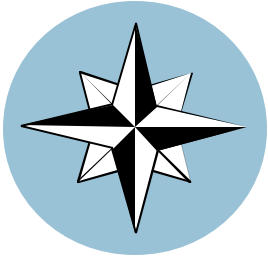


FAA ALASKAN FLYER

AVIATION NEWS FROM THE FAA ALASKAN REGION FLIGHT STANDARDS DIVISION
SUMMER 2004 VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1



The Flyer has Returned

The Federal Aviation Administration Flight Standards Division is happy to announce the resurrection of the FAA Alaskan Flyer. For future editions submit articles and ideas to your local Safety Program Managers, listed below.

Aviation Appreciation Day in Fairbanks By David Karalunas



Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor Jim Whitaker presents Aviation Appreciation Day Proclamation to FAA Regional Safety Program Manager Kieran O'Farrell.

The 3rd annual Aviation Appreciation Day celebration was held on the west ramp of the Fairbanks International Airport on Saturday, June 19, 2004. At least 750 enthusiasts braved the heat to attend.

Aviation Appreciation Day recognizes the significance of aviation in our Alaska heritage. Events included sessions on Medallion Foundation programs and Circle of Safety, aircraft static displays, vendor exhibits, and

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The Alaskan Region Safety Program

The Safety Program wishes to remind airmen of some of the educational opportunities and recognition programs provided by the FAA.

- Pilot and Aircraft Courtesy Evaluations (PACE)
- Aviation Maintenance Technician Award Program
- Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award Program
- Pilot Proficiency (Wings) Program

Contact your local Flight Standards Safety Program Managers listed on the right for more information on any of these programs.

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The Federal Aviation Administration's Safety Program has been producing safety seminars, pamphlets, advisory circulars, videos and many other safety related items for years. The US Postal Service has been our primary way to deliver notices about the availability of these items and information about when and where seminars would be held. This method of delivery is very slow and costly. With the growing popularity of e-mail and its magnificent suitability for delivery of this type of information we have developed the Safety Program Airmen Notification System or SPANS. A user friendly web site that one can use as merely a place to "see" what events are coming up in your local area or any area throughout the country with just a few simple clicks of the mouse. However, many will find it much more convenient to register with the site and receive this information and important safety alerts right in your e-mail box in a timely manner. It's your choice and our way of spanning the gap between the FAA and our customers.

Since its launch on March 21, 2004, the site has had over seven million hits and averages over 700 visitors daily. We have been delightfully surprised at its overwhelming success. Over 3500 seminar registrations have been received. Safety Program Seminars in some areas have seen an increase of over 15% in average attendance and all in two short months. The on-line registration, for most events, has helped the FAA plan better and save resources which can be put into bring you even more safety events and materials.

What has made it so successful? Airmen have expressed to us that it is not your typical site, hard to navigate and find what you need, rather it is user friendly and simple in form and function. Many

have said it is the timeliness of the information. Almost all have said "it's about time" the FAA has done something to make finding the safety information they need easy, fast and effortless.

SPANS — part of a larger effort

SPANS is a part of a much larger effort to bring safety information to you via the web and e-mail. FAASafety.gov will soon bring you a Safety Library, aviation related links, on-line training on safety topics, and a one stop shop to order FAA safety related publications and materials like videos, CD's and DVD's. We are not trying to compete with the many great organizations that already have a great effort on-the-way to provide airmen with safety information. Our goal is to bring to you information which the FAA has to help you fly safely and legally. We aim, at FAASafety.gov, to bring you up-to-date pertinent safety information and span the gap between the FAA and all airmen in using the National Airspace System safely.

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT SPANS

Event Search: This is the heart of SPANS. You can search for events by specifying parameters like Zip Code & Mile Radius, State, Airport, FAA District/Region or Keywords. If you are registered on the site when you log in all events within 50 miles of your home or office will appear on the screen automatically. Or perhaps you are willing to go a little further away from home to gain a little more information on that trip to the mountains you are planning. Simply type in "Mountain Flying" or similar keywords to find all the events in the country where your topic of choice will be discussed. Pick the one you want to attend and then register

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on-line to receive a reminder of the event when you would like one, delivered right to your e-mail box.

Preferences: Here is where you can customize SPANS to suit your personal needs. Change your e-mail address, password or which ratings you would like to receive pertinent safety information on. Customize the type of notifications you wish to receive automatically or completely opt-out of the SPANS system.

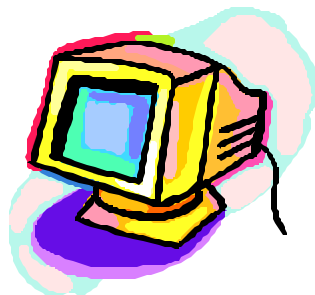
Local Contact Information: Have you ever wanted to know who your Safety Program Manager was? Or, perhaps a local Aviation Safety Councilor to ask a question of? Do you know which Flight Standards District Office is in your area? You will find this and other items your local Safety Program Manager deems appropriate to add to the list.

Site Suggestions: We are always looking for ways to improve SPANS and FAASafety.gov. This is your opportunity to let us know how we can. First you can let us know what type of seminar information you wish to have in your local area. Or what kind of on-line training would help you most. Pick from the list of National Emphasis Items or give us your own thoughts and ideas.

FAASafety.gov

As the safety program transitions into the twenty-first century come make the transition with us. Bring your ideas of how we can help you fly safer and smarter. FAASafety.gov is the place to be. Tell all your friends, have them bring their ideas with them and let's continue to SPAN the gap between the FAA and Airmen. Help us rebuild a new robust safety team by taking part in this great effort to reduce General Aviation and all accidents in the greatest airspace system in the world. For more information register at FAASafety.gov.

James E. Pyles
Northwest Mountain Region
Safety Program Manager
FAASafety.gov Team Leader



Saltwater & Floatplane Corrosion: The gift that keeps on giving

By Kieran O'Farrell

It was one of those mornings, you know the kind I'm talking about. It's early, my maintenance counterpart and I are talking airplanes, reminiscing over a good cup of coffee when the inevitable daily argument begins. The subject really doesn't matter; pilots and mechanics can look at the same airplane very differently. It's all a matter of perspective.

The subject of this morning's lively discussion was aircraft corrosion on floatplanes. I suspect that most of us pilots do a pretty thorough pre-flight. We are cognizant of the ever-constant threat of corrosion on floatplanes, and inspect our plane for it. However, prior to each flight, looking at every fitting, lap joints, and all rivets is not always a reality for a Part 135 pilot working 14-hours a day. What is important is to know what to look for and to watch for signs of corrosion compromising your airplane.

Corrosion is the enemy of any vessel on the water and never more so than for a floatplane in a saltwater environment. There are important areas to check for corrosion and precautions that we can take. (These will be especially popular with your mechanic.)

Areas that are especially susceptible to corrosion on the airframe of floatplanes are:

1. The skin lap joints along the belly.
2. All the cable pulley fittings & brackets on the belly.
3. All of the rivets in areas exposed to exhaust and saltwater.
4. The float gear fittings that connect to the fuselage, as they are exposed to the persistent saltwater spray.

Areas that require our vigilance on the floats of

(Continued on page 8)

The "Bush Flight", when you *have* to go hunting in the *worst* way!

Kieran K. O'Farrell

Dave and Mick could not wait to get out hunting this year. By all accounts the game was plenty. They loaded up all of their gear and headed to the airport. They had chartered a new pilot this year, one that was making a name for himself in Alaska as a guy that would get the job done. They met their pilot, Ross T. Farrian, at the float pond. They loaded up their gear in the Cessna 206 and headed for the lake. Ross piloted his plane through the mountain passes and the fog. The lake appeared through the mist and they landed uneventfully. Mick and Dave waved good-bye to the plane and set up camp.

The hunt was everything they hoped it would be. They had two large bulls, and a fair sized deer. Ross appeared on the agreed upon day to pick them up. They heard the plane for a few minutes before they actually saw it descend through the fog. The low ceilings and poor rainy weather had been persistent throughout the hunt. Ross landed hard on the lake's glassy surface and taxied to the shore where Dave and Mick were waiting. Ross looked at all the gear, the men and the meat while doing mental calculations that left him frowning. "Look guys," he grumbled "this lake is too small, the water too glassy, to haul all this out in one load. I am going to have to make two trips." Dave and Mick argued that this was not what they had agreed upon, it was getting late, and they definitely were not going to pay any more for unnecessary extra flight time. "Besides," Dave continued to argue, "this is the first year we have chartered with you. Last year we flew with Fred, and we got THREE bulls, much larger than these and he got us home in one trip". Ross cringed at Fred's name. Fred was his biggest competition. "All right... lets get going, it's getting late, and frankly there is nothing Fred can do that I can't do better". "That's the

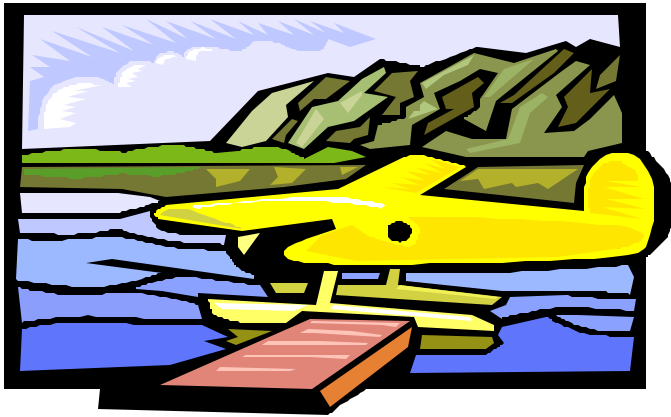


spirit", Dave said. They loaded up the airplane and Ross taxied it to the very end of the lake. The backs of the floats were submerged under water and the trusty Continental engine groaned under the addition of full power. The airplane seemed to just plow forever slowly through the water in a nose high attitude, before settling into a planning attitude. "We're using a lot of real estate here", Ross said with a dry mouth, "I need you guys to lean forward as much as you can". They all did and Ross picked up one float out of the water. The airplane grudgingly became airborne, and none too soon as the lake shore disappeared under the floats. They all looked up only to see the tree-tops at eye level. The sound was deafening, and then, very quiet. Ross, Dave and Mick found themselves outside the wreckage that once was the airplane. Mick looked around as his gray matter settled and said, "Where are we?" Dave replied, "Well it looks like we are about 150 feet further than we were last year with Fred".

This Alaskan Bush pilot joke has long entertained Alaskan pilots and passengers. What is not so entertaining is how frighteningly true it could be. We live in a land vast in remote beauty and the perils that go along with operating airplanes in such remoteness. One of the most cherished aspects of living the Alaskan dream is the freedom to hunt and fish in our backyard. Alaska attracts the rugged, free spirited, outdoor enthusiast. Unfortunately, often it also fosters that "Bush pilot" mentality that contributes to so many accidents.

As pilot's we are under a number of pressures, and perhaps never more so than when hunting season rolls around. The autumn days have become noticeably shorter, and our summer weather has given way to the storms that frequent

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the northern country. If you have been flying all summer for a Part 135 operator, you are unquestionably exhausted more days than not, having worked 14-hour duty days for months on end. Taking short cuts can look very attractive under the strain. What pilot among us has not at least been tempted to push incoming weather to get home, or to put more weight in the airplane than it is designed to carry to avoid multiple trips, especially in deteriorating weather? The autumn months can be some of the more lucrative for companies specializing in guided hunting charters, and let's be honest; there is no loyalty amongst passengers who want to get their deer while keeping costs as minimal as possible. They will most likely go with the best deal.

These are some of the realities that pilot's face flying hunting trips, and it is no coincidence that Alaska's accident rate soars this time of year. Changing that grim reality is up to each one of us individually and as a concerned flying community. First of all if you are a Part 135 pilot, realize that you are tired, no exhausted! After endless 14-hour duty days you are practically tripping over the flowers on the carpet! It is paramount that you take extra time to slow down, not hurry up. It is a time to be more conservative with your personal minimums. Remember that the FAR's are the *bare minimums* we have to adhere to. Your own personal minimums could and perhaps should be higher. By protecting yourself, you in turn also protect your passengers and you employer.

If you are flying Part 91 and taking your buddies hunting, you need to evaluate your proficiency flying off small dirt strips, beaches or lakes. It might be a prudent investment to fly a few hours with a local instructor who is competent in such flying. Scud running and bush flying are as perishable skills as that of instrument flying. This is a critical time to bone up on a few performance charts and weight & balance problems.

Regardless of what type of flying you are doing, you do no one any favors cutting corners. When it comes to the hunters that you are flying, remember that your *plane is not flown by a committee*. YOU and YOU alone are the Pilot in command. PIC does not mean 'Passenger-in-command! Exercise that authority with integrity. Give your passengers a meaningful briefing. Inform them of details of the flight, the weather, and the airplane's performance limitations. Ask them to keep their eyes out for other airplane traffic, and tell them you will be unable to talk to them during takeoff and landings. You will complete the Circle of Safety by doing these simple but important steps. You owe it to yourself, your passengers and your employer. Take the time to realistically evaluate your performance and that of your airplane. Command a relaxed conditional awareness as to weather patterns and changes. It can change so rapidly this time of year. Advise your passengers to be prepared to spend extra time out communing with nature if need be. Be committed to turning around in bad weather, or canceling all together if necessary. These resolves need to be made prior to your flight, not when you are in the middle of the pressure cooker. If you are a passenger, you need to realize that you may inadvertently be placing pressure on the pilot to complete a flight or take loads that exceed the performance of the aircraft or the pilot. Arguably a hunting trip is expensive, but returning to your families and friends to enjoy the labors of your hunt is more important. If we do these things this year *you* will go a long way to reversing this seasons accident trend, and just perhaps Alaskan aviation won't be the brunt of so many jokes. Let's have our safest season ever.

HOW PREPARED ARE YOU TO SURVIVE A PILOT'S WORST NIGHTMARE? UNDERWATER EGRESS TRAINING

KIERAN K. O'FARRELL

I picked up Jimmy Buffett's book, [A Pirate Looks at Fifty](#), and reread the following quote for the hundredth time; "My life did not flash before my eyes; no ancestors called to me from white fog on the other side of eternity. The nose of the plane slammed into the water, and I heard the engines stop... hanging like a captured insect in a spider web from the pilot's seat of a slowly sinking seaplane..." I had highlighted it. Then I flipped to the next sentence I had highlighted and read, "what I learned years earlier at the U.S. Navy flight-survival school in Norfolk, Virginia, saved my life, pure and simple." Now it was my turn.

The irony of it all did not escape me as I strapped myself into the five-point harness of the egress trainer. I had commercially flown Beaver float planes for nine years in Southeast Alaska's Inside Passage, and now in my new capacity as an FAA inspector in Juneau, Alaska, part of my required training was to go through an arctic survival course that included underwater egress training. I gave the thumbs up sign, and my comfortable dry world turned upside down, with me choking on water, forgetting almost all the steps I had just learned to successfully egress my simulated cockpit. I hated it, really hated it! The first time, the second time and the third time.

That was six years ago, and I never looked at flying over my water world the same. I now possessed a rare clarity on the things I would do differently. I always prided myself on giving a good passenger briefing, but now I was emphatic as to the operation of the exit doors and proper use of the life vests. This training is paramount to the pilots who are flying hundreds of hours a year over a predominately unforgiving water environment, such as Southeast Alaska, which is one of the most scenic and wildly remote areas in the world. Steep mountains meet endless channels and fjords leaving pilots with few good options in the event of ditching an airplane.

"My life did not flash before my eyes; no ancestors called to me from white fog on the other side of eternity. The nose of the plane slammed into the water, and I heard the engines stop... hanging like a captured insect in a spider web from the pilot's seat of a slowly sinking seaplane..."

We have had a number of fatal accidents over the last few years in which people survived the impact but were unable to get out of the aircraft, which supported the need for this training. Statistics of seaplane accidents over the last 15 years also supported this. They show that 75 percent of the passengers upside down in a sinking plane did not make it out. Research also showed statistically that 80 percent of pilots who did not receive underwater egress training did not successfully get out of the plane, while 80 percent of pilots that *had* received the training did successfully egress a sinking airplane. These staggering statistics were too dramatic to ignore. Of course the ever-vivid memory of choking on pool water was also seared into my memory.

Four years ago the FAA embarked on a journey to make this training happen for our Alaskan pilots. We could not have imagined how difficult it would be. Ideally we wanted to use our local Coast Guard as they had an egress trainer, and would most likely be the ones launching to rescue an airplane in trouble. We contacted the Alaska Aviation Safety Foundation, who immediately offered their support. This cooperation was an amazing feat. Two separate government agencies and a non-profit agency teamed up to make underwater egress training happen for our pilots. It took almost two years, but after wrestling with legal and liability issues, we are proud to say that the Alaskan Region FAA and the US Coast Guard has just completed our third year of offering underwater egress training to pilots across the State. Most remarkably, this training has been provided at no cost to the pilots!

The actual training consists of the Coast Guard sending one pilot and two rescue swimmers from one of their stations with their S.W.E.T. egress trainer. S.W.E.T. stands for, Shallow Water Egress

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Trainer, (not to mention what you find yourself doing while strapped in it upside down in the water!) Some of our inspectors meet the coastguardsmen in locations where the training is being conducted. The trainer sets up the S.W.E.T. at the pool, and a classroom prepared for the mandatory two-hour briefing.



feet and they will bring the trainer back up. They also assured everyone that if they forgot everything else the rescue swimmer would recognize the, *my mind just went blank... what am I doing here?!'*, stare and would react accordingly. There is no one in the room who doubts it when the rescue swimmer says, "Don't fight us, for **you will lose!**" They then proceeded to demonstrate how a proper egress should be done.

The pilots show up for the morning session, understandably anxious and a bit apprehensive as they look at the egress trainer. The coastguardsmen create a presentation specifically for the group, emphasizing the methods of rescue, making oneself more accessible if in a survival situation, and finally, the proper methods of egress. It strikes me as odd that the only time these two groups would normally meet would be the worst day in someone's life.

The methods they taught for a successful underwater egress were:

1. Do not Panic!
2. Establish a known **Reference Point** in your aircraft, as everything will be very disorienting upside-down in the water.
3. Hold on to that **Reference Point** and wait 5 to 8 seconds for the in-rush of water to stop. (Incidentally my own count to 5 was more like 1-5, instead of 1-1001, 2-2002, 3-3003...)
4. Holding on to the **Reference Point**, remove any headset gear.
5. Open the door; break the window, whatever it takes.
6. Still holding on to the **Reference Point**, release the seat belt.
7. Egress the airplane, once clear of the airplane; inflate the PFD, which of course you are wearing.

Everybody proceeds to the pool and all the pilots are fully clothed as they would have been dressed flying. The Coast Guard provides a demonstration of what to do if you got inverted and did not want to play anymore. The panic signal is to kick your

One by one the pilots go through the trainer. Not once, but two or three times. It was impressive to watch how everyone's confidence increases from the first time to the second and third times. Almost everyone egresses the wrong way the first time, as there is a tendency to be more disoriented under water than you think you will be. There is not a person there who does not feel that this was some of the most valuable training that they had ever received.

The evening's classes tend to be a bit different. Some of the pilots are Part 135 pilots and they come into the briefing after battling the chronic drizzly fog that often frequents this country, for the last 12 to 14 hours. They sit there listening to the coastguardsmen's briefing with that 1000-mile stare. It is the stare that speaks of endless duty days in poor weather, changing schedules and juggling passengers and freight. It is the stare we might most likely have right before unexpectedly impacting the water and finding ourselves in desperate need of having had the benefit of egress training. Because fatigue is not just contributory but causative in accidents, it is plausible that this sort of accident is most likely to actually occur when we are tired.

There is something about looking into the face of the person who might rescue you if you were really in trouble, yet who is about to invert you upside down underwater, that develops a certain camaraderie. Once in the trainer, even these pilots who had been working all day respond positively. The pilots ranged in experience from, "Welcome! Our

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company is glad to have you on board, tomorrow we have to go to the pool, strap you in some contraption and invert you upside down, in the water and see if you can get out;” to seasoned pilots who have logged over 17,000 hours in Alaska. Everyone gets the opportunity to put on a survival suit in the pool and get into an inflatable raft. Ironically more than one of the pilots had survival suits on their boats that had never been opened, much less tested.

The benefits realized are many. Everyone feels better about himself or herself having accomplished a task that was extremely uncomfortable and difficult. Pilots’ confidence in their ability to get out of a sinking airplane dramatically increases, as has their survival awareness of stacking the deck in their favor. An unexpected benefit was three different factions of the flying community, the pilots, the rescuers and the FAA, having the opportunity to work together toward a common goal and see each other differently, at least for a little while.

As much as we need this training, I find that we also need to change our attitudes. While accident prevention is always preferable to crash survival, sometimes it is the realities of crash survival that best reinforces the prevention of needlessly placing oneself in a survival situation. These two lie at opposite ends of the spectrum, but in the middle is the recognition of safety and what it really involves. Some of the comments I have heard from operators were both disturbing and enlightening. Attitudes reflected such callous thinking as, “If a pilot is going to crash our company airplane, he can sink with it!” I am sure that this would be less than reassuring to their passengers. We are not giving up on trying to turn these destructive attitudes around. Fortunately they are the exception not the rule. One operator made a very profound statement when he said, “I often wish that I could give each one of my new pilots an 8 ounce glass of water that they would have to drink for an hour. In that glass would be the experience of losing a close friend senselessly, and what happens to a company when they have an accident. Perhaps then they would not take unnecessary chances.”

There is an ancient Swahili saying that states, ‘God made the earth round so we could not see too far down the road.’ As true as that is, we need to face the realities of flying in the water environment that we love so much, and prepare ourselves for the unexpected, the unthinkable. The next time you are fortunate enough to run into someone who offers you the opportunity for underwater egress training, jump at the chance! It may be your company, a private firm, a friend or a government agency. Who knows, they might even be from the FAA, with an offer to help! In any case it is quite simply *the greatest training we hope you never need.*’



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floatplanes are:

1. Extruded parts such as chines, as they tend to be more susceptible to corrosion than the actual skin of the floats, and should be routinely checked.
2. Electrolysis is a factor if your airplane stays in the water. This is more prevalent on planes in saltwater than those in fresh water. Placing zinc plates on the floats can however reduce the effects of electrolysis.
3. Any steel attaching hardware should be inspected for corrosion.
4. Finally, be sure to check the water steering horns and water rudderposts, as they are in contact with the water.

Precautions that we can take against corrosion include keeping our airplanes clean. While for most of us this is not possible on a daily basis, cleaning the plane with fresh water and soap when feasible to remove the salt residue is helpful. It is also important to wash the floats and lubricate all the moving parts. While this will not prevent corrosion, it will go along way to keeping it at bay.

Checking all of these things does take more time than just exercising all the moving parts, kicking the floats and being satisfied if your foot does not go through it, but the peace of mind you will have while flying, is as the commercial says, “priceless.”



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free food. Fairbanks Borough Mayor Jim Whitaker presented a proclamation on behalf of local mayors, and Regional SPM Kieran O’Farrell presented local airman Jim Drew with the Regional CFI of the Year Award. Aircraft included everything from bare fuselage parts to a new Scout and the C-46 “Maid in Japan.” We had a turbine-powered Lancair homebuilt, MAST Blackhawk, and a brief visit from a Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT), before it was called out on a fire.

Although the morning coffee and donuts were eclipsed by a sponsor’s need to support firefighting with every available employee, we did get donuts eventually. Hot dogs and soda were expertly served by NAATS FAAers Phil Brown and Mike Welch. It was so hot, though, that we exhausted the supply of bottled water at the nearby Fred Meyer store! A

In addition, the annual Alaska Airmen’s Association Fairbanks fly-in and barbeque followed this event after 4:00 p.m. in the Air Park Campground on the east side of the airport. Over 100 folks ended the day there with more free food and aviation appreciation.

Thank you to Kieran O’Farrell and Tony Fischer for coming up to Fairbanks, and to all the other FAA folks and vendors who made this event a success. We had a great time, and we hope more of you can join us next year at an even bigger and better location on the airport, perhaps with true fly-in capability!



SUMMER EVENTS

Cooperative Cope Thunder

When: July 15-30

Who’s Flying: Schedule to participate are Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Singapore, U.K., and U.S.

Where: Eielson/Elmendorf Air Force Bases military ranges and corridors to and from the ranges

Cope Thunder

When: August 12-27

Who’s Flying: Air Force, Navy

Where: Eielson/Elmendorf Air Force Bases military ranges and corridors to and from the ranges

Special Use Airspace Information Service

Pilots can call the SUAIS, provided by Eielson Range Control, at 1-800-758-8723 or 372-6913 from the Fairbanks area. If airborne, contact Eielson Range Control, VHF 125.3. SUAIS information can also be found on the Elmendorf AFB home page at:

www.elmendorf.af.mil

Obtain most current MOAS status information from any Automated Flight Service Station (AFSS), Anchorage Center, or Eielson Range Control.

LOCAL PILOT'S PAGE

MY FLOATPLANE DOCKING, PART I OR THE TRANSFORMATION OF A '58 BUICK

By
Hunter Horvath

I have a wonderful floatplane

- ◆ It has a bigger engine
- ◆ It has longer wings
- ◆ It has a 3-blade prop
- ◆ It has branny new composite floats
- ◆ It has flap and aileron gap seals
- ◆ It has a special STOL kit on the wing
- ◆ It climbs out like you wouldn't believe....

And I didn't believe it when the person in the right seat (who will remain nameless) said, "I like to stay over water." "Why?" I responded. "This airplane has a great glide ratio—" "He replied, "like a '58 Buick – remember the movies where they drive a '58 Buick over the cliff...that's how this airplane glides. You'd better look right below, maybe at a 45 degree angle because that's where you are going to land."

So later, with a respected floatplane mentor pilot in the right seat, we went out to practice, as this airplane is still relatively new to me. After the compulsory clearance turns, slow flight, steep turns, MCA (minimum controllable airspeed), stalls straight, right and left – the usual stuff – my buddy cuts the engine at about 3000 AGL and says, "OK, right there, next to that little island." I didn't get there. Then he says, "Ah ha, now we know, we will practice power-offs."

With about a 10 knot headwind and 1000' to pick the spot – "that island with the tree sticking out will do fine" – then all power off abeam the point. Well, a piece of cake – I'll even add flaps now – WRONG! Short, we'll try it again. After 3 tries short, my pal says, "Do I have to show you how to do it, my airplane." Now this guy has thousands of hours in a wide-gon and owned a stock 206 on amphib, neither of which are known for a great power-off glide ratio. I watch as he adds 10 degree of flaps and says he'll save a little slip if he needs it. Whoa, he's short....way short. He is amazed – we try again, and he's still short. In disbelief, we head back for the ramp. He states, "This is a 58 Buick! I never would have believed!"

What does any of this have to do with docking safety?

Books by floatplane masters are full of "how to" and "what to" and "when to." There are fancy diagrams about sailing sideways and backwards, how to tie off to an anchor I haven't

found any that say in bold print, "DON'T DO..." Here are a couple of my own "DON'T DOs..."

First, remember the "...transformation of a '58 Buick? Well, once our plane is on the water, the extended wings, the gap seals, the huge floats (the same size in the heavy mode are certified for a grossed-out 206) and maybe the STOL kit, too, transform the rock into a feather, given a damn heavy feather, but subject to any and all vagaries of the wind.

And here I am, landing at an away-from-home airport, with a long pond, parallel to the jet runway and filled with all manner of floatplanes. My buddy asks me to identify my touch-down point and, trying to squint the sun out of the way, I remind myself that "professional pilots" don't add power after reducing it and I'm going to do this right. I miss the point and feel a little behind the plane. Now maybe a thousand-hour pilot might not have noticed that, but I think, no, I know, this guy knows too. I could have managed the power better.

The tower directs us to the transient docks at the far end of the pond, and while taxiing I can't but wonder at all the floatplanes. Wow, Beavers, Otters, 180s, 185s, 206s, Pipers, and a Luscombe neatly tied to the floats on both sides of the pond. And they are all, every single one, facing opposite to the way I just landed.

DOCKING DON'T #1 – Don't look at tied down airplanes before you are tied down. Do you know what happened?

When I got to the transient, second-to-last float (the last one was occupied by a Scout on Edos, heading opposite to me), I decided to turn and tie up like everyone else. The guy in the right seat was an experienced pilot. He could easily step out and hold the plane while I shut down and clambered across, right?

BIG Mistake....the '58 Buick metamorphosed into a thousand-kite twisting monster with an instant tailwind turning the plane. We both had to wrestle the turning plane back to the tie area or let it go careening down the shore, making expensive noises as it crunched itself off tail feathers and wing tips. What a way to end a flight... humiliated by the wind. Neither of us was smiling.

What's DON'T #1? Don't look at docked, tightly moored airplanes while you are taxiing on the water. Do look at the wind, any obstructions, and the options for getting to the dock. Do ask what are the worst and best things that could happen. And another part of that DON'T – Don't have your passenger do anything...you are he PIC...unless you trust



your passenger with your airplane. You make the call. You step out of the plane first. You can park it any way you want to. Your name is on the docking job. Oh how professional I would have been to nose into the dock, step out and tie down, yet backwards to the whole world of floatplanes in the pond.

DOCKING DON'T #2:

So now I have been operating out of the same float for about 2 weeks and are starting to get more comfortable checking the wind, the water current (or tide movement), and the frequent boat traffic. It hasn't quite sunk in that this beautiful plane, by itself, dances to the music of the wind and water, free from my heavy feet are on the rudder pedals and my hands not controlling the stick or the pulse of the six-banger with the 3 blade. But the plane knows this, and it sits quietly tied to the float, smiling, waiting.

So when I come blithely up, checking the flag for the gentle breeze and glancing at the drift moving with the tidal surge, the plane's inner smile gets a little bigger -- I'm going to get another **DON'T** lesson..

After the perfunctory pre-flight checks and plane-lover pats and caressed, I untie, step out the float, give a shove, hop up to the seat, prime, pump and try to start the fire. It doesn't start immediately. Suddenly I am aware of a dramatic, surprising, embarrassing change of events. The plane has quickly swung around and is not at 90 degrees, it is now pointing nose straight toward the dock, and the engine starts!

The wonderful lady who runs the office sees my predicament and runs out of the office to find me immediately pulling mixture and killing all switches, in time of course, to preclude getting back to the dock.

What happened? I checked the wind and the tide, how did I get here?

Well, remember the shove-off just before stepping onto the float? That shove was enough to get me, not into the given wind noted from both the adjacent building flag, and the cross-channel windsock, but, into the lee effect of the 2-story float building. And more, the tidal current, flowing so neatly past the front of the building, was back eddying around my mooring spot. Both combined to get me at right angles to the dock, too far to reach, yet not moving back away enough to be able to start-up and clear.

What to do? I climbed out, opened the float hatch, extended the paddle, and began to paddle. This resulted in more turning/circling of the plane, but the lady on the dock knew what to do as the wingtip rope came by. She changed the circus into an everyday event, straightened me out, pulled me in, then smoothly commanded; "Now start it and go." Whew!!

So what is **DOCKING DON'T #2?**

Don't just look at a flagpole, a windsock across the channel, or the current 30 yards out. The plane is right here, not atop the flagpole or out in the channel. When that last line is loosed, the plane will respond to the immediate forces upon it. And when you give a shove and then step on the float, things may /will happen rapidly.

What is the **DO**?

Do look at the flag, sock and current; then ask, "how about right here, behind this building, next to this rail -- what if, what if we don't start today. A little simple planning saves a lot of sweaty paddling.

SO DO LOOK ... DO SEE ... THEN, DO ASK.



ONCE IN 36,000 HOURS

**By
Ken Bellows**

It was a beautiful day! Any day is when you're going steelhead fishing. Especially when going with old friends.

Pumped, fueled, loaded and we're on our way from the dock in Sitka. Call FSS for an advisory. It's 900 and 10. Need a special VFR clearance. Received a special VFR and we are finally airborne.

Excited to introduce my old friends to steelhead fishing, we talk a minute, even though we are covering 2 miles a minute.

"The Fishing Hole" is waiting as we touch down on the lake. Taxi to the beach, tie up, unpack, and get organized.

The sun is peeking through the clouds as we walk downstream through the rainforest. The squirrels are chattering, the birds are singing, the stream is full of fish and the steelhead are hitting. It is a beautiful day!

The clearing skies are interrupted by the noise of an orange airplane. He doesn't know the place! Bing! The light goes on! I forgot to report clear of the "zone". (It's still the "zone" to us old aviators.)

Oh well! I've been found! I can face the music when I get back. Besides. The steelheads are still hitting.

Needless to say, my lack of attention caused a lot of grief for many agencies for which I am truly sorry. And yes, I did get my reprimand from the FAA.



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