

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

Charlie Gordon Burdette, Jr., was seriously injured in an accident which occurred 4 miles south of Eastaboga, Alabama, at approximately 5:45 p.m. on July 8, 1943. Burdette held a student pilot certificate and had received  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours of dual flight instruction. Although his student certificate had not been endorsed by a flight instructor and he was not authorized to fly solo, this was his third solo flight. The aircraft, a Piper J-2, NC 17853, powered by a Continental 40 h.p. engine, was demolished. It was owned by the pilot, W. A. Holan and W. H. Parker but was registered in the name of Benjamin Franklin Sasnett.

Burdette secured clearance from the Anniston, Alabama Airport and took off at approximately 5:00 p.m. for a local practice flight in the areas east of the airport. About 30 minutes later he returned to the airport and, without landing, continued flying in a westerly direction. At approximately 5:40 p.m. the plane was observed about 12 miles west of the airport circling the home of the student's uncle at an altitude estimated to have been around 200 to 300 feet. Burdette then proceeded north for approximately one-quarter mile and as he approached the home of his cousin, the engine sputtered, picked up, and finally stopped. For a few seconds following engine failure the plane appeared to remain in level flight, then suddenly the nose dropped and the plane fell off to the right, striking the ground at an angle of about  $35^{\circ}$ , approximately 40 feet from the house.

Examination of the engine revealed that stoppage was due to failure of the single magneto and the lack of proper maintenance and servicing was evident. The terrain in the vicinity was suitable for a landing even by a student with limited experience.

The student's utter lack of elementary knowledge of the theory of flight was apparent by his statement, "The motor quit, while I was making a shallow turn to the right . . . . I had the stick all the way back and to the left but seeing the plane was going to crash I pushed it as far as I could to the front. About that time I hit."

It is apparent that the irresponsible action of the student pilot in making a solo flight before being authorized to do so by his instructor, and the lack of adequate maintenance of the aircraft contributed to the accident, while the probable cause was the student's lack of knowledge of how to control the aircraft following engine failure.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs  
Secretary