

3/7/43  
Adopted: August 2, 1943

File No. 1240-43

REPORT OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD  
on the  
Investigation of an Accident Involving Aircraft in a  
Cross-Country Instruction Flight

Instructor Manuel Benito Gonzalez, Student Charles Edward Stevenson, and Passenger Jorge Lucas Vidal were seriously injured in an accident which occurred near the Municipal Airport, Fort Worth, Texas at approximately 10:56 p.m. on March 7, 1943. Gonzalez held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-330 h.p., and flight instructor ratings. He had accumulated about 1160 solo hours, 120 of which were flown at night. Stevenson held a private pilot certificate with a single-engine land, 0-80 h.p., rating. He had accumulated about 108 hours of flight time. Vidal held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 80-190 h.p., and flight instructor ratings. The aircraft, a Stinson SR-7B, NC 16103, owned by Long and Harman, Inc., was extensively damaged.

Instructor Gonzalez secured clearance for a routine night cross-country training flight and took off from the Municipal Airport, Dallas, Texas, at approximately 7:10 p.m., accompanied by Stevenson and Vidal. Gonzalez occupied the pilot seat and Vidal the right front seat, while Stevenson rode in the rear seat as an observer. The flight, under contact flight rules, was to be made non-stop to Fort Worth, Texas, via Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. As prearranged, Stevenson and Vidal exchanged seats while circling the Oklahoma City Airport and Stevenson flew the airplane from Oklahoma City until they reached a point near the Fort Worth Airport, where Gonzalez took the controls preparatory to landing. While the aircraft was approaching Fort Worth, Gonzalez called the tower and received landing instructions. During the final approach from the northwest for a landing on the northwest-southeast runway, the control tower warned the pilot that his approach was too low on account of an unlighted power line near the airport. Gonzalez acknowledged the warning and immediately applied power to gain altitude. Simultaneously, the plane struck the 3-wire power line and crashed on the embankment of a railroad beyond.

The pilot stated that the aircraft operated normally during the flight. Weather was not a contributing factor to the accident. The safety belt buckles of both front seats failed in the same manner, which may have contributed to the seriousness of the injuries to the occupants.

Several months prior to this accident another plane struck and broke one wire of the subject power line during an approach to the same runway. The area of the approach to this runway is an open field, free of trees and buildings, and there was nothing to warn the pilot of an obstruction in his path. This power line is located approximately 270 feet from and runs parallel to the northwest boundary lights of the airport.

When this power line was put back into service, the power company lowered it 5 feet and arrangements have been made to light this obstruction.

PROBABLE CAUSE: Presence of an unlighted obstruction, of which the pilot was unaware, in the approach area to the airport runway.

CONTRIBUTING FACTOR: Unnecessarily low approach in view of darkness and the pilot's unfamiliarity with existing obstruction.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs  
Secretary