CALLBACK ASRS

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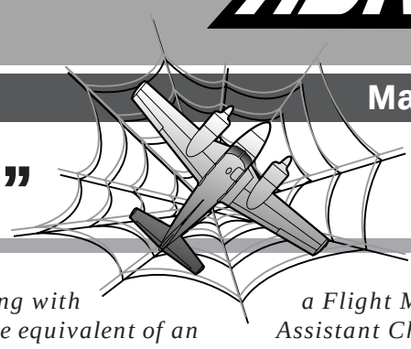

"...Blow Off the Cobwebs"

Spring cleaning around the house requires clearing cobwebs out of hidden corners. Apparently the same holds true for pilots who have been flightless during the winter, or have been on vacation for a while. An instructor reports on his cobweb-clearing efforts with a seaplane pilot:

■ *I was giving a springtime seaplane checkout to a rated pilot for currency and to blow off the cobwebs after a long winter. I picked a long stretch of water to simulate a heavy or high density takeoff by using less than full power for takeoff. The trainee showed a lot of cobwebs, and could not get the seaplane airborne. A boat moving toward us caught my eye. I looked over the nose and realized we were approaching a shallow area followed by the shoreline with tall trees and a few houses. I took the controls and got the seaplane off the water...barely clear of the trees and houses.*

Trainees who "show a lot of cobwebs" bear extra monitoring, particularly when practicing advanced or difficult maneuvers.

Even highly-qualified pilots are prone to cobwebs if they lack recent flight experience, as an air carrier First Officer learned on a flight with a company Flight Manager.

■ *I was flying with a Flight Manager, that being the equivalent of an Assistant Chief Pilot. He had only flown 28 hours in the last 6 months. We were climbing to an assigned altitude of 12,000 feet. Through 11,000 feet, I called 1,000 feet to go, and the altitude alerter worked normally. At 11,600 feet, we were still climbing at 3,000 feet per minute, so I mentioned that we were approaching our altitude. At 12,100 feet, I said, "There's our altitude." The Captain immediately pushed the aircraft over. We returned to 12,000 feet.*

I made the erroneous assumption that, despite the lack of current flight time, his proficiency would be good due to his position, and that this lack of time would not affect a Flight Manager as much as a line pilot. Also, I was reluctant to speak up as much as I should have, [due] to the position held by this individual...and my respect for him.

The reporter suggests that the Flight Manager's status may have inhibited the reporter's typical use of CRM skills, thereby inadvertently contributing to this minor altitude deviation.

Plan to Close that Flight Plan

Some pilots who have been out of the flying game for awhile may have lost the habit of closing a flight plan. Two reporters offer stories of unusual circumstances surrounding flight plans left open. First, a general aviation pilot relied on the Tower to close a VFR flight plan, as would be typical for **this** airport—except when the Tower is closed.

■ *I was flying a club aircraft out of [a military base] and opened a local VFR flight plan with FSS. The base Tower normally closes flight plans when the aircraft arrives, but the Tower was closed. When Tower is closed, I normally close with FSS via radio while still airborne, but low visibility distracted my attention. First time in over 35 years of flying that I forgot to close my flight plan!*

The good news: the aircraft was airborne again [with the next renter-pilot] before the FAA would have begun a search. The new pilot was opening his flight plan with FSS before FSS would be calling to look for an overdue aircraft.

Several years ago, *CALLBACK* published letters from a number of readers who offered memory-joggers for closing flight plans. Suggestions included wearing your watch on the wrong wrist, rolling up one pant leg, leaving notes in your car, attaching a clothes pin to the aircraft ignition key or even your shirt collar, and, of course, adding a line item to the aircraft landing or shutdown checklist.

A flight crew on an IFR flight plan normally can rely on the mere completion of their flight into a Tower-controlled airport to effectively cancel their IFR plan. In our next report, from an air carrier Captain, a bit of a twist was at the heart of the failure to cancel an IFR flight plan:

■ *Just outside the outer marker, Center gave us a hand-off to Tower. We checked in with Tower... and were advised that the Tower would probably close [for the evening] before we arrived. We reported the outer marker to the Tower and they said that they were closing the Tower.*

After landing, we were given a report over Tower frequency that braking action was poor on the taxiways. We taxied in and parked, never going back to Center to cancel IFR. Another air carrier's ground personnel canceled for us with Center. Having received the braking action report after touchdown, neither of us thought about canceling the flight plan. Our mindset was "situation normal" for a Tower airport.

The situation became non-normal the moment the Tower reported closing. That announcement should have given the crew a "heads-up" that they were now responsible for canceling their IFR flight plan.

ASRS Recently Issued Alerts On...
Canadair CL-65 inflight windshield failure
SAAB 340B engine inlet fire during icing conditions
MD-90 inflight fuel leak from fuel pump access panel
Updated ARTS IIA generating erroneous low altitude alerts
Less than standard separation incident in S. American airspace

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Air Carrier Pilots	2081
General Aviation Pilots	797
Controllers	76
Cabin/Mechanics/Military/Other	89
TOTAL	**3043**

Operations at Uncontrolled Airports

Non-standard procedures at uncontrolled airports continue to be a frequent subject of ASRS reports. In our first report, a general aviation pilot preparing for a landing met transient traffic in an unexpected place at an uncontrolled airport.

■ *About 5 miles out, I called for an airport advisory, then a couple of minutes later, I called to announce that we were 2 miles south of the airport. The airport wasn't very busy, with just one plane taking off. I looked for traffic along the downwind leg that might interfere with our entrance into the pattern and that might not have a radio or had failed to make use of the one they did have. Everything looked clear. I announced that we were mid-field at 1,400 feet entering a downwind for Runway 28. Just after crossing over the runway, I looked down to check the windsock...and saw the shadow of another airplane converging on our shadow with only seconds to go. I turned my head just in time to watch the wing of a high-wing aircraft slide under the tail of our plane no more than 20 feet below us. It was a chilling sight.*

It was an enroute aircraft, not landing at our airport. Good pilots use the radio and fly above the traffic pattern when traversing an airport's traffic area. Other pilots may not.

The reporter concludes that the basic "see-and-avoid" rule is still the best defense against pilots who are not following good operating procedures.

An airport that normally has an operating Control Tower becomes an uncontrolled airport when the Tower closes for the night. Pilots then use the Tower frequency as a Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF). At least some pilots do. An air carrier Captain reports:

■ *We transmitted our intentions on CTAF and proceeded to Runway 20. During taxi, we heard no other radio calls. We announced on CTAF that we were taxiing onto Runway 20. We had still heard no calls from any other aircraft. I was about to advance the throttles, when to our total astonishment, we saw a light aircraft lifting off, coming straight at us on Runway 2. Due to the lay of the land, we were unable to see him until he lifted off. He flew overhead and finally broke the silence by announcing that he was turning downwind. After he was well clear, we departed uneventfully. It was just luck and fortunate timing that we did not meet head-on at high speed at mid-field.*

The preceding reports emphasize the importance of vigilance and radio communications at uncontrolled fields.

A Roast, But No Picnic

FAR 91.103 requires pilots to familiarize themselves with all available information about their flights. Our next reporter used several means to familiarize himself, but neglected a basic one—a current sectional chart.

■ *Before my flight, I checked NOTAMs which indicated a change of identifier, but no frequency change. I took the frequency from a sectional which was expired. I had a new sectional chart with me, but failed to check the frequency. I also checked the airport guide, but it was apparently not up to date. So basically I arrived in Class D airspace with an outdated frequency.*

I got no response from Tower, which I did not consider strange, because on my last visit on a weekend evening, the Tower was not occupied. There was no traffic in the air and I proceeded as if in uncontrolled airspace...reporting my position in the pattern, however on the wrong frequency. After I parked, I was summoned to the Tower, where the Controller roasted me.

Pilots need to review up-to-date publications to confirm frequencies, traffic patterns, and other relevant airport information.

VIP Airspace*

*(*Very Important Prohibited)*

Lately, ASRS has received a number of reports concerning a very small patch of airspace that carries very big clout—Prohibited Area P-56, over the White House in Washington, DC. Some arrival and departure procedures for nearby Washington National Airport (DCA) may bring pilots very close to P-56 if they do not follow the routings precisely. A corporate First Officer reports just such an experience:

■ *The clearance was "Depart North, noise abatement procedure," not "Northwest" as usual. The weather was VMC. I elected to fly the Potomac River visually as was allowed by the procedure instead of intercepting the DCA VOR 328 radial outbound. ATC then directed a turn to 270 degrees. Later, we were informed by ATC that there may have been an incursion into [prohibited] airspace by our aircraft.*

A call was received by our employer from the United States Secret Service, advising that they believed our aircraft to have violated [prohibited area] P-56, north of DCA. The Captain and I were interviewed by the Secret Service.

Upon further reflection and review of the DCA ATIS at the time, a strong wind from the west may have been a contributing factor.