

May 7 1936

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE
Washington

STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE CONCERNING AN AIRCRAFT
ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED TO A PRIVATELY OWNED AIR-
PLANE NEAR DANVILLE, ILLINOIS, ON SEPTEMBER 8, 1935

To the Secretary of Commerce.

On September 8, 1935 at about 7.00 a.m. near Danville, Illinois, a privately owned airplane, engaged in student instruction, crashed with resultant death to the pilot and student and the complete destruction of the aircraft.

The airplane, a Taylor Cub, model E-2, bore Department of Commerce license number NC-14779. The pilot, Harley Miethe, held a Department of Commerce transport pilot's license. The student, Fred S. Snyder, held a Department of Commerce student pilot's license.

The instructor first test flew the airplane and then took the student up. Two landings were made and in circling the field for the third time, the airplane was seen to dive into the ground from an altitude of less than 200 feet, nose first and with the right wing slightly down. Statements of witnesses indicate that the engine started missing just previous to this.

Investigation disclosed that the dual control stick used by the instructor had failed, bending at a 45° angle and breaking the welds where it was fitted over an insert tube near its lower extremity. From the type of failure and the foregoing description of the accident, it is apparent that, after the engine started missing, the instructor and student struggled against each other for control of the aircraft with the result that one of the control sticks failed. It was further determined through questioning other students that there was no definite understanding between the instructor and student as to a method of signaling who was to have charge of the controls. Upon examination it was found that the control stick was poorly constructed at the point of failure.

It is the opinion of the Bureau of Air Commerce that the probable cause of this accident was a lack of understanding between instructor and student which, in an emergency, resulted in a struggle for the control of the aircraft and the subsequent failure of the control stick.

Subsequent to this accident, reinforced dual control sticks were installed in all airplanes of this model.

Respectfully submitted,

Eugene L. Vidal
Director of Air Commerce