Roadable Plane Crashes In Test

Fifth design of "fly-car" by company goes down in Calif.; pilot not seriously injured.

Consolidated Vultee brought from under wraps the fifth of its series of flying automobiles only to have the craft crash in test flights at Chula Vista, Calif. The automobile section of the four place Crooley engine powered model was badly damaged. Coming on the heels of Convair's announcement of test flight, the craft had already made news when it went down. The pilot, Lawrence Phillips, was not seriously injured.

With smart body lines strongly suggestive of a Studebaker in miniature, the craft is equipped with a detachable wing which was not seriously damaged in the accident.

The 34 ft. wing, carrying an engine nacelle that overhangs the hood of the automobile, is attached by simple bolt connections through the roof of the auto. Entry through the roof of the auto likewise accepts the wings attached flight instruments and control cables that attach to the steering wheel.

Designed by Theodore P. Hall, this roadable airplane is a departure from the designer's original model (Aviation News, Feb. 4, 1946) in that the 190 hp. Lycoming engine for aerial power is mounted on the detachable wing. Hall's original model, road-tested and flown in the San Diego area in 1939, utilized the same motor for both ground and aerial travel, with a detachable propeller and wings. This new model has two mounted engines.

War demands on Hall's time caused him to turn his project over to the Southern Aircraft Co., for additional development. Convair's new model is the latest example of Hall's work now that he has time to devote to the roadable aircraft project.

Convair had no immediate intention of entering the "fly-car" in the personal aircraft market, but had begun tests that may be conducted for several years in perfecting design and having an catty ready if conventional personal airplane market lags and evidence is obtained that the market will accept the combination of an automobile with detachable wing. Convair's emphasis upon the design of the automobile indicates that it might be sold initially without wing, as a conventional small automobile, with the wing later either rented or sold as preferred.

At press time no comment was available from Convair on the cause of the accident.

CAAC Studying Plan For Lightplane Rentals

Rental of lightplanes from local flight contractors for use by CAAC inspectors is being considered by Civil Aeronautics Administrator T. P. Wright.

The plan has been recommended to the administrator by a special CAAC committee after study of methods to enlarge inspectors in the field to cover these extensive itineraries throughout the year. The committee said fund limitations for maintenance and operation of CAAC aircraft would not permit necessary inspection travel under present arrangement systems.

Use by inspectors of CAAC-owned war surplus planes—AT-6 advanced trainer which cost about $25 an hour to fly—already has resulted in almost complete curtailment of inspector flying for the remainder of the year because of inadequate funds. Transfer of these planes to CAAC was authorized by Congress in 1945 in lieu of appropriations to purchase new light aircraft. If the proposal is adopted, these planes will be turned over to War Assets Administration for sale.

Rental of civil airplanes, which the committee believes should be possible on an annual contract basis at about $10 an hour, would enable CAAC inspectors to stretch their flying time to the 40,000 hours estimated as necessary for the transaction of official duties in fiscal 1949. At the same time it would be possible to continue operating CAAC's twin-engine planes in airway patrol, foreign operations and standardization training at the existing rate of about 54,000 hours annually.

More Planes

U. S. Air Force is adding 650 fighters and bombers to its tactical groups. The planes, now in storage, will be un bottled and ready for service before Jan. 1. Among the planes going back into service are 130 Boeing B-29's and 400 fighters about equally divided between North American P-51's and Republic P-47's.

NAVY UNVEILS MARTIN XP5M-1

Artists concept of new Martin flying boat reveals radical new planing hull lines developed by NACA. A standard Martin PBM-5 flying boat design has been redesigned to incorporate longer, thinner hull lines with afterbody surface continuing to stern. Single vertical tail replaces cantilever twin tails of standard Martin. New float supporting structure reduces drag. Planing hull provides rugged rough water characteristics. XP5M-1 hull will be tested down on converted Grumman JMF "Preliminary Porpoise." (Navy Drawing)