

Adopted: April 17, 1944

File No. 4584-43

REPORT OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD
on the

Investigation of an Accident Involving Aircraft
During an Instrument Instruction Flight

Instructor Willard Alloway Strange, Jr., was fatally injured and his student, Avron Milton Nelson, received serious injuries in an accident which occurred in the mountains about 20 miles northwest of Yakima, Washington, at approximately 11:51 p.m. on October 23, 1943. Strange held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-180 h.p. and instrument ratings. He had flown 485 solo hours, about 50 of which were in the type aircraft involved. Nelson, a War Training Service Army trainee, was enrolled in the Link instrument course at the Kurtzer Flying Service. The aircraft, a Stinson 10A, NC 36737, owned by Lana R. Kurtzer, was demolished.

Strange and Nelson took off from the Yakima Airport about 10:48 a.m. on an instrument training flight under the hood. The student stated that after they had been in the air for some time, the instructor borrowed his pen and graded him on the maneuvers performed. The student's recollection of the accident was haz- but he remembered that the last procedure practiced was a signal fade outward from the Yakima Range Station on a heading of 320° at an indicated altitude of 5000 feet above sea level. Upon completion of this procedure the instructor told the student to remove the hood and look around. Nelson observed that they were flying intermittently in and out of clouds very close to the ground, among high, snow-covered trees. He recalled an attempted pull-up to avoid a tree just ahead but remembered little else, either prior to or following the accident. Three elk hunters in the vicinity heard a crashing sound that they interpreted to be a falling tree or a distant gunshot and, therefore, made no effort to locate it. Shortly thereafter, however, one of the hunters left the party and about ten minutes later, heard repeated calls for help. He found Nelson wandering around in a dazed condition in the vicinity of the wrecked aircraft.

Investigation revealed that the aircraft, after clearing the crest of the mountain by a narrow margin at its highest point (4914 feet above sea level), had struck a tree which extended from the far slope above the top of the ridge. Impact with this tree severed the left wing tip, stabilizer and elevators, and the plane crashed to the ground on the broken left wing.

Instructor Strange was familiar with the mountainous terrain having flown approximately 50 hours during the two weeks preceding this accident instructing students on orientation problems under the hood. On several previous occasions, as an object lesson in the hazards of instrument flying, he had allowed his students to continue flight into rough and mountainous terrain, then had them remove the hood and look around. It appears probable that in this instance he directed a fade procedure which carried the aircraft farther than usual from the station and over high, mountainous terrain. Whether this was intended as an object lesson to the student or was merely to practice under difficult flying conditions could not be determined.

The probable cause of this accident was the instructor's poor judgment in directing flight into unfavorable weather over rugged mountainous terrain at a dangerously low altitude.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary