FOR IMMEDIATE USE

April 23, 1936

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE
Washington

STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE CONCERNING AN AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED TO A COMMERCIALLY OWNED AIRPLANE AT DALLAS, TEXAS ON FEBRUARY 16, 1936

To the Secretary of Commerce

On February 16, 1936 at approximately 4 35 p.m. at Highland Park West, Dallas, Texas, a commercially owned airplane, while making a cross-country flight carrying a pilot and one passenger, crashed with resultant death to both occupants and the complete destruction of the aircraft.

The aircraft, a Waco, model CUC, bore Department of Commerce license number NC-14685 and was owned by the Culver Oil Company, Incorporated, of Gladewater, Texas. The pilot, Paul McDonald Snick, held a Department of Commerce transport pilot's license. The passenger was Mr. George L. Culver, President of the Culver Oil Company.

The take-off was made from Love Field, Dallas, Texas, with Tyler, Texas, as the destination. About five minutes after the take-off, the airplane was seen over a suburb of Dallas executing a vertical bank. While in this maneuver, fragments were observed falling away from the airplane. Two large objects, which later proved to be the tip of the right upper wing and the right gasoline tank, were seen to fall clear of the airplane. At this time full power was applied but the airplane whipped nose down and went into the ground in a vertical dive. The right aileron fell clear before the airplane struck the ground.

Examination of the wreckage indicated that the difficulty originated in the right upper wing. The first large member seen to leave the ship was the right wing tip. Fragments of ribs were picked up all along the path of flight and in such numbers as to indicate that, after the wing tip broke off, all of the ribs broke up and fell away, probably allowing the spars to move sufficiently for the gasoline tank to be thrown out.

An examination of the right aileron showed it to be broken at the center hinge point where the aileron control tube attaches. The rivets holding the fittings to which this tube attaches were wrenched out and one fitting was broken. The other end of the control tube, which attaches to the aileron bell crank through a ball bearing, was detached. The inner race of the ball bearing was still attached to the bolt in the bell crank but the outer race was missing. Apparently this outer race or the method of holding it in place had failed, allowing the tube to drop down and thus disconnect the right aileron control system. Failure in flight of the system controlling either the right or the left aileron would allow that aileron to flutter and thus set up a force sufficient to destroy the wing.

It is the opinion of the Bureau of Air Commerce that the probable cause of this accident was a failure of the right aileron control system which resulted in a major failure of the right wing.

Respectfully submitted,

Eugene L. Vidal
Director of Air Commerce