

July 10, 1936

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE  
WashingtonSTATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE CONCERNING AN AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT WHICH  
OCCURRED TO A PRIVATELY OWNED GLIDER AT WILLOW GROVE, PENNSYLVANIA  
ON MAY 17, 1936

To the Secretary of Commerce

On May 17, 1936 at approximately 3 30 p.m., at Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, a privately owned glider met with an accident which resulted in the death of the pilot and the complete destruction of the glider.

The glider, a Waco Model LAJ, was not licensed, but bore Federal identification number 681Y. The pilot, Thomas Condax, hold a Federal student glider pilot's license

The take-off was accomplished by means of a tow line attached to an automobile. Pilot Condax was seen to climb the glider at a very steep angle after it left the ground. At an altitude of about 600 or 700 feet, the right wing of the glider suddenly folded back and the aircraft dived straight into the ground.

Inspection of the wreckage disclosed that the failure was due to the pulling out of the eyelet in the drag wire on that wing. Further examination disclosed that the wire loop forming this eyelet was poorly constructed. It was stated that this pilot had the reputation around the field of habitually climbing the glider very steeply, which would put an undue strain on the wings while being towed, and that he had been warned about this.

It is the opinion of the Bureau of Air Commerce that the probable cause of this accident was a structural failure of the right wing induced by excessive strain put upon it by improper handling.

Respectfully submitted,

Eugene L. Vidal  
Director of Air Commerce