RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Jim Silliman
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: 5/3/18
Person Contacted: Mr. Todd Evans, FAA
NTSB Accident Number: CEN18LA156

Narrative:

Mr. Evans stated that the initial report was that the airplane was flying between thunderstorm cells and got bounced around by the turbulence. The engine lost power. He stated that the pilot was new to the airplane.

There's speculation that the passenger's knee hit the fuel shutoff valve arm during the turbulence and stopped the fuel flow from the header tank to the engine. The pilot verified that the fuel shut off valve was found in the partially closed position. There is no secondary lock feature on the fuel valve. The fuel valve is not visible from the pilot's seat.

The sagebrush caused the gear to collapse during the forced landing.

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Jim Silliman
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: 5/8/18
Person Contacted: Mr. Mark Johnson, Pilot
NTSB Accident Number: CEN18LA158

Narrative:

Mr. Johnson stated that the airplane was running perfectly and then suddenly, not running. He stated that they hit turbulence at 10,000 ft and then became a glider.

He stated that the passenger's knee might have hit the fuel shut off valve, but he also said the it was possible that the valve arm was hit when they were bouncing through the grassy field during the forced landing. He said that the valve arm was found in between the on and off position, with it being more toward the on side.

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Jim Silliman
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: 6/19/18
Person Contacted: Mr. Todd Evans, FAA
NTSB Accident Number: CEN18LA158

Narrative:

Mr. Evans stated that there were no labels or markings for the fuel shut off valve. He said it was found in the partially displaced position. It was not in the full ON position. He stated that there was plenty of fuel in the header tank when the engine quit. When the valve closes, fuel is shut off to the engine.

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Jim Silliman
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: 6/20/18
Person Contacted: Mr. Bill Lowen, Builder
NTSB Accident Number: CEN18LA158

Narrative:

Mr. Lowen stated that the valve near the pilot was for the emergency gear drop. He said that if none of the hydraulic pumps work, lower the lever and it releases the pressure and the landing gear will come down.

He stated that the fuel transfer pumps are to keep the fuel balanced and to pump the fuel to the header tank.

He said that there was 80 – 90 hours on the aircraft and that the engine was running well.

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Jim Silliman
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: 6/20/18
Person Contacted: Mr. Tom McNerney, Witness
NTSB Accident Number: CEN18LA158

Narrative:

Mr. McNerney stated that he flew the airplane through the Phase 1 of the experimental certification process. He stated that the orange handle on the pilot's side of the pedestal in the cockpit was visible to the pilot and it was the emergency gear dump valve. It dumped hydraulic pressure to let the landing gear to come down.

The orange handle on the passenger's side of the pedestal in the cockpit was not visible to the pilot and it was the emergency fuel shutoff valve.

He stated that he looked at the flight data and stated that the data indicated that the engine quit when it was about 10,000 ft. The engine was operating fine but then the fuel pressure went to zero. He stated that data indicated that right before the fuel went to zero, the airplane experienced about a 2g hit. It's possible that the fuel shut off valve got bumped during the 2g hit. The propeller was pulled back for about 1.5 minutes and the rpm went to 800 – 1,000 rpm. Then the propeller handle was pushed back in and the rpm went to 2,400 rpm, which created a 2,000-fpm descent.

He noted that the pilot lowered the landing gear during the forced landing but did not lower the flaps.

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Jim Silliman
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: 7/17/18
Person Contacted: Mr. Lafe Dunn, Passenger
NTSB Accident Number: CEN18LA158

Narrative:

Mr. Dunn stated that the accident flight was really simple: They were flying along and hit turbulence and then the engine quit. Once the engine quit, he started looking outside for someplace to land and decided to head toward Woodward. They got into VFR conditions and thought they would make the airport, but the 45 knot headwinds made it hard.

He stated that he could not see the emergency fuel valve on the right side of the pedestal. He said it was below the instrument panel. He said the valve was in a bad location. He stated that it was likely that the valve was turned off during the turbulence event. However, the lever appeared to have barely moved and wasn't in the off position, more like the ¼ closed position. He stated that the valve arm does not have much resistance so it's easy to move it. He said it was possible that his left knee hit the valve and it went to 2/3 off, but how did it get back to the ¼ position. He said that the bouncing on the ground wasn't that bad.

During the flight, the fuel boost pumps were on. When the engine quit, the fuel pressure went to zero. They turned the fuel boost pumps and transfer pumps on. The pilot attempted to get the engine restarted. He said it was "shocking" that the airplane descended so fast.

He stated that the problems they encountered were:

1. Severe turbulence
2. Disorienting
3. No time in aircraft
4. Thought they would make the airport but landed 1 mile short
5. Didn't think about an alternate
6. Shocked that they didn't make the airport
7. Picked a field. The road had powerlines.

8. Line up on pasture field

They had a full-up weather display with satellite weather. They were directing around weather but were shocked by the severe turbulence.

He stated that the airplane was immaculate. The original builder had put in the fuel valve. He didn't think about checking the emergency fuel valve because it had been on.