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# EL PRESIDENTE'S

## SAFETY CORNER

**A**irworthiness action against the fleet of Mooney Mite (Model M18) aircraft will be considered in the wake of a July 7 in-flight break-up of one of the wooden-wing, one-seat airplanes at New Iberia, Louisiana. While the airframe failure could have been explained by an attempted high-speed pullout from a steep "gunnery run" dive, the wreckage evidence did disclose what appeared to be effects of long-term moisture exposure, substantially affecting the wing spar structure, investigators said.

The 17-year-old private pilot died in the break-up.

Investigators said the pilot was apparently making a simulated run on a J-3 Cub flown by a friend when the accident occurred. As explained to investigators, the two planes had taken off together and flown in formation from New Iberia Airport out to an area of bayou where the Cub pilot had pipeline patrol duties to attend to. The planes parted company. After flying the patrol, the Cub pilot was coming back through the area a short time later and the pilot looked for his friend in the Mooney. After banking his airplane to scan the sky above, the pilot noticed the Mite coming out of the sun in what appeared to be a 20- to 30-degree nosedown diving run on the

Cub. The Cub pilot observed an attempted pullup at about 1,200 to 1,300 feet AGL, and saw the outboard section of the left wing break, followed by a spiralling descent into the swamp.

The Mite was serial number 125 in a fleet of some 357 aircraft built between 1949 and 1955.

The Mite pilot reportedly was wearing a "kamikaze" bandanna of the kind worn by Japanese suicide pilots in World War II. Laboratory tests showed the pilot had an alcohol level of 0.04 percent in the blood and 0.076 percent in the bile at the time of death, investigators said. In most states, a blood alcohol level of 0.10 percent is considered intoxication while driving an automobile.

In addition, investigators said the pilot's medical certificate had expired nearly seven months prior to the crash. Investigators also said the plane's owner stated through an attorney that the pilot was not authorized to fly the Mite at the time of the accident. The pilot had earlier been given permission to fly the plane so long as he paid its expenses, but the owner had told him to stop due to concern over insurance, and the owner said he was unaware that the pilot had taken the airplane on the day of the crash.

The wreckage evidence disclosed that the plane's main spar failed at a point about three feet inboard of the tip, roughly opposite the aileron mid-span, NTSB's investigator said. Laboratory examination of the failed wooden parts indicated a probable long-term localized decay around the fasteners (nails) in the area where the plywood leading edge section joins the spar, due to possible interaction between moisture, rust and the wood itself. In addition, delamination of the spar was observed, as well as a poor wood surface dating back to the time of assembly. It could not be determined whether the delamination was the result of a short-term or long-term exposure to moisture, and it was possibly related to use of two different adhesives in the spar assembly, one of which may not have been as water-resistant as the other.

The airplane had undergone an annual inspection in December of 1983 and had about 1,350 airframe hours at the time of the crash. NTSB's investigator said at presstime he had yet to determine whether the area can be inspected through routine or even special methods, or whether the plywood leading edge skin might have to be removed to examine the spar.

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*Ahead: what you have to use to get.*

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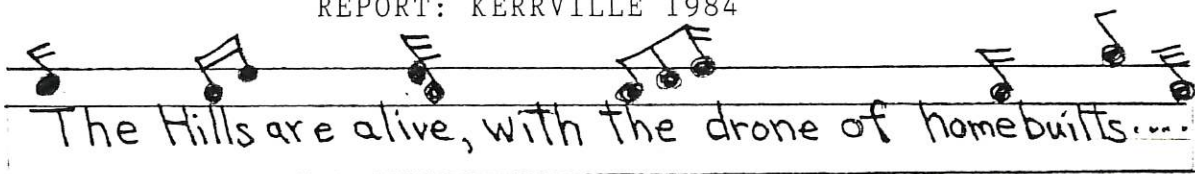
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*Never invest your money in anything that eats or needs repainting. . . Billy Rose*

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REPORT: KERRVILLE 1984



.....And Antiques, and Spam Cans.....And so it went, for three full days in the Texas Hill Country of Kerrville, home of Mooney Aircraft, where the 20th Annual Southwest FlyIn was held. The weather was made to order, with cool mornings and sunny days after a warm Friday, and Bill Haskell, President of the Southwest FlyIn, reported 200 more EAA visitors than last year, for a total of 1900. Noted among these was Gene Chase, Senior Editor and Publisher for EAA National Headquarters and his charming wife Dorothy. Gene is a veritable walking encyclopedia of aeronautica!

Representing Chapter 302 were Wally Tuttle, Ray Coker and Dick Jones, who flew in Saturday, also the Mathews and a Conlin were sighted. Wally and Dick promptly volunteered their bones as FlyIn volunteers, and they really did work, even though Wally doesn't look too busy in this picture!



Yours truly, serving as Kerrville Historian, suffered the frustrations of having to be in too many places at the same time. Don't ask me what Dick Jones caught me planning to do with his

## "PULL OVER AT THE NEXT CLOUD"

Last Sunday morning was the usual hot summer dawn that we've come to expect here and a copy of the Dallas Times Herald was on the breakfast table along with my coffee, when I shuffled in about 8:15 AM. Page three of Section A held some extremely disturbing news--

General Aviation had been involved in the deaths of twenty-nine people in the past 24 hours.

Emotional response on my part began with disbelief, went from there to sorrow and compassion, finally settling somewhere around disgust. It would appear that our worst fears had come true. We have finally taken our irresponsible attitude towards driving from the highways and infected the aviation community. The senseless slaughter that occurs on our own highways that has killed more people than all the wars we've ever fought, seems to have migrated to the airways.

One report says one of the aircraft involved was not on a flight plan. Big deal. I've never flown anywhere in the country where approach control broke in to tell me that a Joe Smith filed a flight plan into the same airport, so be on the lookout for a red and yellow Sky Screamer.

No matter what explanations the NTSB puts forth for us to read, there is no excuse for a mid-air collision in VFR conditions and Damn little excuse in IFR conditions.

My own aircraft has a number of electronic aides to help it see in bad visibility and a small fortune is spent by my fellow aircraft owners everyday to maintain and upgrade this equipment, but for all the money expended, the most valuable and effective anti-collision devices available today are mounted in the front of our heads. They are fairly easy to operate and by turning one's head from side to side, these units provide the most prolific means devised for aircraft avoidance.

"Keep your eyes moving!" We've all heard these words from every flight instructor we've ever had! They've done their job. Should we fail to heed this advice, we shall surely see boldly painted aircraft of black and white with large red rotating beacons in the very near future.

Signed-

The Ground Loop Kid

*See other side*

*for good advise!*