

Summer Edition 2014

Combat Edge

ACC's Full-Spectrum Safety Magazine



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Flight

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Black-Haired
Black Belt

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ACCent

Organizational Safety Margin

What constitutes an organization's safety margin? How can an organization affordably maximize its safety margin? One way of characterizing an organization's safety margin is to express it in terms of the risk management process. Risk management is a process that identifies hazards, assesses risks; chooses risk mitigation strategies, implements chosen mitigation strategies, and observes mitigation strategy results. An algebraic equation of this expression might be:

Safety Margin = Identify + Assess + Mitigate + Implement + Observe

In this representation, one way to maximize the safety margin on the left side of the equation would be to optimize the right side of the equation. The more quickly hazards are identified by safety personnel, the less time those hazards will go unmitigated (Identify). The more accurately risks are assessed by safety personnel, the more effectively mitigation strategies can be developed and chosen (Assess). The more effectively resources can be applied to risk mitigation strategies, the more risks can be reduced and the higher the safety margin (Mitigate). The better the implementation of mitigation strategies, the more effective those strategies will be at lowering risks and increasing the safety margin (Implement). And finally, the more accurately mitigation implementation can be observed by leaders and safety personnel, the better adjustments can be made to optimize results and maximize the safety margin (Observe). Of course, all of these steps require resources and one of the most important jobs of an Air Force leader is the allocation of resources to mitigate risks. In short, the organization's safety margin is governed by this allocation of resources against risks. The resources expended in risk management typically come in two primary types. The first type is associated with the choosing and implementation of mitigation strategies. The second type is associated with maintaining a well-trained Safety cadre capable of identifying, assessing, and observing. This relationship can be represented by:

(Safety Margin) \$\$ = (Mitigate + Implement) \$\$ + (Identify + Assess + Observe) \$\$

However, most of the expense in risk management is wrapped up in choosing and implementing mitigation strategies. The amount of resources expended on maintaining a well-trained Safety staff is usually much less but it informs every term in the safety margin equation above. Regretfully, when budgets are constrained, the tendency is to minimize resource expenditure on Safety training while trying to maintain expenditures in risk mitigation strategy and implementation. This is a costly approach. We can never spend as much on risk mitigation as we would like. In a perfect world we would design the risk out of every operation or activity. However, this approach would be astronomically expensive. Instead, if we maintain a well-trained Safety staff, we can save money on risk mitigation strategies and implementation by identifying hazards early, assessing risks accurately, and by choosing the most cost effective mitigation strategy and implementation. Well-trained Safety personnel can also help us observe mitigation implementation and make timely adjustments to optimize the risk management equation and maximize the safety margin. If we try to save money on Safety training, we actually spend more money in mishaps due to unidentified hazards, poorly assessed risks, and the resulting ineffective mitigation strategies that aren't properly adjusted during implementation. In the end, the most affordable way to maximize the safety margin is to maintain a well-trained Safety staff that optimizes the risk management equation by identifying, assessing and observing.



Col. J. Alan Marshall, Ph.D.
Director of Safety

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The GLOVE

BY COL. J. ALAN MARSHALL, Ph.D.

The phone rang and woke me from crew-rest at 0325 a.m. The voice on the other end said, “Al, Muff is overdue.” The intensity in Maj. John “Cabi” Cabigas’ voice instantly jolted my mind from sleepy foggy to razor edge clarity and I asked, “What do you mean he’s overdue?” Cabi told me that my friend and fellow U-2 pilot, Duane “Muff” Dively, as he was known, had made his last scheduled radio check-in before his U-2 reconnaissance aircraft was expected to arrive on final at our deployed location. However, Muff never showed up on final and the recovery crew couldn’t raise him on the radio. After about 10 minutes of waiting, Cabi, the U-2 mobile pilot, called to wake me (the squadron commander) and tell me the alarming news.

As I jumped into my flight suit and raced to the squadron operations room in my pick-up, my mind ran through all the possibilities. Maybe Muff had experienced radio failure, but then why had he not shown up on final and flown a radio out approach and landing pattern? Did he have an aircraft malfunction that precluded him from landing? Then why had he not declared an emergency and called us on the radio? Dively was one of the U-2 program’s most experienced and gifted pilots, no way he could have crashed, right? Had he been shot down? My mind then wandered back to the night before when Muff suited up for his combat mission.



During the pre-flight test of his full pressure suit, the life support technicians noticed an air leak in his left “space-suit” glove. Since I was the only squadron pilot who had the same glove size as Muff, the life support supervisor came and asked me if Major Dively could use my suit glove as a replacement for his mission. That was a no-brainer question because a simple glove swap was only a small adjustment for a group of professional warriors intent on doing whatever it took to get high priority combat missions in the air. Before moving the suited up Major Dively from the integration room to the pilot transport van, Muff gave everyone the traditional fist bump between U-2 mission pilots and other U-2 pilots and support crew. **He then gave a thumbs-up with my glove and set off on his mission.** My mind raced forward to the present real world; I got out of my truck and ran into the squadron.

When I entered the operations room the mood was somber, the Supervisor of Flying, Major Gary “Kuma” McCloud, was transmitting on the radio trying to raise the missing aircraft on the expected frequency. After a while, our hearts sank even further when we received reports from another airborne aircraft that they saw fires on the ground near the recovery route and what appeared to be a crash site. Our returning combat mission had now changed to a rescue mission. With daytime temperatures quickly soaring to more than 110 degrees, it was critical we recover our pilot before the sun rose high in the sky,

if at all possible. Surviving in such a desert environment would be difficult without cover from the intense sun and extreme heat.

With the crash site being more than 15 miles from the base in a sea of sand dunes, reaching the crash site would be difficult, especially with no access roads to the location. Our only option was to rely on host nation rescue helicopter support to retrieve our pilot. After a few hours of coordination and rescue mission preparation, the rescue helicopter departed for the crash site and quickly arrived on scene.

The helicopter pilot relayed progress over the radio as the para-rescue specialist egressed the helicopter and searched through the wreckage for the pilot. All of our hearts pounded as we waited for some kind of good news from the rescue team. I have never experienced a more intense atmosphere of fear, dread, and stomach churning anticipation than when we waited those few minutes for the status of our pilot. Then, the terrible news came in from the rescue crew that the pilot was deceased. All of us were devastated. Not a word was spoken for several minutes and the room was filled with cold silence. Eventually, we all regained our composure and each of us began the process of coordinating for the recovery effort and for the resumption of combat operations. **We moved about like zombies doing what we had to do, ensuring what had to be done, was done.** None of us would ever be the same.

Col. Marshall debriefs a mission.



The next few days were a blur. We held a memorial service attended by what seemed like the whole base population. Kuma McCloud flew the next combat mission the following morning and Cabi Cabigas flew the next night sortie.

In the days following the crash, we began to believe that Muff had experienced a catastrophic malfunction that had left his aircraft largely without electrical power. One piece of equipment that we were initially unable to recover was the glove that Duane had borrowed from me to fly the mission. Evidently, Muff had removed his gloves for the landing phase of the mission and stowed them nearby in the cockpit, which was a common technique among many U-2 pilots. Once the aircraft had crashed, the gloves were scattered in the aircraft wreckage and were quickly covered over by blowing sand in the sand dunes. I put out a reward to any of the recovery team that could find the missing glove at the desert crash site.

A few days into the recovery effort, three Airmen arrived in my office carrying my glove. Their sun-burnt countenance was a respectful mix of solemnity for the meaning of the situation, and pride in their considerable accomplishment of finding the glove buried in shifting sands. **With grateful acknowledgement, I accepted the glove and provided the Airmen with their reward of three freshly minted U-2 pilot coins and three firm handshakes.** I believe we all walked away with a treasure that day and that moment is still frozen in my mind as one of the seminal moments of my Air Force career. The glove was slightly tattered but in otherwise good shape and

after the life-support personnel condemned it as unusable equipment, I kept it in my desk drawer until I brought it home with me at the end of my tour.

The accident investigation board confirmed that after the malfunction, Major Dively had continued to fly the aircraft in the darkness of the night. While he was trying to trouble-shoot the malfunction, Major Dively's aircraft had impacted the ground and he was fatally injured. It took months for me to fully understand the actions that Duane took that night in the cockpit in an attempt to correct the malfunction, but it was obvious to me all along that he had intentionally put himself at risk to save the priceless combat asset that he was flying. My respect for him increased as we launched every mission thereafter. I kept Duane Dively in my mind and the glove in my drawer. Were we doing everything that we could do to avoid a similar mishap? Were the risks that we were accepting on any particular mission worth the mission objectives on that mission? I was always able to answer “yes” but my experiences in those days after Major Dively's supreme sacrifice changed me. There has rarely been a day since that I have not thought about Major Duane Dively. Everything that I do in my role as a safety professional is based on those same questions about risks and mission objectives. Every time I am notified of another mishap, my mind goes back to that 0325 a.m. phone call. What is the status of the crew? What do we need to do to recover assets? What caused the mishap? How can we prevent it from happening again?



Major Duane Dively



These are not just routine questions to me. This is not just my job. The experiences I had in the desert all those years ago make it real, important and weighty. Each and every Airman we lose in a mishap is a lost family member. They have lives, and families, and friends, and each one will forever be missed.

I remember one day a few months before Duane's mishap when he was flying with a new U-2 student in the two-seat version of the aircraft. I was chasing behind their two-seat U-2 in the mobile chase car while the student was attempting one of his first U-2 landings. After the student made a mess of it, I transmitted on the radio and directed the Instructor Pilot (Dively) to take control of the aircraft. However, before I could get the words out of my mouth, Duane had calmly taken control of the aircraft and let me know that "I've got it."

That was Muff. No one was calmer, more respected, or more heeded than Duane. He had the situation well under control well before I needed to intervene. He was also one of the very best at training our new pilots to land the difficult U-2 and the student in question eventually went on to become a successful U-2 pilot. His loss was a devastating blow to the U-2 program, just as the loss of every Airman is a blow to their squadron, base, and the Air Force. That is why I am a true believer in safety. That is why I pull out my old U-2 glove every year around Memorial Day. It reminds me of an old friend. It reminds me of how important it is to identify the cause of every mishap and to implement corrective actions in every case to prevent reoccurrence.

The "glove" is always kept near to remind me. ✨



Col. Al Marshall is departing for his long planned retirement. Godspeed!



Valor in Flight

BY LOU MICHEL

Capt. Ian Osterreicher was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross medal in a ceremony at Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Ga. As a deployed member of the 74th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, last August he saved 60 soldiers by executing successful attacks on a large enemy force that was attempting to overrun a disabled route clearance patrol. Leading his A-10C flight, Capt. Osterreicher, along with his wingman Capt. Ryan Bagby, flew multiple low-level passes and employed several types of weapons and munitions to defeat the enemy attack on the route clearance company.

To keep the soldiers safe, the flight had to fly extremely low to the ground and employ weapons, all while avoiding hitting their own countrymen. They made 15 passes over a two-hour period until the enemy retreated. Their efforts saved lives and enabled the wounded to be taken to hospitals for treatment.

Word spread quickly among the enemy—an American Army route clearance company of a dozen vehicles had broken down. The lead vehicle had slid off a highway into a ravine in a remote region of Afghanistan. Pulling the vehicle free required the soldiers to set up an overnight encampment.

Dozens of enemy combatants poured in throughout the night and at dawn they pounced on the 60 stranded U.S. soldiers with a barrage of gunfire from a nearby tree line.

The first rounds of enemy fire critically wounded three soldiers and forced the others to take cover behind their vehicles. A desperate radio call for air support went out, and two Air Force A-10C Thunderbolt pilots flew to the rescue. Upon arrival, Capt. Osterreicher quickly declared an emergency close air support event. He also found that there was not a Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) present with the route clearance company, who normally would assist the A-10s in employing their weapons on the enemy and provide additional situational awareness.

It turned out to be far from easy. Some seven months later and half a world away from the dangers, Capt. Ian R. Osterreicher, a 2003 graduate of Williamsville East High School, was rewarded for his actions with one of the Air Force's highest honors, the Distinguished Flying Cross, presented by Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James at Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Ga.

Pictured from left to right are Capts. Ian Osterreicher and Ryan Bagby.



Photo by: Tech. Sgt. Aaron Allmon

A member of the 23rd Fighter Group, part of the famed “Flying Tigers” at Moody, Osterreicher was thrilled to receive the award, one of several he has earned, but told his parents that he did not believe he had done anything exceptional.

“My son told us he was doing what he was trained to do, but the fact is he and another pilot saved the lives of 60 soldiers that day,” said Mickey Osterreicher, Ian’s father, who attended the ceremony along with Ian’s mother, Julia White, fiancé Nicole, and Ian’s sisters, Elena Trapp and Hope White.

According to an Air Force account of the July 23 actions, the two pilots stationed at Bagram Air Base were

already airborne when they received the call for help and were able to quickly locate the pinned-down patrol.

One of the combat jets flew above the enemy in a show of force, but the enemy was unimpressed and continued to advance on the soldiers, despite a further show of might, and a shower of 30-millimeter cannon fire from the A-10s, nicknamed the “Warthog.”

Osterreicher and his wingman realized the situation was worsening as the enemy forces moved in, apparently aware that if they positioned themselves close enough, the pilots might not risk shooting for fear of harming Americans.

But with the enemy now within grenade-lobbing distance of the convoy, the ground commander granted the pilots permission to engage in “danger-close” aerial combat.

Flying in at 75 feet above the enemy’s position, Capts Osterreicher and Bagby could clearly see the enemy and fired relentlessly during 15 gun runs over the course of two hours. Five rockets, three bombs, and 2,170 rounds of 30 millimeter were expended on the enemy. Many of the 30 millimeter strafing runs were within 50 meters of friendly positions.

The pilots’ aim was so precise that no U.S. soldiers were harmed by

friendly fire and, at last, the enemy retreated while Capt. Osterreicher coordinated a helicopter evacuation for the wounded soldiers.

Afghan army soldiers later returned to the battle scene and found the bodies of 18 enemy combatants. Dozens more were believed to have survived and fled.

Capt. Osterreicher and Bagby, after being debriefed, visited the hospital at Bagram Air Base and met with one of the wounded soldiers, who expressed his gratitude.

“Thank you for shooting those bad guys,” the soldier said. ★



I was the JTAC located at Forward Operating Base Airborne just east of the convoy location. As the only Air Force guy with this company, they look to us to protect them and trust that we will always be there for them. Three minutes after my initial request for aircraft after being told we had Troops in Contact (TIC), I was relieved to hear the A-10s checking in to support. In a situation like this there is no better platform in the world. I truly believe that had any other platform responded to my call we would have lost many soldiers that day. I immediately passed them the friendly location and informed them that they were taking fire 150 meters to their south and had them immediately set up for gun runs. The lead pilot requested to do a low “show of force” pass first because, in most cases, once the enemy heard and saw aircraft they would break contact. As lead performed his pass, his wingman reported seeing a lot of muzzle flashes in the tree line and we immediately began gun and rocket runs on the enemy force. When the convoy returned the guys had told me that the gun runs were so close to friendly position that trees as big as six inches around were snapping off and landing in their gun turrets. After the entire engagement was complete and the A-10s returned to base, the pilots immediately called me on the phone and said they were heading over to the hospital to see the wounded soldiers. As if they had not just done enough for everyone the fact that they went right over to the hospital to see these young men speaks volumes about the type of people both Capt. Ian Osterreicher and Capt. Ryan Bagby are. Five months later after we finished our nine-month deployment, I joined up with the company’s soldiers at a military ball in Savannah, Georgia. I had young soldiers come up to me with their wives and shake my hand and say, **“It’s because of you, and the A-10 pilots that I got to come home to my wife ...”** There’s no better feeling in the world!

Staff Sgt. Kyle Terry

From Bald-Headed White Belt, to Black-Haired Black Belt

BY MRS. KENDRA MARSHALL, AN AIR FORCE WIFE

I walked into karate class for the first time as a bald, battle worn cancer patient. I had previously been diagnosed with breast cancer and just finished treatment. Although the cancer was detected early, this silent killer had already spread to my lymph nodes. I was considered young for this type of cancer and was given what I called the “full meal deal” treatment. Now all the surgeries, chemotherapy and radiation lay behind me, and I stood with a white bald head and a white belt with a karate instructor before me. It was time to embark on another journey called “recovery.”

My two boys took karate in the kid’s class and were now joining the adult class. I really needed to get my body moving again, and since I was already bringing them to class, I figured I might as well drag myself out on the mat with them. Although I previously wrote about the Air Force Resilience program pillars (physical, mental, social, and spiritual), as I look back I recognize three aspects of resiliency crucial for me: humility, laughter, and perseverance. This article serves as an update to my story and a discussion about these three aspects of my survival.



Mrs. Kendra Marshall wrote about her battle with breast cancer in the Summer 2012 issue of The Combat Edge. This article is an update to her story.





I met some amazingly resilient people in my journey to “Cancerland” and back. One day during the radiation portion of my treatment, I came home and told my husband about some of the exceptional fellow patients that I had met in treatment who were facing

some extremely tough challenges. I looked at him and sincerely exclaimed, “Alan, these people are *really* sick!” He just sat there for a moment looking at me and then replied, “Kendra, *you’re* really sick.” Oh yeah ... we both busted out laughing. So, the former flight attendant in me says, “Sit back, relax and enjoy the laugh!”

Laughter

Laughter, what a wonderful gift! Despite breast cancer, there has been a lot of laughter in my life over the past few years. Much of it stemmed from my hairless head. I often tell people that my boys had way too much fun with my bald head. They used it for a hot wheels racing track, a helicopter landing pad, and once they even put a worm on it when I wasn’t looking, yuck! I’ve had my hat fall off when being hugged by a well-wisher, and then tried desperately not to laugh out loud when I saw the horror on her face at what she’d done. It must be a terrible feeling to accidentally knock off a bald woman’s hat! I was never ashamed of my bald head. I chose to see it as evidence that the chemo-therapy was killing the fast growing cells in my body. It was a visible sign of the cure!

Laughter can be good medicine and humor is infectious. When those around me seemed to be uncomfortable and didn’t know what to say or do, I could tell them about some funny bald head experience and it would put them at ease. Some research has shown that laughter helps strengthen your immune system. It definitely energizes you while reducing stress. I still need all those benefits and I hope to get a regular dose of laughter for as long as I live. I had a very good friend in college who would say that her favorite thing to do was to laugh, and I have always remembered her words. Just about anything can make you laugh if you are *looking* to laugh.



Humility

Back to my karate story: I dragged my sliced, diced, poisoned, and irradiated body onto that mat, looked up at the verse printed in huge letters across the front of the dojo that said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” and began! I couldn’t do a push up, I could barely force a sit up, and let’s not even talk about a spin kick! With continued encouragement from my husband and two boys, I pressed forward. Many times, as I tried to memorize a new form or remember an old defense move, my sons would encourage me with “You’re doing great Mom!” and “You can do it!” To be perfectly honest, it was difficult. Not only was my body weak, but I was also having a difficult time remembering things. Ok, I admit, I had a problem with remembering things before chemo-therapy, but now it was worse than ever. I just had to get my brain moving! This karate program would require my “chemo brain” to memorize forms, scriptures, grabs, defense moves and other things that I can’t remember right now (pun intended). Had I known what I was getting myself into, I may have wimped out and quit. As my husband frequently says to my boys, “The only way to eat an apple as big as an elephant is to take the first bite, and keep on chewing.” As many of you wives know, husbands have favorite sayings that they say over ... and over ... for years on end. This was one of his, but I have to admit it’s a good one.

Medical professionals say the most difficult times emotionally for a breast cancer patient is when she is diagnosed, and then again after the primary treatments end. Friends and family had surrounded me with love and prayers as I had been brought nearly to death’s door and back again. But

now, thankfully the treatment was over and it was time to get back to a “normal” life. But “normal” wasn’t normal anymore. I would have to find my new normal. But I didn’t want a new normal. I wanted the old one!

We don’t always get what we want. How many times have my children heard that phrase come out of my mouth? Like it or not, it is a true phrase that applies from the youngest to the oldest. Recognizing this truth is a great segue to one of the main foundations of karate, humility. There I was, a middle-aged bald lady in the midst of energetic children, spirited teenagers and focused adults—humility. I was saying “yes sir” and “yes ma’am” to instructors who were young enough to be my children—humility. I was getting my sparring head-gear knocked half way around my face by a teenager—humility. I was doing knee pushups—ultimate humility!





Mother Teresa once said that, “We learn humility through accepting humiliations cheerfully.” Well there you have it! At least I was cheerful! Am I being humble in saying that?

Now let's get serious about this word humility. C.S. Lewis said that we gain humility not by thinking less of ourselves but thinking about ourselves less. When you have a problem, you can minimize the importance of that problem by thinking less about yourself and more about others. Your problems will seem to shrink as the focus on yourself recedes and concern for others grows. This is the hidden power of humility. By focusing on the lives and problems of others, your own problems don't seem to be as big. Placing yourself in a new environment with new challenges is a great way to maintain humility. My karate program certainly kept me humble.

Perseverance

Perseverance, according to Webster, is the “continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition.” For me, one important aspect of resilience is perseverance. The secret to perseverance is to keep on going even when you don't feel like it. Perseverance is about enduring to the end. The famous American priest, Father Walter Elliot said “perseverance is not a long race, it is many short races one after another.”

This fits well with my husband's story about taking that first bite and continuing to chew. Breaking big challenges into smaller bites makes it easier to press on, day after day. When I was in chemo-therapy, I couldn't think about the surgery or the radiation treatments to come next. I just focused on the next day, the next hour, and sometimes the next minute. Long-term resilience is built on short-term perseverance. The only way to make it through a tough year is to make it through tough days, one after the other. It is a mindset that makes or breaks you. The times when I was the most overwhelmed were the times when I started thinking about all that I had to go through in the months and years ahead. I had to refocus on the day I was in, others around me, and my next breath. I really can't overemphasize the importance of this concept.



Conclusion

Remember that white bald head and white belt? I recently earned my black belt along with my two sons who earned their junior black belts. I know my words may not wax eloquent nor be filled with deep insights, but this is where martial arts meet Mrs. Marshall. Sometimes my jump kicks barely get off the ground and my 360 degree spin is more of a 210. My stamina is lacking and

sometimes I just plain forget things. However, **I am alive, I am cancer free, and I am resilient!** Laughter, humility, and perseverance were all critical to my recovery as well as my faith. I hope these are aspects of resilience that can help you in your battle. However, if you are having trouble, remember that there are people that you can talk to. Your chaplain is a great resource and will always be willing to listen. Your Air Force friends care about you and really want to help because you are part of a great team that never leaves another Airman behind. Whatever the challenge, I believe if you are willing to laugh, you are humble enough to focus on others, and you persevere day-to-day; you can succeed. After all, I started with a bald white head and a white belt, and now I have a black-haired head and a black belt! ✦

If you would like more on Kendra's journey see: www.FightTheGiant.org



AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Aircrew Safety



CREW #1, 385 AEG DET 1, ALI AL SALEM AB, KUWAIT. Crew #1 demonstrated superior airmanship and awareness during multiple in-flight emergencies. During takeoff, they received an “APU DOOR” warning light and executed a flawless takeoff abort at 115 knots, just 7 knots under the Maximum Brakes-On Speed. Their follow on actions also prevented a fire from developing due to melted fuse plugs. On another sortie, the crew noticed hydraulic fluid leaking inside the cabin on initial climb-out soon causing fumes throughout the cabin. The crew safely landed the aircraft and performed an emergency ground egress. *(February 2014)*

CREW OF BONE 21, 37 EBS, AL UDEID AB, QATAR. During an Operation Enduring Freedom combat sortie, the crew of BONE 21 displayed exemplary professionalism and skill, while responding to several electrical malfunctions, resulting in an emergency return to base. While providing on-call Close Air Support for Coalition and Afghan ground forces, BONE 21 experienced a power surge, followed by the loss of all copilot instrumentation and a 90 percent loss of both Weapons Systems Officer’s aft station equipment. *(March 2014)*

CAPTS. JEFFREY J. IANNACONE AND READE M. LOPER, 333 FS, SEYMOUR JOHNSON AFB NC. Tacky 44, Instructor Pilot Capt. “Gyro” Iannaccone and Instructor WSO Capt. “Chaww” Loper successfully recovered an F-15E after an Environmental Control System malfunction which caused flight control and landing gear problems. During their sortie, they experienced an explosive rupture of a duct which threw shrapnel damaging the flight controls and portions of the electrical system. Their quick actions and airmanship allowed the safe return of the aircrew and aircraft. *(April 2014)*

Pilot Safety



CAPT. MARK V. SCHNELL, 74 FS, MOODY AFB GA. Capt. Schnell displayed superior airmanship, critical thinking, and decision making while acting as flight lead during a low-altitude sortie. While flying low altitude, Capt. Schnell observed a flashing Left Engine Oil Pressure warning light along with an associated loss of oil pressure and engine indications. He analyzed the situation as oil pump shaft shear and shut down the engine prior to imminent engine failure. Capt. Schnell safely recovered his severely damaged A-10 aircraft. *(February 2014)*

CAPT. ADAM P. PAULY, 75 EFS, BAGRAM AB, AFGHANISTAN. Capt. Pauly demonstrated outstanding airmanship by recovering his crippled A-10C while supporting coalition ground forces in vicinity of Parwan Province, Afghanistan. During strafing operations, Capt. Pauly’s A-10C experienced a right engine compressor stall. Faced with a thrust-deficient aircraft during a dynamic phase of flight, Capt. Pauly maintained aircraft control, avoided the high terrain, assessed the malfunction, and flawlessly executed checklist procedures. *(March 2014)*

CAPT. DANIEL J. O’BRIEN, 30 RS, CREECH AFB NV. Capt. O’Brien demonstrated astute airmanship, CRM, and attention to detail while recovering a stricken RQ-170 aircraft that departed controlled flight in a near unrecoverable flight configuration. During flight, Capt. O’Brien noticed pitch oscillation and abnormal winds aloft indication for the aircraft altitude. As the oscillations worsened, he assessed a faulty air data system and landed the aircraft even after experiencing a rapid nose pitch down and departure from controlled flight for 10 seconds. *(April 2014)*

Crew Chief Safety



STAFF SGT. MATTHEW G. MEDEIROS, 451 EAMXS, KANDAHAR AF, AFGHANISTAN. Sgt. Medeiros was supervising the launch procedures for an MQ-9A aircraft. During taxi, the operators of a MQ-9A lost visual contact with the ground crew due to intense sun glare. In an attempt to regain visual references, the operators executed a steering correction which inadvertently placed them on a collision path with another MQ-9A. Sgt. Medeiro quickly stopped the taxiing MQ-9A, preventing a serious ground collision from occurring. *(February 2014)*

SRA AARON D. CRATON, 79 EFS, SHAW AFB SC. While carrying out his duties as an F-16 Crew Chief, SrA Craton detected a broken instrument panel bevel light, identified an improperly installed engine plug during an intake inspection, and located a broken nut plate in an engine bay that averted 12 man-hours of work to remove the engine and find the missing component. His efforts prevented damage and downtime of multiple aircraft, improved the quality of work of his fellow Airmen, and ensured the safe execution of the squadron’s operational mission. *(March 2014)*

TECH. SGT. JOSHUA S. MOORE, 552 AMXS, TINKER AFB OK. Sgt. Moore, a Dedicated Crew Chief assigned to 552 AMXS RED AMU, was performing a prior to launch inspection on an E-3 AWACS, and identified a cracked pulley control wheel assembly for the flight controls, preventing an adverse situation from developing during the scheduled mission. Sgt. Moore extensively inspected the area after noticing the first control wheel and discovered another cracked pulley wheel assembly. His expert skills and attention to detail prevented a potentially catastrophic situation from developing. *(April 2014)*

Weapons Safety



SRA BRYAN C. RUSNAK, 355 EMS, DAVIS-MONTHAN AFB AZ. SrA Rusnak displayed extraordinary weapons safety awareness and superior technical knowledge as he responded to two Inflight Emergencies for catastrophic GAU-8/A 30 millimeter gun system failures. His expert decision making and unparalleled system knowledge prevented: four explosive safety mishaps, further endangerment of 16 aircraft technicians, and the forced destruction of four defective gun systems valued over \$1,348,000. *(February 2014)*

MASTER SGT. BRANDON M. ARREDONDO, 386 ELRS, ALI AL SALEM AB, KUWAIT. MSgt Arredondo single-handedly inspected 78 pallets / 230 short tons of Net Explosive Weight munitions in support of the Iraq Foreign Military Sale effort. He identified major discrepancies in the pallet configuration and supporting hazardous documentation thereby directly contributing to the safe delivery of over \$28M worth of munitions supporting the Government of Iraq’s fight against insurgency and was lauded by Ambassador to Iraq. *(March 2014)*

A1C DEONDRE M. SANDERS, 355 FS, DAVIS-MONTHAN AFB AZ. During the month of March, Airmen First Class Deondre Sanders coordinated with the Defense Reutilization Management Office for the turn in of more than 1,000 rounds of expended 7.62mm ammunition. He established the procedures for tracking and turn in of approximately 1,500 rounds per annum, saving the Air Force an estimated cost of \$1.5K annually. *(April 2014)*

Ground Safety



A1C ZACHARY T. LEE, 380 AEW, AL DHAFRA AB, UAE. A1C Lee’s superb situational awareness, vigilance, and flawless execution of emergency procedures under duress led to the safe evacuation of five maintenance personnel, while ensuring the safety of a \$330M aircraft. As a result of A1C Lee’s superior performance, the aircraft did not sustain additional damage and was returned to the fight within eight hours of the fuel-oil cooler failure. *(February 2014)*

STAFF SGT. JARRELL CLEMONS, 366 FW, MT HOME AFB ID. While deployed to RED FLAG at Nellis AFB, Sgt. Clemons identified many inconsistencies and varied requirements while comparing Maintenance and Airfield Operations AFIs. He utilized a Geo Base mapping system to develop maps for each EOR. Sgt. Clemons conducted on-site measurements and then included exact placement of where equipment can be located within the maps. His exacting action protected numerous aircraft from damage and allowed the safe accomplishment of over 1,600 sorties and 4,000 flying hours in 15 O&M days. *(March 2014)*

SRA JEFFREY REED, 49 LRS, HOLLOWMAN AFB NM. During a fuel transfer operation, SrA Reed noticed the flow of fuel was significantly slower than usual. He called the contractor on duty to verify everything on his end was set up correctly. He then called the “West” hydrant system storage/issue area and found out a valve had been left open from an earlier transfer. The valve was immediately closed but was very close to setting off high fuel level alarms and overflowing the fuel tank. Because of SrA Reed’s quick response, he prevented the loss of thousands of gallons of fuel. *(April 2014)*

Flight Line Safety



STAFF SGT. KRISTINA L. DIAZ, 386 EOSS, ALI AL SALEM AB, KUWAIT. Sgt. Diaz’s superior awareness and coordination skills prevented collision between aircraft and ground vehicles during overseas operations. In one instance, Sgt. Diaz prevented a catastrophic situation when he cleared ground vehicles off a runway after a controller incorrectly cleared an aircraft to land on the same runway. In another instance, a controller cleared an aircraft for takeoff while ground vehicles were still operating on the same runway. Sgt. Diaz intervened and again prevented a catastrophic situation from occurring. *(February 2014)*

STAFF SGT. CHARLES J. GUMBS, 20 CMS, SHAW AFB SC. Sgt. Gumbs and his team started preparing for an aircraft defuel operation when he noticed smoke coming from a hydraulic mule next to an aircraft. He ran inside the building and notified a production supervisor. He ran back out to the smoking hydraulic mule and now saw flames coming from the unit. He quickly located a 150 lb halon fire extinguisher and began fighting the fire. Within minutes, he extinguished the fire. His actions saved a \$190K hydraulic mule and potential collateral damage to a \$29M F-16. *(March 2014)*

SRA PATRICK SHAFTER, 960 AACS, TINKER AFB OK. SrA Shafter, an Airborne Radar Technician, discovered an unsafe equipment configuration while preflighting an E-3 aircraft newly returned from depot, preventing possible injuries to personnel from the incorrect configuration. SrA Shafter noticed that the firefighter smoke mask and M-1 oxygen bottle were incorrectly mounted out of reach. SrA Shafter’s discovery led to the corrective placement of the life support equipment. *(April 2014)*

AWARDS OF DISTINCTION (Continued)

Unit Safety

62ND EXPEDITIONARY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON, KANDAHAR AB, AFGHANISTAN. The 62 ERS surpassed an exceptional safety milestone in December 2013, and for the first time in 451 AEW history they maintained 12 straight months of zero crew-induced Class A or B mishaps. This significant event prevented the loss of \$142M in vital combat assets by strictly adhering to technical orders, emergency procedures, a renewed supervisory focus on safety culture, and leadership engagement at key points. *(February 2014)*

RED AMU, 552 AMXS, TINKER AFB, OK. The 552 AMXS' Red AMU "Red Dragons" efforts resulted in safe, quality and reliable aircraft maintenance. During this period, they resolved a complex electrical issue, discovered and fixed a main landing gear rod, and ensured a successful, on-time sortie generation of an aircraft despite three serious problems during the launch. This important launch ensured timely search and rescue efforts for a real-time mishap of a Navy helicopter off the coast of Virginia. *(March 2014)*

466TH EXPLOSIVES ORDNANCE FLIGHT, BAGRAM AB, AFGHANISTAN. The 466 EOD Flight provided direct support to Kandahar Airfield, RC-South, RC-West, and the 4th Infantry Division over the course of 52 missions outside the wire. The 466 EOD Flight shouldered the additional burden of munitions retrograde for all NATO forces assigned to KAF, eliminating 5,836 pounds of unserviceable munitions in 30 days alone—the most of any US Force in Afghanistan. *(April 2014)*

QUARTERLY AWARDS

Flight Safety

CAPT. AARON B. SHANOR, 968 EAACS, AL DHAFRA AB, UAE. During an OEF sortie, just prior to commencing air refueling, E-3 AWACS Aircraft Commander Capt. Shanor noticed the oil quantity in the #3 engine had suddenly begun to drop followed by oil pressure fluctuations. He immediately initiated the Precautionary Engine Shutdown checklist while descending to a safe altitude. Capt. Shanor then performed a flawless approach and three-engine landing, in which precise aircraft control was required due to adverse yaw caused by the failed engine. A couple of weeks later, approximately 10 hours into an OEF mission, Capt. Shanor identified six window-length cracks on the outer windowpane. Capt. Shanor continued the mission and stayed on-station while he coordinated and planned emergency actions in case the cracks enlarged. Capt. Shanor returned to base and landed without incident. On another mission, supporting Combined Defense of the Arabian Gulf operations, Capt. Shanor noticed the aircraft in a sudden, uncommanded right yaw. He immediately identified engine instruments showing a failing #4 engine. Capt. Shanor again flew a flawless approach and landing while expertly controlling engine failure-induced aircraft yaw. Capt. Shanor's exemplary actions on multiple occasions ensured combat aircraft returned safely, preserved three \$330M aircraft, and ensured the safety of 22 aircrew members.


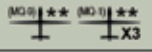

Ground Safety

TECH. SGT. KEITH M. GONELLI, 455 ECES, BAGRAM AF, AFGHANISTAN. As a newly appointed Unit Safety Representative Sgt. Gonelli took over a squadron safety program that was in disarray. He created safety books for nine work sections allowing each section easy access to forms, reports, letters, and checklists. He provided guidance to shop safety representatives on how to maintain safety books and development of Job Safety Training Outlines. Sgt. Gonelli inspected/identified safety hazards in each work section, taking appropriate steps to correct deficiencies. He was also a key player in weekly facility inspections in which Sgt. Gonelli, the First Sergeant, and the Production Control NCOIC toured, inspected, and documented fire, facility, and quality of life discrepancies. These accomplishments are all the more impressive considering they were conducted as an additional duty while Tech. Sgt. Gonelli managed his full time position as the shop supervisor of the Water and Systems Fuels Maintenance Section.

Mishap Statistics Scoreboard



FY14 Flight

As of March 31, 2014

	Fatal	Aircraft Destroyed	Class A Aircraft Damage
1 AF			
9 AF			
12 AF			
USAFWC			
ANG (ACC-gained)			
AFRC (ACC-gained)			

FY14 Ground

As of March 31, 2014

	Fatal	Class A	Class B
9 AF		2	1
12 AF		3	2
USAFWC		0	0
ACC		1	0

FY14 Weapons

As of March 31, 2014

	Class A	Class B
9 AF	0	0
12 AF	0	0
AWFC	0	0

Legend

Class A - Fatality; Permanent Total Disability; Property Damage \$2,000,000 or more
Class B - Permanent Partial Disability; Property Damage between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000
Class C - Lost Workday; Property Damage between \$50,000 and \$500,000
(Class Description Effective October 1, 2009)

* Fatality ** Non-rate Producing *** Performing SOUTHCOM Mission

 = Fatal  = Fatal due to misconduct

Flight Notes

During this period, ACC experienced two Class A RPA incidents including a MQ-1 and QF-4 aircraft mishaps. Continue to stress proper risk management on your flight operations and monitor for any effects of a high ops tempo—fatigue, complacency, etc. and mitigate the risk! As the weather turns warmer, remember the hazards that come along with it including thunderstorms, hail, wind shear, etc. Not to mention rejuvenated wildlife risks posed by migratory birds, deer, and coyote near/on the airfield. On the aircraft maintenance side of the house, "not following technical data" remains the top cause of maintenance-related aviation mishaps; but is matched this quarter by a lack of "attention to detail." Maintainers and their leaders must continue their focused efforts to increase technical order adherence and attention to detail in every maintenance task—no matter how trivial or repetitive it may seem. Fly Safe!

Ground Notes

ACC has experienced six Class A mishaps with seven fatalities and one permanent total disability. The latest mishap was in March and involved a member snowboarding; he hit a bump, struck a rail post, and was paralyzed. As we transition from winter to summer, the Air Force Critical Days of Summer (CDoS) campaign begins on 23 May and ends on 2 September 2014. The CDoS will focus on risk management, core values, the Airman's Creed, and compliance with guidance. Additional information to supplement your CDoS campaign can be located on the Air Force Safety Center and ACC Safety SharePoint.

Weapons Notes

During the last quarter we experienced four Class E High Accident Potential mishaps. Of the four mishaps two involved handguns being discharged into clearing barrels. While both were for different reasons they both could have been avoided. While clearing weapons for issue or turn in, slow down and follow established procedures. These types of mishaps might be small in the grand scheme of things, but let's continue to work on the small stuff to prevent the big mishap. Please take your time and do it right the first time.

Symbols for Mishap Aircraft





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You May Not **PAGE 14**

OVER the Edge MAGAZINE



EXTREME SPORTS

PAGE 4

Summer is here ... **ARE YOU READY?**

The long and cold winter has come to a close. Overcoats, gloves, and snow shovels give way to water skis, baseball gloves, and barbecue grills. The days are longer, and the mercury isn't dipping down quite as far as it did only weeks ago. Once again, we've survived another winter and now it's time to celebrate another long—and hopefully safe—summer.

The activities available to us during the next several months are almost endless. From boating to skydiving, we can get out and have individual, team, and family fun on a daily basis. If you've lived the life of a "couch potato" for the entire winter, then you owe it to yourself to make an effort and recuperate from months of inactivity. So, by all means, dust off the tennis rackets, get out the fishing reels, pump up the basketballs, and light up the grill—it's time to live again!

Wait! Before you get started, isn't there always an adverse effect to anything that's good? It can never really be guilt or worry free, can it? The secondary characteristic of summer activities is the danger associated with each and every one. If it's skydiving, boating, or even something less risky—such as a trip to the beach—the potential for a serious mishap is intensified during summer months.

For this reason, the Critical Days of Summer campaign was implemented to heighten awareness from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The campaign has been in existence for well over 20 years, unfortunately, we're still fighting many of the same battles—to educate and raise awareness of the problems faced during the summer season.

Go ahead, get out there and get involved in some summer fun ... after the winter we just had, you deserve it. However, be sure to evaluate the activity ahead of time. Don't accept any unnecessary risks—those that have no benefit and clearly are not worth taking. This will take a concerted effort on your part, but is worth it. Don't forget the sunscreen, and stay safe!



4 | **EXTREME SPORTS**

*TCE Reprint
Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va.*

10 | **THIRTY MINUTE CRUISE**

*by Master Sgt. Andrew Garrett
HQ ACC/SEF, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va.*

14 | **IT FLOAT'S ... YOU MAY NOT**

*by Col. Nathan A. Allerheiligen
Scott AFB, Illinois*

**THAT GUY
BUZZED**

**DOWNLOAD THE FREE GAME
TO YOUR IPHONE OR ANDROID PHONE**

Can you make it to the end of the night
without becoming That Guy?!

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A MESSAGE FOR U.S. MILITARY FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS



EXTREME SPORTS

We all have our favorite sports. While many enjoy football, basketball, volleyball, or softball, others enjoy mountain biking, rock climbing, sky diving, as well as bungee jumping. Yes, in our nation of free spirits, there are some people who like to “live on the edge” and participate in what are called “extreme sports.”

Extreme sports have become very popular these days. Many who try this class of sports enjoy the adrenaline rush. However, there are others who say people should limit their participation in extreme sports (or not even participate in them at all) because they are simply too risky. *While any sport can be dangerous if you do not follow instructions or pay attention to what you’re doing, it’s a fact that extreme sports do share a common denominator—they are all “inherently unsafe.”*

What side of the fence are you on concerning the issue of extreme sports? Do you believe the essential nature of these sports is truly unsafe? What’s their level of risk? Before a person participates in such a sport, can action be taken to eliminate, reduce, or control the risk? Let’s take a brief look at each of these sports and find out some general answers to these questions.

You might ask yourself, “How can mountain biking be dangerous?” Well, take this into consideration—most courses follow ravines, creeks, and steep mountain sides. Many have sharp turns and large rocks to avoid. Therefore, before you ride on these trails, it may behoove you to familiarize yourself with them. First, take a leisurely ride through the course so you can identify any potential problem areas and obvious hazards. Second, identify the type of personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for the activity. One piece of PPE that comes to mind for protecting your head—no pun intended—is a biking helmet. This should be the most important item on your mountain biking equipment list.

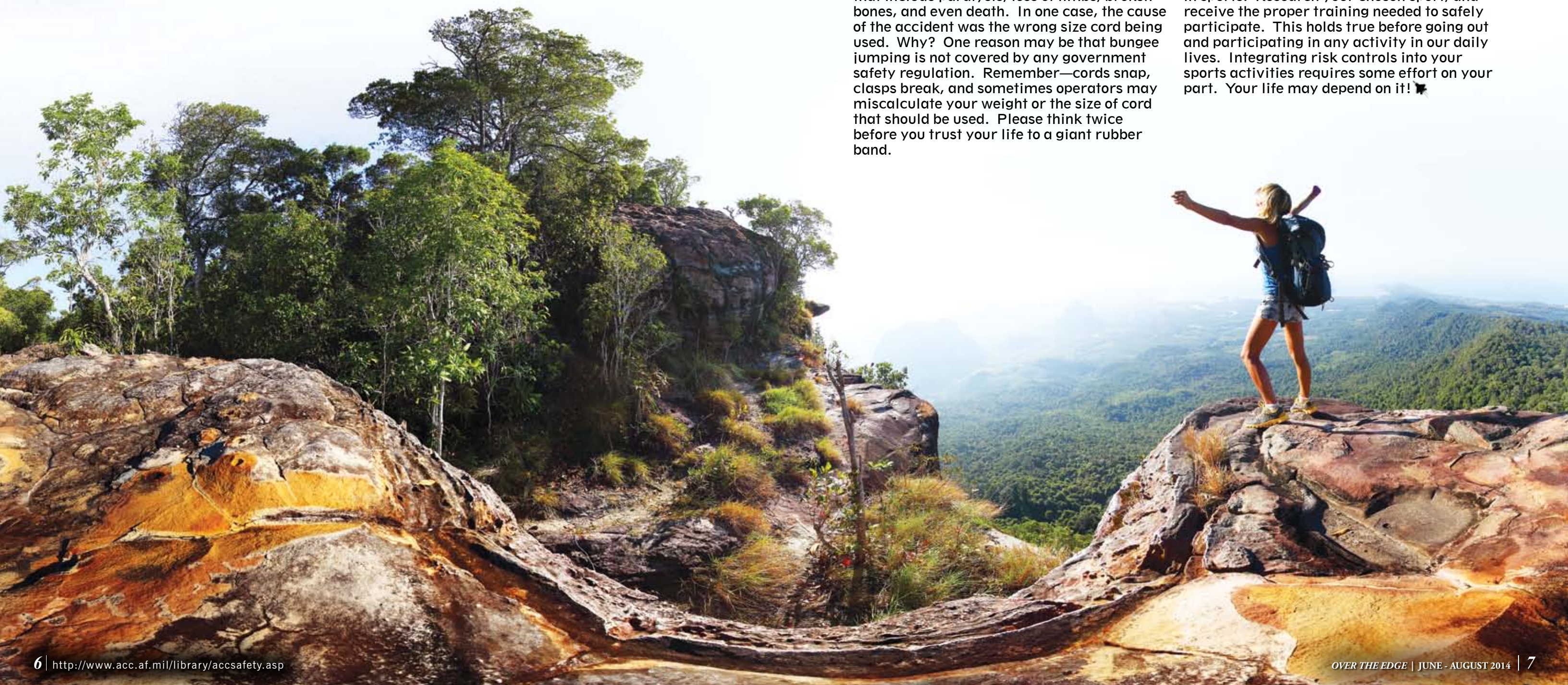
How about rock climbing? By simply going to the Outdoor Recreation Center on base or any other outdoor equipment outlet, you can better prepare yourself with all the PPE you’ll need to reduce your risk of injury for this sport—or most any other one for that matter. Some bases offer military members a course in rock climbing; they may have a mock-up of a mountainside where certified instructors teach would-be wall-crawlers. Some also offer rock-climbing trips. This is the perfect way to go for the novice climber.

Another sport that takes enthusiasts even “higher” is sky diving. This extreme sport is also taught by certified instructors who will tell you it is imperative you follow all safety procedures. They recommend you take the proper steps to become a certified sky diver before going sky diving. Check the yellow pages for a United States Parachuting Association (USPA) certified sky diving school. They will be quite happy to jump with you out of a perfectly good airplane.

Then there are other extremes—like bungee jumping. Before doing this, ask yourself if you really want to put your life on the line at the end of a giant rubber band? There are many horror stories involving this sport. These stories all have unhappy endings that include paralysis, loss of limbs, broken bones, and even death. In one case, the cause of the accident was the wrong size cord being used. Why? One reason may be that bungee jumping is not covered by any government safety regulation. Remember—cords snap, clasps break, and sometimes operators may miscalculate your weight or the size of cord that should be used. Please think twice before you trust your life to a giant rubber band.

Extreme sports, like any other, can be fun if performed in a safe and practical manner. Most likely, no one will ever stop you from participating in extreme sports. But, if you do, you should never accept any unnecessary risks and do everything you can to eliminate, reduce, or control the risk associated with such an activity. Advise your commander, first sergeant, and supervisor of your intention to participate in potentially dangerous activities while off duty. And, when you do, don’t expect them to play devil’s advocate. Remember, as an Airman, you are accountable for your actions.

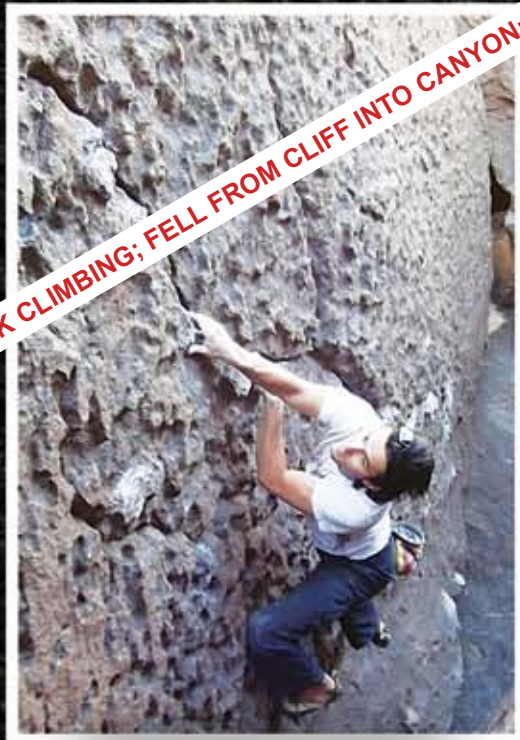
The long and short of it is that we all need to use good judgment and make smart risk management decisions when getting involved in sports. Research your chosen sport, and receive the proper training needed to safely participate. This holds true before going out and participating in any activity in our daily lives. Integrating risk controls into your sports activities requires some effort on your part. Your life may depend on it! 🗡



THE FOLLOWING MISHAPS ACTUALLY HAPPENED TO FELLOW AIRMEN

... Don't Become Another Statatistic!

Photo by: Jonathan Rejent



ROCK CLIMBING; FELL FROM CLIFF INTO CANYON: FATAL

ROCK CLIMBING

- Make sure all of your gear is in good, working condition.
- Never climb alone.
- Watch for falling rocks and be careful about dropping rocks on people below.
- Wear a climbing helmet.
- Take drinking water.

Photo by: Dennis Rogers



MOUNTAIN BIKE RACE; CRASHED — INJURED SPINE: PERM TOTAL DISABILITY

MOUNTAIN BIKING

- Test your equipment before each ride.
- Add extra safety gear as appropriate.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Ride to your ability and in control.
- Always wear a helmet.
- Know basic first aid.

Photo by: Craig Denton



RIDING ATV; EJECTED — FRACTURED BACK: PERM TOTAL INJURY

ATV

- Always wear appropriate PPE.
- Never ride under the influence.
- Ride an ATV that's right for your age/ability.
- Supervise riders younger than 16.
- Ride on designated trails and at a safe speed.
- Take a hands-on ATV Rider Course.
- Slow down when sightlines are poor.
- Cross streams at designated areas.

Photo by: Airman 1st Class Gustavo Castillo



ATTEMPTED TO SWIM BACK TO BOAT; NO PPE: DROWNED

SWIMMING

- Swim with a buddy; Never swim alone.
- Keep to designated swimming areas.
- Inexperienced swimmers should wear life jackets.
- Maintain constant supervision.
- Avoid distractions when supervising children around water.
- Know how and when to call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.

Photo by: Rob Bussard



PRIVATE AIRCRAFT CRASHED AT END OF RUNWAY: FATAL

PRIVATE PILOT

- Ensure you are current and proficient.
- Short cuts are never good decisions.
- Follow the rules.
- Make and file a flight plan.
- Always maintain your situational awareness.
- Remember ... complacency kills.
- Have a readiness mindset.
- Have a willingness to abort if necessary.

Photo by: Capt. Holly Hess



KAYAKING; ATTEMPTED RESCUE — PULLED UNDER: DROWNED

KAYAKING

- Wear all PPE to include a life vest and a helmet.
- Know water and weather conditions for the area you will be visiting.
- Obtain approved training from a reputable instructor.
- Have a float plan and let someone know where you're going.
- Carry your cellular phone if possible.
- Stay hydrated.

IT'S ONLY A THIRTY MINUTE CRUISE

Like any great story of poor decision making,
my story starts “So there I was ...”

BY MASTER SGT. ANDREW GARRETT

It was only one day before the best boating holiday of the year, Labor Day Weekend. I had big plans to meet friends on the eastern shore of Virginia for a long weekend of fishing, water skiing, and all-out relaxation. The only problem was that I still hadn't gotten the boat ready for the trailered trip to the Eastern Shore. I made a list of all the things that needed to be done; check the air in the trailer tires, the trailer lights, the boat's oil, steering fluid, navigation

lights, bilge, fuel, and the serviceability of the most important component to a successful boating weekend ... the COOLER! After work, I went to the marina to start checking things off the list; item by item everything was checked. Like a good Airmen, I followed the list and checked everything twice. What I failed to realize was that the marina's boat ramp was out of commission for repairs. Loading the boat was about to get a little more challenging and this is where my bad decision making began!

A little bad weather had started to move in; at least that's what I told myself as the thunder clouds became visible on the horizon. I planned to take my trailer to another boat ramp only a 30-minute cruise away (under good weather conditions) and have a buddy pick me up and bring me back to the boat. This was going to be a piece of cake! I called up my friend and set up the ride; this was the first opportunity to identify a potential risk. My friend said, "Sure, I will give you a ride, but it's supposed to get pretty nasty

out there tonight. Are you sure you don't want to wait until tomorrow?" I had only to venture a mile or two out into the Chesapeake Bay in order to get to the boat ramp. That, coupled with my tendency to discount advice, led me to assure him I wanted to go out.

With my trailer in place, I called the marina to have the boat ready for departure. That was when I had the second chance to realize the mounting risk. Shelly at the marina said, "It's starting to get pretty nasty out there. Are you sure you want to

take your boat out today?" Looking at the thunder clouds and noticing that they were considerably closer than they had been the last time I checked, I assured her that with only a short cruise out into the bay I would be fine! My only worry was the hassle of loading the boat on the day of the trip, having to back track from the marina, and then having to fight the rush-hour traffic, which would put me at least three hours behind schedule!

I arrived at the marina with my keys, my Golden Retriever, Leonard (who's

always up for a boat ride), and a determination to make it happen. The dock crew met me at the ramp and again asked me if I was sure I wanted to take the boat out. Just then, it started to lightly rain. This was my last chance to turn back, but again all I could think about was ensuring my boating holiday went off without a hitch. Come hell or high water, I was going to get my boat on that trailer that day! Little did I know, the high water was heading my way.

I hopped in the boat, got Leonard onboard, put his life



jacket on (safety first, you know), fired up the engine, and casted off the lines. By that time, the skies had grayed and it was starting to rain a little harder. “No problem,” I said to myself as I throttled up and headed toward the oncoming storm. At that point, I was contending with a steady breeze, moderate rain, and an overcast sky; other than that, it was the perfect afternoon for boating. I made it out of Chisman Creek and into the bay. As I did, a clap of thunder sounded and a BIG gust of wind struck me

head on. For the first time, I thought maybe this outing wasn’t such a good idea. But I thought about the hassle of putting it off, not to mention the shame of pulling back up to the dock after failing to heed the staff’s concerns. I convinced myself that it would be a short trip and that by the time the storm really hit, I would be safe on the trailer. I guess all I needed was that little self-assurance because I opened up the throttle and headed out into the bay. At about the time I got to the midpoint of the trip, the wind really picked

up and the rain started to come down in sheets. I can still remember the way my heart started to pound in my chest as the waves, reaching 5-6 foot, began breaking over the bow. For the first time in my boating experience, I was truly scared. I began eyeing the shore, trying to calculate just how far I would have to swim, should the boat go under. I was able to manage a deep breath, gain some composure, and navigate into the waves enough to keep the boat afloat while still making a little progress toward my destination. The problem

was, in order to accomplish this, I had to go several miles out of my way, and the 30-minute cruise had already reached two hours! Finally, after a total of four hours, I arrived—soaking wet, exhausted, and thankful for not having had to swim! I was able to put the boat on the trailer. I pulled the trailer out of the water and walked around to tie everything down. I bent down to take Leonard’s life jacket off and realized I had never thought to put my own life jacket on.

That day started out with a good plan, focused on efficiency and safety, as I prepared for my trip. I made a list and followed it; I did everything I could have done to ensure a great weekend. But when the weather threw me a curveball, I failed to adapt. I became so focused on my plans that I overlooked the obvious signs of trouble ahead. In the end, I survived without a scratch. Leonard doesn’t get quite as excited for a boat trip as he used to, but I will never forget the sound of that boat crashing into the surf, the rain pouring

down, how far away the shore looked, the pounding of my heart, or just how lucky I was that day.

Since then, I have done a few things to make my boating a little safer. I have downloaded the latest surf forecast app to my mobile phone to make sure I find only fair winds and calm seas. I ensure that I am safe at the docks LONG before severe weather hits. And most importantly, I am more receptive to the warnings and advice of others. Sometimes, I still opt to go my own way; but I’m getting better! ▀



It Floats you may not

BY COL. NATHAN A. ALLERHEILIGEN

I was enjoying an unseasonably warm day at Heber Springs Reservoir with my family and some friends. We started the day on a pontoon boat, with our friends riding on their jet skis.

After a while, they invited me to take one of the jet skis for a spin. Not having a lot of experience on small powered watercraft, I took it easy at first, keeping my distance from other boats and remaining vigilant of those around me. Later, I took my younger son on my lap for a spin while my older son, who was 11 at the time, was riding the

other Jet Ski. He had ridden several times before and was conscientious and careful in how he rode. We were having a nice time and enjoying the day.

At one point, I came up too close behind my son so I headed off in a wide sweeping left turn to get some distance from him while he headed off to the right. My young son was "helping" me steer and run the throttle. As I looked over my shoulder for the other rider, I couldn't see him, so I thought we were safe to keep turning. Spray got in my eyes for a moment as we rolled out of the turn, and then I saw him.



Directly ahead of me in my path was my son on a collision course. We were maybe 50 yards apart and each doing 20 knots or more toward each other. I barely had time to react, so I did my best to steer away without capsizing, or stopping directly in his path. Unfortunately, he kept turning slightly left into my path and we collided. My Jet Ski went up and over the left front of his, flew 2 to 3 feet above the water and stopped about 50 to 60 yards away. I immediately turned around and thought for a moment that he was OK. He was sitting erect on his craft with his hands by his side. Then it happened. He turned to the right, almost as if on purpose, and fell into the water face first. That image will haunt me forever.

At that moment, instinct kicked in, and I instantly jumped into the water and began a lifesaver crawl to him. It seemed to take forever to reach him, and the whole time his face was in the water. I instantly noticed the blood in the water as I turned him over.

Praise God, he began to breathe and did the "funky chicken"—a series of spasms common when a person who has blacked out comes back to consciousness. He had a huge wound above his left ear that was bleeding profusely. I didn't have time, or opportunity to do any more triage, so I headed back to the boat. No one else was in sight, and we were in the middle of the lake with more than a half-mile swim in any direction to reach the shore.

Fortunately, he was wearing a vest-style life preserver and was floating without effort. I grabbed the back of his vest and began pulling him back to my craft where my other son was patiently and quietly waiting. My injured son was responsive to my voice and could move his arms—he even tried to help swim. With his help, I was able to get him onto my Jet Ski, get the motor started, and the three of us raced back to shore.

When we reached the shore, I helped him into a prone position on the concrete, secured his head and neck while applying

direct pressure onto his head wound with my shirt. By then, our friends had called for an ambulance, which arrived quickly and took him to the local hospital less than 10 minutes away.

The doctors at the local hospital evaluated him and found no significant head, neck or back injuries. The cut on his scalp was more than doctors wanted to handle there, and he had lost a lot of blood, so he was medically evacuated to Arkansas Children's Hospital via helicopter. By the time we drove the 75 minutes to the hospital, he was lucid, responsive and doing well. He received 11 staples to close the head wound and was released that night.

There were several lessons to be learned by this life-changing experience, but the paramount discovery is that life preservers save lives! Without the jacket, he may have very well sunk beyond my reach before I could get to him. There is no way that I could have pulled my son, who was 5'7" and

160 pounds at the time, 75 yards through the water and onto that Jet Ski had he not been wearing a life preserver. Likewise, had I not had my jacket on, I likely would have drowned from exhaustion trying to bring him back to safety.

I also learned the importance to carefully and conservatively follow all the safety precautions. As vigilant as I was, the added distraction of having my younger son in my lap made the maneuvers we were doing dangerous and tragic.

Finally, water rescue, first aid and CPR courses are a must! Knowing how to properly save and treat a loved one, or even a stranger, is a critical skill that everyone should learn.

Bottom line: no matter what the water sport may be, wear a life preserver. It floats ... you may not!