

Why I always fly IFR

BY STEVE OLENSKY, MOBILE, ALABAMA

Getting ready for this year's Sun 'n Fun was very hectic due to heavy business commitments, the sale of our house and the resulting move into our new house. During this move, it came time for the annual of my 1965 S model Bonanza.

I decided to have this year's annual done at a local airport about 10 miles south of my home base of MOB. This was mainly because the head mechanic from MOB recently moved to St. Elmo Airport and was performing all of the maintenance on my company's Baron.

There were almost no squawks reported and because of the move, I did not monitor the annual that close. After about three weeks, my Bonanza was reported ready and I flew the plane back to MOB on the Monday before the start of Sun 'n Fun. Once again, being in a hurry because of business commitments, I only took a 15-minute test flight on the way back to MOB, and I did not take time to open the cowl and take a look at my engine for any signs of oil, loose fittings, etc. This is something I have always done in the past, but there were no hints of any problems and I felt good about the work that the mechanic performed.

Saturday, April 18, finally came around and I reserved an IFR slot for a 4:03 p.m. arrival at LAL. The weather at MOB was deteriorating quickly as a slow moving cold front had stalled over the area and was finally beginning to move. Since I don't like to bother with getting fuel at LAL, I instructed the FBO to top all tanks, thus giving me a total of 120 gallons on board. This included 80 in the mains and 40 in the tips, more than enough for the round trip. My son Ben (age 12) and I were the only passengers along with two fold-up bikes, tent, food, clothes and all of the necessities for camping under the plane.

We arrived at the airport at 11:30 a.m. and quickly loaded the plane. I did a nor-

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mal pre-flight, checking fuel, oil and a general outside look at the airplane. All looked in good order. We made a last pit stop, said good-bye to the wife and daughter and cranked up to meet our 12:15 p.m. wheels-up time for LAL. Takeoff was normal for a fully-loaded Bonanza. However, I did notice that the Graphic Engine Monitor was not showing any EGT reading for cylinder #6. After a normal climb out and level off at 7,000 ft. for cruise, I trimmed the plane and set the autopilot. Our ground speed was good at 174 knots, so I was worried about getting to LAL early for my IFR slot.

After crossing my first fix CEW and setting up for V198, things were going so smooth that I decided to review the Sun 'n Fun arrival procedure one more time. This only took a couple of minutes and I started my normal instrument scan and noticed that the oil pressure was at zero.

Ben was asleep next to me so I didn't bother him yet. The oil temp was normal, and my six channel graphic monitor was also normal. I thought I had a faulty oil pressure gauge. Just in case, I set the King GPS-90 for the closest airports and noticed there was one at my 12 o'clock position. By this time, the solid overcast at 5,000 had become scattered and I felt good seeing a lot of open fields below.

About the time I decided I better land and check out the problem, I felt a few bumps from the engine. This was only about three minutes from the first glance at the zero oil pressure. The bumps wakened Ben so I knew they were not my imagination. I was about to notify Cairns Approach about my situation when the engine let loose. All of a sudden there was violent shaking and total loss of power. I declared an emergency and asked for vectors to the closest airport.

Cairns replied with the airport I had identified, at my 12 o'clock position and six miles. I set up for best glide speed and pulled the mixture, trying to stop the prop and all of the shaking. This had no effect and soon we had smoke in the cabin.



Landing end of airport.

I reported this to Cairns and asked for the runway headings. Cairns responded with north/south winds favoring landing to the south, airport at 11 o'clock, four miles. I still had not picked up the airport, but was not worried because of all the open fields around. Ben looked up at me and asked if we were going to die. This was the only thing that really upset me during the whole ordeal.

I knew I had to be on top of the field, but I still had not spotted it. Cairns gave me a heading of three-forty and as soon as I made the turn I spotted the runway to my left, and I was on a perfect downwind. I turned base and then final, Cairns gave me the local CTF and I switched over to notify my intentions. I looked high so I added flaps, I still looked high and the runway looked short (3,700 feet), so I dropped the gear. This was a mistake. I was now dropping too fast and I had to clear trees north of the field. I put the gear up and bumped the flaps up. However, I quickly discovered that the flaps were giving me lift so I left them alone.

At this point I had cleared the trees, but I was not going to make the runway. I decided to see if I had any engine left so I pushed the mixture in and then the throttle, and the engine actually made power. It was just enough to slow my descent. I put the gear handle down while watching the ground coming up quickly. This is where I wished for a 28-volt FAST gear motor. About the time I got the green, we hit the grass about 10 feet in front of the runway.

It was actually one of my smoothest landings. We coasted up to the turn-off and stopped. I told Ben to exit the airplane quickly in case of fire and began to shut everything down. I heard another plane calling to find out about my status and I tried to reply but he could not hear me. I decided to get out also, so I shut down the master and exited the plane.

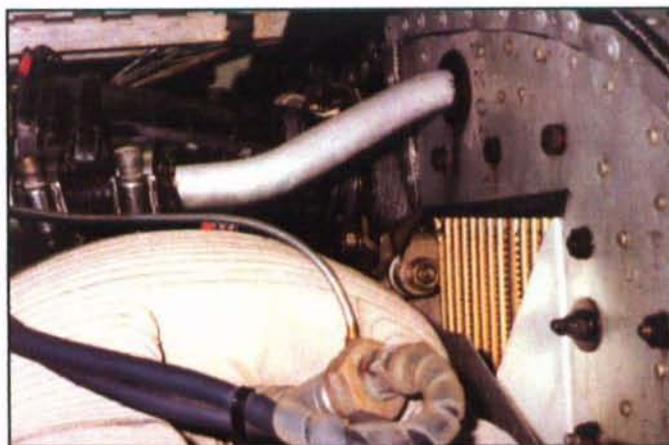
A quick look at the left side of the engine compartment revealed all of the fresh oil streaming along the entire left side of the plane. If only I could have seen this from the pilot's seat. I went into the FBO and called Flight Service to notify them that we were down and OK, and got with the local FBO folks to pull the plane off the runway to a tie-down spot. About this time, the paramedics, sheriff and local rescue personnel showed up. I thanked everyone for their concern and asked "Where the heck are we." We had made it to the Tri County Airport in Bonifay, Florida (1J0).

A closer look at the engine revealed a fist sized whole in the case above the back right cylinder. The left mag was dislodged from its mount and numerous clamps and straps were loose. Needless to say, the engine was trashed.

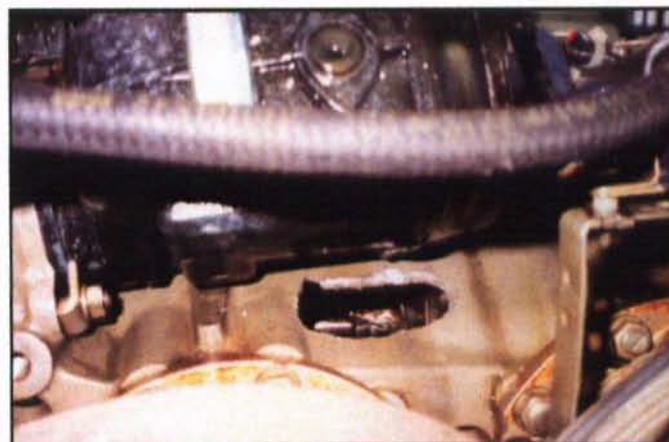
Now the questions: Why did the oil leak out and did the loss of oil cause the rest of the damage or vice versa?

I'm not going to second-guess any of my actions, from pre-flight to landing. Thanks to luck and the good Lord, my son and I are safe, the airplane is not bent and we can fly and attend Sun 'n Fun another year.

I'll report on the engine findings and what my repair deci-



Loose mag with hole in case on left side.



Hole on right side of engine.

sions are in my next article. I can only give the highest praise to Air Traffic Control personnel. They are dedicated professionals only concerned with the safe flight of all aircraft. This is why I always file IFR, even on VFR days. Just in case!

Steve Olensky, SEI, Instrument

AIRPLANE SPECIFICATIONS

BONANZA BE35 1965 S-MODEL - N42AB
IO-520 engine with McCauley 3-blade prop,
approximately 1,450 hrs. since installed (REM)

Sigma-Tec HSI
Dual Narco digital nav/com with GS
Narco imbedded DME
Narco digital ADF
Narco transponder
S-Tec 60 autopilot
King KLN-90 GPS fully-coupled
Strikefinder weather detection
JPI six channel graphic engine monitor
Radar altimeter
Osborne tip tanks, 20 gallons each