

Glider Accidents that have happened before....

By Ron Ridenour, SSF Trustee

Unfortunately, this summer has been no different from previous years in the type or number of glider accidents.

As of the first week of July, our Soaring community has had 2 fatalities, one may have been a medical issue and one was a winch launch accident, these types of accidents have happened before.

We had the total destruction of a SGS 2-32 on a practice 200' rope break with an instructor on board! Miraculously, no one was seriously hurt. I suspect this may have been a skidding turn/stall/spin, this type of accident has happened before.

We had an L-23 take off with the dive brakes opening during the takeoff roll. The tow plane released the glider at 175', when he was having a difficult time climbing. I'm not sure if the rudder waggle signal was used. The glider pilot then made about a 120° turn followed by a hard landing resulting in substantial damage to the glider and minor injuries to the instructor and passenger. I don't think the instructor ever recognized that the dive brakes were open which I'm sure contributed to the hard landing. Again, an instructor was on board and doing the flying, this type of accident has happened before.

We had an ASW-27 breakup in flight after the pilot flew into clouds and became spatially disoriented. He parachuted to safety and the glider crashed, this type of accident has happened before.

We had a motor glider encounter strong sink shortly after becoming airborne at a high altitude airport. The pilot elected to abort the takeoff, and totaled the glider in a field off the end of the runway, this type of accident has happened before.

Flying is a combination of pilot skill, knowledge, decision making, risk management and judgment. These attributes and others require constant practice and study to be a safe pilot.

Learning the necessary Skill to not skid the turn during a 200' rope break starts from day one of your flying. Your instructor should be demanding that you pay attention to your yaw string in every turn of your training. Pilots and instructors need to be more vigilant and make corrections before they become bad habits that lead to accidents. My fellow trustee and pilot examiner, Burt Compton, says "during the rope break maneuver the pilot must pay close attention to the pitch attitude and the yaw string during the turn back to the field".

Having the Knowledge about the aero medical factors that put a pilot at risk is something that needs to be taught and considered every time we fly. Doctor Dan continues to write excellent articles for Soaring which discuss the need to be more vigilant about our personal health. Even though we don't need an FAA medical certificate to fly a glider, we are still bound to obey FAR 61.53(b) which says: *Operations that do not require a medical certificate.* For operations provided for in §61.23(b) of this part, a person shall not act as pilot in command, or in any other

capacity as a required pilot flight crewmember, while that person knows or has reason to know of any medical condition that would make the person unable to operate the aircraft in a safe manner.

Possessing the Judgment and discipline to properly use a before take-off checklist to prevent the inadvertent deployment of the dive brakes during the launch is necessary to prevent accidents. Also, the use of checklists throughout all of our flying activities, including but not limited to a post assembly and positive control checklist and landing checklist, are good tools that we must use.

Having the Decision Making and Risk Management Skills to decide when to land the glider, instead of flying into a cloud and becoming a passenger rather than a pilot are necessary judgments that we must make every day to avoid accidents.

It's easy to "Monday morning quarterback" any of the above situations and come up with a different solution that avoids the accident. The hard part of flying safely is being able to analyze the situation in the moment, whether on the ground or in the air, and make better decisions at that time to avoid the accident. These kinds of decision making and risk management skills can come with better training.

The training part is something we all have control over. As students or experienced pilots we can demand more from our instructor and as instructors we can demand more of our students. As instructors, after the initial training of a pilot takes place, the Flight Review is one of our few opportunities to offer additional training. Please take that responsibility seriously. As a way of keeping current with the latest instructional techniques, instructors should consider taking one of the FIRC's that the SSF offers at various locations throughout the country during the year and at the SSA convention.

It has been quoted many times through the years that, "A **superior** pilot uses his **superior judgment** to avoid situations which require the use of his **superior skill**." We should all strive to live by these words...