Adopted: June 16, 1944
File No. 5374-43

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

An accident which occurred approximately 11 miles south of Pampa, Texas, about 3:30 p.m. on December 25, 1943, resulted in fatal injury to G. Cleve Blalock and minor injury to Lt. John Pendor Wells. Wells, the pilot, age 27, held a private pilot certificate with a single-engine land, 0-80 h.p. rating. He had flown 950 solo hours, the first 25 of which were in the type airplane involved. All of his recent experience had been on multi-engined bombers. Blalock, who was the pilot's father-in-law, was not certificated as an airman. The aircraft, a Taylorcraft BL-65, NC 27522, owned by Paul R. Peeson and Russell A. Chisholm, was demolished.

Wells, accompanied by Blalock, took off from the Pampa Municipal Airport about 3:15 p.m. for a local pleasure flight. The take-off was made into a south wind of 11 m.p.h. The pilot stated that although the airplane seemed a little sluggish and slow, he continued in a southerly direction for several miles and had gained an indicated altitude of around 600 feet by the time he reached the Pampa Plant of the Phillips Petroleum Company, which is located in a valley almost one-half mile wide and 350 feet below the surrounding hills. At this point the airplane started losing altitude and continued to settle into the valley despite the pilot's application of full throttle. Wells stated that he banked the plane to avoid flying over the gasoline plant and then attempted to line up for a landing on a road leading out of the valley to the south. During a right bank the right wing contacted a tree which damaged the wing and threw the airplane into an inverted position on the side of a hill, 120 feet above the floor of the valley and 230 feet below the crest of the hill.

Examination of the wreckage did not reveal evidence of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to impact. Dual controls were installed and operative. Investigation disclosed that the airplane was slightly overloaded and that the carburetor heat was fully on during the entire flight which probably accounted for some reduction of power. The pilot was accustomed to flying heavier aircraft.

This combination resulted in the pilot's inability to maintain altitude.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary