

THE PROFESSIONAL FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR

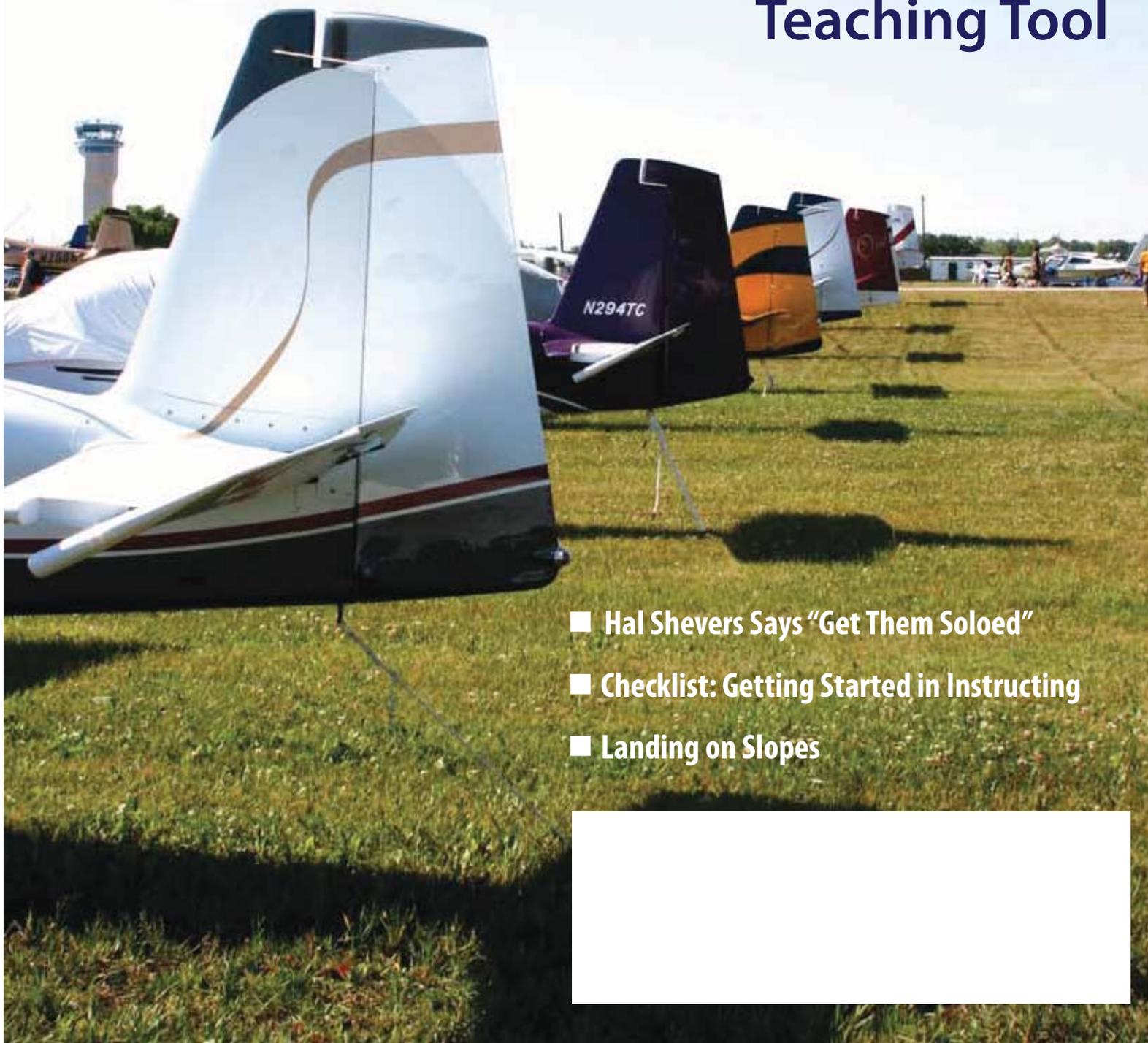
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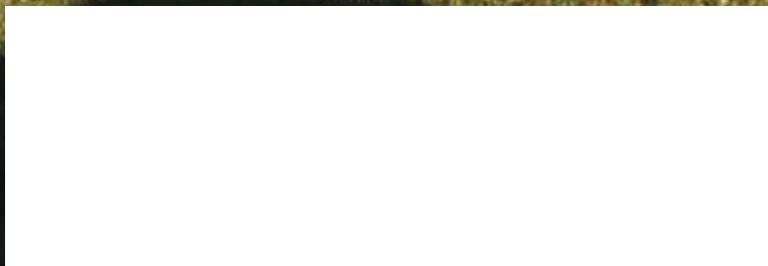
September 2011

VOLUME 13 NUMBER 9

Storytelling as a Teaching Tool



- Hal Shevers Says "Get Them Soloed"
- Checklist: Getting Started in Instructing
- Landing on Slopes



position Report

Teaching Safety

Flight instructors must lead the way



Jason Blair, MCFI
Executive Director

Safety has always been important in aviation. We all want to be safe pilots. But do we really hold each other accountable when we see something that is questionable or witness unsafe actions that could lead to accident or tragedy? In many cases we turn a blind eye and hope for the best.

We can't do this anymore.

Aviation is generally safe. But we are still killing too many people. Most pilots can name someone they have known or who was based at their airport who has died in an aircraft accident. We shouldn't be able to do this. The overall accident rate is better than most methods of personal transportation, but we need to continue to improve. Just because it is better than some areas, doesn't mean that it is good enough. The aviation community rests on thoughts of "We are doing a really good job," and "It is a risky activity; we will kill a few people, but at least keep it to a minimum." The community has accepted a level of accidents that is too high.

The "it won't happen to me" mentality needs to change. Pilots see things

happening or witness behaviors that have killed people and think, "That pilot made a stupid mistake that I wouldn't ever make." But none of the pilots we have seen die made a conscious choice to do something that would kill them; I guarantee that. They missed something, got overconfident, or let their skills degrade. This can happen to anyone.

Throughout the transportation structure, general aviation safety is under the microscope. Congress, the NTSB, and the FAA are all doing separate studies on GA safety; right now. Our community needs to lead the way to safer levels of activity, or instead we are going to have them mandated in ways we may not be able to meet.

As instructors, we have a front line responsibility level in the aviation community. Instructors are the only touch point in flying where pilots have to continue to demonstrate proficiency or receive additional training — at a minimum of every two years for a flight review. Once a pilot has become certified, it may be the only contact they

have with anyone who can help ensure that their skills remain sharp and that their decision-making processes are such that they won't kill themselves or their passengers.

A culture change is needed. Instructors can start this. I am going to pledge to do it myself, and I hope you will all join me. We must actively reach out to pilots we see who seem like they might be doing something unsafe. There can be no pencil-whipped flight reviews for friends who "you know fly regularly." An instrument proficiency check must follow all of the required task areas laid out in the practical test standards. If you rent aircraft, make sure your customers are current. If they aren't, suggest additional training for them, and don't be afraid to charge for it. The training they pay you for might save a life. If they continue to do things that seem unsafe and they aren't willing to improve or fix the behavior, tear up their rental agreement. If you are providing instruction to someone who owns his or her own aircraft, suggest the same, and if that pilot isn't

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willing to work toward safer operations, stop flying with him or her.

Peer pressure is going to be the only way we are really going to start the culture change we need relating to safety. We all want to think we are safe pilots, but sometimes it may take the help of others to see an unsafe behavior we are doing. Be that other person for the pilots at your airport. Do it constructively, but do it actively. It is time that safety takes another leap forward, and I know the instructor community needs to lead the way. ■