

Adopted. June 16, 1944

File No. 154-44

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

An accident which occurred approximately one mile east of Conner Field, Quartzsite, Arizona, about 2:50 p.m. on January 23, 1944, resulted in fatal injuries to Student Pilots George Frederick Messersmith and Ralph Hubert Wright. Messersmith had accumulated approximately 41 solo hours, all in the type plane involved. Wright had flown 106 solo hours, all in light aircraft. The aircraft, a Fleet 2, NC 238H, owned by J. Born and G. F. Messersmith, was demolished.

Messersmith and Wright took off from Conner Field about 2:30 p.m. on a local pleasure flight, with Messersmith occupying the rear seat. About 20 minutes later witnesses observed the aircraft enter a right spin at an altitude of approximately 3500 feet, about one mile east of the airport. This spin continued until the plane struck the ground on its right wing tip, nose and landing gear at an angle of about 70°.

Examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to the accident and the manner in which the propeller blades were broken indicated that considerable power was being developed at the time of impact. Dual controls were installed and operative. Neither of the occupants was equipped with a parachute.

The log books of both Messersmith and Wright covered their flight time only and contained no entries as to what, if any, spin instruction either had received. It is not known which of the two students was piloting the plane at the time of the accident. Messersmith, co-owner of the aircraft involved, had accumulated all of his flying experience in it and was familiar with its operation; whereas Wright had accumulated considerably more flight time but had never flown a Fleet. Therefore, after the plane entered the spin, it is questionable just which pilot would feel best qualified to effect recovery, and there is a possibility that both pilots were on the controls at the same time.

The probable cause of this accident was failure to recover from a spin, for reasons not determined.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary