

Communication Summary

August 1, 2015

Information From: Jeff Garrett, shares hangar with pilot



Summary & Factual Information:

Mr. Garrett was asked to give his recollections of the pilot and airplane. He, in part, indicated that he bought the plane damaged from a gentleman in Texas. It had damage to the prop, leading edges and horizontal stabilizer. It got away from that pilot when he exited the plane while running to close the hanger door. The B Mod had already been completed and the plane didn't have an engine stoppage during the event. The accident pilot and he did all the repairs to the plane and he dialed the crank to insure it was within limits, the repairs were added to the log book and we had a A&P look over the repairs as they progressed. The accident pilot registered the plane and the A&P did the annual and signed off the log book.

The accident pilot received 10 hours of dual in the aircraft with a flight instructor as was a insurance requirement.

Known Issues

Last year the accident pilot had an in-flight vibration leaving KLOU in route to Phoenix AZ. about 10 minutes into his flight. He returned to KLOU and removed the cowling and checked for any possible cause he couldn't find any and did a run up and a few high speed taxi tests and determined it was ok to fly. He departed KLOU again and the vibration had gone away. About an hour into his flight he noticed the vibration return so he landed at an airport near Tell City. He called me and I went to pick him up. We inspected the plane and I found it to have very weak spark. He rented a hanger and we returned to Louisville. The accident pilot bought replacement coils at a mower shop as he was told they were the same. We returned to the hanger in Indiana and I installed the new Coils and the plane ran with no issues so he taxi tested the plane and flew it around the pattern for 30 min. or so landed and I double checked everything and he departed for KLOU and landed without incident.

He had logged several hours on the plane without any further issues with the coils. The condition inspection was just completed 6/11/15 I believe and I assisted the accident pilot with work and had found two problems he needed to correct. The nose wheel bushings were too short and needed to be replaced with the new style from Zenith and the locking washers from Sensenich I wanted replaced since we were removing the prop to inspect the crank shaft bolts. He ordered both and replaced them. Again he flew several hours in the plane with no issues. He was wanting the cold start coils on the plane so he ordered them I believe from Jabiru and they arrived. I called the accident pilot on Thursday from work 7/27/15 and he informed me he was going to install the cold start coils and I told him I would try and get by the hanger after work but couldn't make it as I had to work late. I figured we would meet up on Saturday as usual when he needed help with the plane. I called him Saturday and got no answer he never informed me he was going to Oshkosh. I got the news of his plane missing Sunday afternoon. I went to the airport Monday and was gathering information from people and learned the passenger helped him replace the coils Friday the 28th. The passenger was new to aviation and was not familiar with aircraft engines or their wiring. I then found the cold start coil on the work bench and inspected it and found wear on one side of the pick-up and a purple spot on the end where it had gotten hot. I am assuming he installed the lawn mower coils on the airplane. I called Pete at Jabiru and told him what I had found and asked what would happen if the coil rubbed the magnets and he explained it would run but would damage the new coils to the point of possible failure. The proper way to install them is with 2 feeler gauges but the accident pilot and passenger only had one and when I installed the first ones I only had one and was not satisfied with the installation and went and bought a second set. The magnets are very strong and without two gauges it can allow one side to move while tightening the other.

I have built 3 Zenith 601's and have completed 20 B mods for the Zenith Factory and am extremely familiar with the aircraft. This aircraft was solid and the engine was strong and the accident pilot had hundreds if not thousands of hours flying I hope this helps in your investigation.

I can attest that the above summary is correct to the best of my knowledge:

Edward F. Malinowski
National Transportation Safety Board
Air Safety Investigator