

#### ACC Wins National Safety Award



Please join me in congratulating Air Combat Command's Flight Safety Division on earning the Major General Benjamin D. Foulois Memorial Award for the top flight safety program in the Air Force for fiscal year 2018. This is an incredible achievement and serves as just one more example of the continued excellence that each and every safety office throughout ACC displays on a daily basis. It is truly a privilege to serve with such an amazing team.

- Grit

The contributing members of ACC Safety's Flight Safety Division during fiscal year 2018 were

Col. Brandon W.J. Deacon, chief Lt. Col. Jerry R. Hickey, flight safety officer Master Sgt. Sarah M. Longo, maintenance flight safety manager Lt. Col. Alessandro Bruzzano, LOSA manager

David R. MacKenzie, MFOQA and ASAP manager Lt. Col. Michael M. Harmon (retired in 2018) Master Sqt. Jeffrey A. Stull (retired in 2018)

## Combat Edge

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GEN. JAMES M. HOLMES COMMANDER

Col. Steven G. Owen DIRECTOR OF SAFETY

> AMY ROBINSON EDITOR

KURT REILLY ART DIRECTOR

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#### THE COMBAT EDGE

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ACC.THECOMBATEDGE@US.AF.MIL **TELEPHONE**: 757-764-8846 DSN: 574-8846 FAX: 757-764-8975

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**COVER PHOTO BY** AIRMAN 1ST CLASS MIRANDA LOERA



#### **People First, Mission Always**

Where do you Fit?

In September 2018, General Holmes published ACC's Strategic Plan, providing priorities and goals for "delivering combat-ready Airmen to control and exploit air, space and cyberspace as part of the Joint Force." ACC's vision; "People First, Mission Always" recognizes that our "Airmen provide ACC's enduring source of strength." As such, our safety culture must foster an environment that empowers Airmen at every level to proactively identify potential hazards and develop innovative solutions for addressing those hazards. As an ACC Airman, knowing how your specific role within your squadron contributes to the overall ACC mission is essential to this culture.



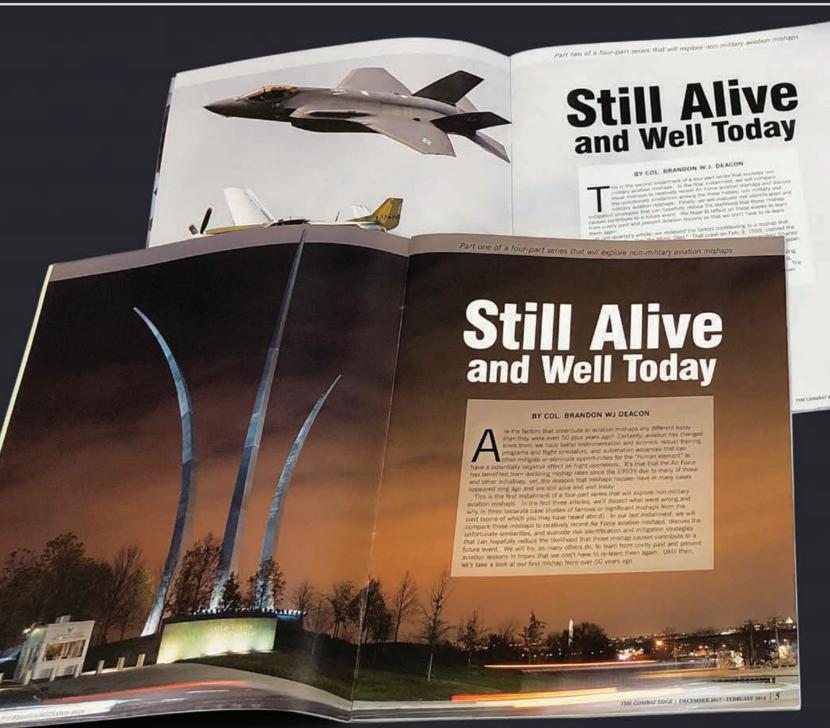
Col. Steven G. Owen **Director of Safety** 

Last year's operational safety review highlighted multiple challenges related to low manning, high ops tempo, low experience levels, training, and pressure to accomplish the mission. In his article titled "Give Me A Brake," Capt Marcus Moore provides a salient example of how multiple stressors, combined with low experience levels can lead to a potentially dangerous situation. Additionally, part four of the "Still Alive and Well Today" series by Col Brandon Deacon highlights several accidents experienced by our predecessors in civil aviation that resulted from poor discipline, risk management or decision-making. He then crosswalks those accidents with some recent Air Force mishaps to highlight the fact that we still face many of these same challenges today.

A mission-focused safety culture that utilizes continuous on-duty and off-duty risk management is one of our most effective countermeasures for overcoming these challenges. The article titled "Safety Culture and Readiness" provides a great snapshot of some outstanding squadron-level leadership and reinforces the concept that every member of the team, regardless of where they fit in the overall mission, is essential to maximizing operational readiness. If you are an aircrew member delivering a weapon on a specific target in a combat environment, your role is fairly clear. However, the crew delivering the weapon is only one piece of the bigger picture. If you are the maintenance technician working the avionics that guided the weapon onto the target, the crew chief who launched the jet, the weapons loader who loaded the munition, the engine mechanic who conducted the most recent borescope inspection, the air traffic controller who cleared the crew for takeoff, or a valued member of our outstanding mission assurance teams in the mission support group or medical group, your name is written on that weapon as well. We need each member of the team to be just as focused as the aircrew on their specific task in order to ensure mission success.

Knowing where you fit provides greater perspective on why your personal on-duty and off-duty risk management is so important. If we lose a single aircraft, we lose a piece of our combat capability. If we lose a single Airman to a mishap, that member's squadron readiness and ACC's overall combat readiness suffers. As you conduct your daily on-duty risk management, take some time to reflect on how your specific job contributes to achieving your squadron's mission, your wing's mission, and the greater mission of ACC. For off-duty risk management, many of us will return to the great outdoors as warmer weather returns. Whether you are hitting the road on your motorcycle, hitting the trail on your mountain bike, taking your kayak out on the lake, or just hanging out at the beach, take some time to ensure your gear is properly inspected, you have a good plan that addresses potential contingencies, and you have the appropriate skills to safely enjoy your favorite off-duty activities.

Fly Safe! – Grit



By far the greater number of aeroplane accidents are due to precisely the same circumstances that have caused previous accidents. A distressing feature of these accidents is the evidence they afford of the unwillingness, or the inability, of many pilots to profit from the experiences and mistakes of others.

— Gustav Hamel and Charles C. Turner, Flying: Some Practical Experiences.

(Published posthumously in 1914)



# Still Alive and Well Today

BY COL. BRANDON W.J. DEACON

his article concludes a four-part series that explores similarities among historic non-military and military aviation mishaps. The first three installments laid the foundation for this capstone article that compares the mishaps previously studied with relatively recent Air Force aviation mishaps. This article will discuss the unfortunate similarities across these accidents and evaluate risk identification and mitigation strategies that can hopefully reduce the likelihood that the causes of those mishaps don't contribute to a future accident. If you have not yet read the previous three articles leading up to this one, we recommend that you familiarize yourself with them before going further, as key summary points (without the detailed specifics) from those articles will be referenced in the pages to follow. Previous editions of The Combat Edge can be downloaded and read at www.acc.af.mil/home/acc-safety.

In the course of examining the 1959 "American Pie" crash that claimed the lives of the pilot and three iconic American singers, we determined that one of the main factors contributing to the mishap was the pilot's lack of familiarity with the use of the specific attitude indicator gyroscope in the aircraft that he was operating. The attitude indicator in an aircraft allows the pilot to determine the pitch and bank of an aircraft relative to the horizon by referring solely to the instrument when outside reference to the horizon isn't possible, such as in darkness or foggy weather. Readers will remember that the way the pilot should have interpreted the attitude indicator installed in the mishap aircraft was opposite from how the aircraft and horizon were depicted on other airplanes that the pilot was used to flying, thus causing him to be confused about actual pitch and bank angles being flown. The confusion likely led the pilot to exacerbate an undesirable aircraft attitude by making flight control "corrections" that made the situation worse at low altitude, resulting in the crash. Additionally, we determined that the pilot not only had general difficulties flying with reference to his flight instruments during training, but he was also not certified to operate the aircraft

with primary references to only those instruments – especially at night. That is, he wasn't certified to fly in the conditions that existed that night. Bottom line, the flight instruments that the pilot was using that night were not his "normal" flight instruments, and he was unfamiliar with how to safely operate that significantly different and specific gear on the aircraft given the dark and stormy flight conditions he encountered. The pilot was therefore unable to make the connection between what the flight instruments were telling him regarding the abnormality of the aircraft attitude, and the imminent crash into terrain.

The 1965 crash of United Flight 227 had a completely different collection of key factors contributing to the crash that ultimately claimed the lives of 43 of 91 people aboard. We learned that the aircraft captain had a consistent and virtually unwavering inability to either execute aircraft maneuvers to a minimum acceptable standard of performance, or demonstrate satisfactory judgement and decision-making while acting as a pilot in command – or both. Although the captain's substandard abilities provided the main backdrop from which we analyzed the progression of

events leading up to the mishap, the article suggested that another contributing factor of equal or greater importance be considered: The instructors and evaluators knowledgeable of the captain's lack of competence either failed to recognize the widespread pervasiveness of his shortcomings or failed to adequately intervene and counteract the disastrous chain of events fueled by those shortcomings that was unfolding before them. To quote the article directly, the instructors and evaluators with the authority and ability to have a direct impact on the captain's credentials, qualifications and privileges failed "to proactively predict the significant risk that he represented based on his actions, and mitigate or eliminate the risk by removing him from duties of significant responsibility." It seemed that collectively and individually, the instructors and evaluators did not have a cohesive, comprehensive risk mitigation plan for addressing the captain's continued substandard performance, unsatisfactory judgement and poor decision-making.

The 1998 aircraft crash off the coast of Massachusetts that claimed the life of John F. Kennedy Jr. and his two passengers had its own interesting contributory factors. In the JFK Jr. crash, we had a pilot who did not have an instrument rating, with relatively low flight time at around 310 hours, 55 hours of night flying and 70 total hours flown unsupervised without an instructor on board. Of all that flight time, only about 36 hours were flown on the mishap aircraft, with less than 10 hours at night, less than five hours without an instructor, and less than one hour at night. The pilot had some difficulty mastering the knowledge and tasks required to successfully perform instrument flight. Remember, as well, that the conditions at the time of the crash included nighttime, visibility



restrictions due to weather, and no instructor on board. Due to the mismatch between the higher degree of skills required to fly in the deteriorating weather conditions and the relatively low skill level of the pilot to operate in those conditions, a situation of rapid-onset spatial disorientation ensued. Without the training and skills to recognize, appreciate and correctly respond to the combination of spatial disorientation and subsequent loss of situational awareness respective to aircraft performance, the pilot made erratic flight control inputs that ultimately ended with the aircraft impacting the ocean and

Three separate aircraft mishaps. Three distinct sets of contributory factors. All three resulting in multiple fatalities for each. Also. all three mishaps happened over 20 years ago. Surely, we as aviation professionals should have learned valuable and lasting lessons since those historic aircraft accidents, and surely we should have implemented measures to ensure that the factors contributing to those incidents would NEVER again contribute to a future mishap. We of high terrain study our mistakes so that we can learn from them and not repeat them, right? ... Right ...?

Let's move forward in time and shift our focus to concentrate on a few relatively recent military

aviation mishaps that display striking similarities to those three accidents from 20 to 60 years

In 2013, a pilot flying an Air Force jet at night near mountainous terrain flew into deteriorating weather conditions that had not been previously forecasted for the local area. Although the pilot was flying on a flight plan filed for visual flight conditions, the aircraft was flown into instrument conditions without the pilot converting to an instrument flight plan. As the pilot continued to operate in the weather with limited to no visibility of the environment outside the fatally injuring all three occupants. aircraft, onboard terrain avoidance systems warned the pilot that a situation that could lead to

> impact with terrain was developing. Due to a combination of spatial disorientation and loss of situational awareness concerning the proximity to the aircraft, the pilot failed to interpret the aircraft instrumentation warnings as

extremely urgent and apply "an intentional and deliberate terrain avoidance fly-up" in a timely manner in order to avoid the mountains. The aircraft impacted the terrain only seconds after the pilot's insufficient corrective control inputs, destroying the aircraft and fatally injuring the pilot. These circumstances bear resemblance to the American Pie crash from 54 years before.

In 2015, a remotely piloted aircraft, or RPA, departed the runway during takeoff, causing extensive damage to the aircraft, auxiliary systems and other onboard equipment. As with many RPA mishaps, there were many technical and technological factors that contributed to the mishap sequence of events; however, with this particular mishap, there were also missed opportunities where leadership could have made definitive decisions to alter a culture of unsafe behavioral conditions among the assigned aircrew. The new squadron commander, during one of his first sorties with the unit. "encountered a failure of checklist discipline," resulting in erratic and incomplete checklist execution that did not adhere to technical order guidance. After the mishap, the commander issued guidance for the unit to place an additional emphasis and





focus on checklist discipline; by then, though, the damage had been done. The commander had missed an opportunity at the first indication of checklist discipline lapses to correct the crew's behavioral shortcomings regarding tech order checklist usage; however, he initially dismissed the observation, believing the crew was simply trying to run the checklist quickly to impress the boss. An organizational culture that allowed for poor checklist discipline as well as erratic and incomplete checklist usage were factors in this crash. The squadron commander was in a position to intervene but didn't: a situation similar to the United Airlines crash from 50 years before.

In 2013, while in a tactical orbit near a target area, the crew of a fixed-wing aircraft elected to climb in order to avoid incoming weather. The climb rate and angle programmed into the autopilot, though, exceeded the climb performance capability of the aircraft. As the airspeed decreased due to insufficient power available, the crew attempted to regain airspeed only by applying additional power. The airspeed eventually diminished until the aircraft stalled and departed controlled flight, spiraling to the ground until impact and fatally injuring the copilot. In this case, the aircrew failed to recognize the impending aircraft stall or spin situation that was developing. Once the aircraft stalled and entered a spin, the crew was unable to recover from such an uncontrollable state of flight due to insufficient stall and spin recovery training. Despite the assertion that the crew's stall and spin training were less than adequate, the crew allowed the aircraft to enter an attitude and flight condition that deteriorated to a regime that exceeded their training and ability to successfully recover. The crew's shortfall in training to recover from unusual

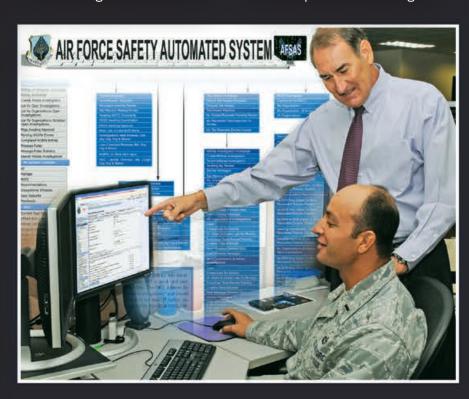
attitudes parallels the JFK Jr. crash from 15 years before.

And so, it seems that we have not been successful at learning from past aviation mistakes and laying to rest those factors that contributed to older aircraft accidents. Spatial disorientation. decision-making, inadequate task training and misinterpretation of aircraft instruments and systems are just a few factors present among those older and recent mishaps. Those factors are still alive and well today, unrelenting in inviting themselves to be sponsors of modern-day mishaps against our aspirations.

Now that we know that mishap factors can certainly resurface over time, what can we do to not only counteract the existence of those factors in modern environments, but also be predictive enough to know if, when and how mishap factors will appear in the future? As Air Force safety professionals, we have access to numerous tools to assist us in our "Quest for Zero" mishaps.

Undoubtedly, one of the most valuable tools we have for understanding factors that have

contributed to past mishaps is the Air Force Safety Automated System, or AFSAS. Simply put, AFSAS is the Air Force's system of record for archiving investigations, factors, findings and recommendations for all aviation, occupational and weapons mishaps. By studying our mishap history through AFSAS, we gain an understanding of past accidents that can inform our plan of action for future risk mitigation. Your wing, numbered air force or major command safety office can help you scrub the database for useable information. Do you want to know what the main factors were in mishaps for your aircraft over the past 10 years? Are you interested in recommendations made as a result of motor vehicle fatalities, as well as if and how those recommendations were implemented? How many weapons safety incidents has your unit had, and what were the details of those incidents? AFSAS has all that information: with it. we can analyze for trends and then have an informed foundation from which to base our risk mitigation strategies to address the most prevalent challenges.





Let's assume that we can use historic mishap data as one possible indicator to predict where we may be either currently at risk or developing risk. Are previously identified hazards – or the opportunities for them to surface – still present? Have our most pressing old hazards been mitigated to a point where a new hazard has now taken the No. 1 spot for concern? Setting aside some white space on the battle rhythm for critical thought in analyzing past mishaps might prove to be insightful. For example, a recent deep dive into the data in AFSAS brought to light an Air Force-wide trend of hypoxia events in aircraft with certain oxygen systems. As a result, a team was formed to investigate more thoroughly the common threads across those incidents, and recommendations to change components of the system are being fielded as a result.

For aviators, we have another unique set of tools at our disposal to help in predicting emerging risks. Through our Military Flight Operations Quality Assurance, or MFOQA, Line Operations Safety Audit, or LOSA, and Airman Safety Action Program, or ASAP, initiatives, we can attempt to proactively identify the what (MFOQA), the how (LOSA), and

the why (ASAP) of operations for indicators that might alert us to evolving risks. Analyzing all three of those data sources for commonality and trend patterns could very well point to areas of concern that may warrant some attentive risk mitigation. Analysis of information obtained through these proactive safety programs has already identified operational areas of concern for multiple airframes; informed commanders can then consider accepting, mitigating or eliminating identified risks. Over a 10-year period. these proactive programs showed commanders and crews that fixed-wing approach and landing maneuvers were being flown with widespread out-of-tolerance parameters. As a result, emphasis was placed on aircraft stability during the approach and landing phases of flight, and unstable approach rates have been reduced to a fraction of what they were.

As individuals, we can manage risk on a more personal scale through the Check-3 GPS (Gear, Plan, Skills) program. In a nutshell, performing an internal assessment to ensure you have the proper GEAR for a task, a PLAN for using that gear (including contingencies in case the plan isn't working out the way you thought it would), and the SKILLS to execute your

plan using your gear is what the program is all about. Although the Check-3 program is geared toward non-aviation or recreational safety. the concepts are certainly valid for assessing and mitigating any taskassociated risks. In retrospect, Check-3 GPS may have been able to emphasize shortcomings in the gear, plans and skills of the American Pie, United and JFK Jr. incidents, and alert those pilots that the risks associated with the gear and plans for their respective flights might easily surpass their skills to counteract that risk.

Let us never forget, though, that the most important tool in identifying and mitigating risk is the one between your ears! Reviewing past mishaps for trends; analyzing proactive safety information for risk indicators; and ensuring we have the gear, plan and skills to navigate an activity with inherently increased risk all involve THOUGHT. The challenge comes in dedicating time to thinking about risk and risk mitigation. With practice, though, it does become less daunting. As professionals, we should all consider taking time each day to use all the tools available to us to address risk and strive to mitigate – or eliminate – risk factors that have been around for decades, and are still alive and well today.

## Safety Gulture C

BY COL. STEVEN G. OWEN

o there I was ... a flight commander working as the squadron operations supervisor at 5 o'clock in the morning. It was a beautiful day for flying and we had 12 morning sorties scheduled with an additional 10 queued up for the afternoon. The first two four-ships of the day were back in the vault briefing up a 4v4 flight-lead upgrade ride and the two remaining two-ships were briefing for their morning basic fighter maneuvers sorties. I was checking the weather and notices to Airmen in order to get ready for the pilots to step to the aircraft when my maintenance production supervisor, or "Pro Super," walked in to give me the bird brief. His shoulders were slumped, his head was down, and in all honesty he looked like he had just suffered a brutal beatdown in a state championship wrestling match.

"Sir," he said, "we have four jets available."

My first reaction was total disbelief mixed with frustration. At the time, we had 24 jets in the squadron and my Pro Super had just informed me that only four out of 24 were mission ready. The remaining 20 jets were non-mission capable. How was this even possible?! I honestly had to ask him to repeat what he had just said. Again, utterly defeated, he calmly and quietly repeated, "Sir, we have four jets."

It was at that moment I realized that maintenance had done everything they could and had simply been unable to deliver. I took a deep breath, told him to stand by and immediately picked up the phone to my squadron director of operations (DO).

"Sir," I said, "maintenance is hard broke. We only have four jets available for the 12-turn-10 that we have scheduled, and there is a fairly good bet that at least one of them will ground abort before reaching the arming area. Recommend we cancel flying for the day and give them a chance to recover."

My DO's response was simple and straightforward: "We're not giving them an ops cancel; fly what we got."

By the end of the day, we had flown a total of six out of 22 scheduled sorties and maintenance was still hurting. Fast-forward 15 years to 2018, and take a look at this recent email from an ACC squadron commander to his team:

From: Squadron CC

Sent: Wed, Nov 14, 2018 at 7:00 PM

Squadron Team

Thursday First Go Cancelled Subject:

High Importance:

To:

## Readiness

I have decided to cancel First Go tomorrow. This is not a weather forecast-based decision, but it is a weather informed one.

Maintenance currently has only six healthy jets, with 32 of their personnel still off station. Many of you probably noticed today that crew chiefs were not quite ready to catch you at your spot when you were back, forms were incorrect, jets weren't quite ready to go when you arrived, etc. These signs are leading indicators of potentially worse problems if we do not make a course correction. Let me be clear that this is NOT a spear at our AMU. Our maintainers work incredibly hard — their spectacular performance at our recent TDY bears testament to that — but they are truly stretched thin right now and aircraft break rates today only made their problem more challenging.

Additionally, we all just watched the CSAF video about flight discipline and airmanship. Basically, getting back to basics. We all are pressing hard on learning tactics and we should, but from observing recent upgrades and checkrides, I would say we all — myself 100% included — could stand to benefit from taking some time to refresh our basic systems and procedural knowledge. As much as I can't afford to lose a jet, the thought of losing any one of you is what keeps me awake at night.

That being said, since tomorrow's forecast is not great, and giving Maintenance time now to catch their breath and fix broken jets instead of pressing hard to prep what healthy ones we have to fly greatly benefits them, I have decided to cancel. I want all of you to understand why I made this decision.

As you all know, our squadron is more than just operations but ops and maintenance, and I believe this is what's best for the whole unit. Our entire team crushed it at our recent TDY, and I couldn't be more proud of both the maintenance and ops effort. Soon we will deploy together, and you will experience what One Team One Fight truly means when we do.

Please use the extra time tomorrow to focus on the basics and refresh yourselves on some GK you probably haven't looked at in a while. Feel free to stop by my office and study with me if you like:)

If anyone has any questions or concerns, please let me know.

As you compare and contrast these two examples, take a minute and ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) Which squadron has a more effective safety culture?
- 2) What criteria would vou use to define an effective squadron safety culture?

As Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein stated in his recent safety video, the only way to maintain a perfect safety record is to stop flying and "that is not on the table." As such. we will have to accept risk. In order to manage that risk, safety must become much more than just a compilation of Air Force instructions and programs. Instead. safety must become a mission-focused culture that

begins with proactive leadership and permeates throughout the entire squadron.

First, an effective safety culture maintains a laser focus on the overall mission and health of the squadron. It understands that the loss of a single Airman or aircraft reduces the overall readiness of the squadron. Our squadron commander does an outstanding job of establishing a mission-focused safety culture by reinforcing a sense of teamwork. He clearly creates a sense of ownership in the overall success of the squadron by stating "Our squadron is more than just operations, but ops and maintenance, and I believe this is what's best for the whole unit." He then goes on to reinforce the mission by stating "Soon we will deploy together, and you will

experience what One Team One Fight truly means." Finally, at the end of his letter he states "As much as I can't afford to lose a jet, the thought of losing any one of you is what keeps me up at night."

Second, in order to ensure squadron readiness, a missionfocused safety culture proactively identifies potential hazards by maintaining situational awareness of key indicators that could lead to a mishap. What are some of the potential hazards and indicators identified by our squadron commander?

#### - Potential Hazards

- Ops tempo due to recent TDY
- Unscheduled maintenance due to high aircraft break rates
- Poor weather forecast

#### - Maintenance Indicators

- Only six healthy iets
- 32 maintainers still off-station
- Crew chiefs not quite ready
- Forms not quite right
- Jets not quite ready

#### - Ops Indicators

- Performance on recent upgrade rides and checkrides

Third, a mission-focused safety culture is disciplined. It identifies innovative solutions to mitigate the risks that we DO have to take without accepting shortcuts or risks that we **DO NOT** have to take. In order to address the maintenance indicators our squadron commander decides that "Giving maintenance time now to catch their breath and fix broken iets instead of pressing hard to prep what healthy ones we have to fly

greatly benefits them." He then addresses the ops indicators by stating "We all – myself 100% included – could stand to benefit from taking some time to refresh our basic systems and procedural knowledge."

Finally, a mission-focused safety culture must be internalized by every member, at every level of the squadron. Whether you are a brand new three-level working the flight line or a seasoned aviator, you contribute to your squadron safety culture by understanding the mission, proactively identifying hazards, avoiding unnecessary risks and mitigating the risks that are necessary.

Readiness = Airmen + thesystems that they operate.

If we skip a step in the tech order and break a jet, we lose a portion of the total available combat power that our squadron brings to the fight. If we fail to utilize appropriate safety gear and injure an Airman, we again lose a portion of our overall readiness. This culture applies to off-duty activities as well. If we lose a single Airman to a motorcycle accident, it hurts the entire team. If you wait until the last week to begin training for a fitness test and injure yourself, it prevents you from contributing to the mission.

I would like to thank the 4th Fighter Wing Commander, Colonel Donn Yates, and the squadron commander who wrote this email to his team. Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Bell, for the opportunity to share this with the rest of the ACC team.

Fly Safe! – Grit





## A MEMORABLE FLIGHT

#### BY CAPT. ANDRE PETERSEN

"Phenom 6, cleared for takeoff, runway 15. Fly runway heading to 3,000 feet, expect FL230 ten minutes later. Departure frequency 124.2, squawk 3216." We read back the clearance, took the runway and pushed up the throttles on our 1960s Pratt & Whitney TF33 engines in the E-8C Joint

STARS. Cruising down the runway, taking careful notice of the airspeed, instruments and centerline, everything was set for takeoff.

"Two positive climbs, gear up, set MCT (Maximum Cruise Thrust), after-takeoff and climb checklist."

As the landing gear retracted, we continued our climb, accelerated, programmed our cruise thrust setting and finished the last steps of the after-takeoff checklist. I thought, "Here I am, first flight after aircraft commander upgrade, and I cannot believe everything is going off without a hitch."

Passing 10,000 feet, I was scanning the instruments and noticed that the exhaust gas

temperature on the No. 1 engine was creeping up and began to exceed its operational limit. Great. I'm no more than 10 minutes off the ground, and we are looking at shutting down an engine. We read a little deeper into the limits table and determined our safe course of action would be to pull the throttle back just below MCT, and just like that – the temp went back to within limits. This is my lucky day!



how it's a great day to fly airplanes. But now something else catches my attention. The nose is beginning to hunt ... up and down ... left and right ... developing into a beautiful figureeight pattern that quickly grows. Within a few seconds, the airplane was pitching up and down as it banked left and right – SUPER!

out the window from 30,000 feet thinking about

"Eng, looks like the yaw damper went out ..." "Yup!" he replied.

"Alright," I say, "I'm going to speed up and click off the autopilot, then we'll switch to the alternate yaw damper." (Thank you Boeing for redundancy.) Flashbacks to pilot training, stories of previously failed yaw damper systems, and thoughts of how bad this situation could get ran through my head.

"Here goes nothing," the flight engineer said as he flipped the switch. Within seconds, the nose straightened back out, and we were back in business!

With four good engines, a working yaw damper and near-bingo with divert fuel, we reached the end on the weather radar, turning into towering clouds of turbulence, thunder and training opportunities! The instructor pilot, who had moved into my seat to prep the copilot for some pattern work back at Robins, was now demonstrating to the copilot how to use the radar for weather avoidance as I made the radio calls from the observer seat. The navigator, who had been talking to the operations folks back home for the past hour, informed us that thunderstorms now covered the field, but they would probably just pass through. To prepare ourselves, we began looking at routes to potential divert fields and holding options. No big deal we thought; we have plenty of gas and these afternoon storms do not normally last more than an hour.

"Nay, let's check weather for Charleston," I said.

"Charleston is socked in."

"Okay, how about Dobbins?"

"Same."

"How about Northwest Florida Beaches, Jacksonville and Columbus?"

"Yeah, not looking good."

We looked at the terminal area forecasts in the

brief and got a weather report. Where did this weather come from? Maneuvering around these storms and inching closer to Atlanta's airspace, the controllers began giving us vectors to the north. Weird – we are supposed to be going southeast.

"Atlanta, any way we can get a vector back to Robins?"

"Phenom 6, that's a negative, we've got all altitudes blocked along your flight path for commercial traffic, holding for landing clearance at Hartsfield."

I replied with an exhaustive "Cooooppy."

Looking at the fuel on board, we're going to be okay; this won't take long. Forty minutes later, after being vectored around the entirety of Hartsfield's airspace and checking the weather at nearly every field in reach, we finally got a vector back to Robins, and not much fuel to play with. The Robins Automated Terminal Information Service had been flowing in the background this whole time, updating so quickly I'm certain it cycled through the entire alphabet while we were being vectored.

"Broken at 3,000! They are calling broken at 3,000!" The thunderstorms are still hanging near the field, but all we must do is get visual and bring this bad Johnny in for a full-stop. We request the instrument landing system and start flying on our

vectors. The navigator swings out the weather radar, and we see a bright red new friend - more clouds - along the approach course. Well that simply will not do! Still on downwind, the field is blocked by the broken layer of clouds at 3,000. About 10 miles from our base turn heading, the copilot looks out his window and exclaims "Field in sight!"

The instructor and I verify and then jinx each other, saying "Let's call visual and put this thing down!" We terminate our instrument flight rules clearance, declare visual and announce our intent to maneuver to land.

"Phenom 6. approved, switch to tower,"

We contact tower, get the landing clearance, and bring it in for a tactical approach that took me back to the T-6 pattern at pilot training: Back in chocks with the engines shut down, we all take a deep breath then the instructor pilot exclaims "Get me out of this plane! This thing is cursed!"

Of course, our plane was not cursed – as much as we might have all thought it was that day. The next day, we got together to talk about the sortie. We saved all the paperwork from mission planning day so we could go back over the forecasts we received. review our decision-making process from the previous day, and talk more about the malfunctions we experienced. Even Monday-quarterbacking our decisions the next day at 0 above ground level and 0 knots, we determined that with the information we had and acquired in flight, the right decisions were made. The vectoring around traffic in the Atlanta airspace had burned through our fuel reserves that would have taken us to any one of the dozens of fields in the Southeast and parts of the eastern Midwest that experienced their un-forecasted afternoon thunderstorms the same time as Robins.

My thanks go out to all the members of the crew that day who stepped up when the going got rough, relied on their training, split duties appropriately to increase situational awareness, and ultimately made my first ride as an aircraft commander so

memorable!

#### BY CAPT. MARCUS MOORE

### Siege 12, be advised, it appears as though your speed brake is extended.

Those were the words tower passed to us after takeoff roll on departure before we changed our radio channel to the next controller. It was that moment I realized that I had committed an egregious error: I had executed a takeoff with the speed brake extended!

What led up to that? It was a typical hot, sunny day at Nellis Air Force Base. The weapon systems officer and I were No. 2 of a twoship whose mission was to support a joint terminal air controller weapons school event. It was the first time my crewmate and I were going to employ live ordnance in a close-air support scenario, so our nerves were higher than usual. After the coordination brief with the JTACs and a flight brief with our flight lead, we stepped to our jets. The emphasis in the brief was to go slow to make sure everything was right with our jet, especially the preflight of the bombs. So far, so good. We start the jet up and immediately start having problems.

"Slow is smooth; smooth is fast," is a phrase you might've heard and one that we stress in the fighter community. It can be challenging to adhere to, especially when things start interrupting your normal routines. Case in point: After troubleshooting our avionics issues in chalks, we decide to taxi out with our flight lead to the arming area. As soon as we reach the arming area, another master caution pops up, and we have to call a redball. This means having maintenance personnel who are experts in the specific subsystem to come out to the jet and troubleshoot the issue. Normally when we call the redball in the arming area, we extend the speed brake so they can identify

which jet is having the issue. So we extended the speed brake. After waiting for 15 minutes for the redball crew to show up, our flight lead decided to press without us to show up on time to support the JTACs. Another 10 minutes pass, and the redball crew shows up. We troubleshoot and clean up the issue.

Guess what I didn't do? I did not retract the speed brake after the redball crew showed up!

After cleaning up our issue and clearing off our redball crew, my crewmate and I became channelized on our game plan to join up with our flight lead. Our jet was still having avionics issues that weren't necessarily go or no-go items, but these issues were still enough to drain our situational awareness. We performed our normal pretakeoff checks, but missed that one major item. We rushed ourselves. Fortunately, nothing else compounded our error. The takeoff didn't feel abnormal, but had something else happened such as a compressor stall, we may have been in a world of hurt.

Lesson learned: As a wingman who always wants to be ready when your flight lead expects you to be, it's better to take the hit on not being expeditious rather than being unsafe. When your situational awareness is drained, don't stick your nose into the fight until you are completely sure you are ready. In tactical situations, this may be hard to do, but when it comes to the basics of safety and airmanship, it's a necessity. It's easier said than done, but ultimately, you are in charge of your jet! 🔭

Photo by Staff Sgt. Brittain Crolley



#### BY MASTER SGT. MICHAEL ULMEN

onsumer-purchased explosives labeled as "binary exploding targets" are used primarily for firearm and target shooting enthusiasts. These exploding targets are often found in outdoor sporting stores from coast to coast and on the Internet. Shoot one from a safe distance, and you'll be rewarded with a concussive blast and a cloud of smoke. indicating that you've hit your target. If you search YouTube for "Tannerite," one of the most popular brands, you'll find more than 10,000 videos depicting the use – and more frequently, the MISUSE – of the product.

Online videos show people in contests to see who can detonate the most explosives in the most innovative ways: demolishing pumpkins and

watermelons, washing machines and refrigerators, old cars and trucks, and even a trailer home. To heighten the impact, diehards mix the explosives with gasoline, diesel fuel or propane tanks, creating explosions that crater the land, trigger car alarms and shake nearby communities. Although this might sound like fun to some. it is a recipe for disaster! Of major concern is the recreational use of explosives by people who have not been trained or familiarized with explosive effects; primarily blast and fragmentation.

The Air Force has experienced a rise in off-duty mishaps involving these exploding targets. Experimentation and improper use and handling are major factors in these mishaps. As a rule of thumb, an exploding target that contains 1 pound of explosives requires a safe distance of 100

yards – yes, a football field. Remember to treat all binary targets with respect. Misuse could result in serious injuries or death from flying debris. Proper personal protective equipment, such as googles and hearing protection, is a must not only for the shooter, but also anyone near the target blast area. Be aware of your surroundings if others are using exploding targets. The manufacturer provides specific instructions to ensure personal safety and proper handling. Remember to always follow the directions on the package to ensure the safety of yourself and others. Check your local and state laws concerning the use of these explosives: many states. alongside the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, are making this product illegal to possess.

FY19	9 Fligl	nt	As of 31 Dec 2018
	Fatal	Aircraft Destroyed	Class A Aircraft Damage
1 AF			
9 AF			
12 AF		+	+*
25 AF			*
USAFWC			
ANG (ACC-gained)			
AFRC (ACC-gained)			

FY1	9 Occup	ational	As of 31 Dec 2018
	Class A Fatal	Class A Non-Fatal	Class B
AFCENT		0	0
USAFWC		0	0
9 AF		0	0
12 AF		0	1
24 AF		0	0
25 AF	##	0	0

FY1	9 Weapons	As of 31 Dec 2018
	Class A	Class B
ACC	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)

= Fatal due to misconduct

#### Flight Notes

ACC experienced one destroyed aircraft and three damaged aircraft that met the Class A reporting criteria during the first quarter of FY19. There were no aviation fatalities in the first guarter. Remotely piloted aircraft accounted for 50 percent of this quarter's Class A statistics, while fighter aircraft accounted for the remaining 50 percent. In comparison, during the first guarter of FY18, we had three Class A mishaps that involved four aircraft with no fatalities: an MQ-1B, which was not recovered; two A-10Cs, which were destroyed; and an E-8C, which was damaged.

#### Occupational Notes

ACC suffered two Class A fatal mishaps and one Class B permanent partial mishap during the first guarter of FY19. This is an increase over last year at the same time when ACC suffered one Class A fatal and zero Class B's. The first fatality happened when an Airman rear-ended a semi truck. Both vehicles were traveling the same direction in different lanes, with the member traveling within the posted speed limit of 70 mph. The semi abruptly veered into the member's lane at about 30 mph, allowing little to no time for the member to react, resulting in the fatal rear-end collision. The second fatal mishap occurred when a military member was the passenger in a vehicle driven by his non-Air Force spouse. While operating the vehicle with trailer in tow, she lost control of the vehicle and crashed into a ravine, resulting in fatal injuries to all four occupants. The Class B mishap happened while a worker was moving a piece of concrete when his finger got smashed and had to be amputated. None of these tragedies seem to be willful noncompliance, but some situational awareness may have prevented them. As always, apply Check 3 - Gear, Plan and Skills in everything you do.

#### Weapons Notes

Congratulations on an outstanding first quarter of FY19. Keep up the good work! Nevertheless, we must keep working to reduce negative trends and ingrain explosives safety into our daily operations. Your focus for the upcoming months should be established through trending negative indicators. Review mishap data points, spot inspection and annual inspection discrepancies to focus your efforts. Thanks for all you do in support of the ACC Weapons Safety community.



#### 4th Quarter FY18 AWARDS







**Aircrew Safety** Capt. Rick Burges, 1st Lt. Haleigh Ferguson and Senior Airman Talon Leinbaugh 66 RQS, 355 FW Nellis AFB, NV



**Explosives Safety** Tech. Sgt. Justin A. Knox 355 CES, 355 FW Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ



Flight Line Safety 332 EOSS, Airfield Management



Flight Safety MSgt Brad J. Stapp 55 WG/SEF, 55 WG Offutt AFB, NE



**Pilot Safety** 1st Lt. Jonathan J. Lowell 421 FS, 388 FW Hill AFB. UT



**Safety Career Professional** Tech. Sgt. Thomas J. Northcutt 363 ISRW Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA



**Unit Safety** 9 ASOS Fort Hood, TX

**Unit Safety Representative** Staff Sgt. Nikolay A. Yakovlev 407 ECS

## Congratulations

2018 ACC Annual Award Winners

ACC Outstanding Airmanship Award\*

Capt. Matthew L. Guertin 94 FS, 1 FW Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA

**ACC Chief of Safety Special Achievement Award\*** 552 ACW/SE

Tinker AFB, OK

**ACC Safety Career Professional of the Year Award\*** 

Tech. Sqt. Dylan M. Gaissert 4 FW/SEG Seymour Johnson AFB, NC

**ACC Outstanding Achievement Award** for Weapons Safety\*

Weapons Standardization Section 355 MXG, 355 FW Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ

**ACC Outstanding Achievement Award** for Occupational Safety, Category II\* 23 WG/SE, 23 WG Moody AFB, GA

**ACC Outstanding Achievement Award** for Occupational Safety, Category IV\* 552 ACW/SEO

Tinker AFB, OK

**ACC Outstanding Aircrew Award\*** 

Lt. Col. Eric A. Fleming and 1st Lt. Nathan E. Bruhn 357 FS, 355 FW Davis-Monthan AFB AZ

**ACC Aviation Maintenance Safety Award\*** 

Tech. Sqt. Michael J. Wilson 923 AMXS Davis-Monthan AFB, A7

Commander's Award for Safety

9 AF-AFCENT/SE Shaw AFB, SC

Wing Safety Program of the Year 23 WG/SE

Moody AFB, GA

Wing Chief of Safety of the Year

Maj. Brian D. Tripp 23 WG/SE Moody AFB, GA

Flight Safety Officer of the Year Capt. Zachary R. Landecker 23 WG

Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ

Flight Safety NCO of the Year

Tech. Sqt. Aldwin S. Del Rosario 49 WG/SEF Holloman AFB, NM

Flight Safety Outstanding Achievement Award

Airman 1st Class Gina M. Louise 23 AMXS, 23 WG Moody AFB, GA

**Occupational Safety Special Achievement Award** 

Staff Sot. Jordan N. Holmes 99 ABW/SE Nellis AFB, NV

**Occupational Unit Safety** Representative of the Year

Charles E. Howe 4 CMS, 4 FW Seymour Johnson AFB, NC

\* These winners also represented ACC at the Air Force-level safety awards competition.







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Don't let your phone have the last word.

My daughter's last word was GR8.

4 | ALYESKA, HERE I COME! by Rodney Robinson ACC/SEG, JB Langley-Eustis, VA MEET COMACC'S "READY NOW" FITNESS INITIATIVE

by Tech. Sgt. Nick Wilson ACC/PA, JB Langley-Eustis, VA

TRAGEDY ON THE TURNPIKE by Tech. Sgt. Phillip Brown 552 AMXS, Tinker AFB, OK

You'LL SHOOT YOUR EYE OUT by Tech. Sgt. Robert Adams 513 AMXS, Tinker AFB, OK

16 | Are You Ready To Ride? by Master Sgt. Joseph A. Morris Jr. 692 ISRG, JB Pearl Harbor-Hickam, HI

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## ALYESKA Here I Come!

t seems like each time I take a vacation I have a story to tell, and guess what? Here we go again! This time, my wife and I were off to Alaska to visit our son, who is in the Army stationed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. My wife had never been to Alaska before, and although we had lots of activities planned, one thing we both wanted to do was to go skiing at Alyeska in Girdwood, Alaska. Now keep in mind I was stationed in Alaska earlier in my active-duty days – Elmendorf, 1982, and I always told my wife stories of skiing at Alyeska.

The stories would usually start out with some friends I met in Alaska who would pick me up from my dorm and take me skiing on the weekends. At the time, it was the largest ski slope I had ever skied on. To this day, I still remember it ... seeing the top of the mountain disappearing into the clouds ... it was huge. But just like any young, carefree and crazy person, I went straight to the top of the slope. Now I knew how to ski, but my ability was based on skiing on mid-level slopes on the East Coast. So when I got to the top of Alyeska, came off the chairlift and turned facing down the slope, I knew I was in trouble. As for my "friends" who brought me skiing - they were advanced skiers and

had already begun their adventure with me. Now I had skied on down the slope. Once again, being young I just pointed my tips down the slope, pushed with my poles and down the slope I went. In those days, ski helmets were not a big thing so of course I was not wearing one. For the first turn or two, I was doing just fine, but this didn't last long and down I went. Unfortunately, this went on for the next hour or so until I finally made it to the bottom of the slope. I was beatup, frozen and realized that I had overestimated my ability by quite a bit. After that run, I stuck to the intermediate and beginner slopes.

Now fast-forward 35 years to 2018, and I was ready to tackle the Alyeska slope again only this time my wife was

and off over the past 35 years 1960 Winter Olympics. It was beginners slope and came down intermediate lift but this time we to the top of Alyeska. Although

and had skied some big slopes to include Squaw, home of the late in the season – in April – but in Alaska, you still have plenty of snow on the mountains. We got to the slope when it first opened and rented all of our gear to include helmets. We got on the first lift, went up the with no problem. Next was the intermediate slope, and it was a little more challenging – as expected. Once we finished that run, we went back up the stopped halfway down the run to catch a lift that would take us



we did see a sign prior to getting on the lift that said this slope was for experienced skiers, we felt we could do it, and my wife trusted my judgement. This was a mistake on her part.

Up we went and when we

got to the top, it was beautiful; you could see for miles over the Turnagain Arm. As we began our run down the slope, we quickly assessed that we were over our head and looked for a pass-through to get us over to an intermediate route. What I found was that unless you ski this mountain a lot, you really don't know where to go. I remember looking at the large map when we got off the lift, and there seemed to be easier runs on the outside versus going down the middle. We headed toward the outside, but there was rope blocking off the run so I was unsure where to go. Luckily a skier stopped near us, so I was able to ask if the run was open. He said yes, and I'm not sure we should have believed him, but we did. We started down the run, and what we found was that Alaska gets lots of snow, as our skis quickly went under the fresh powder. Now if you are not used to skiing on powder, you will find out quickly that it takes a little bit of strength to keep your ski tips up. If you do not do this, you will continue to fall. As you may have guessed, we continued to fall for the next half hour or so. At this point, my wife was getting extremely tired and frustrated. We ended up taking our skis off and walking down to the next trail. Although that may not sound difficult, it was. The snow was deep, the trails were not marked clearly, and we were worn out. We finally made it over to the intermediate trail, put our skis back on and finished the run without injury. For the rest of

the day, we had a great time on the intermediate slopes. We did go back to the top, but this time we rode the gondola up and ate lunch.

Looking back at our skiing adventure, I see that although my skiing ability had improved, it was not just me that I needed to be concerned with. My wife, although a good skier, was not ready for this level, and frankly I overestimated my ability too. Just because we had skied on and off for the past 35 years did not mean we were ready for the expert slopes. We got lucky in

many ways that day. We had the proper gear to go skiing; we had good skis, gloves, jackets and helmets. We had a plan in place and followed that plan; however, we overestimated our skill level when it came to skiing in general. I know at times we get caught up in the moment and think we can do almost anything, but we need to step back and take a better look – especially when we are bringing someone along for the adventure and they are counting on us to use good judgement. Stay safe!



#### 4 Quick Tips:

## **Meet COMACC's** Ready Now Fitness Initiative

BY TECH. SGT. NICK WILSON

Gen. Mike Holmes, the commander of Air Combat Command, recently expressed his intent to emphasize a "ready now" mentality among Airmen across the command.

To meet this intent, Holmes is encouraging Airmen to understand how physical fitness directly relates to agile squadrons and combat readiness.

The standard outlined in Air Force Instruction 36-2618. Enlisted Force Structure, applies to all Airmen. All service members are required to be physically ready to accomplish the mission and actively participate in the Air Force fitness program and always meet Air Force fitness standards by maintaining a year-round physical conditioning program that emphasizes total fitness, to include: aerobic conditioning, muscular fitness training and healthy eating.

Tony Arroyo, 633rd Force Support Squadron Fitness Center director, and Monica Richardson. 633rd Aerospace Medicine Squadron health promotion coordinator, provided ACC senior leaders with four tips to ensure

Airmen are able to pass their fitness assessments at any given moment.

Simply put:

#### 1. Move 2. Nourish 3. Refresh 4. Connect

#### 1. Move and train smart

There's no magic pill. If Airmen engage in rigorous physical activity five to six days a week, they will be far better off than being sedentary until the months, weeks, or days before their fitness assessments.

Arroyo advises that Airmen always be prepared to avoid lastminute prep, which is sometimes caused from being overweight.

"It's all about being consistent with your physical activity," Arroyo some of the monotony of physical said. "Starting to train for your PT test a little bit too late forces you to run on consecutive days, which increases your injury risk."

In addition to last-minute prep, Airmen who aren't able to manage their weight well can inadvertently add pressure on their joints and cause injuries such as shin splints and runner's

Airmen are encouraged to be specific with their training regimen when they are training for their timed 1.5-mile run.

"A lot of people don't realize that you don't have to run all the time to be physically fit and pass your PT test," Arroyo said. "But you should get more specific, at about three months prior to that assessment and start to sprinkle some of that running in."

Throughout the rest of the year, Airmen can do aerobic exercises they enjoy if they don't prefer to run. Arrovo said.

"There is so much variety out there," Arroyo said. "The best approach is to be a jack of all trades and be able to do a little bit of everything."

The diversity also takes away fitness and helps Airmen continue to see results, Arroyo said.

Arroyo also advised that Airmen practice using proper form when

strength training for the muscular components of the fitness assessment.

"Focus on getting the proper form for your exercise, and then gradually increase the resistance," Arroyo said. "When you do have good technique, the results will be better."

#### 2. Nourish your body, hydrate and eat to train

If Airmen nourish their bodies with whole, unprocessed foods instead of fast food, sodas, energy drinks, sugary juices and junk food, they will have more strength, energy and endurance to perform well in their fitness assessments.

"Dehydration is a very real thing," Richardson said. "Our bodies need water. If you're dehydrated before your fitness test and you go out for your run, we can get into a very serious emergency situation very quickly."

Richardson advises against Airmen participating in activities that can cause dehydration right before a PT test or during their physical training.

"All of your body's processes need water," Richardson said. "People restrict their water and calories for their abdominal circumference test and they don't realize how it impacts the other areas of their assessment."

Richardson recommends that Airmen avoid diets that cause extreme calorie restrictions.

"A lot of Airmen say, 'Oh I'm just not going to eat the whole day before my test," Richardson said. "You need to fill your body for what your about to do. Would you get in your car and fill your tank with only a quarter tank of gas for a long-distance drive? Why would you think you would ask your body to perform physically, at the highest level you need it to without adequate fuel?"

In addition to hydrating, Richardson said Airmen should put the proper nutrition in their bodies on the days, weeks and months before their fitness test.

#### 3. Refresh and recover

If Airmen allow their minds and bodies to take a break, they will not only perform better, but also feel better.

"Recovery is a big part of fitness," Arroyo said. "Some individuals rest too much and don't get enough activity throughout the week. Others overtrain a little bit."

Arroyo recommends that even the fittest Airmen add active recovery cycles and at least one full day of rest into each week of their personal fitness plans.

"Our active recovery concept means that you're not going as intense, or maybe you're backing off of the impact," Arroyo said. "Full-out rest is also extremely important."

#### 4. Connect

As Comprehensive Airman Fitness is a key component of Holmes' plan, the general emphasizes that Airmen take time to connect with their families and friends.

"It has four pillars: mental, physical, social and spiritual," Holmes said. "We try to work through and provide tools in each one of those areas."

> Demonstrating and supporting a healthy work-life balance helps build and support healthy families, Holmes said.

Stay tuned to https:// www.acc.af.mil for more information on this year's focus on fitness.

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The following series of events resulted in the most terrifying and horrific incident I have ever witnessed or been involved in. A few miles past the seemingly minor collision behind us, I see a vehicle in my rearview mirror closing distance between us at a high rate of speed. As the car gets closer, I recognize it's the black Cadillac with front-end damage. The caddy tailgates me after several erratic maneuvers and slamming on (740) its brakes. Before I could move over to let it pass, the car darted into the right lane to go around. It didn't race off like I had assumed, but instead, crept up beside my truck and started drifting into my lane. I averted a collision and slowed down to avoid the dangerous driver. I had my wife get the license Sewar plate and call it into Oklahoma Highway Patrol. Before she could reach someone on the phone, the caddy had resumed its alarming behavior, dancing in between other vehicles and lanes with reckless abandon. The nightmare unfolding had only given us a preview of what was to come.

> After several near misses with other travelers and running one car off the road, I knew the Cadillac had no intentions of stopping on its own accord. I instructed my wife to hang up and call 911. This car was operating at speeds between 75 and 85 mph on what looked to be a sinister mission with no target in sight. From the time we passed the parked caddy to this point, it had only been about 10 minutes and we'd covered almost 15 miles. The Cadillac had put a significant amount of distance between us, but we could still see it

wreaking havoc up ahead. About the time my wife reached a 911 operator and detailed the particulars to the representative, it happened. A Ford Expedition, reacting to being rear-ended by the caddy, swerved, lost control and tumbled across the center concrete median into oncoming interstate traffic. Smoke, debris and chaos consumed the area. My wife gave live updates to the operator as I pulled over to provide assistance.

I will never forget this day. I get weak in the knees at the sight of real blood, twisted limbs or out-of-place body parts, etc. Until this point, I had never had to apply my training in first aid or to make sure a scene of this magnitude was safe. Instincts do kick in, and skills learned seem almost automatic. Vehicles were still racing by, some slowed to navigate through the debris and look at the scene, but most kept going. Several vehicles were affected by the collision and aftermath. I realized so many things all at once. My heart was pounding and my senses were overloaded, but my focus was clear. Abilities I didn't know I had went into action, and my emotional stability tested.

My focus was the mangled SUV on its side. I ran across the interstate to assess the vehicle's occupants for survivors and injuries. I knew paramedics were on the way, but I was going to have to provide some level of first aid. You're never prepared for these circumstances, but the carnage was overwhelming. Being the first person on the scene was terrifying. The driver was in critical condition with severe head trauma. His head made contact with the pavement

during the tumbling. He was still strapped in the driver seat, unconscious. I applied a sweatshirt underneath his head to contain the bleeding, but there were other passengers screaming for help. Other citizens quickly arrived to assist, and thankfully, a registered nurse volunteered to take over so I could take care of the passengers. I and another Cushing (33) person pulled out the other family members. By this time, several helping hands were eager to assist.

Paramedics hadn't made it on scene, but we were able to get four out of the five members of the SUV into a safer area off the road. Other members and

citizens affected by the accident were roaming around, so clearing the road and directing traffic was next. People were tending to the minor injuries and shock of the SUV passengers, so it was easier to devote efforts to containing a safe scene. One dazed and confused woman with scrapes and bruises caught my eye. I explained to her that she needed to get out of the road and take a seat at her vehicle. I ushered her to her car, which happened to be a twisted up, black Cadillac. I couldn't believe this was the individual responsible for this carnage, and I was offering her assistance. An off-duty police officer approached me, and I

Quay

Avery

briefed him on what had taken place. The officer segregated the woman and kept watch over her. By this time, I could see and hear the ambulance in the distance. The scene was safe, and concerned citizens had stepped into roles guiding traffic, treating and caring for injuries, etc. I checked on the family after the medics arrived and gave my statement to the police.

Could this tragic event have been prevented? Possibly. If the erratic driver had been reported earlier, it might have saved a life. The Ford Expedition was a family of five. Three children and the mother survived; however, the father

died on the scene. I don't know if his life could have been saved, but ensuring the crash site was safe and removing the other passengers from the vehicle reduced the chance of further injury or loss of life. I am thankful for the training I received throughout the years, and I can attest to the fact that you never know when you might need to use it. I have a better appreciation for the first aid and CPR refresher classes we take now. The partnership between military discipline and repetitive training is really what gave me the clarity-in-chaos factor required to contribute to this situation. Liberty



# MEL SHOOT

#### BY TECH. SGT. ROBERT ADAMS

t was the time my stepbrother had finally left North Carolina to come and live with us for a year. I was 13, and he was 15. Just a year earlier, my father had retired from the Air Force and moved us out to a small 10-acre farm in eastern Oklahoma. In a little over one year's time, we had already populated this little farm

with four cattle, two horses, two goats, a pig, 10 rabbits, 15 chickens, three dogs and two cats, along with all the other indigenous creatures that plague rural areas. Being an Air Force brat, I was already used to being set free and running amuck with friends around base housing so this little farm wasn't much different in that aspect – aside from the animals.

There were three other kids my age who lived on our mile-long street, but most of the time they were not home for various reasons, so my brother's arrival was a huge deal for me. He was my new partner in crime; Billy the Kid meets Jesse James, and we raised nine kinds of hell fighting each other, pranking friends and family, and shooting everything with our BB guns. I don't know how many times we got in trouble for shooting things we weren't supposed to – barn sides, windows, the animals and even each other.

That Christmas, we were very surprised to find in our stockings a matching pair of adult-sized professional slingshots, complete with wrist braces and 200 ball bearings perfectly made for the leather pocket. Ohhhh the damage we could do with those things. And we did. We ran out of those bearings on the first day. So what's the next best thing? All those little rocks in the driveway. At some point while launching rocks in every direction and listening to the whirs and spats on

impact, I was hit on the top of my head from one I assume my brother launched straight up in the air. I just knew he had done it on purpose. I got so mad. I aimed one at him as he ran away laughing, which triggered my instinct like a cat on a mouse, and I let 'er rip. Now the one that hit me on the head hurt a little and left a little bump, but when that little rock hit the back of his head with a THWACK, I knew I had messed up. An emergency room visit, six stiches and the confiscation of everything that threw a projectile was the result. Only after a month of lectures on safety and proper use of these "toys" were we allowed to use them again – and only under supervision.

Do I believe if we had received proper training on using those slingshots – along with a little supervision that this "mishap" would have not occurred? Maybe. But we learned from it, and Dad started being more deliberate in teaching us the right way do things like using tools, fixing things, handling altercations and such.

In my Air Force career, I liken my parents and my brother and I to that of supervisors and their Airmen. I have seen supervisors – myself included – certify Airmen on tasks that either they were not ready to be certified on, or they lacked the integrity or responsibility required to perform the task. Although we as supervisors may be tempted to certify them because of a looming deadline or because we need more certified Airmen, we have to make sure they're ready. We have to ask our Airmen those questions that we think should be common sense. And when we ask those questions, we have to make sure they know and understand the answers. Some might nod and say "Yes sir" to gain approval or avoid the perception of being incompetent, so we need to be 100 percent sure that our Airmen are ready. This might lead to an unpopular call, but sometimes right isn't always popular.

Looking back, we could've caused a lot more harm with those slingshots, but luckily, one incident raised the red flag for Dad to start "certifying" us on our "tasks." In the Air Force, the stakes are higher, and they endanger many more lives. Bottom line, don't give your Airmen the tools, certifications and qualifications to hurt themselves – or others – without making sure they display the competence, character and core values to use them responsibly.



## READY TO

#### BY MASTER SGT. JOSEPH A. MORRIS JR.

ometimes things can go wrong even when you are doing everything right. All week long, I was excited about the group motorcycle ride we planned for our squadron. I would finally get to see Staff Sergeant G's Yamaha YZF R1 in action! I looked forward to witnessing 998 cubic centimeters of fuel-injected, liquid-cooled perfection on two wheels. While I was not disappointed in the awesomeness of his new bike, I almost ruined the group ride.

Before leaving my house, I completed a quick TCLOCS inspection on my motorcycle. TCLOCS stands for tires, controls, lights, oil, chassis and stand. As with any vehicle, it is important to inspect a motorcycle from time to time. When I ride frequently, I inspect my bike weekly. If it is parked for lengthy periods, I inspect it EVERY time I hop on it. The tire pressure was a bit low, so I filled up with my air compressor.

We met up at the local Navy Exchange, aka the mall, at Pearl Harbor at 9 a.m. We had a small but diverse group of bikes.

I was riding my Kawasaki Ninja 650R, and there was a Yamaha YZF R6, a Suzuki GSX-R 750, a Moto Guzzi V7 Racer and the Yamaha YZF R1 I mentioned earlier. The weather started out a perfect and breezy 75 degrees with no precipitation. We stopped by the gas station to fill up and hit the Hawaiian streets. We decided to head east to enjoy the Waikiki scenery. We stopped in a parking lot near the University of Honolulu to decide where to ride next and decided on Tantalus Lookout, which I had never done before. Little did I know, it was going to be an extremely twisty ride!

It started sprinkling a little as we approached Tantalus, which is a disaster waiting to happen when combined with moss. The road is within a forest, and with the tree coverage, I couldn't really tell just how hard it was raining, but the road was getting wet. There are approximately 20 tight turns on this road. I noticed cars and trucks entering our lane, so I instructed everyone on our Bluetooth group intercom to be careful on any turns they couldn't see around.

As I entered a really tight turn,

I slowed to approximately 8 mph. About halfway through the turn, the back tire hit a patch of moss. I felt the back end sliding

out from under me, so I dumped the bike and pushed myself as far away as possible so it wouldn't land on me, since my motorcycle weighs about 500 pounds. Everything then went to 60 frames per second in my head, and I began to see in slow motion. As I am flying through the air, I look over my shoulder, hoping the Suzuki GSX-R rider behind me doesn't go down. I was second to last in the group. He was not too far behind me and had already entered the turn, so he had to make a splitsecond decision. Amazingly, he pushed the left end of his handlebar off the ground, the bike popped upright and he was able to stop without incident -

other than the broken end on his clutch lever. As I landed on my shoulder and began to slide across the lane into oncoming traffic, I hoped no cars would approach and that I didn't fly off the side of the cliff. Luckily, I only ended up with minor bruises, with my ego probably taking the brunt of bruising. The worst part was that the accident occurred on the second to last tight turn, which I figured out after our brief adrenaline recovery break.

I replayed the event many times in my mind afterward. I was not speeding. I turned with caution. I inspected my bike beforehand. I paid attention to wet road conditions and

was aware of the moss on the road. I learned that sometimes things can wrong even when you are doing everything right. The accident was minor, but it could have been a lot worse had I been speeding, not wearing proper personal protective equipment, or a number of other things. The following month, we completed a group ride to Kualoa Regional Park to take photos in front of Chinaman's Hat, a popular view on the east coast in Hawaii. Everything went great and without incident. But whether we complete a ride without incident, or we run into a challenge along the way, I am truly thankful for my motorcycle wingmen.

