

# Army Probes Plane Smash Fatal to Trio

Tail, Wings 'Flew Off'  
of City-Made Craft,  
Witnesses Say.

The three crushed bodies of the crew dug out of the buried cockpit, Army investigators today sought the cause of the mid-air crash yesterday of the Louisville Curtiss-Wright plant's newly-tested first wooden cargo plane.

Army comment was lacking as to detail, but from eyewitness accounts and observations of police and Deputy Coroner M. Rodger Dougherty, it appeared the plane was about 1,000 feet up, on an authorized test without cargo; that tail and wings "flew off" and a gas tank burst but there was no fire.

## Dead

Robert G. Scudder, 26, flight inspector, 2082 Douglass Blvd., newly moved here from St. Louis.

John L. "Dick" Trowbridge, 41, co-pilot, Normandy, Mo. (St. Louis).

Ed Schubiner, 25, pilot, Rochester, N. Y., who had just come here as a Curtiss-Wright permanent tester.

All three victims, in addition to J. C. Eller, 32, St. Louis, constituted the civilian crew in last Saturday's maiden voyage staged by Curtiss-Wright at the airport for plant employes and a few invited guests.

Eller, crew chief, who was not aboard the plane yesterday, joined the search of the mishap area in the hope of finding evidence in the wreckage to show whether the plane had been jarred to pieces, contained a construction flaw or what.

## SCATTERED OVER FARMS.

The probe, led by Lieut. Col. J. S. Dexter, Army production representative at the plant, was under way at the scene of the plunge, a field of soft, almost swampy, land off the Blue Lick Rd., about eight miles from Standiford Airport, from which the flight began.

The "C-76 Caravan" designed to haul freight supplies, troops



and hospital items for the Army, "seemed to fall apart in the air," said Lieutenant Colonel Dexter Wings, and other parts scattered over several farms before the center section with the two engines, dove over a tree and sank four feet into the ground.

Dougherty, who announced identity of the victims after their next of kin had been notified, said the killed fliers, the only persons aboard, were found in the cockpit with their safety belts still fastened to the seats and their unused parachutes strapped around their backs.

#### **NOT HIGH ENOUGH TO LEAP.**

"It looks as if the fliers had tried to land their plane, or whatever was left of it, in the tree-tops to ease their plunge," said Dougherty. "Evidently they didn't have enough altitude to permit them to release their belts or to jump with 'chutes."

Axes had to be used to chop away the wingless superstructure after spades had been applied to the dirt pit.

County Police Capt. James E. Pendleton, who went to the plunge scene, said the center section landed on the nose and that the two engines were found buried out of sight—even deeper than were the crewmen.

The wings, mostly gone from the fuselage, had been attached to the plane's body "by wires, bolts and glue," Pendleton said, and added that "I never saw such a maze of wires and struts." He noticed a gasoline tank "blown to bits and scattered all over the ground," he was unable to say whether the break-up of the tank was from an explosion in the air or from concussion as it hit the ground.

#### **UP ONLY THREE MINUTES.**

"I was informed that the plane has just taken off from the airport and probably had not been up more than three minutes," said Pendleton. "It had been up several other times in the afternoon. I learned, on regular test flights."

Pendleton quoted a witness, Frank Hodges, Indian Trall, a war plant worker, as saying he saw the plane at about 1,000 feet overhead, noticed "a puff of smoke" and then watched as the tail fell from the ship, followed by "other pieces, like big sheets of paper, and a tip of a wing." Hodges, who was about a mile and a half from the place where the cockpit struck the earth, also observed "something shiny" hurled from the breaking-up plane. That, officials believed, was a gas tank.

Mrs. Lloyd Aebersold, South Park Rd., said she was watching the flight and that the plane "sounded kind of funny" before it began to collapse.



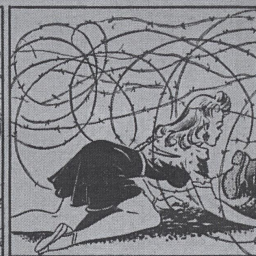
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Male Call

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