The Critical Days of Summer are here ... and they are full of Critical Choices!

Critical Choices

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Saving Superman and his Crew
Chief Achilles
Well Done!

Our 50th Anniversary Edition received an Honorable Mention in the 2011 Military Graphic Artist of the Year Competition. — Publication Category!


6 | What Was I Thinking? by Mr. Rodney Robinson, HQ ACC/SEG, Joint Base Langley-Eastus, Va.

10 | Saving Superman ... by Col. J. Alan Marshall, Ph.D., HQ ACC/SEF, Joint Base Langley-Eastus, Va.


18 | Critical Days of Summer ... by ACC Ground Safety, HQ ACC/SEG, Joint Base Langley-Eastus, Va.

20 | Monthly Awards

22 | Quarterly Awards

23 | Stats

Critical Days of Summer
May 25th Through September 4th

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COVER PHOTO BY PATRICK BURBINE

Have you ever heard of a person breaking a leg or losing their life while playing a game of chess? Let’s face it, some things in life are more dangerous than others, but we cannot stop living. I am as adventurous as the next guy. I have jumped out of planes, kayaked rivers, hiked a portion of the Appalachian Trail, been water skiing and the list goes on and on. But one thing is for sure... I always think about my family. Safety is all about choices, risk mitigation, and Service before Self.

Bad choices lead to sad situations! What makes a choice bad? When we fail to take into account the risk and the potential results of our decision before we execute a plan. I do not think Airmen who face vehicular homicide charges set out to end up in that situation. I think they never stop to think about the results of their decisions and choose to act in spite of what they have been taught. Many may even think that “those things” only happen to other people. Many overestimate their abilities to handle the risk. But ask anyone who has faced devastating circumstances and they will tell you they wish they had a do over.

A key to adventurous activity and everyday living is risk mitigation. Determining the acceptable level of risk that is worth a certain activity is not that hard, but it takes forethought. You know how excited you get when you get the chance to do something you love—for me it’s fishing. It’s about thinking of others before self.

There are many things I would love to try that are simply not worth the risk; things that I would get a rush from but would require a level of risk that I am not willing to accept because of my family. I would love to own and ride a motorcycle, but for me the risk is not worth the reward. I would rather give myself the best chance to be available for my family. Let’s face it … the chances of a life-changing injury or death increase dramatically on a motorcycle versus in a car or truck. Even if you are to be available for my family. Let’s face it … the chances of a life-changing injury or death increase dramatically on a motorcycle versus in a car or truck. Even if you are a safety-conscious person doing all the right things the level of risk is always there. That leads me to my main thought about safety; it is all about Service before Self. I choose to make the decisions that will provide me the best chance to be present for my family, my friends and my coworkers. You see, the decision to operate a motor vehicle without proper safety equipment or under the influence of a drug is a violation of the agreement I have made to my family, friends and coworkers. As a husband and father I made a promise to love and support my family. As an Airman I made a promise to never falter, fail or leave a comrade behind. Your family needs you and the Air Force needs you; so live out the core value of Service before Self as it relates to Safety.
Extreme sports are activities that individuals choose to participate in that generally have a high degree of danger. These sports can include things such as skydiving, bungee jumping, base jumping, cave diving, hang gliding, kite surfing, motocross, rock climbing, surfing, whitewater kayaking, windsurfing or any sport that is counter-cultural and involves an adrenaline rush and imminent danger!

Many people choose to enjoy extreme sports because of the adrenaline rush it gives them. In addition to the adrenaline rush some individuals simply need a challenge. Other individuals may want to break out of their every-day “safe” lives and experience something new and exciting. Participating in an extreme sport allows these individuals to experience feelings and emotions they do not normally experience. The rush of adrenaline, adventure, and excitement is what they are looking for to break out of the normal routine of their mundane existence!

Before venturing out to experience the rush and excitement of an extreme sport, it is important to be physically fit and healthy. All extreme sports require a lot of discipline—both physically and mentally. Attempting an extreme sport before you are physically or emotionally ready will put you and your partners at even greater risk. It’s not about risking your life. It is about knowing the risks involved and following safety guidelines. Those that enjoy extreme sports must take their safety and the safety of those with them seriously. Although there is an adrenaline rush and excitement experienced during these sports, it is even more enjoyable when following specific guidelines to enjoy the sport without taking unnecessary life risks.

We all have friends, family and co-workers who are counting on us to make the right choice ... and to make it through the Summer safely. As we enter the Critical Days of Summer, please remember: your safety is a personal choice.

Critical Days, Critical Choices.
I remember when I (then Senior Master Sgt. Robinson) received my orders for Hawaii. I thought, “This is going to be a great assignment!” Since I’m an avid sportsman, what more could I want? I now could play softball, golf and other outdoor sports year-round. I arrived in May and quickly got involved in the sports scene; but as summer came to a close, so did many of the sports activities I was involved in. Since I like to stay active, I was looking for something to do, when out of the blue I heard two chiefs in my office talking about the upcoming Honolulu Marathon. Since I’m not a runner, I should have just kept my head in my books, kept my mouth shut and pressed on, but that wouldn’t be me. No, I eagerly joined in the conversation and commented that anyone should be able to run a few miles.

My story ends with me missing two days of work because I was unable to walk. My clothes were stuck to my body and my T-shirt was rubbing on parts that it shouldn’t be and felt like sandpaper each time I moved. If you read on, you will see how poor planning on my part and my failure to take other, more experienced people’s advice led to my predicament.

Boy was that a HUGE mistake!
parts of my body that it shouldn’t be. The shorts I was wearing also were not designed for running and were causing me substantial problems in key areas, if you get my drift. My shoes, although they were running shoes, were not nearly as comfortable as I had remembered.

During the race, I did see numerous runners going by tables along the course and putting their hands in something. I later found out this was Vaseline, which could have solved many of my problems.

After 13 miles I could run no more; so I began to walk. Shortly after I stopped running, my coworkers caught up to me. They were very encouraging and wanted me to walk with them. However, by this time my entire body was in pain. My shirt and shorts were sticking to all major parts of my body, my feet were sore and my hands were swelling. My coworkers ended up walking ahead, and I struggled to keep going. After several hours, and many rest breaks, it was almost over.

As I neared the finish line, I remember one of the medical folks asking me if I was okay. Although I told him I was “good to go,” my body was telling me something entirely different. Well, when all was said and done, I had finally crossed the finish line some 7 hours, 32 minutes, and 37 seconds after I started. My body was totally exhausted. If you remember how I began this story, I was supposed to go to Hooters for wings, but, as you can imagine, that never occurred.

My counterparts in the office were going to walk the marathon, but there was no way I was going to walk; in fact, I had bigger plans. I found another coworker just as crazy as me that would be willing to run the marathon as my partner. Although we were not out of shape, we were certainly not in shape to run a marathon—26.2 miles. Well, since the marathon was in December, we had five whole months to prepare. You would think I would have started running a little to get ready, but I made no such preparation. The two chiefs in the office invited me several times to train with them, but since they were “just walking,” I felt that it would be a waste of my time. So I kept on training the way I had been by playing intramural flag football and racquetball at lunch.

The chiefs kept asking me and my coworker what we were doing to prepare and we would reply, “Don’t worry about us.” My wife was even on me to prepare for this event, but I didn’t let that influence me either. The marathon was now only a day away, and I was ready ... or so I thought. My coworker was on temporary duty and was due in later that evening. We would have to get up around 3 a.m. so we could get a good parking spot by Hooters and walk to the starting line. Yeah, that’s right. We parked the car by Hooters because we thought, after the race we would meet for wings and a drink. After we parked the car, we walked to the starting line a few miles away. I guess I should have figured something was wrong when one of the racers at the starting line approached me and asked if I was running in my T-shirt. I didn’t think anything about it and just shrugged him off.

I must admit I felt a little out of place. Most runners were stretching, running in place, and putting Vaseline on their bodies—for what? I was just standing near the front of the starting area ready for the big event to begin.

Finally, the fireworks were in the sky and off we went. The race was packed with thousands of runners. The first 10 miles took what seemed to be days, although I did manage to pass a few of the walkers. At the 10-mile point, my coworker started having foot problems and had to stop. I pressed on, even though I already was questioning myself on what I was trying to accomplish. By this time, I was covered in sweat, and my T-shirt was rubbing on my body. At the 10-mile point, my coworker started having foot problems and had to stop. I pressed on, even though I already was questioning myself on what I was trying to accomplish. By this time, I was covered in sweat, and my T-shirt was rubbing on
U.S. Air Force Capt. Superman is number one in everything he does. First in his class at the Academy, he started the trend of being number one early in his career. His performance as flight lead and as an instructor pilot is legendary around the flight line. Capt. Superman always scores 100 percent on his physical fitness test, and he is working on his master’s degree in his spare time. He is a loyal husband and a father of two little ones who think he is indeed Superman. He is also the go-to-man in the squadron, holding and excelling at a dozen additional duties above and beyond his flying duties. The squadron commander frequently ladles special projects on him because every project that he gets, he knocks out of the park, each one a first-class performance. Who else could the commander trust with such important projects? Capt. Superman attracts other star performers making every team that he is on the best that it can be. Take for example his crew chief, Tech. Sgt. Achilles. Sgt. Achilles specifically requested to maintain Superman’s aircraft. Sgt. Achilles graduated number one from the Non-Commissioned Officer Academy. He too max’s out his physical fitness test and holds several additional duties in the squadron. He serves as a coach for his two sons’ soccer team and volunteers at the local Red Cross. It seems like there is nothing the sergeant can’t do well. He’s an adrenaline junky and loves extreme sports such as skydiving and windsurfing. Everybody wants to be like him and many of the young Airmen in the squadron look up to Achilles, but few are as seemingly bullet proof as the popular crew chief. The only things about Capt. Superman and Sgt. Achilles that worries their closest friends are that their stories have been told before.
In the case of Superman, the super hero had one weakness that surfaced in the presence of Kryptonite, a mythical radioactive mineral from his home planet, Krypton. In the presence of Kryptonite, Superman lost his superhuman abilities and began to die. In the case of Achilles, the ancient superhero had one weakness located in his heel. Achilles was universally known as the most powerful and skilled warrior in all of Greece or even the known world. Supposedly, the mother of Achilles had attempted to make him immortal by dipping him in the sacred river, Styx. Only the heel that was held by his mother went un-dipped, and was thus unprotected. Eventually a stray arrow hit Achilles in the heel during a battle and he died. In both of these famous stories, the two super humans Superman and Achilles, were invincible except for one life threatening weakness. Both have similar weaknesses that make them all too human and even incapable of admitting failure. In the case of Superman, his fatal weakness is a result of his extraordinary talent and his inability to say no to ever increasing demands on his time. In the case of Achilles, his flaw is his Type A personality that causes him to be overly self critical and almost incapable of admitting failure. Although surprising to friends, Type A personalities sometimes harbor deep insecurity and suffer inadequate self-esteem.

Although seemingly superhuman, both Superman and Achilles are in danger and need a friend or supervisor to intervene and save them. Within a few days, Superman will awake several times during the night to tend to a sick child. The next day, he will go into the squadron early to finish a special project for the squadron commander. After work, his wife will call him into the bar and a soft drink while answering a few e-mails at his desk. In the van ride out to his jet, he will be seen making a cell phone call to his wife to give her guidance on what needs to be fixed on the car at the dealership so that they can drive to see grandma the next weekend. Before climbing into the jet, he will realize that he left his water bottle on his desk but will decide to press on without it since he just downed a coke. During the flight, Superman completes his planned mission but adds an extra engagement because he is not happy with his performance on the last engagement. During the additional engagement, Superman will perform an inadequate anti-G straining technique which will lose consciousness. His aircraft will hit the ground before he regains consciousness.

Over the next few weeks, Sgt. Achilles will become despondent over the loss of Capt. Superman.

He will feel that he might have failed to give the captain a good jet and somehow this caused the normally flawless pilot to die. None of this will be true. He becomes depressed and starts drinking more. He stops exercising and shows little interest in extreme sports. He will try to give his favorite hunting knife away to one of his best friends, but the friend will decline without telling anyone. One morning, the usually punctual Achilles will fail to show for work but coworkers will assume that their supervisor had approved leave for him. After work, his wife will call the squadron to ask when he will be home. After a frantic search on base, a friend will find his car parked in a local parking lot with him inside. Achilles will be deceased with a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. How can someone save Superman and his Crew Chief Achilles? Both of them might fit what is known as the “superman model” of affiliation. In the superman model, leaders and peers may “evaluate [people] and support those who appear to be most likely to exceed their generalized expectations of human nature”. This may be related to the “halo effect” where physical attractiveness leads people to assume that the observed person is similarly above average in other characteristics. However, the superman model is based more on demonstrated performance that implies the observed person is somehow more resilient and less vulnerable in all aspects of physical, mental, spiritual and social qualities. For many people, this expectation by superiors and peers may cause intense pressure on the individual to excel in all aspects of life even when the additional effort may cause excessive stress, decreased performance and less resilience. In the case of Superman, had the squadron commander seen the signs of physical exhaustion, maybe that special project could have been given to someone else. Had a wingman noticed that Superman seemed preoccupied before the flight, maybe they could have called “knock-it-off” before that extra engagement. In the case of Sgt. Achilles, if a supervisor had known that he was blaming himself for the loss of Superman, maybe they could have arranged for counseling. If a friend had recognized some of the signals of suicide (depression, loss of interest in hobbies, increased drinking, attempting to give away keepsakes), they might have escorted him to a medical professional who could have helped save his life.

With all this said, most of us in the Air Force know a Superman or an Achilles. They are hands down the most powerful and skilled airmen in the military. They are the best pilots in the military and setting the standard for all aircrew in the service. However, as much as the Air Force and their unit need and support those who appear to be most likely to exceed their generalized expectations of human nature, that same pressure can sometimes cause problems. It is likely that over the last few weeks, Superman and Achilles in the Air Force are over achievers, and all of us are only human. Every day, the Air Force loses Airmen to preventable mishaps and self defeating behavior such as suicide. Leaders and supervisors should recognize this and avoid overloading star performers just because they are so good at what they do. Friends and relatives should also recognize that no matter how “together” we think another person is, they are still susceptible to self defeating behavior and we should always be on the lookout for signs of depression and personality changes in others. It turns out that saving Superman and Achilles in the Air Force is the responsibility of every Airmen and every supervisor. In the end, each of us is a Superman or an Achilles and we all have human weaknesses that can bring us down.

Even Superman needs a good Wingman!


The lead photo for this article was staged for illustration purposes only. We realize it is not an authorized uniform combination. —Ed.
The Day My Dad Was Brought Back to Life

BY MASTER SGT. SEAN M. ROUILLIER

I was 15 years old when my mom called me inside the house and frantically shouted that dad was in a severe motorcycle accident. We were all in shock driving to the hospital as everything seemed to happen in slow motion. As my mom, two younger brothers (Christian 13 and Ryan 10) and I arrived at North Florida Regional Trauma Center in Gainesville, Fla., we couldn’t believe this was happening to us. Shortly after arriving at the hospital one of the doctors came out of the operating room, he looked exhausted and explained to us that there’s a chance my dad won’t survive his injuries, and they’re doing the best they can to keep him alive. We later found out that he was pronounced dead at the accident scene but because of the great work of the on-scene emergency medical team personnel, and a huge miracle, they were able to resuscitate him.

After several hours of continuous surgery, he was stable yet in a deep coma, and had severe swelling of the brain. We weren’t allowed to see my dad for three days due to the sterile environment of the Intensive Care Unit and his comatose condition. On the third day, we were only allowed to view him through a glass window. I’ll never forget seeing my dad just lying there crippled, helpless and still in a deep coma. The four of us cried, as we stared at our lifeless father through the glass of the ICU. We saw that his mouth was wired shut; he had staples in his head, and all down his chest and stomach; and his wrists, legs and knees were brutally damaged. After about three months, and a lot of praying, my dad opened his eyes, but could not speak. As his eyes strained to focus, he barely remembered who we were. After waking from his three-month coma, and several more weeks of recovery, he was finally well enough to come home. Confined to a wheelchair for several more weeks, he required endless sessions of speech and physical therapy. My dad had to relearn how to think, speak, walk, function and interact again. This process took many years, and was extremely frustrating for all of us, especially him.
Around the house, we avoided talking about his motorcycle accident. But one day I asked my dad if he remembered anything, and to our surprise, he remembered many of the grueling details, up until the point of impact. Here’s what he had to say about his near fatal experience.

“I had the right of way as I was traveling southbound at 50 mph towards Crystal River, Fla., on Route 19, (a four-lane highway; two north and two south with a 10-foot median in between). It was about 3:30 p.m. in the afternoon on a beautiful warm sunny day. My motorcycle was a 1981 Honda Gold Wing, which I rode quite often as my primary vehicle. As I approached the entrance to the Florida Nuclear Power Plant Co., which usually changed shifts between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. each day, I noticed a police officer (there to direct traffic) had a car pulled over and was talking to the driver. As I was approaching the intersection at 50 mph, they stopped talking, and the officer waved the driver to proceed directly in my path without looking in either direction. When the 1978 four-door Buick got from beyond view of the police car, I immediately slammed into the left side of the rear door, turning the car completely around. I had no time to apply my brakes, and was propelled forward into the handlebars as my face smashed the roof line of the car, pushing it in nine inches with my jaw. The handlebars of my motorcycle turned sideways and ripped open my stomach, destroying my spleen and part of my liver.

I have no recollection of my stay at North Florida Regional Trauma Center as I was in a coma for the first three months following the accident. My first recollection of my hospital stay was when my father was pushing my wheelchair to his car after I was discharged, and seeing my three boys again.

I had been a motorcycle enthusiast ever since I was 18 years old in the Air Force, and had owned several since then. I rode from Memphis, Tenn., to my home in New Hampshire at least twice, as well as riding from Memphis to Nova Scotia, Canada. I rode for about 26 years without so much as an incident. I was a very safe motorcycle rider for all of those years and absolutely loved riding. I would probably still be riding today, but due to my injuries from that one incident, my riding days were terminated. I incurred a closed-head injury which did substantial brain damage to the left side of my frontal lobe, which controls the right side of the body. My sense of balance was greatly affected as well. Although I am still alive almost 28 years later, I have experienced two total knee replacement surgeries; I have two each “Hebert” pins in my right hand about one and a half inches in length; I’ve had three Transient Ischemic Attacks (mini strokes); and shoulder rotator cuff replacement surgery; all of which were attributed to this single motorcycle crash. At the time of the accident, I was wearing a top-notch “Bell Helmet,” a thick leather vest and Jacket, leather gloves and substantial high-grade leather boots.

Motorcycle accidents, are not always the fault of the rider, who typically rides safely due to their vulnerability on the open road, or even the rider who darts in and out of traffic, speeds, and does crazy maneuvers. It’s more often the fault of a vehicle driver who “doesn’t see” the motorcycle, and is not aware of the riders lack of maneuverability.

The biggest burden of my accident (although the hospital and doctor bills were astounding) was the pain and suffering my loved ones had to face, especially my three boys. I still have and cherish a homemade card that my boys gave me while I was in the hospital, telling me how much they missed me and wanted me back home.

These days, many vehicle drivers are texting and talking on cell phones while driving. Just imagine how often a driver takes his or her eyes off the road at any given moment, and that’s all it takes—a moment!”
During the same period last year there were three Class A fatal mishaps—a 50 percent increase over the previous year. In both years there was one motor vehicle fatality, and the remainder were sports and recreation fatalities. One fatality involved an Airman who had recently (one week earlier) purchased a motorcycle and had not received the required training. As he was attempting to make a right-hand turn at an intersection, he used too much speed and crossed over into the oncoming lane and collided with a truck. Take aways: Inexperience, speed, and lack of training ... It was personal!

There was a drowning mishap involving a Chief Master Sgt. who was kayaking with his family when his son suddenly went over a dam and got caught in the hydraulic boil. The chief jumped in to help him but was also pulled under in the boil. Both individuals drowned. Take away: Know where you’re traveling, be aware of hazards and plan accordingly. It is personal!

In the last fatality, an Airman who was a passenger in a four-person ATV was tragically killed. The operator rolled the vehicle at 25 mph while making a right turn. The roll bar struck the Airman in the head. Take away: speed, vehicle handling characteristics and personal protective equipment (helmets, seatbelts) ... It gets very personal!

The 2012 Critical Days of Summer runs from May 25th through September 4th.
Aircrew Safety

MAJ. JOSHUA B. SCHORE AND CAPT. RICHARD L. DAVIS, 455 EOG, 455 AEW, BAGRAM AF, AFGHANISTAN. Five and a half hours into the night combat sortie, Maj. Schore and Capt. Davis experienced a loud compressor stall which resulted in an in-flight fire, a stuck closed nozzle--post flight analysis found a sheared engine gear box that sent metal through the engine. Their flawless and expeditious emergency and procedural actions, as well as sound airmanship and judgment, ensured the safe recovery of two $56 million combat assets during combat to a strange field in IJC. (Feb 12)

1ST LT. GEORGE A. ARBUCKLE AND LT. COL. LANCE A. HOBSON, 333 FS, 4 FW, SEYMOUR JOHNSON AFB NC. Lt. Arbuckle and Col. Hobson were flying single ship during a basic course LASDT sortie on VR-87. While flying the LL the crew initially received a left inlet failure caution. Lt. Arbuckle quickly climbed to 1,000 feet AGL, IAW procedures, then continued climbing amongst scattered clouds to RAA. The crew executed the approach end arrestment checklist and successfully engaged the cable, safely recovering a $64M combat asset. Maintenance discovered a wire bundle with 40 burnt wires and 14 popped circuit breakers as the cause of the complex system failures. (Mar 12)

Crew Chief Safety

STAFF SGT. JASON WILSON, 28 AMXS, 28 BW, ELLSWORTH AFB SD. While waiting to recover a B-1B aircraft, Sgt. Wilson observed the #4 brake and tire assembly become engulfed in flames directly beneath the main fuel tank. He instructed the aircrew to shut down the engines and emergency egress the aircraft while directing his ground crew to position the fire extinguisher and fight the fire. Sgt. Wilson’s quick, decisive reaction prevented the loss of a $283M combat asset and potentially saved the lives of four crew members. (Mar 12)

Flight Line Safety

STAFF SGT. CHARLES A. SILVIA, 76 ERS, 451 AEW, BASTION AF, AFGHANISTAN. While performing ground operations during recovery of an HC-130J. Sglt. Silvia noticed a fire starting on the number three propeller after the aircrew began their engine shutdown. He removed all external power from the aircraft and directed the crew to evacuate the aircraft. He posted two fire guards while coordinating the evacuation. His actions saved a combat aircraft worth $77M, the lives of 15 personnel on board and prevented injury to the eight maintainers within 20 feet of the emergency. (Feb 12)

CAPT. ANDREW G. TOWNSEND, 99 ERS, 380 AEW, AL DHAFRA, UAE. Capt. Townsend noticed several unmarked signs on multiple taxiways that presented potential hazards to the U-2’s wide and low wingspan. The taxiway signs in question were black and white designs, making them impossible to see at night until it was too late for the taxing pilot to change direction and avoid the sign. His recognition of a safety hazard, formulation of a solution and first-hand efforts in executing the fix have increased safety not only for the U-2, but for more than eight other U.S. and allied nation aircraft assigned. (Mar 12)

Weapons Safety

TECH. SGT. JARED M. HANN, 355 CMS, 355 FW, DAVIS-MONTANAN AFB AZ. During an acceptance inspection Sgt. Hann discovered defective flight controls on four M-99 canopy jettison initiators prior to issue from the Davis-Monthan AFB M-99 stockpile Stockpile Section. After this critical discovery, his unique expertise led to the identification of 30 more initiators with severely damaged threats. The defective initiators were immediately segregated from service and information routed to the item manager. His exemplary performance and meticulous safety discipline prevented the possible inadvertent canopy jettison during flight and alleviated the latent danger to air and ground crew members. (Dec 12)

Ground Safety

MASTER SGT. STACY A. RODRIGUEZ, 332 EFSS, 332 AEW, AHMED AL JABR AB, KUWAIT. Sgt. Rodriguez trained six flight safety representatives on safety regulations and requirements. She also led the development of a standardized squadron safety outline that provided detailed expectations for managing over 100 facilities and established an enduring safety culture within the squadron. Her proactive and innovative approach to safety reinforced mishap prevention efforts and stressed the importance of risk management decision making to protect our greatest Air Force assets. (Feb 12)

CAPT. CHRISTOPHER J. FRANKS, 77 FS, 20 FW, SHAW AFB SC. As number 3 of 4 aircraft executing a tactical training mission, Capt. Franks received an ENG LUBE LOW PFL. His position, over water and 36 NM from the coast, coupled with unfavorable weather conditions at all nearby divert locations led to an extremely complex and serious situation. He located the nearest divert airfield at Myrtle Beach, swiftly attained a 1:1 glide ratio, and attempted to retrieve local weather data which was temporarily unavailable. Impeccable systems knowledge, superior flying skills and high situational awareness culminated in the recovery of a heavyweight aircraft in extremely unfavorable conditions saving a $25M CAF asset. (Feb 12)

CAPT. BRADFORD BALAZS, 64 AGRS, 57 WG, NELLUS AFB, NV. Capt. Balazs took on one of the most critical EPs in an F-15 and reduced it to a side note at a wing stand-up. Through his exceptional airmanship he was able to land an F-16 with a B system hydraulic failure at a divert base during the multi-national Red Flag 12-2. Capt. Balazs’ B system began to leak completely out; he quickly and deftly recognized his changing situation and was able to adapt to the dynamic situation and reapply the checklist to his evolving EP. Due to his expedient actions, perfect checklist memory and his flawless execution, he was able to save valuable time which preventing the loss of a $25M asset and his own life. (Mar 12)

Unit Safety

455TH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE SUPPORT SQUADRAN, 455 AEW, BAGRAM AF, AFGHANISTAN. To ensure the safety of lodging residents during IDF attacks, 15 T-Walls were planned and erected around the RLB’s and six new bunker units were placed. The 455 EFSS obtained and placed 500+ traction strips on the metal stairs of every RLB, which prevented slips during wet and icy weather. The unit managed the ordering and delivery of 92 dump trucks of gravel to ensure no standing water along walkways, increasing the safety of Airmen during wet/winter ops. (Feb 12)

809TH EXPEDITIONARY RED HORSE SQUADRAN, 451 AEW, KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN. The RED Horse Sq европе went into full swing conducting AF’s largest ATO retrograde to date. Their goal--retrograde RH/AFCENT assets with zero mishaps! Across the ATO, we decommissioned/removed three industrial sites. At Camp Dewar, a three-story/$2M+ concrete batch plant was disassembled/cleaned/packed/trucked 120 miles across rugged/hostile terrain. At Kandahar, the ground cargo team orchestrated a heavy equipment mission. Mission complete with zero mishaps! (Mar 12)
QUARTERLY AWARDS

Flight Safety

CAPT. JASON A. SHEMCHUK, 75 FS, 23 WG, MOODY AFB NV. Capt. Shemchuk’s aviation skill and adroit attention to detail led to successful treatment of rare A/C anomalies and safety situations this past quarter. During the winter season, he was credited with having saved the life of a civilian, who was attempting to cross an active runway. Capt. Shemchuk’s action resulted in the civilian being transported to a hospital for treatment. His quick decision-making and thoughtful actions ensured the safety of both the civilian and the aircraft, displaying his exceptional aviation skills.

Weapons Safety

MASTER SGTS. JASON C. HARRE, 57 WG, NELLIS AFB NV. Sgts. Harre exhibited superior expertise in every facet of explosive safety. His adroit skills were indispensable while managing the aftermath of 25 collapsed sunshades at the live loading ramp. Under his guidance, the team successfully addressed the situation, ensuring the safety of personnel and equipment. His meticulous attention to detail and his ability to lead by example set a high standard for others to follow.

Flight Notes

Since the last edition of The Combat Edge, ACC has experienced several Class E mishaps. Three of those mishaps (two MQ-1s and one Aeronautical Systems) were non-rate-producing. The single rate-producing mishap was an F-15E which involved a fatality. All of the above mishaps are currently under investigation. Human Factors (aircrew errors) remain the common theme in ACC’s Class E Aviation mishaps.

Ground Notes

ACC had a troubling first half of FY12. So far this year, we have experienced four PMV4 and three PMV2 mishaps which have taken the lives of nine of our Airmen and left another permanently totally disabled. In a 30-day period, we experienced three Class A motorcycle mishaps, and this was before the real motorcycle season has begun. Now is the time for units to provide their motorcycle riders with annual motorcycle briefings and the mentors should be helping full swing to guide our newer riders to a successful experience in learning to operate their vehicles in a safe manner. This is also the time to visit our forums or partners to be on the lookout for their two-wheeled partners who are sharing the road with them. To emphasize just how easy it is to not see a smaller vehicle, please visit www.msf-usa.org/motion.html to see an experiment that proves how motion-induced blindness works.

Vector Notes

As of March 31, 2012

| Region | Total ACFA | Total CC | Total ACC
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Legend

- Class A - 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 $0 and $500,000

(Mishap Description Effective October 1, 2006)

** Non-rate Producing  * Fatality

= Fatal  = Fatal due to misconduct

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Weapons Notes

Over the past two months, ACC experienced 3 Class E mishaps with equipment failure as the contributing factor. The lack of mishaps involves technical data usage this period is a positive trend. However, let’s be mindful of the impact of equipment failure and the possibility of personnel injury. With summer fast approaching, work conditions changing, and training new personnel, there will continue to be daily challenges. With combined efforts from everyone, we can mitigate most mishaps that occur in ACC. We are professionals, continue to strive for excellence when performing explosive operations. Thanks for your contributions to the ACC community!
Action movie characters might survive jumping into water from great heights, but don’t let that fool you into thinking that means it’s safe.
Critical Days of Summer: May 25th through September 4th

Over the Edge

3 | Don’t Be That Guy

4 | Cliff Jumping
   by Mark W. Holstein,
   7 BW, Dyess Air Force Base, Texas

8 | Humpty Dump-t
   by Jason Decker,
   Current location unknown

Reason #1776 Not to Be That Guy:

Having a Blast

Visit www.thatguy.com
I have always been an adventurous person. I was the kid in school with the broken arm, stitches and bruises. In high school, this side of my life did not quit. When I was 16, our church youth group went to the Colorado River to water ski, swim and have a great time. Where we camped, there were several high cliffs that were next to the river. The cliffs ranged from 45 to 90 feet. It was a common practice for us to jump off of these cliffs into the warm river water. Moreover, it was a test of manhood and peer pressure was imminent. After this experience, I never lost the thrill of jumping off of high places into water. It did not matter if it was a bridge or a cliff ... if I thought the water was deep enough, I would jump off.
Action movie characters might survive jumping into water from great heights, but shooting these scenes requires special effects and stunt professionals. In real life, these sorts of jumps are dangerous. The obvious risk of jumping into water is that you’ll hit an underwater object or the water bed, leading to an injury or even death. But even if you calculate your jump well to avoid underwater hazards, you still face risks.

Some people think that landing feet first will protect them, but at 25 mph—the speed you’re traveling when you hit the water after jumping from a height of just 20 feet—you can experience spinal compression, fractures and concussions. If you don’t manage to land feet first, the impact with the water can kill you. If you jump from just 10 feet, your body will reach 17 mph by the time you contact the water. Your risk of injury depends on your body positioning, which can be hard to adjust when you’re in free fall.

This begs the question … what is deep enough and is cliff jumping an okay practice? However, I failed to ask myself these important questions. Consequently, I carried this thrill activity into my adult life. As an Airman, I returned to those same cliffs when I was on leave at my first duty assignment. And yes, I jumped off the highest ones several times without checking the depthness of the water. This was stupid. I never got hurt, but I could have been seriously injured or killed. Likewise, I never informed my immediate supervisor of my risky behavior. I had the “I’m young and invincible attitude.”

My second duty assignment was Aviano Air Base, Italy. This base is at the foot of the Dolomite Alps. Additionally, there are hundreds of nearby mountain lakes. The lakes are beautiful with pristine aqua-blue water. Furthermore, there are deep ravines with crisp glacier water continually running through them. Upon discovery of these, my mind went directly to cliff jumping.

There was never a great time to get into this water … it was always cold. However, summertime seemed to be the best time. One warm afternoon, a few friends and I got into my car and headed for the Alps. Earlier that year, I had spotted a good possible location for some excellent cliff jumping. I estimated the cliffs to be 40 to 75 feet in height. Using a scientific wild ass guess (SWAG), I made the assumption that the water was deep enough. Without hesitation, we commenced the cliff jumping … not thinking of the shock our bodies were about to receive. The lake run-off water was around 40 degrees and our bodies hit it at terminal velocity … at least it seemed like terminal velocity. We were blessed. The water was deep enough, but extremely cold. Furthermore, we could not get out of that water fast enough. This is another aspect that we did not think through. How are we going to get out?

There were no paths to climb out. These cliffs were almost vertical. We did have the forethought to wear shoes, but that was it. After about 30 minutes, we found our way up the cliffs and back to our car. However, the Italian Carabinieri (the military police) were waiting for us at the car. They were not pleased with us for jumping off of their cliffs and they let us know it. They did not arrest us, but they easily could have.

We were so blessed not to be hurt. I never told my boss. I never gave it a second thought … until now. Cliff jumping is incredibly unsafe, and I was unsafe in my actions.

Never again … not this guy.
Today’s equivalent of the famous, clumsy nursery rhyme egg is the intrepid—but perilous—summer weekend “bonehead” who runs about taking reckless risks with his safety and the safety of those around him. Let’s call him Humpty Dumb-T.

Dumb-T is a well-meaning and generally good fellow, but he just doesn’t think. He doesn’t think about the risk and he doesn’t think about the consequences. What he does think about is, “Hey that happens to the other guy, not me.” He’s wrong, and could even be “dead” wrong! Life is dangerous and there are no guarantees, but there is no benefit to being stupid about it. There are many ways to cut down on the risks we are faced with everyday. Here are a few simple risk control measures that every Air Force member should implement in their life on a routine basis.

The Buddy System. Whether you’re swimming, hiking, or anything else for that matter, use the buddy system. It’s not smart to go swimming alone; always have someone else with you. When it comes to hiking, there is many a story out there where a hiker stepped out on his own—all by his lonesome—and got into big trouble. Just remember hikers nearly always encounter the most trouble when they’re separated and alone from others.

Yard Work. When doing yard work, wear the proper clothing and safety equipment. Open-toed sandals just aren’t good protection for those little piggies against a lawn mower blade moving at a few thousand revolutions per minute. Also, rocks, twigs, and miscellanea coming at near-light speed off those blades or the spinning twine of a weed-eater usually wing against unprotected shins and eyeballs (Ouch!).

Bicycle Helmets. Bicycle riding requires a helmet; that’s the rule. If simply following the rules doesn’t agree with you or if you ride in an area where it isn’t a rule, wear one anyway. Those few pounds of gray matter protected by a precariously thin shield of calcium, are worth far more than it will cost you in comfort.

Seat Belts. They do save lives! When you’re driving, wear a seat belt—simple as that! Dumb-T thinks it’s just a short trip to the market, so why bother. However, statistics show that most accidents happen within five miles of home; and, no… it doesn’t help to refer to your “home of record” just to avoid accidents.

Don’t Drink and Drive. Finally, everyone should know by now that alcohol doesn’t mix well with anything requiring coordination. Drinking and driving—as well as drinking and boating—usually equals poor judgment and can only lead to trouble. Get a hold of this—according to the U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, “alcohol-related crashes account for over 40 percent of total traffic fatalities.” So, if you drink alcohol while out at an activity, assign a designated driver to get you—as well as anyone else—home safely.

Safety is simple! Safety is smart! Safety is personal! It’s not complicated. Look at it this way—an extra moment or two of time and thought could save all the hospitals’ nurses and all the hospitals’ doctors from having to put Humpty Dumb-T back together again.

Above article was printed in a previous issue of The Combat Edge, written by then 1st Lt. Jason Decker. —Ed.