



*Let's not forget that in the midst of everything, Alaska still gives us beauty like this.....*

pic courtesy Talkeetna Air Taxi website

## In this Issue:

- \* Chairman's Letter
- \* Events on the horizon & a round-up of worthy links
- \* Alaska aviation book recommendations for your holiday shopping!
- \* John Mahany on a 2021 plan for professionalism in flight
- \* A timely safety report for prop blade maintenance

***Stay Safe & Here's to a Much Better New Year!***

# Chairman's Letter: Looking to 2021

***Dear Members,***

The Alaskan Aviation Safety Foundation (AASF) is alive and well, it just has been a little hard to show it these past few months. Because of COVID we had to postpone our premier event, the Spring Seaplane Seminar. For the same reason, the Alaska Airmen's Association did not have their classic Great Alaska Aviation Gathering. That had always been another wonderful opportunity for us to staff our booth and visit with you and talk flying. We also were not able to have our Fall Safety Seminar as the pandemic has persisted. But like I said at the beginning, AASF is still here and we are ready to get in there and pick up our efforts to improve aviation safety with a fresh start.

Our first effort in that regard is a feature called **Lessons Learned and Relearned**, appearing elsewhere in this newsletter and edited by our Board Member Rocky Capozzi. Scholarship application review was delayed but should be wrapped up by Mary by the end of the year. Board member Marshall Severson has been working with the AOPA Air Safety Institute to bring you a live interactive webinar in January entitled **LiveATC.net—It's here, how can we use it?** More details on that are presented in this newsletter. And we hope to have some semblance of the Seaplane Seminar in the spring. What and when we don't know yet, but we'll let you know as we get closer to the date and have a better understanding of the COVID situation.

Let's face it.... the last nine months have been tough on all of us. And it is important to continue to be respectful of the suggested precautions to protect us all from the virus so we can enjoy a better 2021.

In closing I appeal to you to help us define our way forward. If you would like to see more webinars, let us know and tell us what would be your best time and day of the week. We do want to limit them to one hour, so more frequently might be better than longer length. If you'd like us to pursue a specific topic in a webinar or in the newsletter let us know that as well, just send us an email at [aasfonline@gmail.com](mailto:aasfonline@gmail.com). Someday we hope to be back where we were before the pandemic, hopefully even better. In the meantime, let us exhibit the grace to respect and help our fellow aviators, passengers, and friends and families get through these dark times. And when you fly, ***Fly Safe.***

***- Harry***

# First AASF Live Webinar January 20, Save the Date!

AASF will be hosting a live interactive webinar early next year on January 20 at 6pm.

The program is entitled “LiveATC.net-It's here, how can we use it?” and will be open to all. Presenters will include Dave Pascoe, founder of LiveATC.net, Jamie Patterson-Simes, SkyTrek Alaska Flight Training, and Tom Simes, LiveATC.net Feeder Site Volunteer.

Have you ever wondered about how those ATC recordings of newsworthy events hit the internet so quickly? Would you benefit from hearing an unofficial recording of your interaction with ATC or even CTAF communications? What about monitoring live ATC communications? How does LiveATC.net fit into training and accident investigations? Answers to these questions, and your questions, as well as discussion on how the network can be used for improved safety and communications will be provided.

The event is co-hosted by the AOPA Air Safety Institute. A link to register for the webinar will be posted on [aasfonline.org](http://aasfonline.org). We look forward to a fresh start and seeing you in 2021!

## ***We are introducing a new feature in this edition of our newsletter called Lessons Learned and Relearned.***

This section has links to accident, incident or “there I was” type experiences that hold safety lessons for all of us.

Our first link takes you to [a recreation of a traffic pattern tragedy](#) that involved both pilot and controller miscues and mistakes.

Next we have the analysis of [a VFR into IMC fatal accident in mountainous terrain](#) where the pilot pressed on despite decreasing ceilings.

Do you know and use a safe minimum maneuver speed? [Watch this video](#) as the expert CFI discusses how and why you should have one.

Our last link for this newsletter takes you to the story of [a pilot who got caught on top of the weather](#) after a lengthy VFR flight. Spoiler alert – he makes it! His story and lesson learned is well worth your time.

*The AASF board likes to hear from our membership. Would you like to share a safety article, video or accident analysis that would benefit your fellow members? Send a short description with the link to [rcapozzi@gci.net](mailto:rcapozzi@gci.net).*

# Make 2021 a year to take your flight skills to the next level

by John Mahany

Looking back, what are the lessons we've learned this year as pilots, from the accidents that have occurred? Hopefully we've learned something. Kobe Bryant's helicopter accident was on January 26. Remember that? That was in the headlines for weeks. Helicopters and IMC don't mix well. But we are still waiting for the NTSB's final report.

In the November 2020 issue of [Aviation Safety](#) (do you read this?), in the section "NTSB Reports", eighteen GA accidents are listed. They run the gamut, including: a Piper Arrow IV attempts to abort a takeoff, and is substantially damaged, as it runs off the end of the runway; a PA-31 Navajo on a low altitude survey flight encounters engine problems then the pilot loses control, stalls and spins; a CE-206 lands 'flat' and bounces, resulting in a 'loss of control' as it veers off the pavement; an American Aviation AA-5 Traveler impacts terrain; a Piper Turbo Lance II is damaged during a loss of control on takeoff, etc.




You get the idea. These are a combination of many things; a lack of ADM, LoC leading to CFIT, lack of practice resulting in not being proficient, poor situation awareness, poor planning and more. How many pilots erroneously think, 'it won't happen to me?' and then it happens. Who among us is immune to this?

What can be done? Many pilots fall into the complacency trap and we all have to fight it. It is a particular problem now, with the pandemic, as many of us are not flying regularly. This is a concern, especially with lower time pilots who

lack experience. We can all learn from the mistakes of others and we should. But some of us don't bother to and because of that the same mistakes and subsequent accidents continue to occur every year.

So, we have to take the initiative. As soon as conditions allow, schedule training with a good CFI. You want one who is demanding, but not in an unprofessional or belligerent way (there is NO tolerance for that, nor is that acceptable!). Look for someone who raises the bar and makes you work hard to maintain or improve your flying skills. Fly with him or her very few months, three or four times a year, and work on different skills each time. Professionals have to train regularly and we should as well.

Another good idea: participate in the FAA's Wings Program. It's based on proficiency, not flight time. When you demonstrate a task or maneuver to proficiency, according to standards set forth in the ACS, you are finished! And participation in the FAA's Wings Program waives the FAA's Flight Review requirement (FAR 61.56).  Your aircraft insurance broker will appreciate this. As an example, this is from the [Avemco website](#):

***"Save Up to 10% On Your Avemco Premium***  
*To help reduce the number and rising cost of general aviation accidents, we launched the Avemco Safety Rewards Program. Our goal is to promote the continuing education of pilots, so the program rewards participating Avemco policyholders with premium credits."*

These are all things to think about, so that we are around to fly another day! Your family, friends and colleagues will thank you for your commitment to safety. Be a role model and set an example for others to follow. We want to stay *out* of the headlines.

Fly safely,

John



# Attention Holiday Shoppers (and readers) - here are some Alaska aviation book recommendations



It's that time of year and while there are many things to buy for pilots (headsets, logbooks, gear for the flight bag, survival kit, [everything you ever wanted with the aviation alphabet on it](#)), there are also some great books about Alaska aviation out there that you might have missed. **The Flying North**, by Jean Potter (pictured at left), is the best book (as far as I'm concerned) ever written about the early days of aviation in the territory. Potter interviewed Joe Crosson, Sig & Noel Wien, Bob Reeve, Jack Jeffords and others about their careers, the friends they lost (notably Ben Eielson) and also picked up more than one crazy story. If you haven't read it, you really must. (I love this book so much I helped to bring it back into print a few years ago.)

There were several biographies written about the early pilots, some vastly better (and more truthful) than others. (Some of them are out-of-print but you can track them down online or through used bookstores.) **Winging It** by Jack Jefford hits all the right marks for colorful flight stories while also covering his CAA career. **Mercy Flight** is the only book to cover Joe Crosson's entire career, from his friendship with Ben Eielson to running Pacific Alaska Airways. In **Glacier Pilot**, author Beth Day occasionally goes a bit over-the-top about pilot Bob Reeve, but it's hard not to use superlatives when writing about his experience (especially in the Aleutians).

**Arctic Bush Pilot** by James "Andy" Anderson covers the post-war era for Wien, (Anderson flew for the company for years and established the Bettles base before moving into company management) while **Wager With the Wind** by James Greiner gives Don Sheldon's career all the attention it deserves. (I really wish someone would write a dual biography of Sheldon & Cliff Hudson—or a history of aviation on Denali & in Talkeetna—so Hudson could get similar literary attention.)

**Alaska's Father Goose** by Gerald Bodding is one of the few books framing a Southeast flying career (Bodding flew for Shell Simmons and Bob Ellis), while for those mourning the loss of PenAir, Orin Seybert has a memoir, **You Breathe, I Fly**, on his career. (The Alaska Aviation Museum has this one in case your local bookstore does not.)

There is almost nothing written about women in Alaska aviation but Steve Sheinkin, who writes nonfiction for the 12 & up crowd, authored **Born To Fly** last year about the first Women's Air Derby in 1929. Marvel Crosson, Alaska's first certificated female pilot (and likely the first woman to fly commercially in AK), was killed in this race and Sheinkin devotes a lot of attention to her and her brother Joe Crosson's careers. If you have a teen interested in aviation in your life, don't miss this one.



*Continued on Page 6*

## Safety Briefing: Backcountry Operations & Propeller Blades

On August 18, 2017, a tailwheel-equipped Cessna A185F sustained a propeller blade separation while taxiing at the Aniak Airport. The pilot was able to maintain control of the airplane after the propeller blade separated and shut down the airplane without further incident (see photo). This was a Part 91 business flight; there were no injuries to the four occupants onboard, nor were there any ground injuries. The engine mount sustained substantial damage from excessive vibrations caused by the propeller blade separation.



The airplane was equipped with a McCauley controllable pitch aluminum propeller, model number D2A34C58-0. An examination of the fractured blade revealed that it had failed due to fatigue cracking that initiated from a nick in the leading edge. Measurement of the nick revealed it was within tolerance for a field repair, although a field repair had not been performed. The NTSB determined that the

pilot's inadequate preflight inspection, which failed to detect a crack in the propeller blade, led to the separation of a section of a propeller blade due to fatigue. The full NTSB report can be accessed [here](#). The public docket items from the accident can be accessed [here](#).

Operating on unpaved runways and airstrips can make propeller blades more susceptible to nicks, cuts, or gouges which can then lead to cracks. It is imperative that propeller blades are inspected before every single flight, including all the respective areas on the propeller blades (the front side, the rear side, the leading edges, and the tips). Be sure the blades are properly cleaned, and the preflight inspection is conducted in adequate lighting. The airframe manufacturer's preflight inspection checklist, along with the propeller manufacturer's maintenance instructions need to be carefully followed. If nicks, cuts, or gouges are discovered, they must be properly addressed in accordance with the propeller's manufacturer's maintenance instructions. Propeller blades have specific overhaul requirements and some propeller blades have published life limits.

If you have any questions about propeller maintenance, repair, and overhaul requirements, contact an airworthiness inspector at your local FSDO. Whether you are flying a Piper PA-18 to a cabin near Tok, a de Havilland DHC-2 to a lodge near Talkeetna, or a Douglas DC-3 to a village near Bethel, propellers **always** require a detailed preflight inspection and regular maintenance.

---

*continued from Page 5*

There are few contemporary titles written about Alaska flying, but **Denali Justice** by Peter Galbraith provides a unique story into the court case that followed a 1981 crash on Denali by Hudson's Air Service. The case was brought against the FAA, National Park Service, the US Army and USAF over the delayed rescue. As detailed [in a 2015 review](#) for Alaska Dispatch, while it might seem unsavory to sue rescuers, the suit revealed how convoluted the interagency effort was and revelations in the trial helped to transform future operations.

Finally, AASF newsletter editor Colleen Mondor wrote about her years as a Fairbanks-based Part 135 dispatcher in **The Map of My Dead Pilots: The Dangerous Game of Flying** in Alaska. Mondor has continued to write about AK aviation since her years at the "Company" and her stories, alternately poignant, humorous, and tragic, will ring true for anyone who has flown commercially in the state.