

SAFETY FIRST

THE GRAY HAIR DEPARTMENT

by JOSEPH M. ROBERTSON, *Chairman*
SSA Safety and Flight Operations Committee

Ronald Oldershaw was fatally injured on August 9, 1959, when the sailplane he was flying spun into the ground at Minter Field, Bakersfield, California.

The flight was for the purpose of training the pilot solo in the sailplane. He had had one previous short dual flight in the ship prior to the fatal flight. The pilot was 15 years old and had accumulated 13½ hours total flight time, all in sailplanes. The method of launching was by auto tow to approximately 1000 feet above the field.

The weather was warm (100°F) and CAVU and was not considered to be a factor in this accident.

The sailplane struck the macadam ramp about ½ mile south of the release point after the pilot had performed several turns as instructed. The spin entry was not observed by any of the people present. First indication of trouble came when the ship was seen to be in a fully developed spin at an altitude of from 600 to 800 feet. After two full turns, a recovery was effected below 100 feet but the ship was then headed directly for a radar tower. In an effort to avoid the tower, a sharp left turn was initiated, followed immediately by another spin which con-

tinued into the ground. The ship struck the ground in an almost vertical attitude and bounced about 10 feet. The forward fuselage, including the front cockpit area, was totally destroyed back to the leading edge of the wing. Both seat belt and shoulder harness were used but damage to the fuselage forward of the wing was so extensive that the belts were of little use.

An examination of the wreckage disclosed no apparent malfunction of the structure or control system. The sailplane had a current airworthiness certificate and had accumulated a total of 148:15 hours flight time. The Jean Linda was a "one off" type all wood design started by Ray Parker in the early 40's and finished by Vernon Oldershaw in 1957. It had exhibited no unusual flight characteristics.

Findings

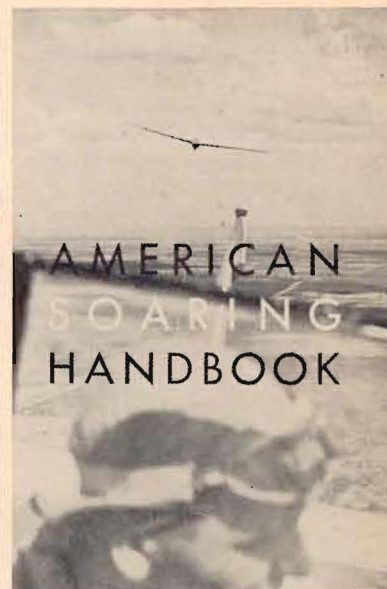
1. There was no structural failure.
2. There was no control failure of the aircraft.
3. Direct cause of the accident was an inadvertent entry into a spin in close proximity to the ground.

Recommendations

It cannot be emphasized enough that training in spins and spin recovery is of vital importance to every sailplane pilot. Students, including rated power pilots, should thoroughly understand the mechanism and feel of a spin entry and spin recovery. As a general rule, most sailplanes will recover from a spin by simply letting go of the controls. If the pilot has knowledge of and fully understands the situation, recovery time can be appreciably reduced by the proper application of control movements. However, if the spin occurs at a very low altitude, there is very little maneuvering room and contact with the ground is usually inevitable.

In the above case, the pilot had received spin training consisting of at least four complete spin entries and recoveries in a Pratt-Read but apparently this was not enough. It was not enough when the pilot was on his own, in the air, and out of contact with his instructor.

NOW AVAILABLE! **CHAPTER 4** **of the**



on AIRPLANE TOW

This is the first available of 12 chapters which will comprise the AMERICAN SOARING HANDBOOK, published by the Soaring Society of America. Each chapter in the series will be made available separately as soon as it is finished, and a handsome binder will soon be provided for keeping the chapters together. The size is 5½x8½.

This authoritative series is being prepared by the best experts in U.S. soaring under the editorship of Alice M. Fuchs, well-known aviation writer and soaring pilot.

While first to come out, the 44 page Airplane Tow chapter is numbered 4 in the series. Soon to be available will be Chapter 3, Auto & Winch Tow; Chapter 2, Instruction & Training; and Chapter 5, Equipment.

No one interested in soaring should be without the AMERICAN SOARING HANDBOOK.

Send for Chapter 4, Airplane Tow, TODAY!

Price: 75 cents, postpaid
from

SSA Box 66071
Los Angeles 66, Calif.

EAA **EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT** **ASSOCIATION**

A non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of home-built aircraft and private aviation.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES:

Member \$10.00
Junior Member \$ 5.00
(less than age 19)
Subscription to
"Sport Aviation" . . . \$ 5.00

Member grades include subscription to monthly EAA magazine "Sport Aviation" and receive the Amateur Builder's Manual.

EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT **ASSOCIATION**

9711 West Forest Park Drive
Hales Corners, Wisconsin