



100 of us will have Accidents in 2007! WHO?

By Bernald S. Smith

Please read this next sentence out loud: I may have an accident on this flight. That is my way of getting readers to put themselves into the position of knowing that I'm meaning the sentence to apply not just to me, the author hereof, but to all readers. What in the world am I doing, you rightly may wonder.

More than 50 years ago, just as we started takeoff with our DC-4 from an island in the Pacific, the Captain said: Do you suppose we'll crash and burn on takeoff? To say the least, as First Officer (copilot) I was more than a little taken aback. Over the years, I've decided that it was his way to combat complacency, because I sure was alert when he said that.

Well, what the italicized sentence is meant to do is see what we can do to combat complacency that might occur with us as glider pilots. Many takeoffs followed by successful flights/landings might make us think we've got it mastered and become complacent. How else to explain the accidents that good pilots have that sure look like pilot error. Someone is going to have an accident on their next flight. We know after the flight who it was; how can we determine ahead of time who it will be. Because, history shows that it does happen on the next flight to too many of us. No one has an accident on purpose, we have to believe, so why does anyone have an accident?

This isn't why, but these are some of the real glider accidents which occurred at least once, and in some cases more than once, in 2006: hard landing; clipped runway lights w/prop; clipped runway lights with wing; bounced on takeoff, loosening gear which collapsed on landing; aborted landing, hit trees; hit trees on off-field landing; rolled into ditch during off-field landing; aborted tow, rolled off runway into weeds; canopy opened on takeoff tow; spoilers opened on takeoff tow; struck head on canopy during turbulence; hit another glider during landing rollout; pitched up sharply on aerotow takeoff; gear collapsed landing in gusty conditions; ground loop on off-field landing; wing dropped during takeoff; micro-burst encounter on final resulting in off-field crash; wing came off during takeoff; hit power lines during landing approach; airplane on takeoff and glider on landing hit each other. Nothing really new about any of those, cause they describe accidents over the years, not just 2006. Not too bad sounding, either, you might conclude, except they involved fatalities, injuries and as high a cost per accident as \$70K.

An accident can happen anytime, not only from the moment of starting a flight to the moment of end of roll-out, but prior to and after, too. For instance in 2006: wind damage to tied-out ship; trailer rolled down hill into creek; storm damage; ground handling broke canopy; cockpit fire while parked; wind blew parked canopy open; pushed ship into wall;

hail damage to parked ship; wind pushed ship into pole; clipped car while moving ship with auto; dropped wing during disassembly; horses damaged ship left in field after off-field landing. No fatalities, but injuries and a cost of up to \$30K per accident.

What can we deduce? Find a way to keep yourself from becoming complacent so that you're not among the more than 100 of us who will have accidents in 2007!

