

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

Pilot Elmer Bender was fatally injured and his passenger, George William Finger, received serious injuries in an accident which occurred near the Municipal Airport, Borger, Texas, at approximately 6 45 a.m. on August 18, 1943. Bender, age 46, held a private pilot certificate with a single-engine land, 0-80 h.p. rating. He had accumulated about 125 hours of flight time, 103 of which were solo. Finger, age 36, held a student pilot certificate and had flown approximately 56 solo hours. The aircraft, an Aeronca 65-CA, NC 34577, owned by Finger, was extensively damaged.

About 6 45 a.m. Pilot Bender, accompanied by Finger, started on a cross-country business flight from the Borger Municipal Airport to Wichita, Kansas. The take-off was attempted from a 2300-foot runway into an east-southeast wind of about 5 m.p.h. during the limited visibility just before dawn. After progressing about halfway down the runway, the aircraft became airborne and reached an altitude of approximately 15 feet. From this altitude it settled back to the ground just beyond the airport boundary. The pilot continued his attempt to take off and the airplane crashed through a fence and into a railroad embankment approximately 1000 feet beyond the airport boundary.

Examination of the wreckage revealed no indication of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to impact. According to the passenger, no attempt was made by Pilot Bender to halt the take-off and he was of the opinion that the aircraft was airborne when it struck the fence bordering the railroad embankment. However, wheel marks on the ground in the adjoining field clearly indicated that the plane rolled along the ground nearly 1000 feet before crashing through the fence. Finger stated that when the airplane approached the fence, Bender called to him to "help pull the airplane over the fence," but that when he attempted to pull back on the control he found it was already back as far as it would go. The aircraft was carrying approximately 195 pounds overload which was a definite contributing factor to the accident. Dual controls were connected and Pilot Bender occupied the right seat, the position ordinarily used by the passenger.

Had the pilot discontinued the attempt to take off when the aircraft first settled to the ground, the accident, in all probability, would have resulted in only minor damage or might have been avoided entirely.

The probable cause of this accident was poor judgment and poor technique exercised by the pilot during the attempted take-off.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary