

MARFA REGIONAL SOARING CONTEST

MARFA TEXAS JUNE 12-18

(OPENS JUNE 5)

ENTRY FEE \$10 SSA SANCTIONED

OPEN TO ALL COMERS

FOR ENTRY BLANKS WRITE —

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SAFETY CORNER

I had not intended to belabor further the subject of adequate airspeed near the ground, but two accident reports have just been received (one covering an additional fatality which occurred during 1965, previously unreported) that are so pertinent I feel they should be brought to the attention of our members. The first report, taken almost verbatim from the Civil Aeronautics Board findings, concerns a fatal accident which occurred in Indiana last October. As yet the name of the pilot is not known to me, but he had a commercial rating and 5500 total flying hours and 15 hours in the Schweizer 1-26 he was flying at the time.

After an airplane-tow launch the glider was released south of the airport at an altitude of 2000 feet and the pilot flew over this area for about 45 minutes. The glider was next observed as it flew toward the airport from a south-westerly direction and made a shallow descent downwind for a landing on the 3000-foot-long west runway. The wind was from 320 degrees at 14 knots with gusts to 18 knots. Apparently the pilot was not satisfied with his pattern for, over the airport and heading east, he made a pull-up to approximately 200 feet and a wingover-360-degree left turn. The glider then turned toward the right and stalled, executed a one-turn spin and struck the ground in a nearly vertical nosedown attitude south-east of the approach end of runway 27.

Examination of the wreckage revealed no failure of the structure or malfunction of the controls that might have contributed to the crash. The probable cause is given as "Pilot failed to maintain flying speed while maneuvering for a landing."

The second report concerns a serious accident in which the pilot of a 1-26 was badly injured and the glider was completely demolished. The pilot, with a commercial license and glider rating, had flown seven or eight flights in a Schweizer 2-22 on the day in question before taking a normal winch launch in the 1-26. After flying locally for several hours the pilot

returned to the airport and made a normal entry on the downwind leg, but turned onto the base leg perhaps a bit lower than normally recommended. He turned onto final at about 100 feet altitude and flew about 300 feet further, then for some unexplained reason, and at an altitude of only 80 feet, began a 360-degree turn to the right. After about 200 degrees of the turn the bottom wing stalled and the glider spun in, hitting the right wingtip first then cart-wheeling over the nose and left wingtip before falling back right side up. Fortunately a doctor was at the scene in a matter of seconds and was able to direct the removal of the pilot so as not to further aggravate his injuries. Those consisted of three fractured vertebrae and minor cuts and bruises.

As to the sailplane, its right wing was broken in half inboard of the spoilers where the spar was severed and the left wing was bent back about 30 degrees with the spar badly buckled. The nose was crumpled and driven in about 18 inches and the fuselage was buckled forward of the tail section. Miraculously the entire cockpit and wing root section remained intact. The pilot had distinct bruises where his shoulder straps dug into his shoulders and where his safety belt was buckled around his waist, but there were no serious cuts or broken limbs. If it had not been for the structural integrity of the Schweizer 1-26 and a securely fastened seat belt and shoulder harness, it is very doubtful the pilot would have lived.

These two accidents both suggest the apparent need for more extensive training in stall and spin recognition and recovery, particularly for power pilots being checked out in sailplanes for it appears that many of them have never experienced a spin. Since there are sailplanes that stall and spin with little or no warning (I do not include the 1-26 in this category), and since stalls are not at all uncommon in many soaring situations, it is most important that *all* pilots taking up soaring be properly instructed in the subject. Club instructors and commercial operators should therefore insist that their students experience spins and learn correct recovery techniques before they be considered competent to fly gliders.

— MILES COVERDALE