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

LeRoy Charles Lindahl was seriously injured in an accident which occurred on Lake Geneva, about 10 miles northeast of Albert Lea, Minnesota, at approximately 7:20 p.m. on August 10, 1943. Lindahl, a War Training Service elementary trainee, had flown about 21 dual and 17 solo hours, all in the type of airplane involved. The aircraft, a Piper J3C-50, NC 26157, owned by Minnesota Skyways, Inc., was extensively damaged.

Lindahl took off from the Albert Lea Municipal Airport at 6:30 p.m. to practice maneuvers in an area northeast of the airport. Another student, James Lionel Sigman, was assigned to solo practice of similar maneuvers in a different section of the same practice area. About 40 minutes later several witnesses observed the two planes circling the town of Geneva, descending at times to an altitude described as below tree-top level in a "follow the leader" fashion. After approximately 10 minutes of very low maneuvering in the vicinity, Lindahl's plane was seen to descend over the lake, headed in a northerly direction, and make a turn toward the west. The water was calm and glassy and the pilot was then facing the glare of the late afternoon sun. During the turn the plane continued to descend, and the left wing tip contacted the water. The plane cartwheeled violently to the left onto the right wing and sank in about 5 feet of water approximately 150 yards off shore.

It is possible that Lindahl's attention was momentarily distracted by the other airplane and he neglected his flying, or he may have simply miscalculated his distance above the water. Witnesses agreed that the engine seemed to be running normally at the time of impact. One witness stated that as soon as the airplane struck the water the other plane headed for the airport. Due to injuries sustained, Lindahl was unable to recall anything pertaining to the accident.

The probable cause of this accident was reckless flying at a dangerously low altitude.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary