

Mr. Carter:

Thought you might be interested in the text of the Vidal report on the Wiley Post crash.

JRR

(ADVANCE FOR AMS SEPT. 4.)

(ADVANCE)..WASHINGTON, SEPT.3-(AP)-THE TEST OF THE REPORT BY EUGENE VIDAL, DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU AIR COMMERCE, ON THE FATAL PLANE CRASH IN ALASKA OF WILEY POST AND WILL ROGERS FOLLOWS: (1,100)

TO DATE, CERTAIN INFORMATION REGARDING THE ACCIDENT IN WHICH WILEY POST AND WILL ROGERS LOST THEIR LIVES HAS BEEN SECURED. THE DETAILS PRECEDING THE CRASH WERE OBTAINED, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, FROM AN ESKIMO WHO SAW THE PLANE FALL, SERGEANT MORGAN OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY, LOCATED AT POINT BARROW, A RADIO REPORT FROM INSPECTOR HALL OF THE BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE, LOCATED IN ALASKA. ALSO, I VISITED PERSONALLY MR.CROSSON WHO FLEW TO POINT BARROWS FROM FAIRBANKS IN ORDER TO RETURN THE BODIES TO THIS COUNTRY, INSPECTOR REED OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, WHO LICENSED THE AIRPLANE AT GLENDALE, CALIF., AND OTHERS WHO HAD CONTACT WITH POST AND ROGERS EITHER AT LOS ANGELES OR ENROUTE. AS YOU KNOW, I TRAVELED TO LOS ANGELES IN ORDER TO DISCUSS WITH MR. CROSSON THE PROBABLE CAUSE AND ANY OTHER DETAILS WHICH MIGHT HAVE AIDED US IN DETERMINING SUCH CAUSES OF THIS CRASH.

INSPECTOR REED, ONE OF OUR REPRESENTATIVES IN LOS ANGELES, INFORMED ME THAT HE HAD INSPECTED AT GLENDALE ALMOST DAILY THE ALTERATIONS OF THE ORIGINAL OION 9E AIRPLANE WHICH POST HAD PURCHASED IN FEBRUARY, 1935. INSPECTOR REED, AS A RESULT OF HIS REGULAR AND FREQUENT INSPECTIONS WAS SATISFIED WITH EVERY DETAIL FROM A CONSTRUCTION STANDPOINT. HE TOLD ME THAT AS TO WORKMANSHIP, IT WAS A "SPLENDID JOB." MR.REED DID NOT FLY THE AIRPLANE, BUT WATCHED POST'S TEST FLIGHTS AND DISCUSSED WITH HIM ITS FLYING CHARACTERISTICS, WHICH BY THE WAY, WERE PLEASING TO POST. THE DEPARTMENT COULD NOT ISSUE AN "NC" LICENSE FOR THE PLANE BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT A WING FROM ANOTHER TYPE OF PLANE, A SIRIUS, HAD BEEN SUBSTITUTED FOR THE REGULAR ORION WING AND A ALARGER MOTOR AND GAS TANKS HAD BEEN INSTALLED. THE PLANE WAS GRANTED AN "R," OR RESTRICTED LICENSE. MR.POST AT VARIOUS TIMES EXPRESSED SATISFACTION OVER THE PLANE'S FLYING CHARACTERISTICS, PARTICULARLY ITS STABILITY, BALANCE, AND EASE OF MANEUVERABILITY.

MR. POST SUBSTITUTED FOR HIS WHEEL LANDING GEAR A PAIR OF PONTOONS AT SEATTLE AND AFTER BEING JOINED BY WILL ROGERS, PROCEEDED TO ALASKA FROM THAT POINT. AT FAIRBANKS, ALASKA, POST INFORMED CROSSON OF PAN-AMERICAN AIRWAYS THAT THE AIRPLANE HAD BECOME NOSE-HEAVY ON TAKE-OFFS AND LANDINGS FOLLOWING THE INSTAWLATION OF FLOATS, AND THAT ON TAKE-OFFS, HE HAD INSTRUCTED ROGERS TO SIT AS FAR TO THE REAR AS POSSIBLE, AND ALSO TO KEEP THE EQUIPMENT AND THE LUGGAGE WELL AFT.

AT FAIRBANKS, BOTH POST AND ROGERS DISCUSSED WITH CROSSON AND OTHERS THEIR PROPOSED FLIGHTS, AND IT WAS APPARENT THAT THEY HAD NO ACTUAL SCHEDULE, NOT SET PLANS, AND NO PARTICULAR REASON FOR DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS AT ANY PLACE ON ANY CERTAIN DATES. POST EMARKED THAT IN THEIR FLYING ABOUT ALASKA, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD HE FLY WITH ROGERS IN OR ABOVE ANY CLOUD OR FOG BANK. HIS PLAN WAS TO TRAVEL AS SAFELY AS POSSIBLE BY SO-CALLED "CONTACT FLYING," TURNING BACK AND LANDING IN LAKE OR RIVER AT ANY TIME WHEN THE WEATHER MADE IT DANGEROUS TO PROCEED. IT WAS BECAUSE OF THIS ATTITUDE OR POLICY THAT THEIR REPORTED INDIFFERENCE TO WEATHER REPORTS COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED CARELESS.

PAN-AMERICAN AIRWAYS BASE PERSONNEL AT FAIRBANKS CHECKED THE PLANE AND THE MOTOR AND DECLARED "EVERYTHING IN GOOD ORDER," WITH THE EXCEPTION THAT A GENERATOR FAILURE ELIMINATED SELF-STARTING THE MOTOR, THUS MAKING IT NECESSARY TO START THE MOTOR BY HAND. THE PLANE HAD NO RADIO EQUIPMENT AND POST WAS NAVIGATING BY COMPASS AND MAP.

PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE FROM FAIRBANKS, A WEATHER REPORT FROM POINT BARROW WAS REQUESTED. THIS REPORT HADN'T BEEN RECEIVED WHEN THEY WERE PREPARING TO DEPART. POST DECIDED THAT THEY WOULD START OUT AND IF THE WEATHER PROVED UNFAVORABLE, WOULD LAND ON SOME LAKE, OF WHICH THERE WERE MANY, OR RIVER, AND WAIT UNTIL CONDITIONS HAD IMPROVED. THE WEATHER REPORT ARRIVED AT FAIRBANKS AT 1:30 P.M., AND READ "ZERO-ZERO." IT WAS REPORTED LATER THAT WEATHER CONDITIONS IMPROVED AND AT THE TIME OF THE ARRIVAL OF POST AND ROGERS AT THE LAGOON NEAR POINT BARROW THAT EVENING, OUR INFORMATION IS THAT THE CEILING WAS ABOUT 200 FEET, AND VISIBILITY SATISFACTORY. THE TEMPERATURE WAS REPORTED FROM 40 TO 45 DEGREES, WITH NEITHER SNOW NOR ICE ON EITHER LAND OR WATER. THE NEXT DAY WHEN CROSSON MADE THE FLIGHT, PRACTICALLY THE SAME WEATHER CONDITIONS PREVAILED, ACCORDING TO HIS REPORT.

THE FLIERS DEPARTED FROM HARDING LAKE AT ABOUT 2:00 P.M., AND LANDED AT A LAGOON NEAR POINT BARROW SHORTLY AFTER 8:00 P.M.

THE LAGOON IN WHICH POST LANDED LIES ALMOST PERPENDICULAR TO THE COAST LINE AND SEPARATED FROM IT BY A FLAT SAND BAR. SINCE THEIR LAST ACCURATE NAVIGATION CHECK WAS OVER 200 MILES FROM THAT POINT, NATURALLY, POST COULD NOT BE SURE ON REACHING THE OCEAN WHETHER POINT BARROW WAS AT HIS RIGHT OR LEFT. ON SEEING THE HUTS AND THE NATIVE ALONGSIDE THE LAGOON, IT WAS VERY MUCH IN ORDER FOR POST TO LAND AND MAKE SURE WHETHER OR NOT POINT BARROW WAS TO HIS RIGHT OR LEFT. POINT BARROW DOES NOT SHOW UP AT A VERY GREAT DISTANCE FROM THE AIR EVEN WITH GOOD VISIBILITY, SO WITH THE LOW CEILING, THE LANDING AND INQUIRY WERE QUITE LOGICAL. THERE COULD BE VERY LITTLE ACCURACY IN THE REPORT THAT POST WAS HAVING TROUBLE WITH EITHER THE PLANE OR THE MOTOR, BECAUSE HE WOULD NOT HAVE ATTEMPTED TO TAKE OFF FROM THE LAGOON WITH ROGERS AS A PASSENGER IF BOTH THE PLANE AND THE MOTOR WERE NOT FUNCTIONING PROPERLY. POST PROBABLY LOOKED OVER HIS PLANE FROM THE PONTOONS BEFORE THE MOTOR WAS STARTED BY HAND.

THE FLIERS LANDED AT THE LAGOON, ASKED THE NATIVE THE LOCATION OF POINT BARROW, REMAINING POSSIBLY TEN MINUTES. THE ESKIMO'S FIRST STORY, BEFORE BEING PRESSED AND POSSIBLY CONFUSED LATER BY A NUMBER OF PEOPLE, WAS THAT THE PLANE TOOK OFF TOWARDS THE COAST LINE, TURNED TO THE RIGHT IN THE DIRECTION OF POINT <sup>Barrow</sup> ~~Barrow~~

*and then plunged into the shallow water immediately after the noise from the motor had ceased.*

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~~!49. 523 .9594 8-8 :3-138.~~ WHILE THE ESKIMO REPORTED THAT THE PLANE HAD RISEN ABOUT 50 FEET, IT SEEMS QUITE APPARENT THAT POST HAD CLIMBED TO A HIGHER ALTITUDE, PROBABLY ALMOST 200 FEET, WHICH WAS THE LOWER LEVEL OF THE FOG BANK THE NEAR PERPENDICULAR NOSING-IN OF THE PLANE AND ITS TURNING OVER ON ITS BACK WOULD INDICATE THAT AN ALTITUDE HIGHER THAN 50 FEET HAD BEEN GAINED PRIOR TO ITS STALLING.

IT APPEARS REASONABLE TO BELIEVE THAT POST WAS BANKING THE PLANE TO THE RIGHT WHILE STILL IN A SLIGHT CLIMB, SINCE WITH THAT LOW CEILING HE WOULD TURN IN THE DIRECTION OF POINT BARROW ALONG THE COAST LINE IMMEDIATELY AFTER GAINING SUFFICIENT ALTITUDE FOR MANEUVERING. HE NATURALLY WOULD NOT ENTER THE FOG BANK IN HIS LAST FEW MINUTES SEARCH FOR POINT BARROW. THE COMBINATION OF THE PLANE IN A BANKING TURN, WITH STILL LOW FLYING SPEED IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE TAKE-OFF AND CLIMB, THE MOTOR FAILURE AND THE AIRPLANE'S NOSE HEAVINESS, COULD RESULT IN SUCH A STALL. THERE CAN BE ONLY SPECULATION AS TO THE CAUSE OF THE MOTOR FAILURE, THE MOTOR BEING BURIED IN THE MUD UNDERNEATH SOME TWO FEET OF WATER. WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT WITH THE MOISTURE IN THE AIR AS IT EXISTED THAT DAY, AND THE TEMPERATURE AS IT WAS REPORTED, ICE COULD HAVE DEVELOPED IN THE CARBURETOR. EITHER THAT, OR THE SPRAY FROM THE WATER IN TAKING OFF COULD HAVE ENTERED THE SCOOOPS AND IN THAT WAY CAUSED ICING.

(END ADVANCE FOR AMS)