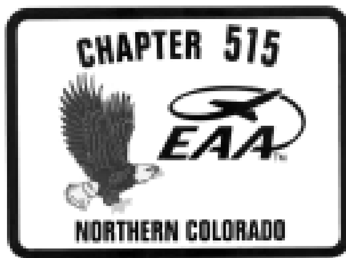

EAA CHAPTER 515
Fort Collins/Loveland
Colorado

NEWS

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In This Issue

• Surviving the Crash .. 1
• Thunderstorm 2
• From the President 3
• Rocky Mtn Flyin 3
• Knowing Ron O'Dea . 4
• General Olds 5

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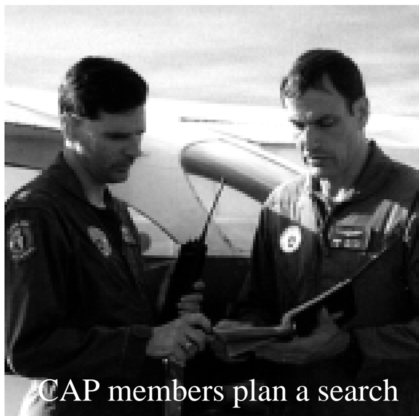
Surviving the Crash



CAP representative Sue Wolber explains to Chapter 515 how to survive a crash.

In a fast-moving and often humorous presentation at the April meeting, Sue Wolber of the CAP gave us lots of tips on what to do if you survive a crash, including the advice to not crash at all. At least 80% of crashes are due to pilot error, so not crashing is something we could do a lot more often. Mechanical failures are actually quite rare.

Sue covered much more, but below is just some of her advice. Take a mountain-flying course. Do file a flight plan (make sure that you close it later), but not "direct" since the CAP needs all the clues it can get as to your likely crash area. If you need to deviate, call flight service with your changes. Without a flight plan, it may take 2 days or more before a search is even started. Call in often. Doing so reduces the search area. If you realize that you are going down, call Mayday on 121.5 with your position, and squawk 7700. Make sure that your ELT works, and that it is off after you land, especially after a hard "arrival." Buy the 406 MHz ELT if you can afford it (how much is your life worth?), since it puts out a much more reliable digital signal, with far fewer false signals. In

(continued on page 5)

EAA CHAPTER 515 MEETING

When: Tuesday, May 7, 2002 • 7:30 PM
Where: Military Science Building • CSU Campus • Ft Collins
Program: Ron Zasadzinski will speak on "Aviation Weather and The Most Useful Aviation Weather Sites on the Web". You won't want to miss this one.

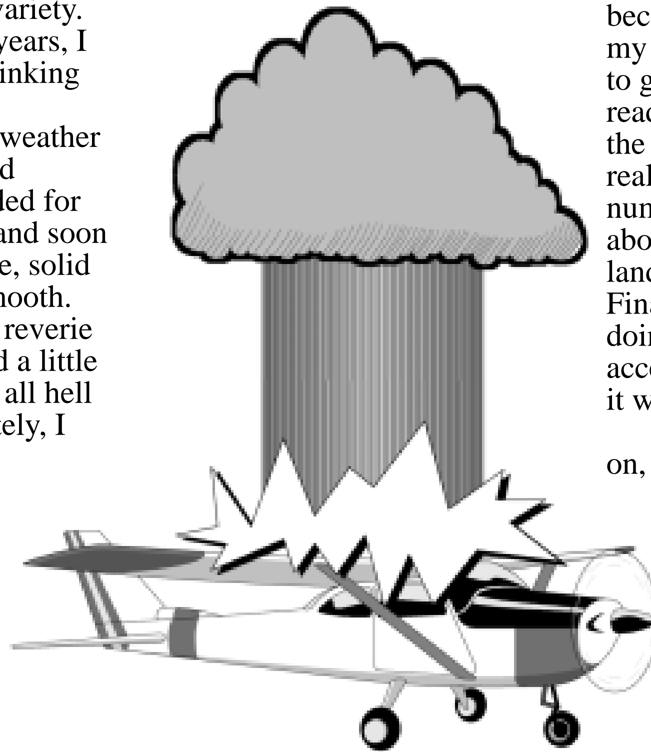
Thunderstorm

By Ron Grob

The thunderstorm season will soon be here, and it comes at a time of year when general aviation pilots do more flying. Not very many of us have flown into a thunderstorm cell in a single and lived to tell about it. Fortunately, the one in which I explored the structural limits of a Cessna 172, as well as my personal limits, was a relatively "mild" Wisconsin imbedded thunderstorm compared to the virulent western plains variety. Even so, after about 25 years, I still get sweaty palms thinking about that flight.

After checking the weather and filing IFR, I departed Duluth, Minnesota, headed for West Bend, Wisconsin, and soon entered textbook practice, solid IFR. It was perfectly smooth. After about an hour, my reverie was violently interrupted a little west of Oshkosh, where all hell broke loose. Unfortunately, I had neglected to keep checking weather enroute and the controller hadn't warned me. Thunderstorms, which had been forecast for south of Milwaukee, suddenly were my life-threatening challenge.

How long I was actually in cells I don't really know, because my adrenaline rush was so huge that it seemed as though time slowed down. The turbulence was extreme (at least for a C172), the airspeed went from near red-line to stall and back in seconds, rain was so heavy that it sounded as though I was inside a steel barrel and hundreds of drummers were drumming on it. I greatly resisted the temptation to pull and push to resist the wild speed variations, because I had read about airplanes disintegrating when pilots did that. The altitude fluctuated plus or minus about 2000 feet, so I was glad that I was high enough to start with. I don't remember talking to a controller about my plight. I was too busy for conversation, but I'm sure that he knew that I had a big problem, since I had an encoding altimeter. I decided to go ahead, rather than turn around, since I remembered that Richard Taylor had recommended doing that in his book, "Weather Flying." Doing that supposedly would reduce the time in the storm, and also make it less likely to lose control. I had studied the approach plates for West Bend before the flight and knew the field well, since that is where I took my primary flight training. I decided to proceed rather than try to land in Fondulac or somewhere else.



With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, knowing what would lie ahead, I probably should have turned around and flown to where it was smooth again. With the severe/extreme turbulence, there is no way that I could have even read a new approach plate, much less study it, and taking it out of the Jepps book would have been impossible. The book pages would have been sprayed all over the cockpit if I had opened the binder.

About then, life became even more interesting. I don't know what caused it to this day, because I don't think that I hit my head, but my vision started to get blurred, and I had trouble reading the panel. Maybe it was the intense adrenaline rush. I really began to wonder if my number was up when I thought about how hard it would be to land without seeing very well. Finally, I just resigned myself to doing the best I could and accepting the outcome, whatever it would be.

The generator light came on, and I knew from one of the instrument training sessions with Bill Hale that I had about 20 minutes of battery time left (as I recall, he unscrewed a fuse when I wasn't looking so as to simulate a generator failure). Unfortunately, I wasn't sure that I had noticed the red light right away. I decided to shut off the master switch and shut off all of the electrical loads except the one navcom. The severe turbulence made it difficult to even guide my hand to switches, and I had trouble seeing them besides. I still had the gyros, and the ball on the turn coordinator (but not the turn indicator). I planned to turn on the radio about every ten

Storm - *(continued from page 2)*

minutes to check my position, make a heading correction, and then turn off the radio again until the time to make the approach into West Bend.

Near West Bend, even though it was still raining extremely hard, the turbulence probably was only moderate, and my vision got better, so I began to hope against hope that I might actually survive the ordeal. However, there still was the issue of how much battery life I had for the approach, and I knew the VOR approach had to be nailed, because there might not be a second chance. Scotty, beam me up! I really didn't want to fly any more that day. I was exhausted, but didn't have any options.

I turned on the navcom, and since I only had one, had to switch back and forth between VOR's to get my step-downs for the VOR approach. It is amazing how focused you can become when your life is at stake, and I did nail the approach. I arrived at the minimum descent altitude as early as was allowed and was still in the soup. What would I do if I couldn't see the field? Should I take a chance by busting the minimum since the terrain there is relatively flat (towers?), or hope I had enough battery time left to do an unfamiliar ILS approach into Milwaukee? Should I head east over Lake Michigan and let down until I saw water (fog?), then hope that I could find some place to land? Fortunately, the field came into sight in time to land so I didn't have to make that decision, but I had to come down pretty fast to get in. It still was raining very hard when I tied down and my former primary instructor came out to tell me that the FAA wanted to know if I had made it all right. They never asked me to talk to them or to file a report. Maybe the controller was embarrassed for not warning me about the thunderstorm.

That evening, my sister, her family, and I went to a movie: "Heaven Can Wait." I agreed fully with that idea.

When I got back to Loveland, I called Bill Hale to thank him for being so hard on me in practice sessions. He usually loaded me down by covering instruments until there wasn't anything left to work with. I had the annual done ahead of time, since I was worried about possible structural damage, but it was OK. Cessna 172's are tough airplanes.

My motivation for writing this is to warn those who may need it that thunderstorms are every bit as bad as we have been told. I can't imagine surviving a ride in a 172 through one of our Colorado 45,000 foot summer thunderstorms. The relatively mild one I was in provided the wildest ride I ever had. I was happy that I had not had a passenger along. Any passenger probably would have panicked, adding another level of difficulty, and the passenger surely would never have wanted to fly again. ■

Message from the President

It was nice to see a good turn out for the April meeting. There were some new faces and some members we have not seen for a while. Any successful organization needs to grow, so do not forget to invite a prospective member to attend with you. It is always more fun and educational with a good group of aviation buffs who get together to share fellowship and trade lies.

Gilbert Wheeler has decided to not be the Young Eagles

(continued on page 4)

• TWENTY FOURTH ANNUAL •
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Getting to Know Ron O'Dea

by Dean Hall

Our Treasurer, Ron O'Dea has still a different aviation history typical of the diversity of aviation experiences and skills in our chapter. Ron was born in Cambridge, Mass and grew up in Woburn. After high school, he enlisted in the Air Force and as the military frequently does, he was miscast, at age 17, weighing 105 pounds, and 5'4", as a Military Policeman. He was an MP for 4 years ending up in the canine corp. During the height of the Cuban crisis, he was in Taranto, Italy, where he was charged with preventing the "unauthorized" launch of nuclear missiles.

He then went to Bentwaters-Woodbridge in England where he was guarding the 81st TAC Fighter Wing, which was equipped with nuclear bombs. [Note: My brother-in-law Captain Harold Trick was flying one of those nuclear equipped fighters out of that base at that time.] And, guess what, while they were there, a new commanding officer arrived, none other than Colonel Robin Olds. There is a story there, and it may come out at our banquet.

When that four-year enlistment was up, Ron reenlisted and chose electronics. He was sent to Keesler AFB in Mississippi for training. This won him a year in Viet Nam as a GCA Radar Technician where his biggest risk was from our own damaged and disabled aircraft sometimes returning with live ammunition on board. Ron was in the Radar box right between the runways.

After the military, Ron drifted a bit doing some electronics. He idly said to a crusty old Scotsman friend that he always wanted to be a pilot. The retort was, "You don't really want to be a pilot, or you would be one." This was a rude awakening to Ron. The guy was right. Ron had the GI Bill and there was no excuse. He found a flight school and was on his way. He got all the ratings including Multi, CFII and ATP.

He instructed for a while, went to Wichita to take the Cessna Pilot Center Program which was revolutionary in terms of the organization and presentation of flight training, and then he was on the fast track. He reorganized the training at his flight school, became a Cessna Salesman, and flew around nine states representing Cessna as a Pilot Center Specialist. He then spent the years '75 to '86 as a District Manager for Cessna covering an area stretching from Detroit, Pittsburgh, to Wichita. He flew everything from 152s to Conquests. Mostly, he was demonstrating airplanes which is in contrast to instructing because the effort is to make the pilot look good, just subtly change the trim or nudge the controls a little bit or whatever. He was also the "tail dragger specialist" —C-195, 180, 185, Luscombe, Stinson Voyager, etc.

It was in 1979 that he met an attractive office manager at a Cessna dealer in Pontiac, MI. Cessna had a strict non-fraternizing rule regarding their salesmen and the dealer's office personnel. Soooo, Ron and B.J. were very discrete. No one had a clue until two years later when Ron went to the dealer and told him that he had good news, bad news. The good news was that Ron was being promoted and transferred. The bad news: "You are losing your office manager; B.J. is going with me and we are getting married."

In 1991, an opportunity opened at ATP, Aircraft Technical Publishers which produces Aircraft Maintenance and Federal Regulatory Information Libraries for aircraft repair stations and aircraft mechanics. Ron is the Regional Sales Manager covering a "modest little area" extending from the Rocky Mountains to Minnesota to Texas and back, and this includes a lot of flying in his Bonanza (!). In addition to selling he also conducts training classes for his customers and participates with the FAA at the annual IA renewal seminars in his area as an instructor. He still does some flight instructing, but only selectively and on his own schedule. Ron and B.J. exemplify general aviation at its best and are real assets to our chapter.

President - *(continued from page 3)*

coordinator. I have expressed our thanks for his efforts in the past and have persuaded him to continue on with his fine job of rounding up kids. He did such a great job that we sometimes had too many! I guess you can never have too many young people interested in aviation, and the goal of EAA has not yet been met, so we shall continue on with some more Young Eagle days. A special thanks for the members who came out and took the kids for a ride. I hope I do not leave anyone out, but here goes—Mel Callen, Jim Grubbs, Dean Hall, Russ Kamtz, and David Larsen (his 210 has six seats). Does anyone have access to a 737 or something?

I have belonged to many organizations but you guys and gals are the best! - *Taylor*

Gen. Robin Olds -

Chapter 515 Banquet Speaker

Our banquet speaker will be Gen. Robin Olds. The following is a highly edited excerpt from a book called FAST MOVERS. A little bit of biographical material may be in order leading up to the Viet Nam story. Robin Olds was an All American football player at West Point. He was one of the top aces in Europe flying the P-38 and P-51 being credited with 13 aerial combat victories and 11 airplanes destroyed on the ground. At one time he was the leader of the Air Force Aerobatic Team Late in his career, he was the Commandant of the Air Force Academy.

Excerpts from
John Darrell Sherwood's New Book.

Fast Movers
Jet Pilots and the Vietnam Experience

Robin Olds' story stands out as one of the most interesting examples of true flight-suit leadership in modern air-power history. In 1967 the Eighth Wing did not possess a more talented group of pilots than any other F-4 wing in Vietnam. The 366th Wing, based at Da Nang in South Vietnam, for example, had just as many skilled pilots, but this unit only achieved 18 aerial victories during the war compared to the Eighth Wing's 38.5. What transformed the Eighth from an ordinary line outfit into the premier MiG-killing wing of the period was Robin Olds' leadership and the sheer force of his personality.

Olds' tremendous success as a combat leader stemmed from three elements in his personality: his loyalty to his men, his desire to share danger with his men, and his willingness to socialize and interact casually with his troops. Olds never asked someone else to do something that he wouldn't do himself. He also did his utmost to shield his men from policies and orders that he deemed nonsensical or downright dangerous. This last characteristic made him a controversial figure with his superiors and hurt his career in the long run. Arguably, Robin Olds was the finest Air Force wing commander in the Vietnam War. His wing received two presidential unit citations, and he himself won the Air Force Cross. Overall, he flew 152 missions as wing commander and emerged from the war as the Air Force's fourth leading MiG killer with four MiGs to his credit. The Wing as a whole flew 13,249 sorties over North Vietnam and 1,983 sorties into Laos between 1 October 1966 and 31 August 1967. With all this activity, it only lost 29 aircraft during Olds' tenure. More significant than the numbers, awards, and accolades is

(continued on page 6)

Surviving - *(continued from page 1)*

about 7 years, you will need to buy one anyway. Carry a glass signal mirror, a cell phone, hunter orange clothes, warm clothes, first aid kit, garbage sacks, streamers (surveyor tape), Jell-O to scatter onto snow, waterproof matches, a whistle, and water. Carrying water is much more important than carrying food since you can only survive about 3 days without water. You need to stay with the plane to survive, so don't bother with a compass. The plane is much more visible than you are, so SIT and STAY in the open. Unusual colors or motion attract attention. Three bright flashes from a signal mirror are especially effective in attracting a searcher's attention, and a mirror is cheap. No mountain searching is done at night and night searches on the plains are usually not fruitful, so flares are of limited use. Use the cockpit for shelter, and start a smoky fire with tires or remaining oil or fuel. Stay warm, dry, and hydrated, and just wait.

Sue ended her presentation with a call for us to join the CAP for $50 per year, and to fly a Cessna 182 for $60 per hour wet after appropriate skills are learned. They especially need back seat spotters with sharp eyes and cast iron stomachs. ■

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Loveland, CO 80537

Robin Olds - *(continued from page 5)*

what other pilots say about Olds. Ask any Air Force fighter pilot from the Vietnam era who America's greatest air commander was, and inevitably the name Robin Olds will emerge at the top of the list. An informal poll of the 300 pilots interviewed for this book confirms Robin's place in the fraternity of fighter pilots. What was the source of this man's popularity? He was willing to share danger with others. Not once in his entire career did Robin Olds ever ask a pilot to do something that he would not do himself.

In the end, what made Robin Olds such a fine combat leader was not so much his raw intelligence, his tolerance of drinking and debauchery in the unit, his loyalty to the troops, or his meritocratic approach to combat leadership, although these characteristics certainly helped; rather, it had more to do with his willingness to fight right alongside his men, combined with his extraordinary skills as a pilot. Olds never accompanied a combat flight simply "for the ride," but fought with his men with fierce courage. Despite his initial inexperience with the F-4 system, Olds ultimately mastered the aircraft well enough to become a leading MiG killer in the War. No other wing commander came close to achieving this potent combination of skill and aggression, and that is why Robin Olds is remembered as the finest Wing commander of the Vietnam War.

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