

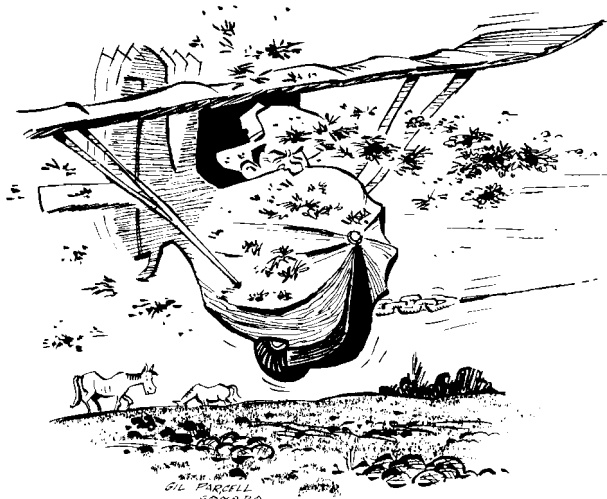
you couldn't tell when it was stalled except it sunk even worse than usual. Luckily it had a landing wheel which came off from a large road grader. When it hit the runway it grunted like a browsing elephant what had been overtaken from the rear by a Rhino just up to V max. The Wallower yo-yoed up and down about six times with virtually no forward motion and deminishing bounces each time. After it stopped my eyeballs yo-yoed another half dozen occilations. I staggered over the side and stood up.

"Ya never were very tall," Slim said, "but now ya look like a pair of shoes wearing a hat!"

A hasty inspection revealed that we hadn't busted anything off the Wallower, and we figured we didn't need all the original dihedral anyhow.

Next it was Slim's turn in the Wallower and mine in the Stupidbaker. I ground on down the runway looking in the rear view mirror for the cable to go slack but it just got steeper and steeper and I was about out of runway. I barreled out onto the overrun and from that into a plowed field but driving transverse to the furrows I slowed considerable. Finally an irritation ditch loomed ahead and I ground to a stop. I jumped out in time to see Slim go past the virtical, still on the wire. We didn't have a release on the car but had the wire tied to the bumper with a rope. I reached in the back seat for the sickle we carried for emergency rope cutting but it was gone. The furrows must a slung it under the seat. I was scared to death as I know Slim didn't have a snowballs chance in hell if he went over the top and kited straight in. About the time I was fumbling with the knots I began to hear wire coiling down around me and heard Slim yell,

"I got it made," he shouted. "Get clear of the wire!"



"... accelerating through a cloud of shredded horse manure."

I looked up and there he was racked into a tight spiral and flaking down wire in great loops. After the first two, his drift carried him to where the loops were no longer around the Stupidbaker. I hot footed it out of there and saw him level up for a final down wind pass alongside the car. He was going like a bat and I figured he would run out of slack wire before he did airspeed. Now steel wire, when it snaps under load, can really whip around. I didn't want to get any

shorter, so I did a swan dive into the irritation ditch. There was a mighty sound of grain being threshed and then all was still.



"... a mighty sound of grain being threshed ..."

I come up out of the ditch with my knees shakin so bad I could hardly run over to the ship.

"Are ya all right, Slim?" I asked inanely.

Slim just sat there with that far away, gentle smile that appears on the face of anyone who has stared at sudden death in the air, has mastered the instant of terror, and calling on skill beyond their conscious ability, saves their butt with first-class airmanship.

"I pulled the release all the way down," he muttered, "but she just wouldn't let go."

Then it was that we both saw it. Slims whitened knuckles were wound in a death grip about the SPOILER handle! When we got him disconnected and out of the ship we sat down and reconstructed the action. On take off, Slim had figured to cut down the wild yawing back and forth across the runways by using some wheel brake which on the Wallower was on the same handle as the spoiler. Once in the air he just plum forgot to switch over to the cable release lever.

Since that infamous day I have jousted with the aerial reaper on two occasions, have known that initial instant of terror followed by the cool clear thought process and lightning swift reaction that saves ones butt, but neither time was I as scared as that day I thought I had killed Slim through damn foolish haste to fly. If any of you have heard this story before kindly forget the names involved. Slim is now a respected College Perfesser and Shorty, while still in the Defence Industry, might want to repent and switch to a more honest living (like a blackjack dealer or something) some day and we would hate to have the folly of our youth on record.