CALLBACK ASRS

From NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System

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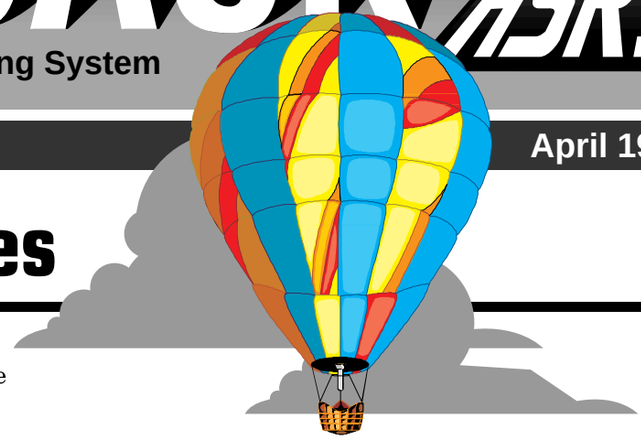
Aeronaut Adventures



In many ways, ballooning is not very different from any other type of flying. The challenges are similar, as are the some of the hazards. Some aeronaut reporters to ASRS share a few of their "hot air" stories with us.

Capricious Winds–and Fortune

More so than in powered flight, hot air ballooning is at the mercy of the "wind gods" who often offer up capricious winds, or sometimes no winds at all. A controller's report provides evidence:

■ *Two hot air balloons departed near the exterior boundaries of the ATA [Class D Airspace]. Because of winds, they entered the ATA and became a factor for several aircraft.*

These balloonists probably wanted to fly out of the ATA as much as the controller wanted them to, but most likely couldn't tell ATC this. Even though a few balloonists carry handheld radios, most are incommunicado.

A Kiss, Not a Miss

■ *Contact with another hot air balloon...fabric-to-fabric [and] no damage to either aircraft. I should have looked closer behind and below.*

This no-damage mid-air collision is known as a "kiss," and might have been avoided had the reporter given way to the lower balloon. This incident serves as a gentle reminder to all pilots to review right-of-way rules–and to see and avoid.

Low-Level Hazards

■ *Launched in good VMC conditions. While I was performing high altitude maneuvers, ground fog started to form. I maneuvered with reference to objects projecting above the fog, and began a slow descent. I established ground contact at approximately 100-200 feet AGL. Primary cause of the incident was not being more aggressive about landing at the first sign of fog formation.*

Not every pilot has such a benign encounter with unforecast IMC. This pilot was fortunate to be able to descend without interference from powerlines, trees, or some other obstacle hidden in the fog–unlike our next aeronaut:

Another pilot and I were floating up a river [in a balloon] when we came upon some well hidden powerlines. We brushed the lines, but no damage occurred.

Powerlines, especially those embedded in trees, continue to be a hazard to <u>all</u> types of low-flying aircraft. Pilots are responsible for determining when low-level flight is safe and appropriate, and when it is simply not worth the risk.

Notable Landings

An unwritten rule for hot air balloonists is never to pass up a good landing site for a poor one. As such, some aeronauts recall their notable landing sites.

■ *Our flight finally started 50 minutes prior to sunset. I became concerned with lack of landing sites and closeness to sunset. Finally, with only 15 minutes before sunset, I landed in the center of a highway cloverleaf.*

Luckily for this reporter, the local police were more curious than punitive...

■ *I landed in a suitable area at a school. The Vice-Principal approached and advised me that summer school was in session and the property was off limits.*

Some state Departments of Aeronautics strictly control aircraft landings on school property (usually only K-12), regardless of whether or not the school is in session.

■ *I was flying over the lake, winds went calm...and we decided to land the balloon in [a friend's] boat. I elevated the basket, he slipped under with the boat, and I sat it down in the boat and collapsed the envelope.*

According to our reporter, the need for an ASRS report arose when "one of the boats reported to the local FAA that the balloon had 'crashed' in the lake..." This was probably not the first time a balloon has needed a little help getting to shore.

Another aeronaut needed help getting out of the "pen":

■ *The wind was picking up on the surface. I decided to land in the hayfield directly in front of us. We were met by two Corrections Department employees, informing us that we had landed on prison property!*

A Note To Our Readers

The April issue of Callback experienced unexpected productions delays that will result in readers receiving it much later than usual. The May issue should be produced on time. We regret this departure from our usual schedule.

ASRS Recently Issued Alerts On...
An uncommanded engine overspeed on a B757-200
Bear repellent canisters on Part 135 flights in Alaska
Late distribution of Class II NOTAMs and AIM revisions
Improper installation of a bearing assembly in a jet engine
Reports of improper baggage loading on commuter flights

A Monthly Safety Bulletin from

The Office of the NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System,
P.O. Box 189,
Moffett Field, CA
94035-0189

February 1995 Report Intake	
Air Carrier Pilots	1771
General Aviation Pilots	613
Controllers	63
Cabin/Mechanics/Military/Other	23
TOTAL	**2470**

Runway Excursions...

Excursion is usually defined as a short journey, an outing, or a pleasure tour. The alternate definition, relevant to ASRS, is a digression, literally "going away" from a runway or taxiway, usually inadvertently. In the following report, the pilot experienced both types of excursions. It is likely that the reporter will remember the ASRS definition long after the pleasure tour is forgotten!

■ *I was flying to this uncontrolled grass airport to visit relatives living nearby. Because of a delay, I did not arrive at the field until dusk. As such, I made my approach slightly faster and higher than normal. When my main gear touched down, I placed the flap selector in the retract position because I felt I needed the additional braking authority that would give me. My aircraft went into the ditch at the end of the runway. The nose wheel folded into the well, and the prop was slightly damaged.*

[Later], I discovered that my flaps were still in the full extended position [and] the flap control was in the retract position where I had placed it. I then found that the flap circuit breaker had popped, apparently at the time that I extended the flaps.

I believe this incident could have been avoided by better adherence to short field landing techniques, and a pre-landing cockpit check of circuit breakers.

...And Landing Diversions

The flip side of this month's CALLBACK reports on memorable landings experienced by hot air balloonists. Reporters in powered aircraft have slightly different stories to tell. Open fields are usually favored for unplanned airplane landings. Frequently, however, these fields are not without hidden hazards:

■ *...[Landed] in the only field available to me. There was a rusty old barbed wire fence hidden in the high grass. I believe that when the plane caught the fence, it caused the plane to turn over.*

Occasionally, there are no hazards:

■ *The engine quit. Landed in hay field. No damage. Restart successful. Took off on road.*

Any uninhabited expanse long enough for an aircraft rollout may be suitable:

■ *Past the end of the fishing piers, over the ocean...my engine quit without warning. I was able to glide the aircraft to the water's edge of the beach and make a safe emergency landing.*

A four-lane highway is often a good alternative runway, and all that asphalt perhaps provides some confidence:

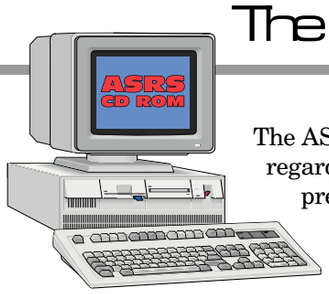
■ *I told ATC that a four-lane highway [was nearby]. I chose a stretch of road which would permit an uphill approach and landing...while giving traffic behind me plenty of time to slow down..*

Of course, an airport is always the best choice, and what looks more inviting than 15,000 feet of Air Force Base runway?

■ *Radio calls all went unanswered, [and] I followed the wrong freeway. After squawking 7600 and searching for an airport, I found [the Air Force Base], where I was given a steady green light for landing. I was allowed to takeoff after filling out the necessary paperwork.*

As the old saying goes, "A good landing is any landing you can walk away from."

The ASRS Database On CD-ROM



The ASRS database is widely regarded as one of the world's premier sources of information on aviation safety and human performance. Over the years, ASRS has received thousands of requests for database information. In 1994 alone, ASRS satisfied 632 requests for ASRS incident data.

Requesters use ASRS data for many purposes. ASRS data are particularly useful for accident prevention, procedures training, aviation education, safety analysis, human factors studies, and scenario development for Line Oriented Flight Training (LOFT) and Advanced Qualification Program (AQP) applications.

The ASRS database is now available on CD-ROM. Users can have quick, effective access to ASRS data—and search parameters can be tailored or modified as required.

The ASRS CD-ROM disc contains over 50,000 full-form incident records, covering the most recent five years. It also contains over 100,000 abbreviated format records (useful in statistical analyses). Users can carry out simple or complex searches on any combination of fixed or textual fields. The user can search on keywords specified by ASRS Analysts, browse and print user-selected records, and export data for use in word processing, spreadsheet analysis, database and other programs.

Computer Requirements. The ASRS CD-ROM is currently available for DOS only, and requires an IBM (or true compatible) 386 or higher PC, with at least 640 KB RAM, DOS 3.31 or above, and an ISO 9660 compatible CD-ROM drive.

Order Information. The product is available through AeroKnowledge, Inc. of Pennington, New Jersey. Their telephone number is (609) 737-9288, or fax (609) 730-1182. Call them for more information.

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Ames Research Center
Moffett Field, California 94035-1000

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