

## Veteran aviator's death a shock

By Mike Harden  
Dispatch Columnist

"I'm going to be cremated," veteran Columbus aviator Mark "Doc" Savage told his pilot friend Monty Montenaro several days ago. "You want to scatter the ashes for me?"

"Sure," Montenaro agreed.

"I'll even provide the coffee can," the often-irreverent Savage teased.

A shaken Montenaro would recall that brief exchange yesterday, only hours after the 74-year-old Savage died in a German glider he had helped build from a kit. The glider crashed shortly after it was towed aloft from Marion County Airport, around 12:40 p.m. yesterday.

"We're talking about a pilot with a lot of flying hours," said Ohio Highway Patrol Trooper Greg Cun-

ningham of the patrol's Marion post. "We're not really looking at pilot error. The plane was out of control."

Cunningham said Federal Aviation Administration representatives from Cleveland were being sent to inspect the wreckage, which left little more than the glider's tail intact.

The glider went down in a field next to Likens Road, less than a mile from its takeoff point.

Savage was heading to Port Columbus to deliver the BG-12 model glider to the Ohio History of Flight Museum at 4175 Sawyer Rd.

"The BG-12, the one he died in, he was donating to the air museum at Port Columbus," said Savage's daughter, Peggy Lou Savage.

Eyewitnesses indicated that the 30-year-old glider began "porpoising" or pitching up and down as it climbed. Shortly after the tow plane banked for a turn, the safety ring on its tail released the glider. The safety

ring is an automatic fail-safe mechanism designed to prevent the one craft from bringing down the other.

Seconds before the crash, Savage had radioed tow-plane pilot Tom Lusch. "Slow down a little bit. I'm having problems back here."

"From about 1,000 feet, he went straight in," Montenaro said of Savage.

"It could have very easily been a broken elevator cable," speculated Savage's friend and fellow glider pilot, Ken Hadden. Hadden, of Mount Air, is the current national and international unlimited aerobatic glider pilot champion. "He was a superlative pilot ... a pilot's pilot," he said of Savage.

Savage had logged more than 50 years as a military and commercial pilot. During World War II, he flew one of the dive-bomber missions against the German-fortified abbey at Monte Cassino, Italy.

A certified flying instructor, Savage was instrumen-



Mark "Doc" Savage was killed in a glider crash yesterday.

tal in the founding of the Ohio chapter of the Soaring Society of America and had served as its governor.

He would have been 75 on May 26. He is survived by his wife, Ruth — also a World War II veteran — and children Peggy Lou, Randy, Rick, Russ and Rod.