

## CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

## ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

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## FALLS CHURCH AIR PARK, FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA, SEPTEMBER 3, 1947

An air collision at the Falls Church Air Park, Falls Church, Virginia, at approximately 1900 September 3, 1947, resulting in fatal injury to Ferdinand H Kirchman, pilot, and his passenger, Agnes Louise Brady, and serious injury to William Gleason Sauerwein, solo student. Both aircraft, a Stinson 10A, NC-32246, occupied by Kirchman and Brady, and an Aeronca 7AC, NC-83596, flown by Sauerwein, were demolished. The former was owned by its pilot, the latter by the Falls Church Air Park Co., Inc.

Both aircraft were being flown locally. The Aeronca took off from the extreme east end of the runway after Sauerwein had checked his engine and made a visual check for incoming traffic. He said that he saw none. The Stinson at that time was on final approach, but, for reasons not determined, its descent was stopped. The Stinson continued ahead at an altitude of about 100 feet over the center of the runway without veering either way from the Aeronca which was taking off. Collision occurred about two-thirds of the way down the 2,600-foot runway. Both planes plunged nearly vertically to the ground at the edge of the runway. Neither burned.

This airport has a single runway, both ends of which are bordered with trees approximately 70 feet high. Take-offs are often started so close to these trees that it is impossible for pilots of incoming planes to see planes about to take off, and vice versa. Sauerwein checked his

plane and looked for incoming traffic from a point so close to the tree-bordered end of the runway that he could not have seen the incoming Stinson during its final approach. Kirchman, in the faster plane, overtook the Aeronca after he discontinued his landing. There was ample room and time for him to have turned to his right which would have been the correct procedure under the Civil Air Regulations. Despite the direction of the sun, there appears to have been no dangerous sun glare. Investigation disclosed no malfunctioning of either plane.

Kirchman held a private pilot certificate and had flown about 180 hours. Sauerwein, a student under the G I Training Program, had flown 13 25 hours and was starting his third solo flight.

The probable cause of this accident was the failure of the pilot of the overtaking Stinson to avoid the overtaken Aeronca, and the action of the pilot of the Aeronca in starting a take-off at a place from which he could not see incoming traffic. A contributing factor was the presence of high trees immediately adjacent to the end of the runway which impaired vision between aircraft landing and taking off.

BY THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

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