



## WHY?

by Bernald S. Smith, SSF Trustee

- Why can't we reduce the accident rate amongst our Soaring Society of America members?
- Why do we continue to do dumb things?
- Why do we hit trees on the downwind leg?
- Why do we roll off the end of the runway into a fence?
- Why do we hit another aircraft during rollout after landing?
- Why do we hit trees on base leg?
- Why do we have hard landings, injuring our backs as well as damaging our gliders?
- Why do we pass up a good landing field only to find there's no more lift and no place to safely land?
- Why do we hit trees on final approach?
- Why do we run over a glider's wing during taxi of our towplanes?
- Why do we take off without using a checklist?
- Why do we think a good lookout does not require turning our heads?
- Why do we land short into a fence?
- Why do we overlook something during assembly?
- Why do we take off with the tail dolly still attached?
- Why do we land without putting down the landing gear?
- Why do we zoom up immediately after takeoff, dangerously pulling up the towplane's tail?
- Why do we run out of fuel in the towplane during tow?
- Why do we hit another aircraft while flying?
- Why do we place our canopy unattended on the ground to watch a wind gust take it?
- Why do we find out to our surprise that our MG glide ratio with the engine extended and not running will not permit us to reach the runway?
- Why do we think it's more important to close the canopy during tow when it comes loose than it is to fly the glider?
- Why do we take off with the canopy loose in the first place?
- Why do we nose over while taxiing or just after landing our towplane?
- Why do we ground loop?
- Why do we hit runway lights with our wing or towplane propeller?
- Why do we drag towropes over and damage other aircraft?
- Why do we tie down inadequately for conditions that do or may exist?
- Why do we hit runway/taxiway signs during rollout?
- Why do we have gear collapse after landing?
- Why do we hit power lines during off field landings?
- Why do we have so many ground handling accidents?
- Why do we incur so much storm damage to tied out aircraft?

- Why do we 'lose it' on winch launch?
- Why do we allow animals to damage our aircraft?
- Why do we have rope breaks which sometimes result in accidents?
- Why do we have trailers come loose during road driving?
- Why do we have soft spots and/or holes in our glider runway which we encounter resulting in towplane/glider accidents?
- Why do we break canopies with our head during flight?
- Why do we have a wing come off in flight?
- Why do we hit our wing against the hangar door while pushing our glider into the hangar?
- Why do we fly so slowly near the ground that we stall unrecoverably before ground contact?
- Why do we become involved in CFIT?
- Why do we make all these mistakes?

This is our Soaring Safety Foundation end of the year review. All of those questions represent accidents which have occurred to SSA members who are glider and/or towplane pilots. Is there anything any of us can do to preclude any of the above occurrences? They don't happen to most of us. Why do they happen to some of us?

These monthly SSF items are intended to keep the matter of safety continuously in your purview. Not everyone has an accident, but we, and hope you, think too many do, and in most cases they are because we do dumb things. We do dumb things not because we're dumb, but because we forget, or because we get distracted, or because we get hurried, or because we don't think through our actions, or because we got away with it once so we'll get away with it again, or because of a lot of other things, including because we just don't think!

Soaring is fun, and we love to fly, and most of the time we have no regrets, but when we don't pay attention to all the things we need to pay attention to, we can have accidents.

Many may be minor, but some are serious and some are so serious they result in a fatality. What's the difference between them? Sometimes just the luck of the draw!

Whatever you do on your next flight, and the next one after that, and all your flights, please don't rely on luck to save you.

Why do we think we don't need to read all of this because it doesn't apply to us?

CFIT stands for controlled flight into terrain, describing an accident whereby an airworthy aircraft, under pilot control, inadvertently flies into terrain, an obstacle, or water.

