

CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

Adopted: May 12, 1948

Released: May 19, 1948

BEECHCRAFT BONANZA—LAKEVIEW, OREGON—OCTOBER 28, 1947

The Accident

At approximately 2235,* October 28, 1947, a Beechcraft Bonanza, NC-2978V, crashed 23 miles southwest of Lakeview, Oregon. There was no fire. The pilot and the 3 passengers were fatally injured, and the aircraft was destroyed.

History of the Flight

During the afternoon of October 28, 1947, Clifford W. Hogue, pilot, and passengers Earl Snell, Governor, State of Oregon, Robert S. Farrell, Jr., Secretary of State, State of Oregon, and Marshall E. Cornett, Senate President, State of Oregon, departed from Salem, Oregon, in a Beechcraft Bonanza airplane, NC-2978V, for a hunting trip to Adel, Oregon. Low ceilings were encountered en route. It was accordingly decided to discontinue the flight at Klamath Falls, Oregon, and continue the following morning to Adel. The aircraft landed safely at Klamath Falls, was serviced, and placed in a hangar.

At 1900 that night Pilot Hogue telephoned the Civil Aeronautics Administration's communications station at Klamath Falls for weather information at Lakeview, a town 22 miles west of Adel and the nearest weather reporting station to Adel. The communicator read to him the 1600 Lakeview terminal weather report, the latest available, and also the teletype reports of weather existing at Redmont and Portland, Oregon. According to the Lakeview report, weather there was overcast, lower broken clouds, ceiling at 1,000 feet, light rain, temperature 40, dewpoint 39, wind south. Mr. Hogue did not call the communicator again for any further weather information.

At approximately 2100, Mr. Hogue called a Mr. Kittredge, then in Lakeview, who within the last hour had driven over the mountains which are located between Adel and Lakeview. He informed Mr. Hogue

that over these mountains there was rain and occasional snow, and did not believe that the aircraft could be flown to Adel. Mr. Hogue asked about Lakeview. Mr. Kittredge told him that he could see Dog Mountain, approximately 20 miles away, and that there were clouds over the mountain ridges to the north, though moonlight was visible underneath them.

Since the weather at Klamath Falls and Lakeview appeared to be satisfactory for contact flight, the party decided to take-off in an attempt to fly to Adel. Mr. Kittredge was requested to drive to Coleman Lake, a dry lake located immediately north of Adel, in order that the aircraft could be landed on the dry hard surface of the lake with the aid of the automobile headlights. Mr. Hogue told Mr. Kittredge that if he could not reach Adel he would return to and land at Lakeview.

Take-off from Klamath Falls was accomplished at 2200, which was 3 hours after the time that Mr. Hogue had requested weather information from the CAA communicator. Thirty minutes later, between 2230 and 2235, a cowboy residing about 21 miles southwest of Lakeview heard an aircraft flying very low overhead. He stated that the engine roared intermittently as if the pilot were stunting, and that it sounded as though the aircraft were being flown in a westerly direction. There was heavy rain at this location and visibility was very restricted. About two minutes after the aircraft had been first heard, all sound from it stopped suddenly, and the cowboy believed that the airplane had crashed. NC-2978V was reported missing the following morning, and investigation was immediately initiated.

Investigation

Though the accident occurred at approximately 2235, October 28, 1947, the wreckage was not reached until 0800 the morning of October 30. Officers of the Oregon State Police were among the first.

*All times noted in this report are Pacific Standard and based on the 24-hour clock.

there, and the aircraft was immediately placed under guard pending the investigation initiated by the Civil Aeronautics Board

The aircraft struck the ground in a wooded and mountainous area 23 miles southwest of Lakeview, at an elevation of 5,500 feet. No evidence was found of the aircraft striking the top of any of the trees in the vicinity, and markings and breaks of trees where the aircraft struck the ground showed that it had descended at an angle of at least 30 degrees. All parts of the aircraft were located in the immediate vicinity. These were examined, and no indication was found that there had been any mechanical malfunction or structural failure prior to the time that the aircraft struck the ground. Fuel was found in the right tank, the left, however, had been crushed and broken by impact. The propeller showed evidence of being stopped at the time of impact and, when a small amount of power was being developed.

The airplane, a 4-place, low wing, all metal aircraft, was equipped with the necessary instruments and radio for night and instrument flight. However, the radio equipment, both for receiving and transmitting, was not in operating order during the time of this flight.

The CAA communications station at Klamath Falls is serviced with only one teletype circuit, service A. The volume of communications over this one circuit does not permit the inclusion of regional forecast weather information, consequently, such information can be obtained only upon request from the forecast center, which for this area is located in Seattle, Washington. Forecasts issued by the Seattle Forecasting Center prior to the time that Mr. Hogue took off indicated that clouds, broken to overcast, with bases at 7,000 feet existed over the mountains en route, and that lower stratus layers were expected in the mountain passes. Also, rain was to be expected, and over the mountains, light to moderate turbulence with light icing above 6,000 feet was indicated. Ceiling and visibility at Klamath Falls were forecast to remain good. An aftercast of the weather existing en route showed that the weather conditions actually encountered were substantially the same as those that were forecasted.

Clifford W. Hogue, age 41, held an airman certificate with a commercial

pilot and flight instructor rating. His last CAA physical examination was accomplished September 24, 1947. He had a total of 5,900 flying hours, of which 1,600 had been obtained in the capacity of instructor. There was no showing that Mr. Hogue had at any time received instruction or training in instrument flying. Safety Bureau files reveal that Mr. Hogue had been involved in five accidents prior to the time of this flight, one of which had resulted in the fatality of a passenger. His first accident, May 5, 1943, was the result of dirt in the aircraft's fuel supply. September 9, 1943, the aircraft which he flew caught on fire as the result of an unsecured storage battery which arced with the rudder control cable. October 30, 1943, Mr. Hogue stalled and crashed a Taylorcraft airplane on a landing approach. May 17, 1944, he capsized a small seaplane while giving instructions to a student pilot, and April 22, 1946, he collided with a wire fence during a power stall approach for landing in a small field. Two complaints were filed with the Civil Aeronautics Board by the Administrator. The first, September 3, 1941, after due notice and hearing resulted in the suspension of his airman certificate for a period of 60 days. The second, February 22, 1944, was compromised by a civil penalty in the amount of \$100.00

DISCUSSION

All evidence disclosed during the course of the investigation indicated that the aircraft was in an airworthy condition prior to the time of the crash with the exception of the radio receiver and transmitter which were not in operating order. Other than the radio equipment no indication was found of any mechanical malfunction or structural failure prior to the time the aircraft struck the ground. Since the aircraft was serviced prior to the time of take-off, and since fuel was found in the left tank, there was no possibility of fuel exhaustion.

All available evidence indicated that the pilot encountered instrument weather conditions, and because of his inability to handle the aircraft by reference to instruments alone, lost control of it, and crashed. The intermittent roar of the engine, the steep angle at which the aircraft struck the ground, the weather

conditions which existed at the time, and the lack of any instrument training or experience of the pilot, all point to this conclusion. It is also significant that Mr. Hogue was warned by Mr. Kittredge of the possibility of rain and snow over the mountains between Lakeview and Adel.

Full and complete weather information for the flight from Klamath Falls to Adel was obtainable from the forecast center in Seattle only upon special request. Whether Mr. Hogue understood this is not known, but if such information had been available at the time Mr. Hogue called the communicator, instrument weather conditions would have been indicated, and it is highly probable that the party would have decided not to make the flight that night.

The wreckage was located in this case largely as a result of a well organized and coordinated search between the Oregon State Police and the United States Forest Service. Location of lost aircraft in mountainous terrain is at times extremely difficult. The successful conclusion of the search in this case demonstrates the value of coordination between State Police, the United States Forest Service, and all the various components of search and rescue.

Findings

Upon due consideration of all available evidence, the Board finds that

1. The pilot held an airman certificate with a commercial pilot and flight instructor rating, but did not hold any rating for instrument flight.
2. The aircraft was equipped for night instrument flight, but the radio transmitter and receiver were not in operating condition during the time of this flight.

3. No indication was found of mechanical malfunction or structural failure of the aircraft or of any of its components prior to the time that it struck the ground, nor was there evidence of fuel exhaustion.

4. The weather at Klamath Falls and Lakeview, Oregon, was suitable for night contact flight, but instrument weather conditions existed along the route between Klamath Falls and Adel.

5. The pilot did not request or receive any information concerning weather conditions between Klamath Falls and his intended destination, Adel, Oregon. Such weather information was available from the United States Weather Bureau Forecasting Center in Seattle, Washington, upon special request.

6. The aircraft struck the ground at an angle of at least 30 degrees, and did not collide with the tops of trees or other objects prior to the time of impact, first structural damage resulting from impact with the ground.

7. Heavy rain and very limited visibility existed in the area of the crash, 23 miles southwest of Lakeview, at the time the aircraft struck the ground.

Probable Cause

The Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the pilot's flying into instrument weather without the training and experience required to safely control the airplane without reference to the ground.

BY THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

/s/ JOSEPH J O'CONNELL, JR

/s/ JOSH LEE

/s/ HAROLD A JONES

Ryan, Vice Chairman, did not take part in the decision.