May 2017

EAA 983

Gayla Maas Gets Us Back to Stick 'n Rudder

Gayla Maas was our speaker at the Chapter's April meeting, and gave a very entertaining and thought-provoking presentation on the subject of stick and rudder flying.

As someone who occasionally has to be reminded of the purpose of those funny pedals on a plane's floor, I could particularly relate to Gayla's urging on the need to keep things coordinated.

Gayla also emphasized the importance of good pilot communication, particularly when approaching non-towered fields. Don't be silent, but for gosh sakes, we don't need to hear from you every half-mile starting 15 miles out!

Gayla made this good suggestion: instead of identifying yourself, for example, as "Experimental 123 November," something like "yellow low-wing" will give other pilots much more useful information.

Gayla's fun and feisty personality really enlivened our meeting. Thank you, Gayla!

Gayla Maas with EAA 983 Secretary Karen Woodward

Pecan Pilot Profiles: Mack Angel

Mack was born in Arkansas, and at age 19, entered the Air Force Aviation Cadet Program. Mack's goal was to get an F-86F assignment when he finished his flight training and received his pilot wings and commission as an Air Force officer, but when available slots were posted for selection the last of six F-86Fs was taken by a student officer positioned directly ahead of him in a line based on class standing. His disappointment was short-lived, as Mack selected an F-84F slot which was quickly changed and he became a member of only the second group of pilots to enter training in the F-100 (the first jet fighter capable of supersonic speeds in straight and-level flight) immediately after receiving their wings. Upon completion of F-100 training Mack spent 4 years in an F-100 squadron in Germany with a primary mission of sitting nuclear alert defending U.S. interests during the cold war. (Five of the six F-86 pilots ended up in the B-47).

After returning to the States, Mack became an F-105 instructor at Nellis AFB, NV. In 1966, early in the air campaign against the North Vietnamese, Mack was based in Thailand and flew a total of 103 combat missions in the F-105F as part of the "Wild Weasel" program, in which planes trolled for surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites that they and other planes would subsequently bomb. Two of the eight Wild Weasel crews in Mack's squadron were shot down and killed.

In 1967, Mack's dream of becoming a Thunderbird came true. After selection to the team he reported to Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas and, after 60-70 training missions, served a two-year appointment as Left Wingman flying the F-100 and then the F-4E. Mack mentioned that the air shows themselves were only about 10% of the pilots' duties. Much of their time is spent visiting hospitals, schools and civic organizations.

Mack subsequently attended the Armed Forces Staff College, and was thereafter assigned to the Pentagon for three-and-a-half years, where he served as a personnel staff officer and then as Aide to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force.
Mack served a total of 21 years in the Air Force, attaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and obtaining his undergraduate degree at Hampton Institute. Mack and Connie mentioned that spending time at the Institute,

Program Reminder

June 10/Rain Date June 17
Poker Run
Pecan Plantation Airport

July 8 EAA 983 Chapter Meeting
What My Mechanic Almost Did to Me

August 12 EAA 983 Chapter Meeting
GPS and iPads

September 9 EAA Chapter Meeting
Subject TBA

October 14 EAA 983 Chapter Meeting
Dick Keyt Talks

November 4 EAA Chapter 983
Annual Fly-in

a historically black college, was an eye-opening and rewarding experience.

Mack's military awards and decorations include the Silver Star, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, and 11 Air Medals.

After leaving the Air Force, Mack accepted a job as a Cessna Citation demo pilot, based in Wichita. After amassing lots of Citation experience, Mack became Chief Pilot for Pizza Hut where he flew Citations and a Canadair Challenger. Mack loved the Citations, calling them great planes and noting that later versions flew at speeds similar to or faster than their competitors.

He later became the Director of Aviation for Dallas-based Frito-Lay, along with Pizza Hut a part of the PepsiCo family. He flew the Citation VI, Challenger 601, Hawker 800 and Astra SPX before his retirement in 2002.

After retiring from his corporate career, Mack and Connie moved to Pecan Plantation, and Mack had his first experiences with general aviation. He bought a V-tail Bonanza that had originally been based in Zimbabwe. After years of tightly-regimented military and corporate flying, Mack enjoyed the freedom and challenges of being on his own in general aviation. For several years, Mack participated in Veterans' Day "missing man" Bonanza formation flights here.

Mack left me with this word: when he was applying to the Thunderbirds, he was told (in jest) that a requirement was that applicants have a gorgeous wife. Everyone who has met Connie knows that Mack most easily fulfilled that requirement!
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A Pilot's Last Flight

Maybe—I'm guessing here—but I suspect that CPAs, gardeners, and trash men probably welcome a little excitement into their everyday jobs. Certainly, professional athletes and movie stars relish the limelight and enjoy the adrenaline rush that comes with their occupation. Pilots? Uh…not so much.

Being hired as a professional commercial pilot we already come to the job having all the skills and knowledge necessary to complete a safe and relaxing journey for our passengers. We relish the mundane comfort of a normal flight. What we train for is something different altogether.

Ever six to nine months we head back to the "school house", a highly technical training facility of electronic and hydraulic simulators that can throw you around in ways you can't imagine. We train to fly the jet with an engine out, on fire, and completely separated from the aircraft. We train for explosive depressurization from the highest altitude, fire in the cockpit and how to recover from a total hydraulic loss causing control failure. Throw in landing gear that won't come down, loss of all electrics, and what to do when you have a bomb on board and you have a just completed a sweat inducing, four hours in the simulator. Come back the next day and do it all again! Do you know of any profession that trains constantly over and over so often? Firemen come the closest, but they don't have their "licenses" on the line each training session with the threat of unemployment should they screw up.

After flying for a major airline for almost 26 years I had had enough. Last November I decided to submit my retirement papers. Due to decades of convoluted union contracts and a volatile stock market, which makes picking an exact retirement date more complicated than understanding two teenage girls talking on a cell phone, I selected March first as my retirement date, But, things don't always go as you plan and my company decided to declare bankruptcy because they weren't making money, but more so, to eliminate contracts that took years to negotiate. The bottom line is they wouldn't make money if we worked for free with their flawed business plan. There are threats of lower wages and benefits and certainly expectations of advancement are dashed while we are asked to work longer hours and do this all with a "Happy Face".

So, with all that turmoil I moved my retirement date back to June first. As that date quickly approached it was inevitable that I would have a last flight but never did I think it would go as it did.

After years of training to flawless standards (unlike any profession I know, we don't get a second chance to make a mistake), I was able to survive my 30+ years of commercial aviation without an incident and nary a scratch. As I sat at the end of runway 04 at JFK waiting to push the throttles up for takeoff I said a small pray that everything would go as smooth as the thousands of flights prior.

It was just getting dark as we rolled down the runway. As we reached our rotation speed of 145 knots, I pulled back gently and a few seconds after the nose lifted as did the entire aircraft. At over 320 tons the aircraft was more sluggish than normal but those big engines were more than enough to make it fly. Not more than two seconds after liftoff the airplane started to buck. I felt it yaw to one side and confirmed my

suspicion when I looked at the engine instruments centered on the panel between the Captain and myself. The Left engine temperature gauge was in the RED indicating an Over Temp of that engine. It was still putting out power but it was bucking like a stallion. For what seemed like five minutes, but was probably no more than a few milliseconds, I could hear a voice in my head asking over and over, "Why me? Why now? What did I do to deserve this? Is this my punishment for years of boredom?"

Do something I told myself. The engine would have to be shutdown. In reality, I didn't know if the engine had a compressor stall, severe damage or had fallen off.

I flew the airplane and started the Emergency items that finally popped into my head, displacing those "why me" thoughts. Left auto-throttle switch: OFF. Left throttle: reduce (until the problem subsided). Darn, the problem didn't subside. The bucking got worse and by now, I 'm sure the passengers have noticed. Certainly, the flight attendants would shortly be asking: "how long before we land?"

The Captain was handling the various duties such as contacting ATC and advising them of our situation, running the electronic checklist, calling and talking to the flight attendants and telling them the nature of the problem and making a PA to the passengers stating we have a "small problem" and would have to return to the airport, the most common thing to say even if one engine falls off and the other is on fire.

Darn, still bucking. On to the next step in the checklist and that was to pull the fire handle. Even though, so far, we didn't have a fire indication and didn't assume there was a fire in the engine (don't make the problem more complicated than it already was I told myself), by pulling the handle you shut off the electrics, hydraulics, and bleed air as well as a few other things which at that moment my brain was attempting to remember, using valuable synapses needed for more important duties.

In reality, most large airplanes can fly sufficiently well on one engine as they can on two and many times passengers are unaware that one quit until they are told. The Boeing 777 has a wonderful system called, Thrust Asymmetry Compensation, better known as the TAC, which adds rudder to compensate for the reduced thrust on the side of the failed engine. This reduces the fatigue on the pilot, who would normal have to do that chore.

Ok, I take stock. Airplane flying-check. Airplane climbing-check. At this point we are only two minutes into the flight but it seems like 20! I take over the radio duties as well as the flying while the Captains continues the multitude of tasks required to ensure that we don't do something stupid or forget to do something smart.

I request a downwind to land on JFK's longest runway, always a wise idea. I inquire about the weather and the winds even though I can see the runway lights and it's clear outside.

Wow! All those years of training finally pay off. The Captain has declared an Emergency (SOP), the airplane is under control, the passengers briefed and I finally relax a bit, enough so that I think about how we aren't going to get paid for this. Not paid? That's right. By some quirk of our arcane contract if we

return to the same airport that we takeoff from we get no pay! WTF? Who came up with this provision? Twenty minutes of sweat and most likely soiled tighty-whities and we don't make enough to take them to the cleaners. In the words (or Letters), that my kids would use, YGTBSM!! I'm guessing that USAir had the same provision in their contract. I suspect that's why Sully went in the Hudson and didn't return to the airport. For a moment, I think we should go to Newark for the pay alone, after all the hard work was already done. Ok, my mind was wandering a bit, but not for long.

As we approached mid-field on the downwind I was snapped out of my dream state as the cockpit went dark. Except for the screen in front of the Captain we had nothing! My first thought was electrical failure. Even though the APU (auxiliary power unit) should have been started, if in fact it was, it was not on line yet and we were on battery power. I wished my first though was accurate but unfortunately it was worse than just an electrical failure. The second engine, for some unknown reason stopped running.

At this point, there is not enough time to run a lot of additional checklists or do much more analyzing. The bottom line is we are coming down. For a second I think about Sully and his crew's successful results. Off to our side we have the Atlantic Ocean which is a much large landing area than the Hudson, but that presents a whole new set of problems. If you survive the landing will you drown? What if you're injured and can't swim? How about Sharks? I'm sure there were no sharks in the Hudson but I'm not certain in the Atlantic Ocean, at least near Jones Beach.

Geez: "why me?" I ask again to no one in particular. Is this how it ends after a long and undistinguished career?

I remember all those hours and years of training. At the end of each simulator session, when asked if there was anything else I wanted to do, I always asked for the instructor to put me at 3000 feet above the airport and cut both engines. While having 600+ hours of glider time doesn't necessarily qualify you to land a big jet with no engines it couldn't hurt. Surprisingly each time I was able to land, without power on the runway. It wasn't always pretty but lives were saved, at least in the simulator. Once in the B737 I was able to land and taxi to the gate with the available energy, just like a Bob Hoover routine. Bob is without a doubt, in my mind the greatest pilot that ever lived. I am no Bob Hoover, (though I met him once and got him to sign his book), but at least that day I hoped I was able to duplicate his feat.

I get only one chance to do this right and so far, the Captain is content to let me finish the leg I started. Whether he was scared more than I or too busy doing his "captain" duties, I can't say.

Things are happening in slow motion now. My life didn't flash before my face but I was expecting that movie to start running shortly. As I turned base and asked for flaps the cockpit lit up. All the instruments in front of me were back working, indicating that the APU finally came online. How long did that take? It seemed like a year but was probably only a minute or two. I no longer had to look across the cockpit to read my airspeed and altitude, which at this point were both a little low. A slight correction here and there and I felt a little better, hell if one COULD feel any better. "Why me?" I asked again. Why won't anyone answer? No time for self-pity, just do what you can to the end.

I turned final and asked for more flaps. I was not all that surprised at how well the B777 flew with both engines out, mainly because this was demonstrated to me about a year ago. Fly at 250 knots, turn the autopilot on, connect it to the Glide Slope and this airplane flies all the way to the ground. All you have to do is manage your speed with flaps and gear which up to this point I was doing pretty well considering. We were aimed at JFK's longest runway but I could see that if I didn't come up with an idea we were going to be short.

I left the gear in as long as I thought I could without landing on the belly. I threw it out uncertain as to how long it would take to fully extend. I missed calculated as the gear came down swiftly and now I was saddled with too much drag. As we neared the runway my heart was in my throat when I realized we weren't going to make the runway end. It would be close but not close enough. I pulled back and bled off more airspeed to gain what little altitude I could but at some point, you get to the point of diminishing returns. At one hundred feet, we were low and 5 knots slow but at this point I was just going to try to make it survivable. We smacked down about 100 feet short of the runway end, but all in all it wasn't that rough a landing. The gear maintained the bulk of the overweight aircraft and we rolled right up to and on the hard-surfaced runway. I applied the brakes to stop the aircraft as soon as possible as I as I'm sure the passengers wanted to end this ordeal post haste.

When we came to a complete stop the Captain, who had been quite silent up to this point (or maybe I had tuned him out) looked over to me and only said "With the exception of a few ruts in the grass, Nice job"

I was relieved. It was over. I got up out of my seat collected my flight bag, went to the cockpit door and waited for the hydraulic stairs to come down.

Did you see this event on CNN? Maybe Fox or CBS? No, you didn't see it there because no one died and bad news sells advertising time.

You see, if you haven't figured it out by now I was in the simulator. I was there to complete my three take-offs and landings (required every 90 days) to be qualified for my last international trip on the 29th of May. Since I was retiring June first this seemed like a waste of resources but I made a decision that I had started my career with the airline in training and that's where I would end.

I got home from that training session at 2230 and developed an eye problem. The problem was that I couldn't SEE going to work the next day. Let the Wall Street vultures and the Wharton school whiz kids devour what's left of a once great airline.

I called in sick and I am DONE! Over and Out!