

Coroner's investigation  
Air crash, Feb. 3, 1959  
SW $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 18, Lincoln Twp.  
Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Jiles P. Richardson, Charles Holley, Richard Valenzuela and Roger A. Peterson, pilot of the plane, were killed in the crash of a chartered airplane when it fell within minutes of takeoff from the Mason City Airport. The three passengers were members of a troupe of entertainers who appeared at the Surf Ballroom at Clear Lake, Iowa, the evening of Feb. 3, 1959, bound for Fargo, N. D. and was headed northwest from the airport at the time of the crash in a stubble field, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Clear Lake, Iowa. The plane was discovered about 9:00 A.M., February 3, 1959, when Mr. H. J. Dwyer, owner of the crashed plane, made aerial search because he had received no word from Peterson since his takeoff.

The wreckage had been approached only by Deputy Sheriff Bill McGill in his sheriff's car before I arrived about 11:15 A.M. At this time two sheriffs' cars, two highway patrol cars and cars carrying members of the press, both reporters and photographers, and representatives of TV and radio stations and a few spectators were allowed to pass through the gate into the field where the crash occurred. Approach was made in a circuitous route to avoid disturbing wreckage and debris from the crash.

The wreckage lay about 1/2 mile west from the nearest north-south gravel road and the farmhomes of the Albert Juhl's and Delbert Juhl's. The main part of the plane lay against the barbed wire fence at the north end of the stubble field in which it came to earth. It had skidded and/or rolled approximately 570 feet from point of impact directed northwesterly. The shape of the mass of wreckage approximated a ball with one wing sticking up diagonally from one side. The body of Roger Peterson was enclosed by wreckage with only the legs visible sticking upward. Richard Valenzuela's body was south, lying prone, head directed south 17 feet from the wreckage; Charles Holley's body, also in the prone position, was lying southwest, head directed southwest, 17 feet from the wreckage; and J. P. Richardson's body, lying partly prone and partly on the right side, was northwest of the wreckage, head directed south 40 feet from the wreckage, across the fence in a picked cornfield. Fine snow which fell lightly after the crash had drifted slightly about the bodies and wreckage. Some parts of each body had been frozen by the ten hours' exposure in temperature reported to have been near 18 degrees during that time. The three bodies on the ground were removed before I left. Peterson's body was removed after permission was granted by the inspector for the Civil Aeronautics Board and Federal Aviation Agency. This was done by Deputy Sheriffs Wm. McGill and Lowell Sandquist using metal cutting tools to open a space in the wreckage.

At the scene of the crash Mr. Carroll Anderson was helpful in tentatively identifying the bodies from the clothing.

A large brown leather suitcase with one catch open lay near one leg of Charles Holley, and about 8 ft. north of the same body lay a travel case with brown leather ends and sides of a light plaid color. This measured approximately 15 in. x 12 in. x 6 in.

A billfold containing the name of Tommy Douglas Allsup and a leather pocket case marked with the name, "Ritchie Valens", were brought to me at the scene by Deputy Sheriffs inspecting the ground over which the wreckage had skidded and rolled.

Glen Kellogg of Clear Lake took photos of the scene at the request of Sheriff Jerry Allen and me. News and TV photographers also took still pictures and movies of the scene.

The plane was a Beach-Craft Bonanza, No. N3794N, painted red, with white and black trim. Deputy Sheriff Lowell Sandquist, an experienced pilot, who has flown in and out of

the Mason City airport, was present when the radio and navigational equipment from the plane was examined. He reports the radio to have been set for listening and talking to the Mason City Airport Station MCW, and the navigational equipment to have been correctly set for a course from Mason City to Fargo, N. D.

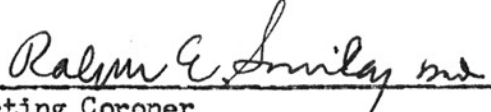
Arrangements for the flight were made by Mr. Carroll Anderson, Manager of the Surf Ballroom at Clear Lake, Iowa, with Mr. H. J. Dwyer, fixed base operator for the Mason City Airport. The reasons given to Mr. Anderson for the flight were that all three passengers wished to reach their next destination in their itinerary ahead of the chartered bus which carried the rest of the troupe in order to have some laundry done. Mr. Anderson drove the three passengers to the airport in his family automobile. Accompanying him were his wife and 8-year-old son. They saw the plane take off and make its circle to take up its course.

The Air Traffic Communication Center of the Federal Aviation Agency at the Mason City Municipal Airport reported to me that at 0058 on February 3rd, the wind was south, gusty to 20 M.P.H., temperature 18 degrees F., dew point 11. In takeoff, the plane followed a normal procedure using the runway toward the south and turning in a counterclockwise direction. The amount of snow falling from midnight to 6:30 A.M. on February 3rd was listed as a trace.

Further information from them was that as the pilot taxied down the runway he communicated by radio with the tower and secured additional information about the weather en route. He told the officer in charge in the tower he would file a flight plan after getting in the air. When this information did not come in, the officer tried to reach the pilot without getting a reply.

An official investigation was carried on by a crew of field representatives headed by Mr. C. E. Stillwagon of the Civil Aeronautics Board, Bureau of Safety Investigation, 4825 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri, and Mr. A. J. Prokop, Federal Aviation Agency, Des Moines office. This group spent three days on the investigation arriving here the evening of February 3rd. They visited the scene of the crash for preliminary survey before dark that day.

I, Ralph E. Smiley, M. D., Acting Coroner of Cerro Gordo County, Iowa, on the 4th day of February, 1959, hereby certify that the above facts are made of record after diligent investigation and I believe them to be correct.

  
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Acting Coroner