



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	SAN MARTIN, California	<b>Accident Number:</b>	LAX97LA102
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	February 11, 1997, 11:15 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N34PC
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Green COZY III	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

## Analysis

The pilot had throttled back for a descent but when he attempted to return to level flight, throttle movement failed to produce an increase in rpm. After several unsuccessful throttle movements, he declared an emergency and was directed toward the nearest airport. When it became apparent to him that he would not reach the runway, he made an emergency off airport, gear-up landing short of the airport boundary. Fuel was present in the carburetor and gascolator. The left main tank was empty but the right tank was nearly full. The fuel selector was found positioned on the right tank. The pilot reported contamination in the right tank and gascolator. Dirt was reportedly found at the bottom of the gascolator and red colored oil globules were found on the gascolator screen. Both dirt and oil were found in fuel from the right tank. The pilot told FAA inspectors that hydraulic lines are routed through both fuel tanks. There were no other deficiencies identified.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: A loss of engine power due to fuel contamination. A factor in the accident is the aircraft design, which routes hydraulic lines through the fuel tank.

## Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL  
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - NORMAL

Findings

1. LIGHT CONDITION - DAYLIGHT
  2. (C) FLUID,FUEL - CONTAMINATION,OTHER THAN WATER
  3. (F) ACFT/EQUIP,INADEQUATE DESIGN - OWNER/BUILDER
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Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING

Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

4. TERRAIN CONDITION - CONGESTED/CONFINED AREA
5. LANDING GEAR - NOT DEPLOYED - PILOT IN COMMAND

## Factual Information

On February 11, 1997, at 1115 hours Pacific standard time, an experimental Cozy III, N34PC, diverting to San Martin, California, experienced a partial power loss and made a forced landing short of the airport. The aircraft sustained substantial damage; however, the pilot, the sole occupant, was not injured. The aircraft was operated as a personal flight by its pilot/owner when the accident occurred. The flight originated in Stockton, California, at 1030 on the morning of the accident. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed at San Jose, the original destination; however, the pilot was diverting to an area of visual conditions that existed at San Martin. No flight plan had been filed.

The pilot reported that, as he approached San Jose, he realized he could not descend in VFR conditions due to a cloud layer. He was advising Bay approach that he was diverting to Sacramento, California, when the controller advised that the clouds had dissipated in the vicinity of Morgan Hill. The pilot continued to that location and, finding VFR conditions, throttled back to begin his descent into the San Jose area.

At the completion of his descent, the pilot attempted to return to level flight by advancing the throttle. When the throttle movement failed to produce an increase in rpm after several attempts, the pilot declared an emergency. Bay approach reported the nearest airport was the South County Airport in San Martin. The pilot told the controller that he might be able to make the airport, but that it would be close.

As he approached the airport, it became apparent to the pilot that he would not be able to reach the runway. He selected a paved Santa Clara County vehicle maintenance yard as an emergency landing site and decided to land with the gear retracted. After sliding to a stop, he exited the aircraft without assistance. Although the aircraft landed gear-up, there was no visible damage to the two-bladed propeller. The accident site was located approximately 100 yards from the airport boundary.

A postaccident examination of the aircraft by FAA inspectors revealed that there was fuel present in the carburetor and gascolator. The left main tank was empty but the right tank contained an estimated 15 to 16 gallons of fuel. The fuel selector was found positioned on the right tank.

The pilot stated that he observed contamination in the right tank and gascolator. He said he found dirt at the bottom of the gascolator and red colored oil globules on the gascolator screen. He also found dirt and oil in the fuel from the right tank after the fuel was drained into a clean container and examined. The pilot told FAA inspectors that hydraulic lines are routed through both fuel tanks. There were no mechanical deficiencies identified with the engine.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	49, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Helicopter	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	April 23, 1996
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	809 hours (Total, all aircraft), 58 hours (Total, this make and model), 809 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 24 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Green	<b>Registration:</b>	N34PC
<b>Model/Series:</b>	COZY III COZY III	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	Yes
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Experimental (Special)	<b>Serial Number:</b>	566
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Retractable - Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	3
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	September 16, 1996 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1800 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	48 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	796 Hrs	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>	Installed, activated, aided in locating accident	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-320-D2J
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	SALVATORE PETER LA BARBERA	<b>Rated Power:</b>	160 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None
<b>Operator Does Business As:</b>		<b>Operator Designator Code:</b>	

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	RHV ,133 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	21 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	10:47 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	325°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Unknown	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Overcast / 2200 ft AGL	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	/	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	0°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	-12°C / -14°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	STOCKTON , CA (SCK )	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>	SAN JOSE , CA (SJC )	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	10:30 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class E

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Used:</b>	0	<b>IFR Approach:</b>	
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	Forced landing

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	37.100795,-121.599273(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Crispin, Robert
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	DENNIS L DAY; SAN JOSE , CA
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	October 14, 1997
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29726">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29726</a>

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