Subject: N423LL, Emergency Landing, Ringwood, NJ (NJ Botanical Gardens)
Date of Occurrence: 11/4/2021
Approximate time of Occurrence: 3:05 PM EDT
Purpose of the Flight: Day VFR repositioning flight

At approximately 1:00PM EDT time November 4, 2021, N423LL landed at 7B9 (Ellington, CT). I joined the pilot who flew this aircraft to 7B9 from N85. The first action taken was to check fuel. I setup a ladder and utilized a calibrated float type fuel stick in the right hand tank for which it read approximately 22 gallons of total fuel. I also utilized a wooden stick type fuel stick, to cross check the reading and it indicated the same amount of fuel. I replaced the fuel cap and then proceeded to the left wing. The left wing tank was checked with the same fuel tank stick and showed approximately 23 gallons of fuel total. This tank was also cross checked as well with the wooden stick type fuel stick. Subtracting 5 unusable gallons for this aircraft, I knew we had 40 usable gallons of fuel for this flight. I believed I had replaced both fuel caps.

At approximately 2:00PM EDT we boarded the plane and I started the engine. Checked all gauges, activated the avionics. We got the intercom system working. I performed a run up checking the mags and aircraft systems and engine gauges. We waited for a Cessna 150 in the pattern to land before departing. A GPS direct course was plotted from 7B9 to N85. I performed a final check of the engine gauges and ensured the fuel selector was on both and trim was set for take off and flaps to 10 degrees. I made appropriate non-towered radio calls, checked for a clear runway, taxied out and held the brakes while adding full power and departed 7B9 on RWY 1. No contact was made with air traffic control, as this was a VFR part 91 day flight. Approximately 1 hour into the flight (approximately 3:00PM EDT) near the New York / New Jersey border, and Interstate Highway 87 and Suffern NY, the engine began losing power. I immediately checked oil pressure, which was green. Carb heat was added, and the engine began making some power again for about 30 seconds, until it began losing power. Engine was still running, but at about 1600 RPM. Mayday calls were made on 121.5. Air traffic control responded and asked to change 125.5 for which I did. I declared we were losing engine power and I did not believe we were in glide range of any airport.

ATC advised Lincoln park 11 miles south, which I did not believe was a suitable option, given the 10 knot head wind present. ATC advised Greenwood lake, which was 7-8 miles at my 12 o'clock. I proceeded in that direction scanning for the airport. Mixture was made rich, mags checked L, R, back to both, engine continued to run but at 1600 RPM. Fuel selector valve was changed from both to left to right and back to both with no change in engine performance. I accepted I was likely going to have a power off landing. I continued to try find Greenwood Lake, but was unable to see it. ATC advised, it looked like I had enough altitude to make it, holding best glide speed around 80 MPH, the aircraft was subjected to a headwind and gliding to 4N1 seemed unlikely.

I checked the Foreflight IPAD glide ring and it indicated that Greenwood Lake was well outside the Foreflight calculated glide ring. I began looking for any suitable open space. I called ATC and advised I had a golf course to the right of me and an open field to the left of me. At approximately 3000' MSL the engine began to sputter. At approximately 2500' MSL the propeller stopped turning. I advised ATC of this. I committed to landing in the field known as the New Jersey State Park Botanical Gardens.

I setup for a left downwind and overflew the field to lose altitude. I added flaps, cleared the tall trees at the approach end of the field, performed a short slip, flared, and touched down about 1/3 of the way down the field. As I applied brakes, the left wing contacted a small diameter tree in the middle

of the field which was unavoidable. The right wing tip contacted a single tree in a row of trees to the right of me. I steered the nose to the left a little to avoid aiming at a large tree at the end of the field. I applied maximum brakes and skidded to a stop about 12' from a park bench. I spoke with local law enforcement and emergency medical personnel. We secured the aircraft and found the left fuel cap was missing. The left horizontal stabilizer had blue streaks running from front to back.

I called a friend and requested he search the Ellington airport ramp for the fuel cap. He found the fuel cap on the runway near the departure end (RWY 1). He kept it until I retrieved it from him on Sunday November 7th. The fuel cap was returned to the airplane on Monday November 8th.