

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

Instructor Charles Junior Kratz was fatally injured and Student Elliott Pearson Garrett received serious injuries in an accident which occurred approximately 2 miles south of Wataga, Illinois, about 9:30 a.m. on October 15, 1943. Kratz held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-330 h.p., and flight instructor ratings. He had accumulated approximately 735 hours of solo flight time, 713 of which were in the type aircraft involved. Garrett, a War Training Service Trainee enrolled in the Army indoctrination course, had received approximately 8 1/2 hours of dual instruction time. The aircraft, an Aeronca 65TL, NC 31872, owned by the Defense Plant Corporation and being operated by the Currey Flying Service, was demolished.

Kratz and Garrett took off from the Galesburg Airport about 9:00 a.m. for the purpose of reviewing flight maneuvers. About one-half hour later they were observed approximately 6 miles northeast of Galesburg, flying in a northeasterly direction, just above the tree tops. According to the witness the engine appeared to be running normally as the plane passed overhead and about one-half mile beyond the pilot made a steep 360° turn to the left at an altitude of around 75 feet, then straightened out, heading north. Immediately thereafter the witness heard a noise, which he thought was the airplane striking the tops of corn, and, upon investigation, found the wrecked airplane resting on its nose in a cornfield approximately one-half mile away.

Evidence indicated that the plane struck the ground squarely on the nose, rotated around the engine to the left about 30° and came to rest in an almost vertical position. Examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to the accident. The manner in which the propeller was broken indicated that little or no power was being developed at the time of impact.

The student stated that he had practiced flying a rectangular course and S turns at an altitude of 500 feet. His version of the accident varied from that of the eyewitness, in that he stated that they went into a spin at 700 feet. However, the student had been in the hospital several days before he could be questioned concerning the accident and it is quite possible that injuries sustained were such as to make his recollections of the accident somewhat confused. Due to the fact that the witness observed the plane flying straight and level for approximately one-half mile at an altitude described as "about the height of trees", and stated that the altitude of the plane during the 360° turn was "about 75 feet", it appears that the instructor exhibited poor judgment in attempting or permitting the student to attempt a steeply-banked turn at such a low altitude.

The probable cause of this accident was loss of control at an altitude too low for recovery.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary