

“What Did I Miss?”

By: Capt Bill Trussell, CFI, IA, MEI

In looking at everyday things we do in our flying careers, we all know that at some point those things were not done or used before. They were adopted for use because someone thought it was a good idea, or it was deemed a necessity or safety mitigation. So begins the origin of the preflight check list. The information provided here drove the interest in what prompted the construct and use of the checklist and what was its purpose?

When reading the article below, you realize that it goes back a long time, to 1935! Flight testing a Boeing 299, which would ultimately become the B-17, turned out to be a dangerous assignment one day at Wright Field in Dayton for the test pilot, Major Ployer P. Hill of the Army Air Corp. It was noted that Major Hill failed to ensure that the elevator gust lock was not fully disengaged. The problem is that this oversight was not uncovered until the catastrophic outcome of the test flight that day in October 1935.

During a review of the accident, it was discovered that there was no formal tool to be used to ensure that critical items were not missed during the preflight action. All CAP pilots are aware of the existence of the aircraft checklist, intended to be used during all phases of flight. CAP is not alone in using aircraft checklists. They are extremely common in the military, airlines and, yes, GA operations. The FAA insists that they be used during check rides for certificates and ratings. It is helpful to know and understand the origins of their construct and use.

Standardizing the composition of the checklist, often by the aircraft manufacturer during the certification process is an excellent objective. What makes the checklist less than fully effective is the attitude of the crew toward their use. There have been recent recurrences of locked flight controls on a few business jets, as evidenced by the aircraft running off the end of the runway during takeoff. So, what does it take to make pilots realize how important it is to ensure that all the items on the list are checked? **Starting with ensuring that every crew member realizes the importance of each item on the list and what the negative impact could be if all items are not checked prior to takeoff or landing.** How bad would it be for a pilot to not check and reset the elevator trim prior to takeoff? Could be very surprising upon application of takeoff power and achieving takeoff speed.

Checklists are not in the aircraft and flight manuals for decoration, sun shields or bug deterrents. The checklist has a long history and is considered a quite simple safety-of-life tool that cost more than one life in its evolution. The history of the checklist deserves some respect through its dedicated and regimented use.

The article can be found HERE : [The History of the Pre-flight Checklist - Aero Crew News](#)

Capt Bill Trussell, CFI, IA, MEI
Squadron Commander, DE-019
FAA Safety Team Representative
Assistant Stan/ Eval Officer, DE Wing
CAP Instructor Pilot, Check Pilot