

Report on Tuntland Accident

DEAR EDITOR:

In the investigation of the accident, it was determined that the right wing failed at a point 16 inches from the wing root.

It is believed that the spar web buckling was the primary failure.

It is believed that the failure occurred at an acceleration of approximately 6.

It is believed that Paul did not realize the acceleration due to the reclining seat position.

It is quite well established that;

Paul had been soaring for approximately 2 hrs 45 min.

A long glide from 8500 ft. to 2250 was flown at approximately 85 mph.

Followed by a series of 5 stalls.

Followed by a one minute glide at 85 mph.

Followed by a loss of 500 ft. altitude in 20 sec.

At the end of which the wing failed, at altitude of 1250 ft.

It is not known if or not the dive was ended with a maneuver or what.

A sample spar, duplicate of the failed one is being made for a static test. Other ships of the same design will have a proven spar (load tested) incorporated.

It is established that the wing failure occurred with the flaps in the retracted position, and it is calculated that the ship would have been traveling at about 140 to 150 mph. with that much loss of altitude in 20 seconds.

No one saw the ship flying at the time of the failure. However, about seven people who were standing together, saw it hit the ground.

The canopy was broken where the wing hit it, but had been successfully jettisoned, as it landed intact otherwise, about 400 ft downwind of the ship.

Paul's chute was opening, but had not the time to fully open.

I had offered to let several pilots use this 215 to make their golden or diamond legs. Paul had intentions of flying eastward on this flight, with a goal of Glendale, Nevada. Conditions were late in getting soarable on this day. He and Bill Ivans were flying together the first part of the flight, most of which was accomplished in a weak wave.

This is about all I can offer at this time, and I would like it understood that this is not an official report of any kind, merely my account of the proceedings thus far.

IRVING PRUE

● Irvine Golden "C"

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a little over 12,000 ft. at an average of better than 300 ft. per minute. The next one was really too weak, but I wasted about 7 minutes in it gaining only 1,200 ft. For some reason or other, I kept thinking that it would get better, but it didn't. Now I had a long glide from 10,700 ft. down to 8,500 ft. There I caught a nice thermal that averaged over 500 ft. per minute and took me up to 12,600 ft. In my glide after that one, I tried to work four separate thermals, but they all turned out to be too weak. Soon I was down to 6,400 ft. north of the airport at Ft. Morgan. There I got a fair thermal back to 10,500 ft.

The time was now 2:30 and the distance from Rustin Field, 75 miles. I figured I could stay in the air

for about another three hours and 15 minutes. At the speed I had been making this would give me a total distance of around 150 miles which would be 40 miles short of my goal. So far, I had had no help from the wind. Each time I climbed up in a thermal I ended up over the same spot at the top as at the start. I had been gliding at minimum sink between thermals; that was about 42 miles per hour on my airspeed. Obviously, I should have been gliding faster. I had drifted a little to the East in my last climb, so I figured that if I glided at 50 miles per hour and could stay up until six o'clock, I might make my goal—if I could get a little help from the wind. Anyway, I didn't give up. I started gliding at 50 between thermals and faster when I hit downdrafts. I hit some that took me down 900 ft. per minute, but fortunately they didn't last long. At 3:35 I was over Sterling, Colorado, with 80 miles to go. My altitude was 10,600 ft.

Here I believe I made a mistake that almost put me down without any more thermals. The South Platte river runs almost in a straight line from Sterling to Ogallala, and there are a lot of irrigated fields along the river especially on the Northwest side. Just a few miles to the South of the river is dry ranch land. The highway runs along the river on the Northwest side. I thought to myself that conditions were probably best Southeast of the river over the dry ranch land; but there were few roads over there; and if I landed I would have a long walk to a telephone and a big job retrieving. Therefore I decided to stick to the highway. There were no thermals down to 8,000 ft., but I wasn't worried. Soon I passed 7,000 ft. with no lift, then 6,000. Now it began to get quite warm in the cockpit. I was beginning to sweat, and 5,000 ft. passed with not even a bump. The ground here has an elevation of 3,900 ft. Now I was wishing I had taken the route over the bare prairie, but I didn't have enough altitude left to get there. At 4,600 ft. I hit a weak thermal which took me up 1,000 feet in ten minutes. I noticed that I was drifting along the ground at a pretty good rate as I climbed. That long awaited tail-wind was finally showing up. Also my thermal died abruptly, and in three minutes my precious 1,000 feet was gone and then 100 more with it as I glided along the highway. I passed a red truck and thought to myself, "I'll soon be trying to explain to the driver how I got from Denver to down on the highway ahead of him." No cars were coming from the East, so I resigned myself to landing straight ahead.

Just then I spied a bare field of about 80 acres just about a quarter of a mile off on my left. I gave up the highway to land in it with the desperate hope that a thermal might be coming up off it. I turned downwind of it, and as I passed to the East my rate of climb rose to zero sink and then showed "up", just barely "up". There was no time now to fly on through to see if it increased; I could make only one 360 degree turn to the left and land if I lost altitude or try another turn if I didn't lose. Wonder of wonders, I had centered it perfectly and my rate of climb showed an even 50 ft. per minute all the way around. Then my eyes deserted the ground and the little bare field and became glued on the airspeed, the ball, and the rate of climb. The airspeed must not vary, the ball must stay centered, and if the rate of climb went down, I must do something about it immediately. Any "up" at all was as welcome as any thermal I've ever entered. Soon I noticed the little town of Eedgwick drift by exactly under me. I had drifted 5 miles and had