



# DEBRIEFING

**Flight Safety is Everybody's Business**



much better reporting and an ever-improving attitude towards flight safety. Let's keep it up. Notwithstanding, we would all like to see the number of accidents reduced dramatically. Having the right flight safety culture and acting professionally in all phases of flying operations will help achieve this aim.

In order to raise the awareness of all personnel, this issue of *Debriefing* will describe two separate experiences lived by Air Cadets in recent year so you learn from their experience and ponder how you would have reacted if you had been in their situation.

This issue of *Debriefing* will focus on the Air Cadet Program who has just started their intensive summer flying program. The CF's Flight Safety Program encompasses the air cadet one. This pamphlet will be of particular interest to those operating with the air cadets, who act as liaison officers or who are active members of the movement.

History has shown there are no new accidents, only new people having the same old ones. In 2003, there were 113 Flight Safety occurrences registered by Air Cadet gliders and tow planes: 63 Glider incidents, 25 Scout incidents, and 18 L19 incidents. These were spreaded over more than 57,000 glider flights and 7,600 tow plane hours; this is an excellent flight safety record representing some 99.88% occurrence free flights and a slightly higher damage free flights percentage. Unfortunately, the cadets had 7 accidents, all gliders.

Since 1989, the number of reported cases has increased significantly, with the last three years sticking out as higher than normal. This in no way implies that flight safety is deteriorating within the Air Cadet program; rather it shows



## “Rookie”

Whether it's being a new technician on squadron or becoming part of a crew for the first time, at some point in your career, you all know what it is like to be a “rookie.” Everyone has had his or her judgement challenged, but, what is important, is how you confront that challenge - especially when it means maintaining flight safety.

The summer was well underway and I was enjoying my experience as a “rookie” tow pilot. The C-305 was my first tail-dragger experience and I

enjoyed the contentment of finally knowing what was meant by “stick and rudder” skills. I was looking forward to the day of flying and had just begun my pre-flight inspection when a senior pilot approached me. He informed me that there had been a few comments made about the performance of the aircraft and that if, at any time, I felt uncomfortable then not to fly it. I said I would keep an eye out. Having flown the aircraft the previous day, I was confident that I could handle the situation.



Flying commenced with my departure off the active runway and I set up for an approach to the other runway to pick up a glider. The wind was light and variable but, as I established myself on final approach to the non-active runway, the wind became a slight quartering tailwind. This made the directional control after landing more difficult than usual. Assuming the challenging landing was due to the wind conditions, I took off in a more favourable direction with a glider in tow.

After releasing the glider, I headed back to the airfield, relieved to be back on the active runway. However, as my wheels came in contact with the

hard surface, it was again a struggle to maintain directional control of the aircraft. At that point, I'm thinking “note to self” something isn't right and like every good pilot I decide to give it one more try, ignoring my “tingling Spiderman senses.” Well, I did one more tow and that was enough for me. I decided I had more productive things to do then to fight with this airplane. I radioed glider operations and requested them to send out another aircraft. Once I had pulled off the runway and into the grass, I shut down and headed over to the launch control officer (LCO) and explained why I thought the aircraft was unserviceable and should not be flown due to the decreasing tail wheel steering.

The next day, I arrived at the hangar, anxious to see what had caused the problem the previous day. I met the maintenance officer who challenged my judgement and assumed that it was my lack of experience that caused the directional difficulties and that there was no real problem. I maintained my decision to call the airplane unserviceable, and walked away feeling frustrated and disappointed. I found out later that upon further inspection of the tail wheel, it did need to be replaced and that, if left undetected, would have caused further directional control difficulties. These problems could have resulted in a ground loop, causing serious damage or injury to both the aircrew and the aircraft.

The valuable lesson here is to not back down on your judgement of safety, no matter what your experience level. It is up to everyone to create an environment that encourages, not discourages, addressing questions and concerns. Rookie or not, **everyone is responsible**.

### **Safety Is Safety!**

Our air-cadet gliding centre had finished flying the squadron of cadets, and we were now conducting

training flights. The Deputy Commanding Officer (DCO), the only qualified gliding instructor present, was in command of the field.

I had just finished a rotation of four consecutive flights and exited the glider. The DCO entered the glider with the next most senior pilot to complete the last flight of the day – the “hangar flight” whereby the glider is launched from the normal location and then lands as close as possible to the hangar or the tie-down area so the ground crew don’t have to push the glider as far. I was then the most senior person on the ground, and so I coordinated the loading of equipment into our van. I caught snatches of conversation between the DCO and his co-pilot, which suggested to me that they were going to do something unorthodox, though I was not sure what and I did not ask.



After the launch, the crew and I had approached the hangar and then held our position to allow the glider to land. The glider appeared on our right and I realized that they were attempting a landing on the tarmac in front of the hangar. A chain-link fence backed this area. As the glider approached the intended landing area, the DCO realized that he was too high and too fast to land

safely in the remaining area. He banked to the left to increase the landing area but, as the glider touched down, it came in contact with concrete embankments left from a dismantled hangar. The landing skid was torn off and the glider sustained “C” category damage.

Thinking back on the subject, it was obvious that the DCO had made a bad call in attempting to land the glider in such a confined space but I think I could have done something to avert this accident? When I exited the glider and became the senior person on the ground, I should have at least asked about his intentions for the hangar flight. True, I was not a qualified launch control officer, but that did not mean that I could not have inquired about his intentions. The DCO had, on previous occasions, shown himself to be a pilot with superior ability. I had enough respect for his abilities that I could not differentiate between his abilities and his judgement. I thought he would always do the safe thing and I could not recognize an unsafe decision.

At the time, the DCO was holder a higher rank than me and I still felt an aversion to pointing out errors made by any officer, particularly one that was my direct supervisor at the time. Challenging him on his intentions would, in my mind, have been akin to insubordination. Regardless though, safety is safety and I should have both recognized and mentioned the lack of it.

**IRRELEVANT OF YOUR EXPERIENCE,  
QUESTION WHAT IS PERCEIVED BY YOU  
AS CONTRARY TO GOOD AIRMANSHIP  
AND SAFE FLIGHT OPERATION**

