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SAFETY FIRST

A column dedicated to GA safety education

By Warren V. DeHaan

SOAR TO FLY SAFELY IN 2013

Happy New Year! We say this so often, but I would like to modify that for all of our friends that fly aircraft with "Happy Flying in the New Year."

And what will make our flying happy? Lots of things of course, but we will be especially happy if we don't have any accidents. The year 2012 was happy in respect to the FPA accident rate since we had no fatalities. Unfortunately, we have not always been able to say that.

The good thing about flying ourselves is that we have such a large measure of control over our destiny. That is not so true when we drive our cars and are vulnerable to the actions of so many other people. When I drive from Boulder to Golden (in Colorado) on a highway that has no divider, I often think about how we are just three feet from probable sudden death if anyone gets dis-

tracted (cellphone?) and strays over the centerline. With a closing speed of over 110 MPH, the odds aren't good in a head-on collision.

When we fly, we have almost complete control over our level of risk. In many cases that involves decision making before we ever take off. Weather considerations, choosing an adequate altitude, and carrying plenty of fuel, are examples.

There is another way we can reduce our risk, and that is the myriad of opportunities for additional education and training. I would like to put in a recommendation for just one of those ways in this article: glider training.

What does glider training have to do with flying your Cirrus, Cessna, Bonanza, Baron or whatever? You would be surprised. How often have you had an engine failure and expe-



rienced an actual forced landing in an airplane? Do you really know how you would react if it happened to you (if it hasn't already)? Would you panic? Would you keep thinking clearly?

I've never had an engine failure in an airplane, helicopter, or hot air balloon. Nevertheless, I've done over 100 forced landings. In each, I had one chance, and one chance only, to safely put the aircraft on the ground.....in gliders. During glider training you learn to plan your approach and landing with a precision that we don't usually have to maintain in airplanes. In an airplane, a go-around is usually a good option, but in gliders, it has to come out right the first time because there is no go-around. Good mental discipline.

And then, there is mountain and ridge flying. I like to think my Cessna T210 has a good climb rate at altitude, something like 800 feet per minute at a reasonable power setting. What good is 800 feet per minute if I get in a 3000-foot per minute downdraft? A calamity in the making? Not if I use my glider training concepts.

Glider pilots love those kinds of strong mountain waves. It's like the optimistic kid who was given a pile of manure from Santa Claus and remarked that where there is s* there has got to be a pony! With glider training, you know that if there is a 3000-foot per minute downdraft, that there has to be a 3000-foot updraft next to it. If you have learned how to get to the updraft and stay in it, you will get up to 18,000 feet (or whatever you need to clear the ridge) in no time at all. However, if you have not taken the glider training on how to maneuver away from a downdraft, you might make the mistake of raising the nose to climb attitude, slowing to near the speed of the upper level wind, and you will

stay in the downdraft and ride it all the way to the ground. Not really complicated stuff at all, but you need to experience it to gain the ability to "play the waves" well, whether in a glider or in an airplane.

In glider training, you'll also learn more about micrometeorology than you can imagine. That knowledge just might save your bacon on an approach in unusual conditions, such as when the windsock on the ground (and the AWOS) tells you that you are properly landing upwind, but at 300 feet you get a huge "push" on final. That "push" brings you in much too high, so you lower the nose to try to get down. Then you are too fast and you land ¾ of the way down the runway and go off the end into a ravine. Or worse, you try to take off again and stall into the trees at the end of the runway.

No, that wasn't you, but it has happened to other pilots. You don't want this to happen to you, so consider my recommendation that you get your glider rating in 2013. You'll be a safer, more knowledgeable pilot. But, more than that, I think you'll love it. Except for the seaplane rating, a glider rating is probably the easiest and most fun rating you'll ever get

May you happily soar through the skies in 2013!

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*Warren V. DeHaan, OD, is chair of the FPA Human Factors and Safety Education Committee. He and his wife, Vici, who is also a pilot, live in Boulder, Colorado. They fly a Cessna T-210M, N301MM, from KBDU, and he has over 4,000 hours PIC. Current ratings: ATP-Multi-engine, helicopter, glider, lighter-than-air, seaplane. CFII: Multi-engine, glider, instrument*

IN MEMORIAM  
**Isabel Parish**  
Well-known  
RFS Member



Isabel Grayson Parish, of Pinehurst, N.C., formerly of Roanoke, died peacefully with her family by her side on Sunday, December 23, 2012. In addition to her parents, two of her five sons, Court and Doug Goldsmith, preceded her in death. Her loving husband of 37 years and best friend, Havner Parish, survives her. "Hav" Parish is a long-time FPA member. Contact information for Dr. Parish is available on the FPA web site, [www.fpadrs.org](http://www.fpadrs.org)