



Story, Fred I need Some Spin Training

Back in 1992, after I had been instructing for a few years, I was in the local FBO's office where I worked. I was waiting for one of my students to come back from a solo flight. When my student came in, he looked as though he had just seen a ghost. He was shaking and sweating I asked him what happened. The answer that I got was one that most flight instructors would not want to hear: "I was practicing stalls in the practice area, and all of a sudden I was upside down, and then just spinning toward the ground I didn't know what to do, but I heard your voice tell me to pull the power back and just let go of the control column, and the plane will stabilize."

If you know anything about small Cessna's, they tend to have a forward CG and will recover if you just let go of the controls for a second—that is, if you are not in a fully developed spin. So that is what the student did. Even more upsetting was when he stated the fact that, once the plane stopped spinning and the nose started to come up, the altimeter was reading about 1,800–1,900 feet.

If you fly in the Phoenix area, you know that the ground elevation is approximately 1,500 feet MSL. So my student recovered about 300 to 400 feet about the ground. This is far below normal traffic patterns. Would you like this to happen to you? Because it can happen to you. Or would you rather have an instructor go over spin entries and recoveries with you?

I was taking aerobatic flight lessons at the time and had practiced plenty of 3- to 4-turn spins, so I got the parachutes on, and up we went. I started demonstrating spins and spin entries, and he just kept saying, "Nope, that is not what happened." It finally dawned on me what had happened, and I asked him. Sure enough, I had hit the nail on the head.

The spin my student got himself into was one of the worst cases you could imagine. He was practicing power-off stalls, so the normal recovery procedure is to lower the nose, add full power, and start retracting flaps ten degrees at a time.

Little did my student know that the plane had started to enter the spin when he added full power. The result was a torque roll that placed the plane upside down at first, then continued to spin with the help of the full-power setting. I didn't think that a 152 was capable of that, but sure enough, it was. So he pulled the power and let go of it, recovering about 400 feet above the ground.

I think every pilot out there should do some type of spin training. Now that I don't have an aerobatic airplane, I do a flight that shows students how to enter and recover from the spin. This is not a full spin lesson, but it shows the student what to expect. If the student does get himself in trouble, I will let them go as long as I can.

When I had a Cessna 152 Aerobat, I would do spins and basic aerobatics with every student who wouldn't put the plane over weight. Most students would be a little scared, but after the first of two flights, they couldn't wait to do the second one.

If you can get up and do this before you solo, I suggest not doing it in an extra 300. Yes, it will be a fun time, but you won't get the feel of the plane you are normally flying. If you can't do it in an Aerobat, try to get in a Citabria or Super Decathlon. Use a plane that will be a little sluggish to simulate the plane you are training in.

Hope to See you in the Sky

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