July 3, 2013

Mr. Simpson:

Here is the statement you asked for regarding my experience with Scott and the training times and airplane observations.

Scott emailed me and called me to arrange his 15 hours of PIC time/dual in the Skymaster. He told me that he needed to do another 10 hours of solo after the 15 hours of time to be insured. His purpose for having the airplane was to commute from KSPB to KSJC and Sometimes KPAO.

I did the training on the following dates.

5/25/2013 1.1 Hours – KSPB – KSPB
5/27/2013 2.3 hours KPAO – KSJC – KPAO
5/28/2013 2.6 hours KPAO – KCVH – KPAO
5/29/2013 2.5 Hours KPAO – KSAC – C83 - KPAO
5/30/2013 2.0 Hours KPAO – KSJC – KPAO
5/31/2013 – 2.7 Hours KPAO – KFAT – KPAO
6/2/2013 1.8 Hours – KPAO – KSJC – KPAO

OBSERVATIONS ON THE AIRPLANE:

As we went along I noted any discrepancies with the plane and gave those to Scott.

The first was that the time to get to full power from idle was a bit slow. The response was the same with both the front and rear engines. Both engines developed full power and RPM after a moment. During the Run-up, engine checks/indications and governor checks were normal as well as feathering checks.

Second, the pressurization system didn't seem to like being at maximum differential. It would start to climb and descend the cabin. I didn't notice this until we went high enough for it to happen.

Third, the Cowl flap breaker would pop on occasion. Resetting the breaker cleared the fault.

Fourth, there was some radio noise breaking the squelch until the airplane has been run up. The noise then goes away.

Fifth, GPS two display would start to go dim after a while. Still legible, however.

Sixth, the air conditioner wasn't working very well. Fan noise would bleed into the intercom when it was on high on occasion.

I told Scott to have the maintenance personnel at Advantage Aviation look into these issues and he had given the airplane to them. The last time I checked it was returned to service.

Let me know if you need anything else.

Sincerely,

Mike Shiflett

Simpson Eliott

From: Brian Ackerman <[redacted]>
Sent: Thursday, July 11, 2013 6:55 PM
To: Simpson Eliott
Subject: Sputtering Engine WPR13FA289

Eliot, Thank you for the information, I read the report. I am not sure if you remember, but I thought I may have told you this.

When Scott did a cold start once, he did not use his checklist, and I witnessed first, rear engine start, sounded like a radial engine, spewed grey smoke. He then tried the front engine and had the same result.

I walked up to the plane as I was at his hangar and asked what had happened. He replied I don't know. I asked where was his checklist and he did not have one. I scolded him, and said never start without a checklist, never!

I then got into the plane and said lets do it together with the checklist. I found that he had left the electric fuel pumps on, when he was only supposed to use the fuel pump to prime. When we did it together both engines started normal and I did not witness any smoke or experience any sputtering like he did.

I would not think a fuel pump turned on in departure would not cause this, And I asked Mike his instructor and he said no, but maybe this is something???

Again thanks for all your courtesy and help when we were on site. I am assuming the final report will come out within a year. Is it possible to see all the evidence collected and your files or does it typically have to be subpoenaed?

Regards,

Brian

--
Land Arch, Inc.
[redacted]

To whom it may concern:

My name is Michael T. Ryan,

On the afternoon of June 24th 2013, at approximately 12:50pm I was standing outside of my office located at, 4075 Santa Fe Rd. San Luis Obispo, CA, 93401.

The parking lot in front of that office, faces the runway of the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport (IATA: SBP, ICAO: KSBP, FAA LID: SBP), McChesney Field

At 12:53:43 PM, I witnessed a Cessna 377h during takeoff. Where as I often watch the aircraft at the time of take off, this time there was something different. The sound of the engine gave me reason to believe that he was not getting enough power. There was the definite sound of an engine that was revved to maximum RPMs. The Cessna had lifted off but was moving very slowly and was not climbing in altitude, as one would expect for an aircraft that has just left the runway.

Shortly after takeoff, I lost sight of the aircraft, and shortly after that I could no longer hear the sound of the Cessna's engine. I then received a phone call, informing me that there was a plane crash near the airport and I realized that it had to be the same Cessna that I watched take off.

I then realized that the security cameras mounted on my office, would have caught the take off and that combined with my witness statement might be of assistance to the investigation into the cause of the crash.

I swear that the above statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and memory.

Please feel free to ask any further questions that you may have.

Phone Statement, July 25, 2013 taken with Eliott Simpson, NTSB

Mike Shiflett – 200 experience hours 337 in Riley conversion, provided training for accident pilot per Insurance requirements.

No experience with pilot prior. He was really smart, could take a technical manual and apply it right away. Not typical, a quick study. Not the impatient type that his friends keep stating he was. He flew fairly well right out of the gate. Skill level surprisingly good. Did caution him on his use of a mobile phone. Not sure what he was doing with it. Told him to not spend a lot of time on the cell phone- because while on the ground and went off center line - he then chided him not to use it again. Then on climb out on another flight, there was a period of time when he was not looking out of the window, but instead was looking at the phone.

Only struggled with landings, was too fast, but he cleaned it up ok. Only happened on one flight, and then he was good. As an example of his skill level, he could use the autopilot intuitively, learning it very fast having read the manual. Did not appear to be a risk taker, appeared very cautious. Diligent preflight, was never in a hurry. He asked to go to Lake Tahoe for training but did not think he was ready for it.

Checklists – Initially didn't have a checklist, so they used the one in the manual. Mike insisted for engine starts due to complexity.

With regard to engine problems, Mr. Shiflett was aware that if you applied throttle to firewall, it would take about 1 second for engine power to come up to where you would expect it. He did not experience the stuttering anomaly, but did notice that the engine was sluggish to climb past 2,000 rpm. Surmises that it could be the turbocharger delay. Not enough to make you abort the flight, and it happened to both engines. In general the airplane was better than most 337's he had flown.

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Eliott Simpson
Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: June 24 through June 30, 2013.
Person Contacted: Multiple Witnesses
NTSB Accident Number: WPR13FA289

Narrative:

Brian Ackerman, [redacted]

Friend of pilot. Stated that during the month leading up to the accident, the rear engine was "stuttering" as the throttle was advanced from idle to full power. The pilot reported that he was able to forestall the problem by advancing the throttle slowly. Mr. Ackerman had not experienced this problem, having flown with him on a number of occasions; however the pilot stated that it had been getting worse during the two-week period leading up to the accident. The pilot planned to fly the airplane in the traffic pattern, and if all was well, continue the flight to the maintenance facility in Palo Alto. Pilot works in the Bay Area and was planning to use the airplane for commuting.

_____

Patricia, ATC Tower Controller at San Luis Obispo Tower.

First drawn to the sound of what appeared to be a hard landing on the runway, heard something almost like a bang that drew her attention. She looked up and saw the airplane was still on the ground at taxiway E adjacent to tower. The airplane continued the ground roll. She was trying to clear another airplane, but unable due to the Cessna 337 not clearing. She watched as it took off at the end of the runway, but it got no higher than the FBO building and would not climb. The pilot then reported mayday.

_____

Andrew Robillard – [redacted]. Maintenance personnel at Jet Center FBO.

He was sitting in the FBO looking towards the tower and runway, when his attention was drawn to an unusual engine ”out of sync” sound on the field; he looked up saw a Skymaster, then thought no more of it. He listens to many airplanes, and this was not normal. Shortly after he heard a series of mayday calls on the UNICOM, and then stood up, the remaining transmission was undiscernible. He did not see

or hear a crash or explosion. Mr. Robillard provided a fuel receipt indicating that N337LJ was last fueled on 5/25/13 with the addition of 94.6 gallons of 100LL. Nobody had complained about fuel issues since that time.

_____

Richard Howell– [redacted], Airport Manager.

Was located in his office close to the departure end of Runway 29 and heard an unusual rumbling sound, similar to a radial engine. About one minute later the lights flickered in the office.

_____

Jim Willis. Owner of PCF Aviation.

The pilot performed his multi training at PCF in the company PA 44. Pilot bought the C337 airplane in Napa, PCF looked at it June 14, as part of a prebuy inspection.

PCF worked on the stuttering problem outlined in the work order. The pilot eventually asked them to stop diagnosing, stating that he was "tired of putting money into it." Mr. Willis advised him that it was not repaired. Additionally the aft engine prop governor linkage was loose. They were able to replicate the stuttering problem. To the best of his knowledge, PCF was only maintenance facility that worked on it in San Luis Obispo. The pilot did not provide the logbook so they could not make a logbook entry. Pilot stated that he had a flight Thursday am, the engine problem was manageable, and that he would take the airplane back. The airplane remained at the PCF tie down until the accident flight.

Mr. Willis watched the pilot perform the preflight inspection for the accident flight, the pilot walked around, and was on his cell phone the entire time. It took no more than 3 minutes from arrival to engine startup all while on the cell phone.

Mr. Willis then got into an airplane for training, and was told by ATC to "line up and wait" at Runway 29 just after the accident airplane passed him on the runway after landing. He looked up and perceived that the airplane was continuing on the runway for a long time. It finally rotated "yanked up" as it approached the runway end, and continued at a low altitude, flying in what he described as ground effect. It eventually transitioned to a shallow climb, with a steep angle of attack such that he could see the entire upper wing surface. The airplane then began to "mush" back down, remaining in the nose-high attitude, and rocking from side to side. It then began a rapid descent, followed a short time later by a flash.

Jesse Bennett Mechanic at PCF Aviation

Owner thought maybe prop governor was at fault. If he slowly increased the throttle the rear engine would go to full RPM. If they applied full throttle rapidly, it would get to 1900-2100 and oscillate, jump but never reach full rpm. During that period EGT and CHT would stay static. The propeller blade pitch angle did not change while the engine was stuttering, and he therefore discounted a governor problem as the cause.

They decided to swap flow dividers from front to rear along with the engine driven fuel pumps (swapped back before finishing). About that the time pilot called for an update, they were about to check for an induction leak - they checked induction leak and it was ok. Pressurized intercooler and found no leaks.

James Allen (Advantage Aviation). [redacted]

He had evaluated the airplane for future work a few weeks prior. The owner reported that the rear engine had a surge or dropped speed on acceleration. Followed up with him on June 18, pilot stated he had a mechanic at San Luis Obispo look at it. Pilot called back a few days later, and reported that the shop had taken the fuel pump and spider from the front engine and swapped it with the rear to diagnose the problem, with no resolution. Mr. Allen suggested they check for an induction leak. He then asked about the governor, and offered to pull the propeller governor. The pilot said he would bring up to Advantage to look at it on the day of the accident.