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File No. 813-44

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

An accident which occurred approximately 7 miles west of the Municipal Airport, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, about 2:30 p.m. on March 24, 1944, resulted in fatal injury to Pilot John Joseph Grassi, Jr. and serious injuries to his student, Nicholas Bianchi. Grassi held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-315 h.p. and flight instructor ratings. He had flown approximately 1278 hours, including about 186 in the type airplane involved. Bianchi, a War Training Service Naval trainee, had flown approximately 6 solo hours. The aircraft, an N3N-3, NR 45245, owned by the U. S. Department of Commerce and being operated in the War Training Service by Lancaster Air Service, Inc., was demolished.

Instructor Grassi, in the front seat, and Student Bianchi, in the rear, took off from the Lancaster Municipal Airport shortly after 2 00 p.m., and proceeded to a practice area west of the airport, where they engaged in practicing a series of "S" turns at an altitude of approximately 500 feet. The student stated that he and the instructor alternated in making these turns over a road, and that he had difficulty hearing the instructor through the gosport system. He said that just prior to the accident, the instructor told him to follow through on the controls, which he did, and that he believed each thought the other was flying the plane, with the result that it was allowed to stall and fall off into a spin. Partial recovery had been effected when the plane struck the ground on the landing gear and nose at a steep angle.

This appears to have been a case of misunderstanding between the instructor and his student as to who was flying the plane and the instructor evidently allowed it to assume a dangerous attitude before taking over the controls.

The probable cause of this accident was a stall and spin at low altitude from which complete recovery was not effected.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs  
Secretary