

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

Verner Leroy Peasley and his passenger, Thomas Theodore Fisher, were fatally injured in an accident which occurred approximately 12 miles north of Cairo, Georgia, about 6:57 p.m. on September 21, 1943. Peasley, age 40, held a private pilot certificate with a single-engine land, C-80 h.p. rating. Fisher, age 43, held a student pilot certificate. The aircraft, a Culver LPA, NC 41649, owned by the pilot, was demolished.

At 5:15 p.m. Peasley secured clearance for a cross-country pleasure flight from Eufaula, Alabama, to Adel, Georgia. About one hour and 40 minutes later the airplane was observed circling a sparsely populated farm area at a low altitude, approximately 85 miles from the point of departure and 30 miles south of a direct course to Adel. The sky was overcast, with a very low ceiling, and it was nearly dark at the time. While the pilot was apparently maneuvering for a landing, the airplane disappeared from sight and a loud crash was heard immediately thereafter. There were no known witnesses to the impact. Due to darkness the wrecked aircraft was not located until the following morning. It had struck the ground in an almost vertical attitude at the base of a clump of trees around 60 feet in height, just short of a small open field.

The wreckage had been removed from the scene of the accident and stored in a farm shed several miles distant when an air safety investigator arrived. Therefore, little could be learned of the condition of the aircraft immediately after impact. It could not be determined whether or not the landing gear was extended at the time of the accident. Although there was evidence that power was not being developed when the plane struck the ground, there was nothing to indicate engine failure and it is probable that the pilot had throttled the engine for an attempted landing. The U. S. Weather Bureau report for Albany, Georgia, about 12 miles north of the scene of the accident, was: Ceiling estimated 1000 feet, overcast with scattered clouds at 300 feet; visibility 3 miles; thunderstorms and light rain. Unofficial reports indicated that the following weather conditions prevailed at the scene of the accident: Ceiling 800 feet; visibility 1/4 mile.

The aircraft had been fueled to capacity just prior to take-off from Eufaula. The fact that the plane was only 85 airline miles from Eufaula when it was observed about one hour and 40 minutes after take-off, circling approximately 30 miles south of the direct course to Adel, indicates that the pilot was probably lost. He was apparently circling at a low altitude to attempt a precautionary landing in an open field but due to darkness and poor visibility, misjudged the height of some trees in his path and stalled the aircraft in an attempt to clear them. The pilot and passenger were both residents of Denver, Colorado, and it is probable that they were not familiar with the type of terrain over which they were flying.

While the pilot exercised poor judgment in continuing flight into an area of unfavorable weather and approaching darkness, the probable cause of this accident was a stall at low altitude during a precautionary landing.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary