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File No. 3193-43

REPORT OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD
on the
Investigation of an Accident Involving Aircraft
During a Cross-Country Business Flight

Pilot George Elmer Stockhill was seriously injured and his passenger, George F. Askin, received minor injuries in an accident which occurred near Powderville, Montana, about 9:30 a.m. on July 21, 1943. Stockhill held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-80 h.p., and flight instructor ratings. He had flown approximately 455 hours, all in the type of airplane involved. Askin held a student pilot certificate. The aircraft, a Piper J5B, NC 40984, owned by the passenger, was extensively damaged.

Early in the morning of July 21, Stockhill and Askin departed from Miles City, Montana for a water well-drilling sight about 80 miles south-east of Miles City in the Powder River Valley. They landed on the open prairie near the drilling location and, after completing their business, departed on the return trip to Miles City around 9:30 a.m. The take-off was made from a grassy strip of table-land. When the plane had reached an altitude of from 200 to 250 feet, the pilot made a steep right turn of 180°, and did a wing-over. He then came back over the drilling location in a shallow dive and, with power on, flew directly into the ground at a point where it rose abruptly some 20 feet higher than the drilling site. The plane struck on the right wing and forward right portion of the fuselage and slid about 100 feet beyond the point of impact.

The pilot and passenger agreed that the aircraft operated normally prior to the crash. The weather was suitable for flying and had no bearing on the accident. Evidence clearly indicated that the pilot diverted his attention from his flying to friends on the ground, for whose benefit he was apparently putting on a show.

The probable cause of this accident was reckless action of the pilot who displayed no regard for the safety of his passenger or himself.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary