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## ACCIDENT REPORT

*by* JOSEPH M. ROBERTSON, *Chairman*

SSA Safety and Flight Operations Committee

An instructor with 300 hours in sailplanes was checking out a student in a Pratt-Read prior to allowing him to go solo. The student had about 25 hours in sailplanes, including both 2-22 and TG-2 solo time. The tow was by airplane to 2000 ft. The weather was CAVU with the wind at 15 knots plus and gusty.

The flight was normal with airspeed being kept at about 52 MPH indicated. On landing, an approach was made straight in at 68 MPH indicated with the student at the controls. The spoilers were open. Suddenly, at about 50' altitude, the ship felt "light" as though stalled. The instructor pushed the nose down and tried to close the spoilers. However, the student had braced them open with his arm and the instructor had to yell at him before he realized what was happening. He then let the spoilers slam shut but it was too late.

The ship mushed into the ground in a level attitude, the boom broke off and the nose section slowly rolled over, coming to rest upside down. Neither instructor or student were injured, in spite of not having shoulder harness. Damage to the nose

section and wings was minor but separation of the boom must be considered major damage.

In the opinion of the instructor the major factor was insufficient airspeed for the gusty conditions combined with a severe wind gradient. Direct cause of the stall was a momentary let up in the gusty wind.

The student's lack of familiarity with the ship was a strong contributing factor. If he had been aware of what was happening, he would, perhaps, have reacted more quickly and thus been able to retain flying speed without the delay that occurred.

The instructor felt that he should not have let the student go as far as he did before initiating a stall recovery.

Ironically, the accident occurred while the instructor was informing the student of the merits of high speed, safe approaches.

This points up the merit of higher speed than normal approach pattern when flying in gusty weather. You never know when the wind will suddenly quit dead and leave you stalled out while still in the air. It can be most embarrassing.

him, after flying as a competitor in the 1923 contest with a Pelzner monoplane. Wolf had been instrumental in inducing Willy Pelzner to let me fly this little ship which was just the right size for a youngster, with its 28 ft. wing spread. Wolf appeared to be unusually depressed about his having missed this year's contest.

"You know, Peter, I always wanted to achieve the same fame as my brother Helmut. Here in soaring was my chance. Now all this has been spoiled."

We know better today. Wolf's iron will overcame all obstacles that fate put in his way, and there were plenty. Several more serious crashes were ahead of him, always brought about by some malfunctioning of his plane, and the loss of one leg in a motorcycle accident.

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Ten years later Wolf was at the top of his fame, having been awarded the Hindenburg Cup for being the best German soaring pilot in 1932, and the winner of the Rhoen soaring contest of the same year, and the following year. In 1933 we were the main competitors during the Rhoen contests, the only time that I placed just ahead of him, but in 1934 he flew the world distance record and again was on the top.

During the first few months of 1934, Wolf was a member of Professor Georgii's expedition to Brazil and Argentina together with Hanna Reitsch, Heini Dittmar and myself. His good humor was a great asset to us during some of the trials our expedition had to go through, but we all knew that he suffered often from wearing an artificial leg. He was no complainer. He laughed it off.

When Wolfgang Klemperer phoned and told me of Wolf's death, I just held a letter from him in my hands which he had written a few days before, "Flying is still permitted to me, but who knows for how long?!" he said in it after mentioning his last two heart attacks. Wolf's end came too early for all of us, but if he had been given the choice, he certainly would not have wished for a different one. Life without being able to fly would have been impossible for him.

### ACCIDENT REPORTS

All pilots are reminded of their obligation to report any aircraft accident to the F.A.A. where there is injury or damage estimated to exceed \$100.00. C.A.R. Part 320 covers these requirements. In addition, a report of each sailplane accident or incident should be submitted to the chairman of SSA's Flying Safety Subcommittee. This is important if others are to profit from the experience gained from each accident and to help establish more realistic insurance rates for soaring activities. Make SSA reports verbally or in writing to your SSA Governor or directly to the chairman:

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### ARE YOU MOVING?

It would assist SSA's office staff if members who are submitting a change of address would include the two-character membership code that follows their name on all SSA mailings.

### NAA MEETING SET

The 1959 annual meeting of the National Aeronautic Association has been scheduled for November 16th and 17th at the Hotel Belmont Plaza in New York City.

NAA affiliates, such as SSA, are being asked to conduct meetings or events concurrently, and first reactions indicate several will do so.

NAA Chapters should make an effort to have a large number of delegates and observers present. They are invited to make suggestions for the agenda and/or submit ideas concerning the annual meeting.