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Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: July 17, 2024

Subject: WPR24LA207, Memorandum for Record

Contact: Max G. Brandy, Pilot

The following is a synopsis of the information provided by Mr. Bandy in a telephone conversation.

He had recently purchased a Piper, J3C (N3627N) and was flying it back home to Arizona. On the day of the accident, he departed from the Modesto City-County Airport-Harry Sham Field (MOD), Modesto, California with the intended destination of Bishop Airport (BIH), Bishop, California. While flying through mountainous terrain, he mistakenly flew the airplane into a boxed canyon, believing the additional 20 horsepower engine would climb over the mountains. He noticed the terrain was rising faster than expected. He looked for a place to turn around, but the pass was too narrow. He was concerned that he might stall the airplane if he attempted to turn around. When he realized, he was not going to clear the ridge, he looked for a location to make an off-airport landing. He noticed an area that had a tree and elected to use the tree to take the brunt of the impact. He reduced the airspeed and impacted the tree.

Additionally, Mr. Bandy stated that he was seated in the rear seat of the airplane and was not able to lean the engine due to the fuel mixture controls being located in the front seat of the airplane. He believes that the combination of high altitude and the inability to lean the airplane's engine, degraded the airplane's performance.

According to the pilot there were no preimpact mechanical failures or malfunctions with the airframe or engine that would have precluded normal operation.