



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	BUCKEYE, Arizona	Accident Number:	LAX00LA128
Date & Time:	March 15, 2000, 18:30 Local	Registration:	N3896X
Aircraft:	Aero Commander 100	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

A witness observed the airplane, while in cruise flight, as the right wing dipped to a near vertical position followed by the airplane diving into the ground. The witness went to the accident site where he found the pilot kneeling beside the wreckage. According to the witness, the pilot stated he was not trying to land at a nearby airport, but was 'screwing around.' The local sheriff's office report of the accident indicated that the pilot reported flying at 200 feet above the ground when he reduced power to observe the airplane's glide capability at that height. According to the sheriff's report, the pilot further stated that a wind gust resulted in the left wing dropping. When the pilot corrected for the gust, he overcompensated, lost control, and the airplane flew into the ground. The pilot has a student pilot certificate with no solo endorsement for the Commander 100. His last solo endorsement was for a Cessna 152 dated March 10, 1987. The last flight entry in his pilot logbook was dated July 10, 1999, and indicated a flight in the accident airplane.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's improper judgment and his failure to maintain clearance from the ground. A factor was the pilot's lack of recent experience.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. (F) ALTITUDE - LOW - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) JUDGMENT - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) LACK OF RECENT EXPERIENCE - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Factual Information

On March 15, 2000, about 1830 hours mountain standard time, an Aero Commander 100, N3896X, collided with the ground following an in-flight loss of control near Buckeye, Arizona. The airplane sustained substantial damage. The student pilot, the sole occupant, sustained serious injuries. The airplane was operated by the owner pilot under 14 CFR Part 91. There was no flight plan filed for the personal flight that originated at an unknown time from Buckeye Municipal Airport.

According to the Maricopa County Sheriff officers who responded to the scene, the pilot told them that he was flying at 200 feet above the ground (agl), and he had reduced engine power to "see how the airplane would glide at 200 feet." As he was gliding eastbound, a large gust of wind blew him north making his left wing dip. He increased the engine speed to compensate for the wind gust, overcompensated, and lost control of the airplane.

A witness observed the airplane to his south flying east. He said he watched the airplane's right wing drop to a near vertical position and the airplane dove into the ground. He saw a cloud of dust and heard the crash. The witness responded to the scene with another witness. When they arrived at the crash site, they observed the pilot on his knees on the ground near the left side of the airplane. The first witness reported to a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector that the pilot told him that he was not trying to land on a nearby private dirt airstrip but was just "screwing around."

The sheriff's report stated that they located the airplane in a slightly hilly, open desert area. The report indicated that the airplane came to rest nose down, facing east. The tail of the airplane was pointing upwards about 90 degrees. A sheriff's deputy measured the length of the ground scar leading to the wreckage as 76 feet.

An inspection of the airplane by an FAA Airworthiness Inspector revealed that the engine had separated from the airplane. Fuel was found in both tanks. The propeller blades were bent forward. The throttle was fully forward and the mixture was in the "RICH" position. The primer was in and locked.

According to the owner of Buckeye Aviation, the owner had fueled his airplane the morning of the accident. He observed the pilot running the engine while he stood next to the unattended airplane. On another occasion, the owner of Buckeye Aviation stated that he had looked inside the airplane and noted that all the seats were missing except for the pilot's seat. He noted that the pilot had not flown the airplane in several months, and that he watched the pilot perform several touch-and-go operations prior to departing the pattern. He stated that it was his opinion that no maintenance had been performed on this airplane in "many years."

A friend of the pilot said that the pilot "hardly ever flew his airplane."

The pilot's logbook and student pilot certificate were located and copied. A third-class medical certificate was issued to the pilot on March 18, 1998. The certificate contained the limitation that the pilot must have glasses available for near vision. An entry in the pilot log indicated that the pilot had been certified safe for solo flight in a Cessna 150 on December 24, 1986. Additionally, there were three cross-country endorsements for flight in a Cessna 152, all dated from February to March 1987. The logbook did not have any flight instructor endorsements, and a record of a flight review was not located.

The mother of the pilot called investigators and said that she was unaware that her son had purchased an airplane. She stated that he was unemployed and had little money.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Attempts by Safety Board investigators and FAA airworthiness inspectors to obtain airplane maintenance history or copies of maintenance logs were unsuccessful.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Student	Age:	Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	March 18, 1998
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	97 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Aero Commander	Registration:	N3896X
Model/Series:	100 100	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	132
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2250 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	O-320
Registered Owner:	KENNETH BELOAT	Rated Power:	150 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	GYR, 959 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	30 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	18:50 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	270°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	20 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	240°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	24°C / 7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	, AZ (BKK)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	00:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	33.379497,-112.550765(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Childress, Deborah
Additional Participating Persons:	DAVE BARON; SCOTTSDALE , AZ
Original Publish Date:	June 25, 2003
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=48793

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