

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

Instructor Van Wilkinson and his student, Thomas M. Kastl, were fatally injured in an accident which occurred approximately $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of Everett Field, Moorhead, Mississippi, about 3:00 p.m. on October 20, 1943. Wilkinson held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 110-330 h.p., and flight instructor ratings. He had flown approximately 255 solo hours, 73 of which were in the type plane involved. Kastl, a War Training Service trainee enrolled in the second-ary course, held a student pilot certificate. The aircraft, a Waco YMF, NC 14082, owned by the Defense Plant Corporation and being operated by the Greenwood Flying Service, was demolished.

Wilkinson and Kastl took off from Everett Field about 2:20 p.m. on a routine instruction flight. Shortly thereafter they were observed in the vicinity of Itta Bona, Mississippi, approximately 7 miles east of Everett, executing various acrobatic maneuvers at an altitude estimated to have been around 2000 feet. About 3:00 p.m. three witnesses, working in different fields, approximately one-fourth to three-quarters of a mile from the scene of the accident, observed the plane dive to the ground from an altitude of about 500 feet.

Examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to impact. However, it was so completely demolished that little could be determined from its condition. The tail surfaces were the least damaged and the elevator and rudder could be moved freely. The stabilizer was only slightly distorted, apparently from the force of impact, and its adjustment mechanism was in place and set at approximately level flight position. Although two witnesses noticed black smoke issuing from the plane, there was no indication in the wreckage that fire or an explosion had occurred. One of the witnesses stated that the plane, while flying at an altitude of about 500 feet, dived from level flight for about 200 feet, zoomed back up and that as it leveled off for an instant, he heard a loud noise, described as being "louder than a backfire" and stated that he "saw a big puff of black smoke come from the plane." The aircraft, he said, then nosed down and dived to the ground with power on, striking in a nearly vertical attitude. One of the occupants, he stated, jumped from the plane after it had dropped about 100 feet, while the other left when the aircraft was only about 60 feet from the ground. The witnesses did not see any parts of the aircraft break away before it struck the ground. Both parachute packs were open but neither canopy was entirely out of the pack. The rip cord of the student's chute had been pulled but that of the instructor was still in the pocket. These chutes had been packed about two weeks prior to the accident by a certificated parachute rigger and indications were that they were in good condition and operative. It is apparent that one, or perhaps both of the occupants had jumped from the falling plane at an altitude too low to allow time for their parachutes to open before they struck the ground.

The probable cause of the accident was loss of control of the aircraft for reasons not determined.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary