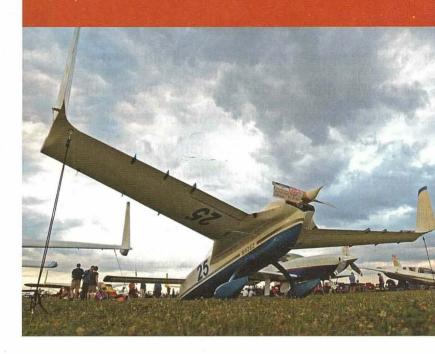


CHARLIE PRECOURT



Join the Club

Increasing your flight safety through type club participation BY CHARLIE PRECOURT

IN CASE YOU HADN'T noticed, the focus of the last many months in this column has been loss of control. That issue remains far and away the number one cause of general aviation and experimental amateurbuilt accidents in our community. LOC is on the NTSB "Most Wanted List" and is the FAA's theme issue this year. It is also the focus of the EAA Founder's Innovation Prize, described in a fourpage spread in the December issue of Sport Aviation. And we'll keep pounding on LOC until it goes away, just like we did with controlled flight into terrain (CFIT), which was a big issue for us until the advent of GPS mapping displays in our cockpits. So, what will be the equivalent solution for LOC? We don't yet know, but we will figure it out! In past articles I've covered upset recoveries with Mike Goulian, transition training with Dave Morss, the use of angle of attack systems, which have been made easier to retrofit by FAA policies, the use of crew resource management, stick shakers, controllability checks, and a few more. Each of these topics contributes to a portfolio of tools for us to use to stay far away from a loss of control in flight problem. And there's yet another one to consider I want to advocate this month-relying on each other's experiences. There's nothing like learning from someone else so you don't have to learn it the hard way yourself-and the best way to do that is to join a type club! I've been associated with four different type clubs myself, and I have to say the experience has been nothing short of awesome.

In both my military and NASA experience I was the beneficiary of a very extensive training system with facilities and assets that are hard to match. In general aviation those kinds of assets ar simply not available-but in type clubs you can get very close to the same train ing experience you'll find in the best military and airline flight schools out there. In the military and commercial airline communities, there were consid erably higher accident rates prior to 1990 than exist today. Those communities took on the issue by creating highly professional training systems with a focus on crew resource management, and they also improved the redundancy in system designs of the airframes-a training-oriented solution and a system oriented solution. Together they resulted in plummeting accident ratestype clubs can be a part of the same answer for us in general aviation.

I want to acknowledge some very significant research the area of type clubs by one of our members, Jeff wards. Jeff is an accident investigator, former Navy A-6 nbardier, and the founder and president of the Lancair mers and Builders Organization (LOBO), a type club for ncair experimentals. Jeff conducted a comprehensive dy on the efficacy of type clubs that was published earthis year in the Journal of Aviation Technology and gineering (JATE). You can get a copy of his entire study www.EAA.org/sportaviation under This Month's Extras. e study is entitled "The Efficacy of Aircraft Type Club ety." In his study, Jeff researched the question of ether type clubs actually improved safety and if so, y. His study was both qualitative and quantitative in ure, examining both the statistics and the attitudes of mbers in three distinct type clubs. From his study we i't determine if pilots become safer because they join e clubs, or if it's the safer pilots who join type clubs. cus groups agreed it was probably a bit of both—safer ots tend to join and in turn become even safer because cheir involvement. When you look at the statistical data, you have to ask irself why you wouldn't be a member of a type club for ir aircraft. The three type clubs Jeff studied were BO, the American Bonanza Society (ABS), and the rus Owners and Pilots Association (COPA). The data these three clubs represent more than 20,000 aircraft d owner/pilots. For the Bonanza accidents analyzed, percent involved nonmembers, and 92 percent of the alities were nonmembers. Members in the ABS were times less likely to be in a serious accident than nonmbers and 11 times less likely to be involved in a ality. COPA members were 1.5 times less likely to be olved in an accident and 2 times less likely to be olved in a fatality. For LOBO, members were involved only 16 percent of accidents and 18.2 percent of fatalis. Pretty significant results! Qualitatively it gets even more interesting. Pilots o are members identify four themes of importance: aring information, sharing experiences, learning, and ety. Most type clubs have websites with tons of type ormation and blogs for members to ask each other estions, share experiences, answer questions about ange occurrences in flight, find best deals on parts, d in general keep each other from repeating past mises. In other words you're not alone! Novel concept. ese clubs also tend to have annual fly-in events that fabulous social gatherings. Hangar flying, presenta-

ns by industry experts, and contact with vendors oviding the latest information on the maintenance d upgrade of a particular airframe are all part of ree- to four-day events that bolster proficiency, **CHARLIE PRECOURT**

awareness, and camaraderie among other owners of the same aircraft.

In my own experience I've associated with the Rutan EZ group, LOBO, Citation Jet Pilots, and most recently the Malibu and Mirage Owners and Pilots Association (MMOPA). In building my VariEze I scoured every one of Mike Melvill's newsletters for insights into lessons learned and accidents others had experienced, all in striving to avoid repeating the same mistakes. That information in the Rutan Aircraft Factory newsletters was absolutely invaluable to my VariEze flying experience. Today I am active in the MMOPA, which helps me immensely with my new JetPROP. One of the common gotchas for PA-46s has been aircraft leaving the runway on touchdown in crosswinds. Through MMOPA I learned some things about my PA-46 that I wouldn't have learned

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elsewhere. It turns out nose tire pressure in my JetPROP is a big deal; let it get well below the spec 47 psi and you are inviting controllability problems on touchdown in crosswinds, and the big gotcha is you can't easily detect low nose tire pressure visually because the aircraft weight on the nose is less than other designs. So we all carry tire pressure gauges in the tool kit to take regular readings and stay ahead of that problem. I also have really enjoyed trading stories about flying the aircraft with many others who have more experience than I in

that airframe. Not having to figure things out on my own is incredibly valuable. So join the club-the type club that is. For a list of the type clubs focused on your particular aircraft visit www.EAA.org/sportaviation and click on This Month's Extras. It's certainly worth pursuing, is loads of fun, and might just save your bacon! Fly safe! EAA

Charlie Precourt, EAA 150237, is a former NASA chief astronaut, space shuttle commander, and Air Force test pilot. He built a VariEze, owns a Piper JetPROP, and is a member of the EAA board of directors.