

REPORT OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD  
on the  
Investigation of an Accident Involving Aircraft  
During a Crop Dusting Flight

Arthur Jay Veroneaux was fatally injured in an accident which occurred about 2 miles east of College City, California, at approximately 6:30 p.m. on June 8, 1943. Veroneaux held a commercial pilot certificate with a single-engine land, 0-675 h.p. rating. He had accumulated about 3209 solo hours, of which approximately 368 were flown in crop dusting operations in the type of airplane involved. The aircraft, a Travel Air 4000, NR 8135, owned by F. H. Nolta, was destroyed by impact and fire.

Veroneaux was engaged in fertilizing a freshly-sown rice field and was using an improvised runway on the farmfield operating base. Take-offs were being made toward the southeast into a wind of about 12 m.p.h. A high tension line extended east and west approximately one-half mile beyond the southeast end of the runway and had to be crossed during dusting operations. Shortly before 6:30 p.m. the plane was loaded with 550 lbs. of fertilizer and Veroneaux took off toward the southeast. He then turned more directly than usual for the field to be fertilized which necessitated his flying over the power line at its highest point some 20 to 25 feet higher than where he had crossed it on previous flights. When he reached the power line his altitude was insufficient to clear it and the landing gear struck and severed the wires. The plane crashed to the ground tail first approximately 100 feet beyond the power line and was destroyed by fire.

Before the pilot lost consciousness he discussed the accident with his employer and stated that he had forgotten about the power line being higher in this area; that upon seeing the wires and realizing that he could not avoid them, he endeavored to dump his load. However, he said he was unable to do this or change his direction of flight in time to avoid the collision. Veroneaux had made approximately 43 previous flights from this runway.

Investigation disclosed that Veroneaux and other pilots engaged in dusting operations had been flying as much as 15 hours a day, starting in the early morning and continuing until dark.

While pilot fatigue was undoubtedly a contributing factor, it appears that the probable cause of this accident was carelessness on the part of the pilot in failing to avoid a known obstruction.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs  
Secretary