

The following is taken from a tape recorded conversation between Mr. Howell W. (Pete) Miller, Ron Harrison and Tom Nallen. The date was January 28, 1978. The events described are those concerned with and relating to the last flight of the MAC-1 aircraft. This airplane was the modified "Time Flies" originally designed and built by Miller for the noted long distance flyer, Captain Frank Hawks.

"We took the ship down to Rentschler Field, Pratt and Whitney (East Hartford, Connecticut) where Earl Ortman was to make climb tests from 1,000 feet to 11,000 feet to check the rate of climb for 10,000 feet. Ortman was working for the Military Aircraft Corporation.

For the tests he would fly along level at 1,000 feet then put the ship in a climb at various speeds to 11,000 feet. Then... he would nose the plane over and come down and while he was doing this he would make notes on a knee pad that he had. Earl Ortman was not only the world's best test pilot but he was an engineer... an aeronautical engineer...and he knew, from the feel of things, what was causing...you know...anything unusual.

We hired Ortman because we knew that he was a good racing pilot and he was available. Racing pilots during the depression were available and he was a good friend of Mr. Connerton who was president of Military Aircraft Corporation.

We had for this particular test two fuels. One...100 octane for takeoff and climb, and a lower one for cruise...87 octane. The 100 octane gas was new in those days.

We had told Ortman, before the test, to use the fuel in the aft tank first, to get away from tail heaviness, 'cause there's nothing worse than tail heaviness. There were three sets of tanks in the ship (a forward tank, a tank in the rear seat location, and a tank

in each wing.)

So...wether he misunderstood or what...wether the valve was wrong... wether he misread the valve plate...it was one of those four-way manifold valves...instead of using fuel from the rear tank which was behind the pilot, he had selected the forward supply. He didn't land between climb tests and when he would come down to 1,000 feet to begin another run, he would change trim by use of tabs on the elevators which were adjustable from the cockpit.

They were quite good sized tabs...as I recall they were about ten or twelve inches in span with about a five inch chord...on each elevator's trailing edge. He had a little control which he'd just have to wind to trim the airplane with these tabs.

He kept doing this until...on about the sixth run...he was getting more and more tail heavy...and pretty soon those tabs were so greatly deflected...he had gone to the extreme. And those things were never... you never want to put a surface at an extreme angle...without danger of flutter...and that's what happened...flutter!

And that thing crept right up through the fuselage...it tore the tail off! Ortman said later that this oscillation began and built right up like that! There was no warning...except that...something's going to happen...he knew this! He reached up to a lever at the top of the windshield which released two hinge pins and kicked up the front edge of the canopy...and that jettisioned. The next thing he knew, one of the oscillations tossed him right out. He had released the belt, of course, and he had a chute on...fortunately. Ortman waited a few seconds, pulled the ripcord and landed very nicely at the edge of Rentschler Field. The airplane buried itself near Forbes Street. It didn't hit anything.

Many years later, a fellow who worked in the Research Department at Pratt and Whitney told me of a conversation with a neighboring

vacationer while at the shore. As a boy the neighbor had seen an airplane in trouble come down in the vicinity of Forbes Street in East Hartford. This big thing came whirling down and hit him in the arm. "Look", he said, "I had three stitches put here." My co-worker asked if the neighbor still had the object which struck him. He did. "Well, I know the guy that designed that airplane, and he'd like to have it." said my friend...so I have it in the garage here, now. The object was a five pound aileron mass balance which Mark Granville had fashioned for "Time Flies".

Ron Harrison
Tom Nallen