

Adopted: May 3, 1944

File No. 5156-43

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

Instructor Rex Lindley Wells and his student, Patricia Lucida Hall, received serious injuries in an accident which occurred 5 miles southwest of Blythe, California, about 11:20 a.m., December 19, 1943. Wells, age 27, held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-450 h.p., and flight instructor ratings. He had flown 2250 solo hours, approximately 800 of which were in the type aircraft involved. Student Hall, age 20, held a student pilot certificate and had acquired about 11 hours of dual instruction but had not soloed. The aircraft, a Piper J3F-50, NC 25950, owned by Betty Lund, received major damage.

Instructor Wells and his student took off from Herron Field, Blythe, California at 11:00 a.m. for a dual instruction flight which was to consist of climbing turns and later, take-offs and landings. However, no definite schedule of maneuvers had been discussed by the instructor and student before flight. At an altitude estimated to have been 1200 feet the airplane was observed to enter a steep climbing turn to the left from which a spin developed and continued to a point close to the ground. Only partial recovery had been effected when the aircraft struck the ground in a comparatively flat attitude on the wheels. It then bounced about 25 feet and came to rest on its nose at an angle of approximately 45°.

Examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to the accident and the condition of the propeller indicated that considerable power was being applied at the time of impact. Several cracks were found in the exhaust stack just below the point of attachment to the manifold but there was no evidence that monoxide fumes could have entered the cabin heater in sufficient quantity to be considered a contributing factor.

Weather conditions were suitable for contact flight and did not contribute to the accident. The instructor and student were unable to remember clearly the circumstances just prior to the accident and could not explain why recovery from the spin was not accomplished before striking the ground. It appears from the information available that the student was flying the plane when an unintentional spin was entered and that the instructor failed to take over in time to effect recovery.

The probable cause of this accident was the instructor's delay in taking over the controls after the student had inadvertently permitted the aircraft to enter a spin.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs  
Secretary