

Adopted: May 22, 1944

File No. 5152-43

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

Pilot Leigh Andres Merrill and his passenger, Charles Peters, received fatal injuries in an accident which occurred on the Municipal Airport Fort Smith, Arkansas, about 4 50 p.m. on December 21, 1943. Merrill, age 29, held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-80 h.p. and flight instructor ratings. He had flown approximately 3000 solo hours, all in the type aircraft involved. Peters was not certificated as an airman. The aircraft, a Piper J4E, NC 35599, owned by Ray E. Basore, was demolished.

Pilot Merrill and his passenger departed from Muskogee, Oklahoma, about 4.00 p.m. en route to Fort Smith, Arkansas. They were next observed coming across the Fort Smith airport from the west at an altitude estimated to have been 10 feet. Just before reaching the Administration Building, the pilot pulled up in a steep climbing turn to the left. After turning 180° and at an altitude of from 150 to 200 feet, he immediately attempted a snap-roll to the right. When about three-fourths of this maneuver had been completed, the airplane nosed down and dived to the ground.

Examination of the wreckage revealed no indication of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to the accident and the condition of the propeller indicated full power was being developed at the time of impact. Dual controls were installed and operative. The weather was CAVU, wind west 20 m.p.h., very gusty.

The probable cause of this accident was the pilot's recklessness in attempting acrobatic maneuvers at a dangerously low altitude and his poor technique in the execution.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary