

Prater, who twice ran unsuccessfully for Congress, is general counsel for Modular Management Inc., which operates a plant that manufactures modular homes and motels at Martinsville.

Mrs. Prater said Sunday evening that her husband went to Atlanta on Thursday to meet with Claude Crosby, president of Modular Management; Murphy, and Jack Littleton, representing a group of California investors. The group was to fly to Martinsville Friday morning, she said.

### 'Never Showed'

Troy Beaver, manager of the Martinsville plant, said he expected the group at 11:15 a.m. Friday.

"They never showed; they just disappeared," Beaver said.

Neither Mrs. Prater nor Beaver had heard from the men since Thursday night. Mrs. Prater said her husband always called her each night when he was out of town.

The long interval between the plane's disappearance and the initiation of a search was because the plane's pilot didn't file a flight plan.

No flight plan is required, however, as long as the pilot is able to maintain visual flight rules. Had he filed a flight plan, FAA officials said, a search would have been begun shortly after the plane became overdue at its destination.

### No Doubt

For several hours there was also a lack of confirmation that the men did board an airplane at Peachtree-DeKalb.

But Bill Spoon, sales manager of the company, said there was no doubt that Prater, Murphy and the others boarded the plane. He said his secretary took the men to the airport and watched them take off.

The FAA was hampered by

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