

Adopted: July 28, 1944

File No. 991-44

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

A prolonged spin terminating at an altitude described variously as "just above tree top height" and "about 200 feet" ended in fatal injuries to Instructor Raymond Ellwood Larson, age 28, and Student Lloyd O. Murray, age 20, in an accident approximately six miles northeast of Stevens Point, Wisconsin, about 2:40 p.m. on March 24, 1944.

Instructor Larson held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-80 h.p., and flight instructor ratings. He had acquired approximately 1928 hours, of which about 1501 were instructional flying. Larson had been employed as flight instructor by the Albert E. Padags school at Stevens Point, Wisconsin since December 1943. This school was engaged in giving a War Training Service-Army Indoctrination course. Murray was enrolled in the course, and had a little more than two hours flight instruction. The aircraft, WTS 896, a Taylorcraft L2B (Army liaison type) with a 65 h.p. engine, owned by the Army Air Forces and assigned to the War Training Service, was demolished. No evidence was found of failure of any part of the aircraft or engine.

At 2:15 p.m. Instructor Larson and Student Murray took off from the Stevens Point Airport for a dual instruction flight in practice area No. 7, east and somewhat south of the airport, the area to which Larson was regularly assigned. The plane was next seen by several ground observers at a point near the northern boundary of practice area No. 6, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of the assigned location. It was flying north at an altitude variously estimated as 2500 to 3000 feet.

Observers then saw the aircraft go into what their description indicates was a normal spin. The plane continued to spin to an altitude of not more than 200 feet, where the rotation stopped abruptly. With wings level and the plane heading southwest, recovery from the vertical dive was begun. While still descending at an angle estimated as 25° to 30°, the plane contacted the ground with the nose and wheels, slid 90 feet and came to rest in an upright position.

The aircraft struck the ground at a point just east of a forest area and cedar swamp. Two hundred yards from where the plane hit the ground three men were loading pulpwood. On several occasions one or more instructors had dived at men engaged in the pulpwood operation, zooming upward after going down to a very low altitude. Instructors, students, and local residents who were questioned told of planes diving low in this area.

Witnesses, including one of Larson's students and an instructor, stated that on a flight preceding the fatal one Larson left his practice area and led two other aircraft, flown by instructors, in a demonstration which included four successive dives across the pulpwood camp at

or below tree-top height. These two witnesses took part in the flight they described. The fatal spin was entered almost over the spot that had been the target in previous demonstrations and where there was sure to be a group of spectators.

Nothing was found to indicate that the plane had been spun inadvertently or could not be brought out of the spin. Evidence was that the spin was entered normally, continued normally, and was stopped normally, but when rotation was stopped there was not enough altitude left to effect recovery. Both seat belts were intact. The student was wearing his parachute but that of the instructor was found back of the rear seat.

The probable cause of this accident was continuing an intentional spin so long that there was not sufficient altitude to effect complete recovery before hitting the ground.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary