

Mahlon B. Hull


Sedro Woolley, WA 98284

To: NTSB

9 May 2020

Landing Out with N355BA

Flight in the Area

Takeoff and climb were normal. I did not box the wake or any other practice maneuvers as I saw this as a re-orientation flight since my last flight was 15 March 2020 in 355BA. I released from tow around 3100' and began to do some practice turns, slow flight and look for some lift. I headed towards the building along the flight line to see if there was anything in that area and practiced a few shallow to 30 degree bank turns if the Vario indicated some activity. I was down to 2300' and headed towards the Chicken farms South of the High School and there were a few areas of spot lift and I was maintaining between 2000'- 2300'. I headed over to the South end of the High School and made several turns practicing my 45 degree entry for smaller thermal shafts and I was slowly coming down with each try. At Point "A" on the attached map I made the final thermal turn at 1800' hit some sink and came down to 1600'.

Accident Sequence

I headed towards a small lake in the house area and called "355BA in 45 for downwind, landing to the North in Glider Grass". I crossed the lake (point "B" on map), which I have used before as a ground reference, at 1400', and my goal is to always be there at about 1500'. As soon as I crossed the lake I hit some pretty good sink and went down to about 1300' so, I turned toward a closer base to final. As, I approached the flight line buildings and houses it turned into lift and I went back up to about 1450'. I was coming up on the airport road (point "C") so I turned downwind and made the radio call. I hit some sink again but wasn't too bad and I accomplished the FUSTALL checklist, which requires Airbrakes to be checked so I extended them all the way to visually checked them. I felt high by angle to the runway so I left them fully extended for 10+ seconds or so then partially retracted them to maybe just under 50% for another 5 seconds or so then fully retracted them. I hit more sink on downwind and was down to 1200', I checked my landing point which seemed fine so I tuned base (point D). As soon as I turned, the ground speed slumped and the glider started descending at a rate I had not witnessed before. I thought about turning direct to the airport but convinced myself it would stop and re-checked the Airbrakes were up and locked (I'm pretty sure because I remember pushing forward twice on the control). My outside view began to look shallow (point "E") and I looked at the altimeter and it was 700'. I'm pretty sure I managed my turn towards the airport area then but I can't be sure. I realized by Point "E" I was low and still in sink and at about 52 kts. I was doing quick updates on the ground movement and altitude lost and the loss seemed high to me (never experienced before, I did not check the speed brakes closed here just trying to make a choice if I could make the airfield grass). From Point "E" to "F" the airfield fence was right about where the aim point was and I didn't think I could make it over. At point H on page 2 of pictures (visually I did not look at the altimeter) I decided to miss the light poles in the parking lot and land on the gravel because I did not want to hit the wire fence. A few feet up I pulled full Airbrakes pushed the nose down and tried to pull up at the last second (I had the Airbrake handle in my hand and it went backwards, seemed like in that split second to me). The touchdown was hard but just a split second later it went bang. I rolled through the small bushes and stopped just short of the middle of the street. I closed the air brakes and opened the canopy and jumped out. Cars stopped and helped me push the glider to the airport side of the road. Someone from the

hangars ran over and said we should carry it over the fence and by miracle a van full of young ATF agents, about 6-8 of them, and we all picked up the glider and placed it on the airport side of the fence.

Injuries

My tailbone and hip muscles are sore at this point 6 hours after the incident. Both of my knees hit something (canopy rail I think) as they are both scrapped and bruised (not a problem though).


Summary

The Sink I experienced was on and off during the whole flight. The segment between D and E seemed like a lot of altitude loss, and, for an extended period of time. Mike Delany asked me to think about it to see if I could recall airbrake actions I took. What I said above is what I'm pretty sure happened. However the altitude lost between D and F is significant and certainly would make more sense if the airbrakes were left extended during the sequence. My memory of double checking between "D" and "E" is real and extending just before landing is also real.

The only other explanation that is plausible from my perspective is, I was wider than what I seem to remember (one ground person said I looked really low to him with the speed brakes out just past point C, my altimeter calls are accurate, the 700' location is the only fuzzy one) which could translate into a too wide of a downwind, then extended to far out for base (experience of a ground location rather than an angle picture) and finally experienced more wind and sink than what could be overcome by managing the airspeed.

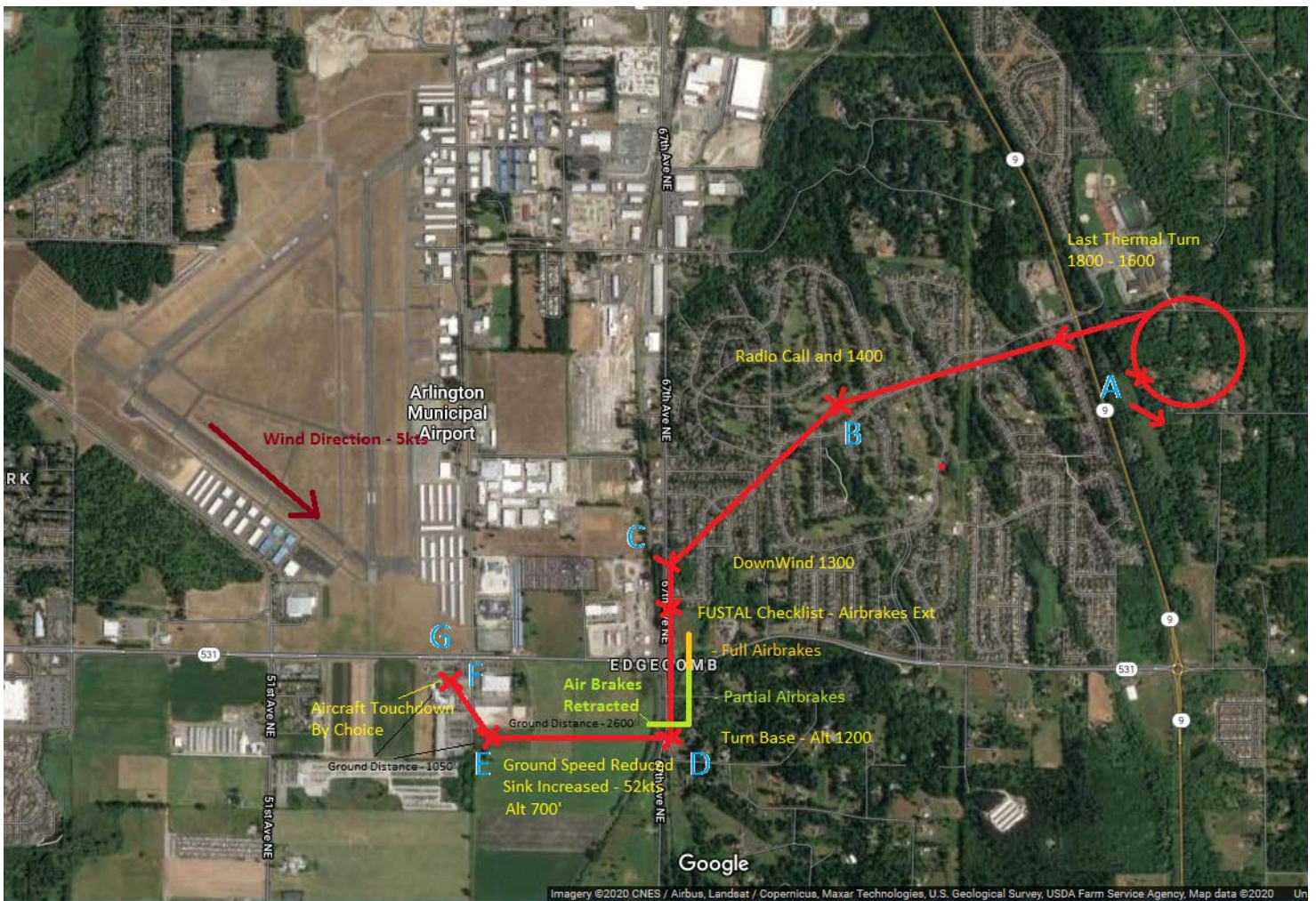
Please let me know if you need any further explanation on this description of what happened and or if you need an actual signed copy.

Signed,

e-signed  /

Mahlon B. Hull

Map 1 – Overall Landing Pattern



Map 2 – Final Landing Segment

