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

Alfred Saunders Pearsall was fatally injured in an accident which occurred approximately 6 miles west of Brees Municipal Airport, Laramie, Wyoming, about 3:00 p.m. on September 20, 1943. Pearsall, a War Training Service Navy trainee, had flown approximately 30 hours, of which 9 were solo. The aircraft, a Luscombe 8A, NC 41960, owned by Defense Plant Corporation and being operated by Summit Airways, Inc., was demolished.

Pearsall took off from Brees Airport about 2:20 p.m. with instructions to practice a series of maneuvers which included right and left two-turn spins from an altitude of 3500 feet. At approximately 3:00 p.m. an instructor from the Brees Airport, flying in the same vicinity, observed Pearsall's plane spinning at an altitude of about 2000 feet and counted seven turns before it struck the ground. After circling the scene of the accident he returned to the airport to report it. Another witness, driving along the highway, observed the pilot fall to the ground after he had jumped from the aircraft at an altitude estimated to have been 200 feet. He stated that the pilot's parachute was partially open, trailing above him, and that the airplane, with power apparently off, was in a dive about 100 feet above the pilot. It struck the ground nose-first in a nearly vertical position.

Examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to impact. Examination of the parachute indicated that it had functioned normally but it had not had sufficient time to open fully before the pilot struck the ground, as all shroud lines had not pulled from the retainers. Entries in the student's log and on the progress sheet in the flight office revealed that the subject flight was the student's first solo spin practice, although he had received some spin instruction on three previous flights. Investigation disclosed that the student had possibly not received sufficient instruction in spin recovery and that his instructor had been teaching him an unconventional recovery technique. During the investigation the instructor, Victor L. Follett, and two of his other students were flight checked by a CAA Inspector and the spin recovery technique of all three was found to be faulty. The Inspector then instructed Mr. Follett in the proper method of spin recovery.

PROBABLE CAUSE: Pilot's failure to effect recovery from an intentional spin.

CONTRIBUTING FACTOR: Questionable instruction in spin recovery.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary