

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

Pilot David Vearl Nuttall was fatally injured and his wife, Ella L. Nuttall, received serious injuries in an accident which occurred about 15 miles east-northeast of Ely Airport, Ely, Nevada, between 9:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. on August 1, 1943. Nuttall held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-325 h.p., and flight instructor ratings. He had flown approximately 1565 hours, around 29 of which were in the type of airplane involved. Mrs. Nuttall was not certificated as a pilot. The aircraft, a Rearwin 7000, NC 18023, owned by the pilot, was extensively damaged.

Pilot Nuttall, accompanied by his wife, took off from the Ely Airport about 9:00 a.m. on a cross-country pleasure flight to Provo, Utah. According to Mrs. Nuttall, they had planned to cross Creek Range via Steptoe Creek Pass; however, after entering the canyon the pilot attempted to cross the mountain at a higher point slightly to the left of his previously planned course. Mrs. Nuttall stated that they were unable to gain sufficient altitude to clear the range and when it appeared that the canyon was getting narrower, she called to her husband, "When are you going to turn around?" She said she remembered nothing further but did recall that the weather was clear and calm. There were no known witnesses to the accident, but evidence indicated that the aircraft struck the ground on a road bed on its left wing and nose at an angle of approximately 80°.

Examination of the wreckage revealed no failure of any part of the aircraft prior to the accident. The ignition switch was in the "off" position and the manner in which the propeller was broken indicated that no power was being developed at the time of impact. Dual controls were installed and operative. The plane was loaded within its placarded limits.

It appears that after entering the Steptoe Creek canyon the flight path was altered and was continued between narrowing canyon walls toward ground which rises 1500 feet above the point where the accident occurred, 8500 feet above sea level. Apparently, when the pilot realized he could not clear the rapidly rising terrain ahead, he either attempted to land in a small field nearby or tried to turn around and go back and in so doing stalled the plane.

The probable cause of this accident was the pilot's poor judgment in attempting to cross the mountain range at its highest point when maintaining his planned course would have taken him over much lower terrain.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary