

THE CROSSWINDS

MIDSTATE AVIATION, INC.

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FALL 2010

Summer Achievements! Congratulations!

Private Ratings

Chis Weholt
Mathew Meisner
Eric Bruns
Yreka Flores
Matt Anderson
Evan Sainsbury
Evan Dawson
Daniel Anway
Tristan Snyder

Commercial Ratings

Brian Fagan
Evan Wheeler
Robert Pendergraft
Evan J. Marshall
Daniel Morgenstern
Cody Simmons
Westley Schroeffer
Jared Loveland
Samantha Caldwell
Scott Romain
Kevin Silvernale
Raeya Tsutakawa

Instrument Ratings

Jake Pedersen
Matt Peterson
Ted Groves
Chris Freeman
Stacy Sundborg
Ross Young
Alex Toner
Austin Duckett
Patrick Sheeks
Andrew Gratzner
Michael Donia
Jeremiah McLaury
Curtis Marsh
Skyllar Weiskind
Jeffrey Vossen
Andrew Fishburn
James Wilson
Daniel Creech
Michael Rizk
Ashley Messmer

Multi-Engine

Jesse Tyler
Alan Morgan
Brendan Boyd
Kyle Moran
Adrian Lee

CFI

Luke Miller
Joe Bertsch
Jonathan Mawer
Kyle Halverson
Ashley Hayes

THE CHALLENGE

Ron V. Mitchell

Owner of Midstate Aviation

The recent crash of a Turbine Otter near Dillingham, Alaska carrying former Senator Stevens, as well as the former head of NASA and his son, has been highly publicized. The pilot, a former Alaska Airlines Captain, was reportedly highly experienced, and an excellent pilot, very familiar with operations in the Alaska bush. I have not heard how much experience he had in this type of aircraft, or in this type of flying, but since the cause of the crash is yet to be determined, it would be irresponsible to assume the pilot was to blame.

Subsequent to the Dillingham accident, a DHC-2 Beaver on floats disappeared on a flight from the Alaska peninsula coastline, on a flight to King Salmon, Alaska. On board were a highly experienced pilot and three U.S. Forest Service employees. As of this writing, the airplane and passengers have not been located. The airplane disappeared about 50 air miles from the Dillingham crash, on the opposite side of Bristol Bay.

Why have I chosen to bring up these two accidents? The answer is that both of these accidents have spoken to me personally. I have flown many times in the area of the accidents. The weather is notoriously bad, and the airplane is in many cases the only means of transportation. For instance, the Alaska Peninsula Highway, connecting King Salmon, and Naknek, is only 11 miles long. Hundreds of miles of the most pristine hunting and fishing lands in the vicinity of Bristol Bay are accessed solely by boat or aircraft. I have personally flown many times with the pilot missing in the Beaver, and the last flight he made prior to the accident flight, was transporting guests of my employers. Many of the flights I have taken as a passenger in these aircraft have been conducted in ceilings less than 500 feet, and visibility of one mile, (maybe). Pilots in Alaska fly every day in extreme conditions, and the accident rates reflect this.

The reason I am reflecting on these accidents is simple. It is a small world in aviation, and as I get more experience, (older), the more I am reminded of that. It is seldom that I get on an Alaska Airlines flight, that I don't recognize at least one of the flight crew members, as a former classmate, student, or applicant for a practical test. These persons become friends, and I do not wish any of them to end up in harm's way. The other lesson to be learned is that experience, although very valuable, also breeds complacency. If you don't believe that, look at the historic fatal aircraft accident statistics in the U.S. There is a rise in accident rates to approximately 400 hours total time, before you see a decrease. This obviously is due to an increase in piloting proficiency after gaining approximately 400 hours of piloting experience and probably equally important, the judgment learned in the process. The scary thing is that the accident graph begins an increase again at approximately 2,000 hours of flight experience. This can possibly be explained by piloting proficiency beginning to

deteriorate as training is no longer emphasized, as one factor. I believe the more important reason for an increase in accidents for more experienced pilots is complacency. We all, at one time or another, suffer from this disease. Call it ego, (remember, like it or not, this is one of the top motivations for most of us to become pilots) or maybe boredom, for whatever reason, as piloting becomes easier for us, it is MOST important to remain vigilant. I have heard former flight instructors at Midstate say they were “burned out”, after giving 500 hours of dual. That tells me they thought they had nothing more to learn, and was probably an accident waiting to happen. Some students are satisfied with passing stage checks on the third try, and barely meeting the minimum proficiency required to complete each course of training. If you are not continually learning, and getting better, you are going backwards, in my opinion.

It is not my intent to scare you or discourage you with my comments. Instead I hope to challenge each and every one of you to continually strive to learn, become increasingly more proficient in your knowledge and piloting skills, and never forget that we as pilots are responsible for the safety of our passengers. This is a great avocation and profession. Let’s give it the respect it deserves.

***“Think of everyday, every challenge,
every triumph and indeed...
every defeat as feathers on your wings.
Then, one day, the sum of all your
wisdom will let you fly...
Where only eagles dare!”*** *anonymous*

Navigational Technology and Your Training
Monte Thorn
Alaska Airlines 737-First Officer

While I had the pleasure of meeting many of you last winter, most of you know I was recalled back to Alaska Airlines in May. As I transitioned back to the 737, I was amazed by how much navigational technology has changed since I initially went through training at Midstate Aviation and how advanced most training aircraft have become.

First, I want you to know that the aircraft you fly at Midstate Aviation are some of the most advanced in navigational technology and the most mechanically-sound planes in the industry. The Warriors, Arrows, and the Seminole all have the Garmin 430 GPS capable of WAAS technology. This technology is for sure the future of instrument approaches along with other various forms of GPS technology (i.e. LAAS, RNP, etc.) As technology

advances, WAAS capabilities will continue to improve and allow for instrument approaches to normal ILS minimums. WAAS equipment is not even found on most airline aircraft. The only aircraft that comes to my mind that uses WAAS capabilities is Horizon’s Dash 8 Q-400.

Alaska uses dual GPS and IRS navigation systems, which allows us to use Required Navigational Performance (RNP) procedures. Most public RNAV approaches have a .3 nm range for acceptable performance, but RNP allows for the aircraft to operate at a lower acceptable nautical mile range. This means the position of the aircraft is more accurate and so the aircraft can be flown to lower approach minimums. RNP is not as readily available in the lower 48 as it is in southeast Alaska. RNP procedures in Alaska have made a huge improvement in our abilities to get in and out of difficult airports. Most airports in SE Alaska have approaches that allow for a descent to VFR conditions and then continue to the airport in VMC conditions, but with separate RNP approaches, a missed approach is not as common. Requiring more stringent navigational performance and having the ability to create and certify our own approaches means that we can make approaches to a lot lower straight-in minimums.

The satellite system and the navigational computer onboard your aircraft are very advanced and do a lot without pilot input or understanding. But in order to get the most out of your aircraft and to be positionally aware you should have a sound understanding of the technology behind GPS and the many systems that use its information. The AIM has a great section as do many textbooks and owners manuals. The more you know about your aircraft, its systems, and the environment in which you operate, the more likely you are to have a safe flight. Fly Safely.

Editors Note: Monte Thorn, a 1996 CWU Flight Technology graduate, was a Midstate CFI from 1996 until 1999. Monte was Captain at American Eagle Airlines flying regional jets and currently is an Alaska Airlines 737-First Officer. Last school year, Midstate welcomed Monte back as a part-time advanced instructor. We appreciated his input to students from the airline world.

Dates to Remember

September 22nd, Mandatory Schedule begins
No Mandatory Schedule on the following dates:
Veteran’s Day November 11th
Thanksgiving November 24th-26th

NOW ON SALE

Midstate Aviation’s
First Annual 2011 Calendars
(photos by flight students and employees)
Get yours while the supply lasts!