

Too Low!!! - Too Slow!!!





PASCO

SOARING

Pacific Soaring Council, Inc.

A non-profit volunteer organization serving glider pilots in Northern California and Nevada



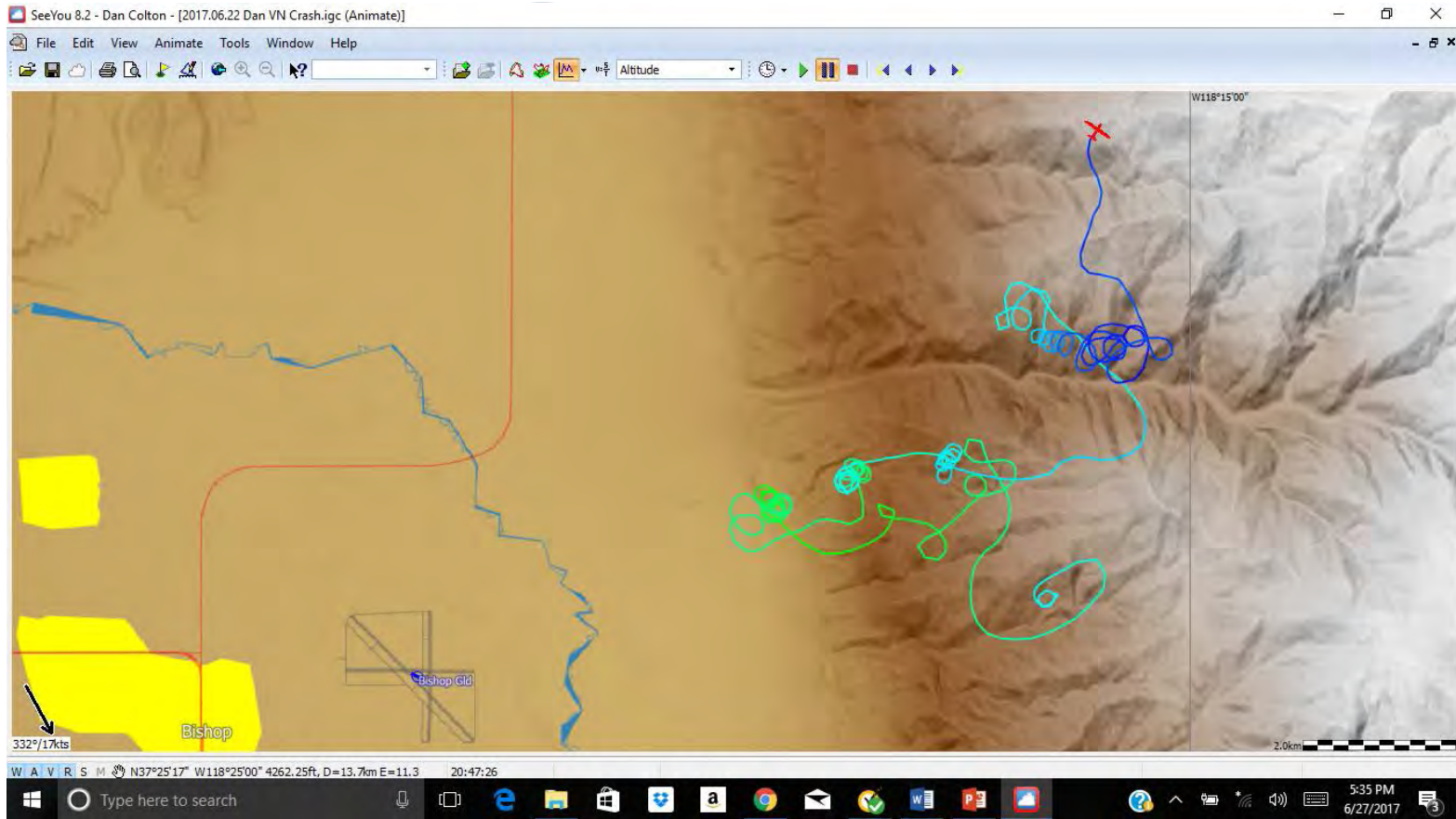
The Day I Crashed Onto the Whites

By: Dan Colton

The Flight



The Trace



The Crash



The Crash



The Crash



The Crash



The Crash



The Crash



The Crash



The Crash



The Crash



The Crash



Now What Do I Do?



I JUST CRASHED INTO THE SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN AND THE GLIDER HAS FINALLY COME TO A STOP. BLOOD IS RUNNING DOWN MY FOREHEAD, BUT I AM ALIVE. I NEED TO GET OUT OF THE GLIDER AND SEE HOW BADLY I AM INJURED.

The Carnage



But I'm OK



Safety Cockpits Work



The Rescue



The Rescue



Who Needs to Know?

1. Notify my club
 - a) Phone call from the hillside
2. Notify my family
 - a) Another phone call from the hillside
3. Notify NTSB
 - a) NTSB Form 6120.1
4. Notify FAA
 - a) FAA Form 8020-23
5. Identify and notify land owner
 - a) Who actually owns the land
6. Notify insurance company

Parties Vested in my Success

1. My Flying Club

- a. CFGI and DPE ground and flight instruction to fill gaps in training and foster good judgement and flying skills in similar environment
- b. Mentoring to help me get back into flying

2. The FAA

- a. FSDO examiner Form 709 reexamination

3. My Fellow Pilots

- a. Provided a wealth of knowledge, articles, empathy and encouragement

Flight Analysis - Background

1. Advancing my soaring abilities was a priority
2. Bishop and cross country was the goal
3. My plan
 - a) Read everything soaring and XC related
 - b) Thermal camp (attended 2014)
 - c) XC camp (attended 2015)
 - d) Silver badge (completed 2015)
 - e) Aggressive XC Mentoring (2015-2016)
 - f) Solo 300k (accomplished 2016)
 - g) BISHOP (enrolled for 2017 with aim to complete my Gold badge)

Flight Analysis - Background

1. But the plan had a hidden gap
 - a) My training focus was get high, stay high, and maintain safe glide to paved airports
 - b) Terrain proximity flight skills development therefore took a back seat and was merely knowledge based without a solid foundation of practical training

Bishop

1. Best intentions

- a) Prepare glider, equipment and pilot
- b) Take time traveling to Bishop
- c) Orientation flight on first day (not solo)

2. The reality

- a) Final 30 miles to Bishop were stressful
 - a) Breakdown on the road
- b) Orientation flight day not as planned
 - a) Mental Stress (frustrations)
 - b) Physical Stress (daytime temp over 100°)
 - c) Rushing (led to flight computer not setup)

So Why Did I Fly That Day

1. Three years of anticipation and planning
2. I thought I was fit enough to fly (I have flown fine in other places when I felt off and didn't crash)
3. I was on a mission (complete my Gold badge)

Analysis and Healing

1. Debrief thoroughly (with experts)
2. Accept responsibility (this was 100% on me)
3. Share the story (but not too often)
4. Be open to empathy, advice and criticism (I got plenty of all three)
5. Get back in the saddle (before the demons in my head take over)

And importantly

1. Take my time getting current again (my mind needs to heal)

The Weather

1. Clear with no wind on the ground and 10 knot gusts near the terrain at altitude

Pilot Experience

1. Total hours in gliders = 290
2. Hours last 90 days = 22
3. Hours last 30 days = 13
4. Total hours in VN = 1
5. Total fights in VN = 1
6. Total ridge soaring training = 0

Major Contributory Elements

1. Overconfidence
2. Mental preparedness and focus
3. Situational awareness and knowing my limitations
4. Ridge flying fundamentals not followed
 1. All turns away from ridge
 2. Always have an escape route
 3. Fly faster when close to terrain to manage wind shear

My Lessons Learned

- Acknowledge my limitations and get formal training to fill gaps
- I can never have too much local knowledge
- I will set and periodically re-evaluate my personal safety minimums and stick to them
- My pre-flight checklist now includes “don’t fly if not physically **AND** mentally good to go”
- I will Acknowledge the trap of Plan Continuation Bias prior to, and throughout every flight (no flight is worth my life)
- I will always have a safe exit route available
- A well stocked landout kit works

Supplemental Reading

1. Why Smart Pilots Crash
 - a) <https://www.avweb.com/news/features/Why-Smart-Pilots-Crash-229682-1.html>
2. Working Ridges
 - a) Compilation of articles offered through Valley Soaring Association
www.pacificsoaring.org/articles/2010/Working-The-Ridge-VSA-0116-2010-Kempton-Izuno.pdf
3. Getting on Top of the White Mountains
 - a) <https://www.soarthesierra.com/tutorials/getting-on-top-of-the-white-mountains/>
4. The Soaring Engine
 - a) Book by G. Dale



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Questions?