

Quickly I moved the control stick about half way toward its forward stop, keeping the ailerons in neutral and applying partial top rudder, and waited for the stalled wing to start flying again — as it always had before. After one or two seconds I could see that I had not yet succeeded in unstalling the inboard wing and that indeed the Austria was starting to spin into the stalled inboard wing. I pushed the control stick all the way forward and applied full rudder against the spin. This should have stopped the spin quickly — but it did not! I had never encountered anything like this in all my 28 years and 6000 hours of flying, and I began to realize something was wrong!



Dick Johnson has performed this act many many times in his life, and twice has saved his life by doing it. The ship is Dick's *Adastra*.

I kept the control stick full forward and the ailerons neutral, but for some reason I could not get the nose to go down. I must confess that this really frightened me. I did succeed in stopping the spin rotation with the rudder control, but since the wing was still stalled the *Austria* quickly started spinning in the opposite direction! The aircraft acted just as if the elevator control was in the full nose up position, although I was holding the control stick firmly against its forward stop!

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By now I was convinced that either the elevator control system had failed, or that one of the rudder-control surfaces had come loose. I had spent about 10 seconds or so in my recovery attempts and had made absolutely no progress at all. I was now down to about 1700 feet, and probably descending at about 100 feet per second. My time was fast running out, and I knew that I had to jump without delay if I were to make a successful parachute escape!

I released the controls, pulled the canopy release, and jettisoned the canopy. As I was unlocking the seat belt latch, I noticed that the airspeed began to increase rapidly. Since I was *sure* that the *Austria* had suffered a control failure, and the ground was rushing up at an alarming rate, I made no further recovery attempt, but quickly opened the airbrakes to keep the speed down and unfastened the seat belts.

The normal acceleration in the cockpit was now close to plus two G's and I had a little difficulty getting out. My altitude was probably close to 1300 feet now. By pushing with my feet I was able to get out far enough to place one hand on each side of the cockpit

edge, and then gave a hard push using both my arms and legs for propulsion. With surprising ease I sailed up and over the V tail surfaces. I inspected the surfaces in the brief time I flashed by them, and they appeared to be normal. Well, I thought, the trouble must be in the fuselage control system somewhere.

As soon as I cleared the *Austria's* tail surfaces, I reached to my left chest and expected to find the parachute "D" ring there. When my hand did not find it immediately, I thought, "Damn! Where is it?" Looking down I realized these newer military type parachutes place the "D" ring on the left side rather than the forward chest location.

A quick pull, the canopy quickly steamed out, and then inflated with a crack which jerked me almost to a complete stop. I sighed with relief. I was about 800 to 1000 feet above a large plowed field near the river.

I looked for the *Austria* now but could not see it anywhere below. Then, on searching the sky I saw it gyrating wildly, in an inverted attitude, about 300 feet above and to the south of me. It continued gyrating harmlessly in a stalled falling leaf pattern and crashed audibly on one wing in the plowed field. A pickup truck was driving down a narrow dirt road about 250 feet away when the *Austria* hit to one side, and that dramatically got the driver's attention!

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It was just me and the parachute now, and the ground was steadily rising. Drift was rapid in the 30-knot wind and I knew my problems were not over yet. Looking below, I wondered if I could shout to the man in the pickup truck to grab my chute canopy when I landed. With my high drift rate and the rough plowed surface below I soon realized that was hopeless, and that if anything was to be done, I had to do it myself.

I looked down and tried to judge where I was going to land. Yoicks! There was a tall, isolated tree downwind from me in the field, and it looked as if I were heading directly toward it! I had mixed feelings about this prospect. I wanted something that would snag the parachute canopy after I landed, but I knew that if I were unlucky I could break my neck on one of those heavy branches. Better avoid the tree, I thought. It is probably a lot safer to be dragged across a plowed field.

I looked up at my canopy, grabbed a handful of risers on the side away from the tree and pulled. I missed the tree all right, but in my preoccupation with that problem, I neglected to prepare myself for the impact with the ground. The field was harder than it looked, and I apparently hit it with my legs stiff and straight. A sharp pain flashed thru my right leg, then immediately I rolled head over heels down the field in a most undignified fashion.

As soon as I could stop rolling, I reached up and pulled in the uppermost risers to deflate the chute and stop my rough and unwonted tow across the field. I then looked at my right foot and saw that it lay in a very unusual attitude. After trying to move it, I knew for sure the leg was broken just above the ankle joint.

The pickup truck soon arrived. The driver rolled up the chute, then called the ambulance for me and the airport for the *Austria*.