



# **Airfreddy's Flying Stories**

## **Stories That *All Pilots* Can Learn From**

### **Story #12: Bad Weather On A Second Solo**

**UNEXPECTED WEATHER ON A SECOND SOLO:** Now it is time to introduce Ken, Barbie's other half, who was slightly ahead of Barbie at this point in time. He did his first solo and showed up on a morning for his second solo. Barbie was with him since she was going flying with me right after he got back.

It was during the summertime out here and yes it was during monsoon season. This day I think everyone in the hanger learned a little about monsoons. We went outside and looked at the clouds. There was a layer of normal clouds at about 10,000 feet. The clouds were light grey, so no one was worried. We called flight service to double check and storms weren't forecast for about another 4 hours. I specifically asked the briefer what the radar was showing and he told me nothing. Winds were calm. Ken was ready to go, so I told him to go up to the checkpoint for the practice area and then turn around and come back. I do this on every second solo just to make sure the student can find their way back to the airport without a problem.

So off went Ken. Barbie was in the other room at the office reading up on her lesson and I was in my office. All of a sudden BOOM!! This thunder was loud and right on top of the airport. Within about 30 seconds it started pouring. Barbie came running into my office "Frederick" (Oh I hated that) "there is a thunderstorm going on outside and Ken is out there soloing". We walked outside and it was not looking good.

I quickly grabbed the phone and called my buddy in the tower. I told him to radio Ken and tell him to stay in the practice area. Then Barbie and I went up to the tower. We got there and found this storm caught everyone by surprise. Ken was up

in the practice area and now the winds were picking up. Coming back home was not an option. We were looking out across the Phoenix valley and it was getting dark fast.

We had to get him back on the ground and fast. Luckily the winds were calm over at nearby Scottsdale airport. So we called Ken up and told him to start heading that way. Ken came back over the radio "Um Fred you haven't signed me off for that airport". My buddy replied back to him, "Don't worry about that, just go to Scottsdale and contact them on this frequency and they will talk you in". In this case I told the controller to send him there and this was definitely an emergency, a logbook endorsement was the last of my worries.

I try and get my students up in winds up to 20 knots if I can before they solo in order to prepare for something such as this.

We were on the phone with Scottsdale airport and the winds were starting to pick up. . The eastside of the valley was starting to turn into one big microburst. About this time my buddy in the control tower put the phone on speaker so we could hear everything. Ken was cleared to go direct to the numbers and land. There was a plane in front of him and yup here came the call over the radio "Scottsdale tower Cessna ABC we just lost 10 knots on final". Great! I slowly turned around and got that look "Frederick". (oh how I hate that) I just said "relax". Then Ken came back over the radio "Cessna 7609A I heard that I am going to come in fast" and I quick gave Barbie the Thumbs up.

Ken got on the ground, got the plane tied down and had to wait it out. About an hour later everything cleared out and the sun was shining again. So I called him and gave him the thumbs up to come back home.

Now before Ken got to Scottsdale the controller over at that airport gave him a

transponder code and walked him right to the airport. Yes the controllers will be your friends.

If you start getting into trouble call them and tell them what is going on. Once again if you get stressed out, don't worry about the radio phraseology, just talk to them. Now remember my density altitude lesson. This was a different case and I was close to the ground so talking on the radios was the last thing I wanted to do. I wanted to fly the plane first.

In Ken's case he was at a safe altitude in the practice area and got unexpected weather. Of course, fly the plane first but in this situation you will be able to talk to the controller and get some help. Don't be afraid to get help.

The next thing you want to remember is "DON'T TRUST THE WEATHER MAN". Yes, get your reports and forecasts and check weather but always expect the worst.

If they tell you everything is all clear expect the worst. If it is a calm time of the year(weather wise) when things are pretty constant you will be ok. Here in Phoenix most of the year it is clear, blue and 20+ miles visibility. There is not a lot to worry about, it is pretty much good flying weather here most time. If a weather system comes in you can see it coming you just don't fly, but when you get into an unpredictable monsoon season all bets are off.

Once you get into storm season wherever you are don't trust the forecasts. You just get it in your mind that it is storm season period and expect the worse at any moment and have a plan to get on the ground. Many times I have been on cross countries, the forecast had no storms expected for hours and all off a sudden right in front of us there it was. Wherever you are, there is a time known as "storm season" and it is usually in the summer, but depending on where you are it can be anytime. Plan for the worst!!!. When in doubt go have a beer and stay on the ground.



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