

SAFETY FIRST

THE GRAY HAIR DEPARTMENT

by JOSEPH M. ROBERTSON, *Chairman*
SSA Safety and Flight Operations Committee

This is the story of a minor accident that could have been a major one but resulted only in a couple of bashed leading edges on a 1-26. However, the important point is that the accident clearly illustrates how a series of seemingly unrelated factors suddenly converged on one pilot and caused him to be able to tell about the time he hit the telephone pole.

The field is only 2000 ft. long with power and telephone lines across the take-off end, and no clearly visible wind sock. It is customary at this field to land in the opposite direction except in strong winds to avoid coming in over the wires and landing "long." The pilot, who was not very experienced, took off by airplane tow for a local flight. He planned to attempt a spot landing at the termination of the flight. A flag had been placed about 1/3 the way down the runway from the power lines for use in marking a place to touch down. The runway surface of alternate gravel and sod was wet and the wind was 90° to the runway.

The pilot elected to land toward the power lines, but while he was in the air the wind shifted so that it was quartering towards the lines and becoming stronger. In addition, the pilot had previously displayed a tendency to fly at a fairly high speed on his final approach and this flight was no exception. As he came in to land he did not realize he was landing downwind since the wind sock was barely operable. He touched down momentarily short of the flag,

in a puddle that soaked the 1-26 brake. Next contact with the ground was downwind of the flag, where he applied the brake to the wheel. Since it and the grass were wet, no braking action resulted. The combination of high approach speed, and a downwind landing, slick grass and a wet brake, plus a "long" landing, carried him to the end of the field where one wing hit a power pole. The ship then swung around, catching the other wing on a telephone pole.

The damage was not severe but it did put the ship out of commission for several weeks. Cost of the repairs - about \$100.00.

Comment: When landing on wet grass or a wet runway, the 1-26 brake loses most of its braking capability. This factor plus the failure of the pilot to make sure of wind direction plus the limited amount of runway that had been set up for use in landing all combined to put the ship out of commission for a couple of weeks.

When actively planning for a safe operation all the factors that might have a bearing on the operation must be examined in detail and the obvious risks eliminated. Probably the most important factor in all such planning is the experience level of the pilots who will be doing the flying. Gear the planning to the lowest experience level and the more experienced pilots will have little trouble.

Incidentally, the field now has a brand-new wind sock on top of the hangar roof, the most conspicuous spot on the field.

CALENDAR

Items listed in bold face type are to be sanctioned by SSA.

April 9-17. SCSA High and Wide Wave Soaring Expedition, Bishop, Calif.

May 28-30. Arizona Soaring Association's Invitational Soaring Cross-Country Weekend, Prescott, Arizona, Municipal Airport.

May 28 - 30. NCSA Soaring Contest, Hummingbird Haven, 4 mi. E. of Livermore, Calif.

May 29 - 31. Memorial Day Soaring Meet, Richmond, Ind.

June 4-19. 1960 World Soaring Championships, Butzweiler Airport, Cologne, West Germany.

June 7-18. VIIIth OSTIV Congress of Technical Papers on Soaring, Cologne, West Germany.

July 1 - 4. Midwest Soaring Contest, Marion, Ohio, Municipal Airport.

July 2-4. First half of 1960 Southwestern and Texas State Soaring Championship, Georgetown, Texas, Municipal Airport. (25 mi. N. of Austin, Texas.)

July 2 - 4. Third Annual Tulsa Skyhawks Soaring Contest, Harvey Young Airport, 1500 So. Hoover, Tulsa, Okla.

July 4-8. West Coast Championship Soaring Contest, Fancher Field, Wenatchee, Washington.

Aug. 2 - 11. 27th Annual U. S. National Soaring Championships, Ector County Airport, Odessa, Texas.

Aug. 4-7. Soaring "Meeting" (Camp), Frankfort, Mich.

Aug. 12. SSA Board of Directors' Meeting, Odessa, Texas.

Sept. 3-5. Second half of 1960 Southwestern and Texas State Soaring Championship, Grand Prairie, Texas, Airport.

Sept. 3 - 5. 3rd Annual Rocky Mountain Soaring Contest, East Colfax Airpark, 10 mi. E. of Denver, Colo. Write Mervin Hicks 1345 Elmira St., Aurora, Colo.

Sept. 3-5. SCSA's Invitational Gypsy Soaring Contest to, at and from McCarran Field, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Sept. 3 - 5. National Air Rally, Orange, Mass., Airport.

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