

Thomas P. Turner's Mastery of Flight™

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FLYING LESSONS for October 24, 2024

FLYING LESSONS uses recent mishap reports to consider what *might* have contributed to accidents, so you can make better decisions if you face similar circumstances. In most cases design characteristics of a specific airplane have little direct bearing on the possible causes of aircraft accidents—but knowing how your airplane's systems respond can make the difference in your success as the scenario unfolds. So apply these *FLYING LESSONS* to the specific airplane you fly. Verify all technical information before applying it to your aircraft or operation, with manufacturers' data and recommendations taking precedence. **You are pilot in command and are ultimately responsible for the decisions you make.**

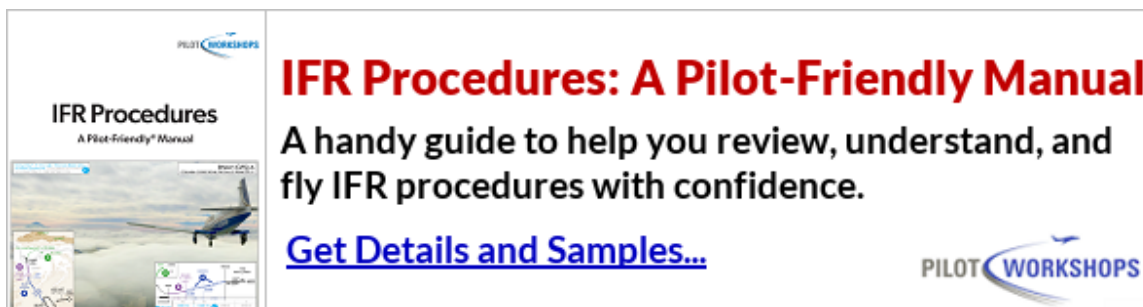
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This week's LESSONS:

It's time again to catch up on reader insights by going straight to the Debrief.

Questions? Comments? Supportable opinions? Let us know at mastery.flight.training@cox.net.



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Debrief

Readers write about past *FLYING LESSONS*

Frequent Debriefer Lew Gage continues [last week's LESSONS](#) with his own bird strike story:

I was the First Officer on a [Boeing] 707 flight from San Juan, Puerto Rico about 1969. Just after liftoff a large flight of seagulls lifted off of the departure end of the runway. We flew right through them with most or all of the birds on the right side of the airplane. There were a number of loud thumps right at my right knee area and I turned and saw several (maybe 6) of those seagulls go into the #3 engine. The engine was a high bypass fan.

I then looked at the engine gauges and they did not move out of the normal indication so we pressed on to New York. At the blocks at JFK I inspected the airplane exterior and there were several bloody spots from the birds that struck the area at my right knee but I could find no other strikes on the wing leading edges. The #3 engine had quite a bit of blood on the fan blades and it looked like all of the bird's remains exited through the fan air exit and did not enter the engine

compressor. Of course Pan Am Maintenance did a detailed inspection of the engine interior. I later found out that the ingested birds evidently did exit the engine out through the fan air exit route. That takeoff is one that I will remember as turning out OK, but **it also could have gone a different direction.**

I also saw a single seagull go into the #4 747 engine on a takeoff at SFO [San Francisco] with no problem. But that was only one bird, not the six or so on the 707 engine.

Thank you, Lew. Reader, supporter and retire airline captain Tad Santino adds:

We hit a bird (large hawk) with the Bonanza several years ago at our home airport just over the runway on landing. Just as I would at the airline, I reported the strike to the tower. That opened up a can of worms. The tower gave me a number to call. They informed me that I would receive a call from the FSDO and NTSB. It was a Sunday and sure enough a few hours later the phone rang and the NTSB and FSDO were on a conference call with me. I was polite and gave direct answers as they asked if anyone was injured and about the damage to the plane, which was a minor dent in the wing between two ribs. They wanted to know the dollar amount of the damage, which at the time I had no idea. The NTSB representative declared this an incident and left the call. The FSDO however advised there would be a follow up call and not to repair the aircraft until their maintenance inspector viewed the damage.

The next week I took the airplane to a maintenance shop on the field and contacted the insurance company. The insurance company sent out an adjuster who viewed the damage and the rest of the airplane as well. He also reviewed the maintenance logbook. I felt they were looking for a way not to accept the damage claim. Finally an FAA Maintenance Inspector came and looked at the damage and also took the opportunity to look over the entire aircraft and maintenance logbooks. We were finally given the approval to get our airplane repaired.

But that was not the end of it. The FSDO called me once again and wanted me to drive an hour to the FSDO for a sit down meeting. They wanted me to bring my certificates, medical, and logbooks. This was before I retired from the airlines, and I was concerned. What were we going to discuss? Nothing good could come from this. I later advised the FSDO that I would be unable to attend the scheduled meeting due to my work schedule and **the FSDO dropped it and never rescheduled.** And the insurance company paid for the damage.

We received another call from a government agency sometime later, I do not recall which agency, asking for more details about the bird that hit us and our phase of flight. I couldn't believe how much effort was going into this event.

This was a vastly different experience than the one I had at the airline where we would report the strike to the tower, the airport authority would come out and collect samples of feathers or blood from the point of contact, and I would file a short report with the airline in addition to making an entry in the aircraft maintenance log. The FAA did not come out and ask the crew questions about the bird strike.

I wonder if my experience was unique for some reason.

That does seem odd, Tad. Readers, have you had a similar experience?

See <https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-october-17-2024/>

Several readers wrote about the dark-night takeoff crash of a Beech Baron at Avalon, California, and the *LESSONS* the tragedy suggests. Well-known Australian flight instructor Edgar Bassingthwaight writes:

The Beech Baron accident reported in your last bulletin has every appearance of the typical dark night black hole effect, likely aggravated by the [somatogravic illusion](#). ***It is not just VFR pilots who are subject to this hazard.***

In an article I wrote for the Australian Beechcraft Society magazine (Issue No 108) two of the accidents I noted :

26/7/1990: A Beech King Air 90 on a late night take off from Wondai, Queensland flew into the ground wings level 600 metres beyond the end of the runway. The departure was towards dark countryside, away from the town lighting. The PIC [pilot in command] was an experienced ex-military pilot on an IFR flight plan. He had made an "airborne" call to Centre immediately on becoming airborne. All aboard [were] killed.

08/7/1994: A Beech 55 Baron, four POB [persons on board] and full fuel, on takeoff from Halls Creek (a very small outback settlement), Western Australia at 0430 [am local time] flew into the ground 440 metres beyond the end of the runway. On an IFR flight plan, this pilot was also making an "airborne" radio call. The four escaped with severe burns.

In the second instance I think you would find ATSB Air Safety Investigation Report 199401758 to be of particular interest on a number of points.

I think you and I would agree that **"VMC" on a dark night with no visual horizon is a purely theoretical** regulatory VMC. In reality it is absolute IMC. We had a saying among our Aero Club Instructors at Toowoomba, where all our Night VFR cross country training flights were to the west, away from lit urban areas, that ***a dark night over the outback was "more IFR than IFR."*** In fact our Chief Flying Instructor refused to conduct Night VFR cross country flights in single engine aircraft when there was no moon - quite rightly in my opinion.

I digress to an old joke: A British pilot [back in the day before ceilings were reported as Broken or Overcast and instead sky obscuration on a scale of zero to 8] is nearing his destination in the Far East and asks the tower controller for the weather. The controller responds that it is "ten tenths at 800 feet." The pilot responds "roger that, but don't you mean 'eight eighths' old boy?" The controller responds, "Sir, I have seen eight eighths, but this is worse than that." Haha - same applies to dark night IMC don't you think?

Indeed I do, Edgar. Thanks for your insights.

Reader and flight instructor Gary Palmer adds:

I'm one of those non-Bonanza owners who learns a lot from your *LESSONS*, thank you.

Regarding that Baron crash at Catalina: I have heard from locals (who should know) a bit more detail, here are more facts as I understand them: There was another plane that had flown to KAVX [Avalon] but when ready for the return there was a problem (one comment said a bad magneto). The passengers on that airplane were not comfortable flying over the ocean, but at 5 pm the airport tower closed as well as the restaurant. No ground transport [was available] and prospects looked grim about spending the night. Both planes were from KSMO [Santa Monica, California, 37 nautical miles away on the mainland].

The [pilot of the] Baron, on a mission of mercy, flew out to assist. Possibly [to] try and repair [the stricken airplane] since the Baron was on the ground about 2 hours, or else to bring the others home. I do not know how many arrived on the Baron, but apparently everyone loaded into it for the return.

I had never considered if a mission of mercy could be considered an emergency. But this has me thinking about those few times I flew to help someone else. **Did I let the desire to help affect my judgment?** That is something I can learn from this.

Great introspection, Gary. That's a question each of us must ask ourselves every time we fly—and the standard for a "mission of mercy" should be no different that under any other circumstances. I could argue that **a humanitarian flight requires even more caution and erring toward safety** because we are involving others who depend on us for their lives and may not understand the risks well enough to know whether to accept the offer of a flight. Thank you.

See <https://skybrary.aero/articles/somatogravic-and-somatogyral-illusions#:~:text=Description,visual%20external%20reference%20is%20attempted>.

Reader and [Sporty's Pilot Shop](#) Vice President Paul Jurgens also writes:

I had an experience earlier this summer with an airplane **taking off at night without runway lights**. I had just returned from a flight and landed on the preferred no-wind runway, 22. It was

just before 11pm as I was tying down the C172 that I had gotten night current in. I heard a Cessna 150/152 start up and taxi to runway 4. After completing their runup, they announced departure on 4 with plans to leave southbound. They did not turn the taxiway or runway lights on at any time. There was no sound of an attempt to do so either (there is a loudspeaker with the CTAF that the line personnel use during the day to monitor radio traffic).

I don't know if it was an intentional act for some type of "training" exercise. I do know that it is not something that I would train one of my students or allow one of our instructors to do. If I had been quicker to my flight bag, I could have turned the lights on with my PJ2 [handheld communication radio], but the sudden lights might have also been a safety issue. Thankfully, they did not have an accident. but I did document the incident with an SMS [safety management system] report.

That serves as a reminder to flight instructors and the pilots they train: **Do not cause an emergency training exercise to devolve into an actual emergency.** When would you *ever* need to take off without runway lights? As my first flight instructor, Joe Oswalt, told me, **"You never have to take off unless someone is shooting at you."** That's not likely flying a Cessna in Ohio. I really can't come up with a scenario in which it's a good option to take off from an unlit runway at night.

If you still want to practice a no-lights night takeoff for some reason, or even a no-lights landing (which is a more realistic emergency scenario if you lose all electrical power and there are no always-lighted alternates within range of your reserve fuel) you can use the amazing and relatively low cost option of computer-based simulation. Thank you, Paul.

See www.sportys.com

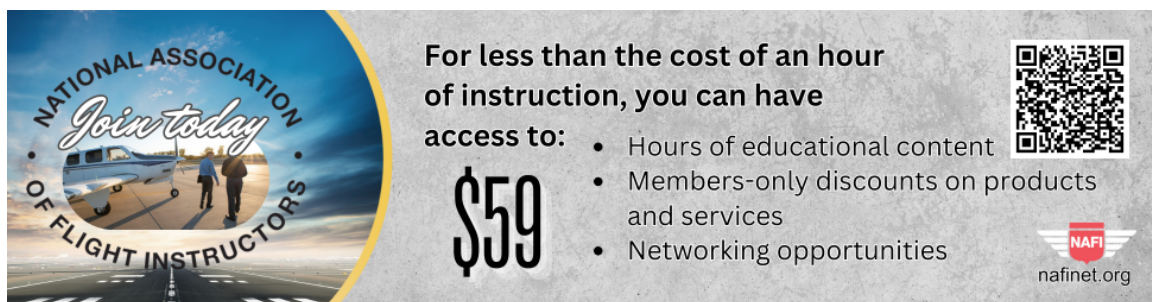
Frequent Debriefer and past U.S. Air Force pilot John Scherer takes us back further to the [September 26 LESSONS](#) about wargaming unusual scenarios:

In the C-5 [Galaxy] we always did an oxygen check passing 10,000 feet on climb out. All crew members were required to check on: Pilot, Co-Pilot, Flight Engineer #1, Flight Engineer #2, Aft Flight Deck Loadmaster, and Passenger Compartment Loadmaster. **This kept us sharp** at donning our oxygen masks. Above 35,000 if one pilot got out of the seat, the other pilot was required to wear oxygen. Above 41,000 as I recall, one pilot had to wear oxygen, even with two pilots in the seats. Thanks for your great work on *FLYING LESSONS*.

Thanks for relating your experience, John.

See <https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-september-26-2024/>

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NEW THIS WEEK: Tad Santino, Steven Scharff



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Thomas P. Turner, M.S. Aviation Safety
Flight Instructor Hall of Fame Inductee
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2010 National FAA Safety Team Representative of the Year
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