Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	MULBERRY, Florida	**Accident Number:**	ATL01LA071
Date & Time:	July 4, 2001, 15:35 Local	**Registration:**	N1235L
Aircraft:	Lake LA-4	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	2 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

Shortly after lift-off, the engine rpm went to idle and quit. The pilot initially attempted to return to the departure airport, but subsequently selected a nearby clearing for an emergency landing. The airplane collided with rough and uneven terrain, and burst into flames as the pilot maneuvered the airplane for the emergency landing. No contamination was observed in the oil filter element or suction screen. The pilot estimated that approximately 40 gallons of fuel were on board the airplane at the accident. Examination of the airframe and the engine assembly failed to disclose a mechanical malfunction or a component failure.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The loss of engine power for undetermined reasons. A factor was rough and uneven terrain.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF

Findings

1. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Findings
2. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - ROUGH/UNEVEN

Factual Information

On July 2001, at 1535 eastern daylight time, a Lake LA-4, collided with the ground and burst into flames shortly after takeoff from the South Lakeland Airport in Mulberry, Florida. The airplane was operated by the private pilot under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 91, and visual flight rules. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident and no flight plan was filed for the local flight. The private pilot and the pilot-rated passenger received no injuries, and the airplane sustained substantial damage during the collision and the post-crash fire. The flight departed Mulberry, Florida, at 1500.

According to the pilot, he completed a normal engine run-up prior to the attempted takeoff and no abnormalities were noted with the airplane. However, shortly after lift-off from runway14/32, the engine rpm went to idle. There were no abnormal noises heard, and the pilot was not sure if the engine had quit. According to an eyewitness, the engine began to sputter and subsequently quit. Reportedly, the pilot initially attempted to return to the departure airport, but subsequently selected a nearby clearing for an emergency landing. The airplane collided with rough and uneven terrain as the pilot maneuvered the airplane for the emergency landing.

The post-accident examination of the engine assembly found that it rotated through and drive train continuity was established through the accessory gearbox. Engine ignition system continuity was also established, and ignition sparks were observed in both magnetos. The spark plugs were examined and were gray in color. There was no visible contamination in the oil filter element or suction screen. An engine field compression check was also completed. The examination also disclosed extensive fire damage to the airframe. The pilot estimated that approximately 40 gallons of fuel were on board the airplane at the accident. Examination of the airframe and the engine assembly failed to disclose a mechanical malfunction or a component failure.

During a telephone conversation with the pilot/owner of N1235L, on November 24, 2001, he stated that he had owned this airplane for approximately 25 years. He also stated that in approximately 1990, he experienced a sudden loss of engine power in flight. During this emergency, he landed the airplane safely. The subsequent engine examination failed to disclose the source of the sudden loss of engine power.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	**Age:**	65,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	**Seat Occupied:**	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	**Second Pilot Present:**	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	March 13, 2001
Occupational Pilot:	No	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	May 1, 2001
Flight Time:	4200 hours (Total, all aircraft), 3300 hours (Total, this make and model), 45 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 15 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	**Age:**	57,Female
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	**Seat Occupied:**	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	**Second Pilot Present:**	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	July 25, 2000
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	May 1, 2001
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Lake	**Registration:**	N1235L
Model/Series:	LA-4	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	**Serial Number:**	734
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle; Amphibian	**Seats:**	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	December 16, 2000 Annual	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	2690 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	68.5 Hrs	**Engines:**	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3630 Hrs as of last inspection	**Engine Manufacturer:**	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	**Engine Model/Series:**	IO 360 A1B
Registered Owner:	On file	**Rated Power:**	200 Horsepower
Operator:	On file	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	LAL,142 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	10 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	13:50 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	180°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 4000 ft AGL	**Visibility**	12 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 40000 ft AGL	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	3 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:		**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.12 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	34°C / 22°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	MULBERRY, FL (X49)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:		**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	14:10 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	Class C

Airport Information

Airport:	South Lakeland X49	**Runway Surface Type:**	Grass/turf
Airport Elevation:	110 ft msl	**Runway Surface Condition:**	Dry
Runway Used:	14	**IFR Approach:**	None
Runway Length/Width:	4000 ft / 100 ft	**VFR Approach/Landing:**	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Serious	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		**Aircraft Fire:**	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	2 Serious	**Latitude, Longitude:**	27.933332,-82.349723

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Wilson, Butch
Additional Participating Persons:	Susan Dillard; Federal Aviation Adminstration; Orlando, FL
Original Publish Date:	February 20, 2002
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=52711