

SAFETY CORNER

Last month's article outlined good, safe practice in landing back at a familiar airport. This month I will try to bring together all the additional rules and suggestions having to do with making a safe away landing in a strange field.

Remember first of all that the *only* important consideration is that of safety: any thoughts of personal convenience with regard to telephoning or ease of retrieve must be strictly secondary. While moving cross-country you should always keep a safe landing field within conservative gliding range (conservative since you can never count on achieving the maximum glide ratio under ordinary circumstances) and this of course becomes increasingly important as altitude decreases. It is essential that a pilot should establish for himself an altitude limit below which he will not attempt to soar regardless of the circumstances, and this altitude will vary depending on the experience of the pilot and the difficulty of the terrain. For most of us this point should be no less than 1000 feet above the ground.

You should select the largest suitable field available, in order to increase the permissible margin of error in setting up the approach, and remember that flying downwind in searching for a field will cover appreciably more territory than flying upwind. The landing should of course be made upwind (unless several factors mentioned later dictate otherwise) in order to steepen the approach, reduce approach and

touchdown speeds, and shorten the landing run. Wind direction is generally determined from smoke, flags, and ripples on crops or water. If the ripples on a pond are small and their motion cannot be seen, then the upwind side can usually be determined by the fact that the water is smooth along the upwind shore and rippled along the downwind shore.

Fields from which crops have been harvested are generally good since cultivation smooths the ground and removes obstacles, or at least leaves them visible. Landings can be made if necessary into low crops, but remember that tall or heavy crops not only hide obstructions but also can break the stabilizer and rear fuselage, or cause a bad ground loop when a wingtip is caught. Ships with skids can be landed either along or across furrows, but those with wheels should only be landed in the direction of the furrows. Pastures are suspect since they are uncultivated and may be filled with rocks, ruts and ditches as well as livestock. If your field lies alongside a main road be sure to be especially careful of telephone and high tension lines, for they are very unforgiving when struck by a sailplane. For this reason approaches over wires are to be avoided if possible—and you should *never* plan an approach under wires you know are there. Generally speaking the lees of hills should also be avoided, due to possible turbulence, as well as approaches over tall obstructions such as trees or buildings which lengthen the landing run unduly. You must always land upslope or, less desirable, across a slope regardless of wind direction—never land downhill! If you can detect the slope from the air then it is too steep for you to be able to get the sailplane onto the ground going downhill. Remember that fields along rivers, lakes or flooded areas slope towards the water. If a landing is being made onto a slope with a definite uphill slant you will need a little extra speed at the last moment to enable you to pull up parallel to the surface of the ground.

As pointed out last month you should be prepared to fly a proper pattern without dependence on the altimeter, and it is best to stay upwind and to one side of the field being considered to allow the best possible judgment of the coming approach. Avoid staying in too close to the field unless in a high wind, since you would then be unable to make good judgments of your glide path and proper adjustments of your height. Remember that an overshoot is much preferable to an undershoot, if only because of the speed at which you will hit any obstruction—flying speed on an undershoot but certainly something less on an overshoot. When it is seen on final that the sailplane is certain to clear the near boundary of the field then it should be slowed down with full spoiler or airbrake to prevent bounce and shorten the ground run, and if necessary the stick should be put forward after contact with the ground in order to drag the skid and slow the ship as quickly as possible.

After landing tie the sailplane down if you can, or leave it with the canopy closed and the upwind wing weighted to prevent it from being picked up by the wind. In a strong wind it is best to stay in the cockpit until help arrives. And never leave a ship in a field with livestock unless you wish to find it later with hoof-shaped holes in wingtip and tail, and teeth marks all over!

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