

Kristyn Blocher
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: 09/18/24

Subject: WPR24FA298

Contact: Molly Littlefield, pilot

The following is a synopsis of a telephone conversation with Molly Littlefield.

Ms. Littlefield was the pilot of one of three Stearmans flying to Hood River. She described their group as a "gaggle in loose trail", as opposed to a formation flight. She stated that she had been unaware that Mr. Paulson would be joining she and Mr. Hoogammer that day. She first met up with Mr. Paulson when the three Stearmans had stopped at TDO for fuel. Each airplane was fueled, and she recalled that Mr. Paulson added 24 gallons of 100LL to his Stearman.

Ms. Littlefield had flown to Hood River previously and stated that her intention was to fly her "normal" route, which included remaining near I-5, on a southerly course, then proceeding east along the Columbia River. She was not aware of any conversations that had been discussing an alternate route to Hood River that day. Mr. Paulson departed TDO first, and Mr. Hoogammer and Ms. Littlefield each departed about 5 minutes later. South of Kelso/Longview (KLS), the three airplanes flew close enough to each other to take some arial photos. Near Woodland, Ms. Littlefield continued on a southerly course, and she heard the other two Stearmans talk about a different route and say, "...this is the cut we're going to take." She stated to them that she would be sticking to her normal route. She recalled to me that she wanted to fly her familiar route and did not want to follow them through the "cut." It was smokey, and she felt her familiar route was less risky. She estimated that the visibility at the time was about 7 miles. She saw them turn east toward their "cut" and did not receive any further responses from them when she attempted to reach them by radio, after that.

Ms. Littlefield flew her normal route along the Columbia River and caught sight of Mr. Hoogammer, near Hood River. On the ground at Hood River, she and Mr.

Hoogammer waited about an hour and then began the overdue airplane reporting process.