

Coming in for an emergency landing, Piedmont plane touches down on left landing gear to reduce impact on right gear with one wheel missing.

Diverted to Airport Here

Plane Lands Minus Wheel

A Piedmont Airlines Martin 404 made a safe emergency landing at Smith Reynolds Airport yesterday after losing a landing wheel as it took off from Florence, S.C.

None of the three crew members or nine passengers aboard Flight 631 were injured as the plane landed here.

The flight originated at Wilmington and had scheduled stops at Florence, Charlotte and Greensboro.

A spokesman for Piedmont said it is not certain how the pilot discovered that the wheel was missing, but it came off just after takeoff from Florence. The pilot, Burt Barnes, passed over Charlotte and came to Winston-Salem, where repair facilities are available, the spokesman said.

The spokesman said that the aircraft has two landing wheels on each wing and

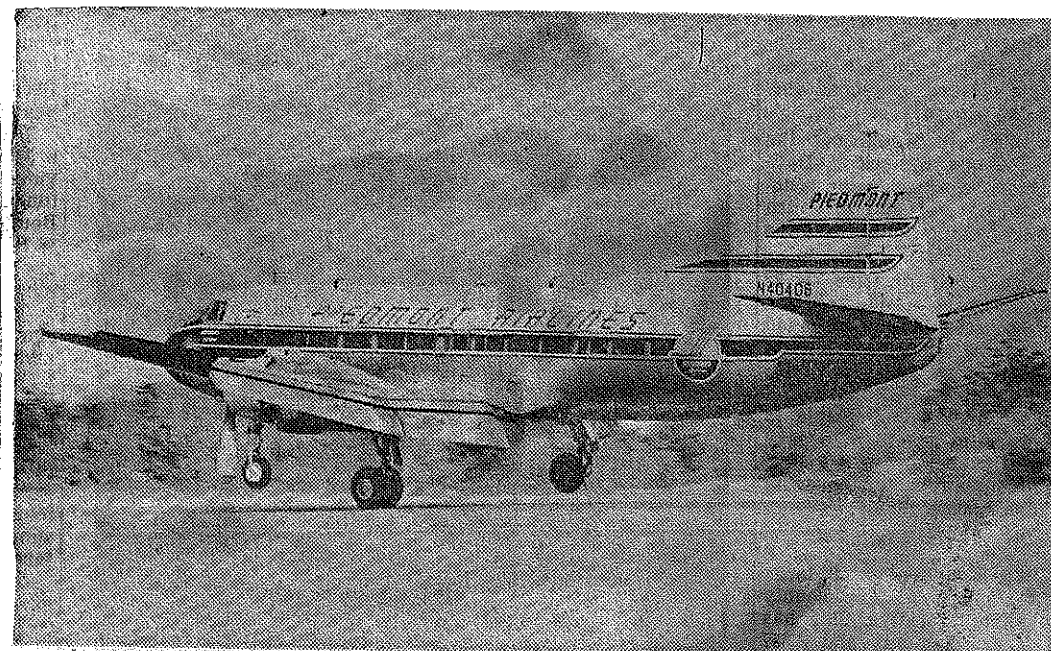
one of the wheels came off the right wing landing gear.

Barnes, who is based in Wilmington, brought the plane in for the landing. He held the right landing gear off the ground until the last minute, keeping it from receiving the impact of full landing speed. The plane moved more than 100 yards down the runway on three wheels — the two left wheels and the nose wheel.

The spokesman described Barnes' landing as "beautiful."

The Winston-Salem Fire Department city police, airport fire trucks and several ambulances were sitting along the runway as the plane came down. They were not needed.

As a precaution, passengers were taken off the plane on the runway instead of waiting to get to the terminal, the airport spokesman said.



Staff Photos by Bill Ray