

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE
Washington

REPORT OF THE ACCIDENT BOARD
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE

Statement of probable cause concerning an accident which occurred to a commercially owned airplane near Gulfport, Mississippi, on July 19, 1935

To the Director of Air Commerce

On July 19, 1935 at approximately 12 30 p.m. at a point in the Gulf of Mexico about 3 miles from No. 5 Lighthouse on Chandeleur Island, a commercially owned airplane, engaged in a charter flight, crashed with resultant death to the pilot and passenger and the complete destruction of the aircraft.

The airplane, a General, model 102-E, was owned and operated by Wedell-Williams Air Service Corporation and bore Department of Commerce license number NC-492K. The pilot, Walter W. Wedell, held a Department of Commerce transport pilot's license. The passenger was Howard L. Sanders of Anderson, South Carolina.

The passenger chartered the airplane for a trip from New Orleans, Louisiana, to Mobile, Alabama. The take-off from Wedell-Williams Airport was made at approximately 11 10 a.m. From here, the airplane was seen to fly over Shushan Airport at New Orleans and later over a privately owned airport at Slidell, Louisiana. After this nothing more was heard or seen of the airplane until it was observed diving into the Gulf of Mexico at a point approximately 20 miles off course to the right.

Only one eye-witness to the accident could be found. His attention was attracted to the airplane by a loud roar. Looking in that direction he could see something falling about two or three miles away and could hear the roar of the engine until it struck the water. He was unable to state whether or not the airplane was spinning and could not say whether it was all together or in pieces.

The airplane was so badly damaged that nothing conclusive could be learned from the wreckage. The fuselage was found in about four feet of water. The engine had torn loose and was found about 25 feet ahead. Other parts were found scattered about and parts that floated were drifting away. Many parts were missing entirely. One wing was found about 3 or 4 miles away but there was sufficient current to account for this and it cannot be taken as indication that the wing had failed in the air.

The air line course from New Orleans to Mobile is either over land or just skirting the shore line. No reason could be found for this airplane being so far off course and especially 20 miles out over the water.

The Accident Board feels that the available evidence is insufficient to justify any statement of probable cause concerning this accident.

Respectfully submitted

ACCIDENT BOARD

Signed: Jesse W. Lanford, Secretary

Richard C. Gazley, Chief Engineer
Manufacturing Inspection Service

Jos. P. Shumate, Jr.,
Chief, General Inspection Service