

Adopted: March 24, 1944

File No. 3346-43

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

Burt Bailey Beard, age 39, was seriously injured in an accident which occurred at Montrose, Arkansas, about 10:10 p.m. on August 6, 1943. (He succumbed to his injuries on January 23, 1944.) Beard held a commercial pilot certificate with a single-engine land, 0-80 h. p. rating. He had flown approximately 2413 solo hours, about 1500 of which were in the type of airplane involved. The aircraft, a Piper J3C-65, NR 25701, owned by the Murphy Crop Dusting Company, Inc., was destroyed by impact and fire.

Pilot Beard completed a crop dusting mission at Jones, Louisiana around dusk and decided to return to his home base at Lake Village, Arkansas, approximately 38 miles distant. He took off around 9:00 p.m. and flew extremely low, following the highway about 25 miles to Montrose, Arkansas. Instead of turning right at Montrose to follow the highway to Lake Village, he continued straight ahead about 9 miles to Jerome, Arkansas. When Beard realized that he was lost and that his fuel supply was nearly exhausted, he circled in the vicinity of Jerome, then returned to Montrose and circled several times. At both places he flew very low, throttled the engine, and shouted to people below, "Help! Give me lights. I want to land." Montrose residents responded by placing their cars along the roadside and illuminating the highway. As the pilot came in very low the aircraft struck and became impaled on the cross-arm of an electric power line pole about 50 feet above the ground. The plane immediately burst into flames and fell slowly to the highway with the broken pole and sagging wires. Beard was thrown clear of the wreckage upon impact with the highway.

There was no evidence of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to collision with the power line.

The pilot exercised extremely poor judgment in attempting a night flight without proper equipment. However, the direct cause of the accident was his failure to observe and avoid an obstruction while making an approach for a landing at night.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs  
Secretary