

Adopted: November 22, 1943

File No. 2138-43

REPORT OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD
on the
Investigation of an Accident Involving Aircraft
During a Local Instruction Flight

Burt Clemons Sloate, Jr., was fatally injured and Deryl Lucas Wood escaped injury in an accident which occurred about 2 miles northeast of Mead Field, Spokane, Washington, at approximately 3:15 p.m. on May 29, 1943. Sloate, a CAA War Training Service flight supervisor, held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-330 h.p., and flight instructor ratings. He had accumulated approximately 1338 hours of flight time, 3 hours of which were in the type of aircraft involved. Wood held a student pilot certificate and was in Stage A of the secondary course of the War Training Service. The aircraft, a Fairchild M-62B, NC 37165, powered by a Warner Super Scarab 165 h.p. engine and owned by Zimmerly Air Transport, Lewiston, Idaho, was destroyed by impact and fire.

Flight Supervisor-Sloate, occupying the rear cockpit, and Student Wood, the front, took off on a routine check flight from Felts Field, Spokane, Washington, at about 2:25 p.m. They proceeded to Mead Field (5 miles northwest of Felts Field) where two landings were made. Sloate then directed the student to a locality about 2 miles northeast of Mead Field for low altitude maneuvers, such as 8's, S turns and rectangular course flying, after which they proceeded to an altitude of about 3500 feet where acrobatic maneuvers completed the student's flight check. Sloate then took over the controls and performed several acrobatic maneuvers. According to Student Wood and the one other known witness, a student pilot flying in the vicinity, Sloate executed a slow half roll at an altitude of about 2000 feet and continued for a few seconds in inverted flight. During this inverted flight, Wood noticed smoke and fire coming into the front cockpit from the engine compartment forward of the fire wall, and immediately informed Sloate, through the Gosport system, that the airplane was on fire. Sloate promptly rolled the aircraft back to normal flying position while Wood applied the fire extinguisher. The fire increased rapidly and when the airplane had reached an altitude of about 1500 feet, Student Wood called Sloate's attention to flames burning the fabric on the right side of the fuselage as he got out on the left wing to jump. He stated he called to Sloate and asked if he were coming along, but that Sloate did not reply. Wood then jumped from the burning plane and parachuted to safety. According to Wood, Sloate seemed calm and collected and was apparently busily engaged in flying the airplane to an emergency landing. During the plane's descent it was seen to make several 45° turns to the right and left until it reached an altitude of about 200 feet above the ground, when it headed directly southwest into the wind and crashed to the ground in a rather steep glide.

Investigation revealed that the carburetor on this aircraft had been "loading up" for some time previous to the accident and that on May 18, a new carburetor had been installed. On May 19 a one-hour test flight was completed and the trouble was considered to have been remedied satisfactorily. The plane was then returned to service and was flown two hours prior to the accident. Just before the subject take-off the aircraft was fueled to capacity (45 gallons).

On the evening before the accident, Sloate, in conversation with a WTS flight instructor, stated that he was curious to know if he could keep a Warner engine running during inverted flight by use of the wobble fuel pump, and it is possible he may have been so experimenting when the fire broke out. Student Wood stated he did not know whether or not the pilot used the wobble pump. The engine, fuel plumbing, wobble pump, carburetor, etc., were so badly damaged by impact and fire that little or no information could be gained from an examination of the wreckage. Sloate was regarded by students, instructors and fellow CAA personnel as steady and reliable and an unusually skillful pilot.

The probable cause of the accident was fire which originated in the engine compartment during the slow half-roll and inverted flight.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary