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FAA Clips Wings of Wayward Pilot

By James Cunningham

James Ashdown's pilot license was revoked yesterday by the Federal Aviation Agency.

The FAA ruled his wild early morning buzzing of Oahu yesterday violated safety rules.

The emergency revocation of his license became effective at 4:06 p.m. yesterday.

FAA regional counsel Jennings N. Roberts issued the order after receiving a report from flight standards director Raymond c. Woodward on Ashdown's joy ride in a B-25.

FAA officials said Ashdown is free to appeal the revocation to the Civil Aeronautics Board in Washington.

They said they would serve him with the revocation order at his Kaneohe home and ask him to surrender his license. It will be unlawful for him to fly again until he wins a new license or restoration of the old one, they said.

Spokesmen for L. Frederick Pack Associates of Hawaii, the aerial survey firm which owns the B-25, said they would press aircraft theft charges against Ashdown. Damages were estimated at \$10,000.

Charges will be aired at a preliminary hearing in District Court at 9 a.m. Monday. Ashdown is free on \$500 bond.

The 34-year-old Ashdown was taken to jail after surrendering to police at the Air Service Corp. hanger where the B-25 is based.

During the previous 30 minutes his low level aerial antics terrorized residents and tourists from Koko Head to Waipahu.

He roared down near Hawaii Kai rooftops, zigzagged through Waikiki at window level, buzzed the Honolulu International Airport tower and bowled over radio antenna supports in Waipahu.

Ashdown lifted the B-25 from a high speed taxiway – instead of the runway – at 1:30 a.m. His departure took tower controllers by surprise. They thought he was a mechanic working on the plane. He filed no flight plan. And had no clearance.

Near the end of his flight, the twin-engines plane nosed through the top of the old wooden tower above Radio KAHU, shattering debris and slamming doors inside the station.

This shattered the plane's nose bubble, behind which the cannons were once mounted, ripped a 33-foot gash in the belly of the plane and showered Ashdown with fragments of glass and metal which cut him in the face.

But the former fighter pilot, who flew F-100s during the Korean War, managed to bring the damaged B-25 back for a landing on Honolulu International Airport's jet runway.

When police tried to stop the plane, Ashdown grinded the motors and led them a merry chase around the field.

Controllers, fearing he might try to take off again, turned off the runway lights. But Ashdown, who told police he was seized by a sudden "urge to fly again" had had enough.

He taxied the plane to the hanger where other police, firemen and airport officials were waiting.

It was Ashdown's second brush with civil aviation authorities. He paid a \$100 civil penalty to the FAA in June 1960, for flying below 1,000 feet over a congested area of Honolulu.

There was an accompanying article detailing reactions from startled residents.

Pilot's Grounded but Waikiki's Still Buzzing

By Burt Anderson

Hundreds of persons in the Honolulu area saw or heard the stolen B-25 "buzz" boomer early yesterday morning. Here's what some of them had to say:

Mrs. C.A. Huntley, who lives with her husband on the 20th floor of the Foster Tower Hotel: "I heard it coming and it startled me. It was so close I was ready to touch it. At first, I thought it was a helicopter."

"I went to the window and saw it hook out over water and swoop down low near the Colony Surf. Its tail was right next to the water."

"It circled near Diamond Head and returned minutes later and buzzed Kuhio Beach below me."

"I don't know how it missed the little houses where they play checkers. It was very close to them."

First Lieutenant Doug Stuman, who lives on the 17th floor of the Foster Tower, on the ews side: "I was sound asleep and it awakened me. I thought it was going to hit the building so I jumped out of bed and rushed to the window. I'm not sure where it was going. I just caught a fleeting glimpse of it."

John Raymond, who lives at 117-A Ohua Avenue said: “for a minute I thought maybe I was on the runway at Honolulu International Airport. The plane sounded like it was coming through the window.”

“I streaked out the front door just as the plane made a second pass over my apartment.”

“Along Kalakaua Avenue, it was standing room only. The B-25 shot by again, nearly chopped Foster Tower down to bungalow size, and skimming out to sea, driving a terrified motor scooter rider up on a sidewalk and kicking up enough sand to start a new beach.”

“The people on the upper floors of the Foster Tower caught all the action by looking down. As one of the told me later, ‘we've had a lot of drunks in Waikiki, but this is the first one who ever flew past the windows.’”

Joe Anzivino, who lives on the 7th floor makua side of the Ilikai: “It sounded like it was in my room.”

“I thought it must be somebody in trouble – a pilot looking for a level piece of land or about to ditch in the ocean.”

Hal Wood, 529 Poipu Drive: “I thought it was going to take my roof off.”

Disc jockey Ronald West, who was alone at radio station KAHU: “I thought it was a big truck. It nearly drowned me out.” I said, “What is that. And that’s all. I thought about it until the police came and asked if there was any damage.”

Mrs. Joshua Sibonga, of 94-625 Farrington Highway: I thought it would come right into the bedroom. “I thought to myself, he's going to hit something.”

Charles E. Chadwell, who was in the control tower at Honolulu International Airport.

“The radar man said he was approaching from Keehi Lagoon directly toward the tower. But he was coming so fast that by the time we saw him we didn't have time to think about it. Fortunately, he pulled up in time.”

“We were worried that he'd turn around and come back at us, but he didn't.”

“After all of that, I was thinking of putting in for hazardous duty pay.”