In his July 2012 article, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, James Roy delivered a brilliant and timely reminder to all Airmen to not let today’s technologies replace real live human relationships. Our Tweets, Skypes, and Facebook “friendships” are increasingly supplanting actual face-to-face interactions to the detriment of our human connections.

As a Safety Warrior, I easily see a correlation between Chief Roy’s concerns and ACC mishap prevention.

When General Mike Hostage, ACC Commander, issued his FY12 Safety Focus for the command last fall, he built upon our ongoing foundation of Leadership and Commander Involvement by reinforcing that foundation through DISCIPLINE and PROFESSIONALISM. Commanders and supervisors are doing what they can to execute safety programs and training, giving ACC Airmen all available tools to minimize risk, but your leaders can’t be everywhere all the time. Disciplined and profession Airmen ensure mishap prevention efforts carry on even when direct supervision isn’t around.

So how does this relate to Chief Roy’s message? Easy. “Leadership by Blackberry” doesn’t amount to eyes-on Leadership and Commander Involvement. Posting a tweet is one way to employ peer-to-peer accountability, but it’s hardly as effective as the in-person Airman-to-Airman approach. Being good Wingmen means grabbing your fellow Airman’s arm and leading them out of any dangerous situation, even if they’ll be insulted by it (God forbid).

Commanders and Supervisors, look your Airmen in the eye. Airmen, shut off those iPhones and get out of the dorm with your Wingmen. Learn how to tell each other, “Dude, that’s not smart. Give me the keys.” Strengthen those relationships, open those lines of communication, THEN use technology to enhance the power of human interaction. Safety Teams, put your hands on the hazards and fix them … not with a mouse click, but with fingerprints and sweat.

Solid wing Safety programs require aggressive boots-on-the-ground physical look-sees in the work centers, on the flight line, at the front gate and in the clubs and dorms. A Safety professional who thinks we can monitor and manage the health and status of his unit’s safety program through digital portals, like the Air Force Safety Automated System (AFSAS), is a professional who thinks we can monitor and manage the health and status of his unit’s safety program through digital portals, like the Air Force Safety Automated System (AFSAS), has committed himself to a REACTIVE safety approach. Now don’t get me wrong; AFSAS has come a long way since its first version in 2007, but it’s still merely a soda straw. You’ve got to get out there, see and talk to the people, get your boots dirty.

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People make the difference in other peoples’ lives, not technology. iPhone apps are like honey badgers. They’re cool, but they don’t care. Airmen bring their wingmen home, no matter how long it takes. Airmen “never leave a wingman behind … never falter … will not fail.”

This month we tell you about Wingmen who never gave up, and brought home two Airmen lost to enemy fire over North Vietnam and missing for 44 years. Today’s technology helped confirm our Wingmen’s identities, but resilient Airmen fulfilled the personal commitment to bring them home to their families and a grateful nation.
During a calm June morning, a lone F-4C Phantom flew over a quiet field below. There were no anti-aircraft rounds streaking through the air, nor were there any flares or loud explosions on the ground. The scene was very different 44 years earlier. On the night of July 5, 1968, a flight of F-4C Phantoms flew a night combat mission over the Quang Binh Province near the central coast of North Vietnam. U.S. Air Force pilots Maj. Ed Silver and 1st Lt. Bruce Lawrence were in the lead aircraft of the formation and tasked with dropping illumination flares for armed reconnaissance. As the formation maneuvered above, anti-aircraft artillery rounds and small arms tracers blanketed the night sky in an effort to prevent the Phantoms from accomplishing their mission. Suddenly, the lead aircraft was struck and the wingman reported seeing a large explosion and streaks of fire trailing out of the bottom of Silver and Lawrence's aircraft. After a smaller secondary explosion, the aircraft rapidly descended and crashed approximately 23 miles southwest of Dong Hoi, North Vietnam. No parachutes were visible in the dark night and no transmissions were ever received from the aircrew. Due to intense hostile fire and the fact that the crash site was well within North Vietnam, a search and rescue mission was not possible. Ed Silver and Bruce Lawrence were designated as "Missing in Action" and were never heard from again. However, family, friends and the nation did not give up on bringing them home.

Edward Dean Silver was born February 2, 1934 in Batavia, Iowa and was raised in Junction City, Ore. He graduated from Junction City High School in 1952 and attended Oregon State University where he enrolled in ROTC. After graduation, Silver joined the Air Force and excelled in pilot training at Vance Air Force Base, Okla. where he was selected as an instructor pilot. Silver then spent a tour as an exchange instructor pilot in Saudi Arabia tirelessly training foreign air force pilots how to fly. In 1968, Maj. Silver joined Tactical Air Command (the precursor to Air Combat Command) and deployed to the 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 12th Tactical Fighter Wing, Cam Ranh Bay Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. After the repatriation of Vietnam prisoners of war during Operation Home Coming in 1973, a returning POW reported being forced to watch a North Vietnamese propaganda film showing the body of an American flyer in a flight suit with the name of "Silver" visible on the flight suit name tag. Vietnam War POWs made a habit of memorizing names of fellow POWs identified while in captivity; however, no returning POW was able to report seeing either Silver or Lawrence in captivity and both men were declared "Killed in Action, body not recovered, based on presumptive finding of death." Prior to being designated as KIA on February 25, 1977, Silver was promoted to lieutenant colonel.
Bruce Edward Lawrence was born on January 12, 1943 and was raised in Phillipsburg, N.J. Lawrence graduated from Phillipsburg High School in 1960 where he was a star player in basketball, baseball and football. A caption under Lawrence's high school year book picture stated “Bruce will one day fly jet airplanes.” After graduation Lawrence joined the Air Force but was discharged for problems with his feet. However, Lawrence never gave up on his dream of flying and in 1961 he attended Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., where he attempted to join ROTC, but was rejected for continued problems with his feet. Lawrence did not let his medical problems stop him from starring on the Rutgers football team as an outstanding linebacker and offensive halfback. In fact, due to his never give up attitude, Lawrence was eventually selected as the co-captain of the varsity football team and later graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree. In October of 1965, Lawrence was finally able to successfully join the Air Force. He graduated from Officer Training School and earned his pilot wings in 1966 at Craig Air Force Base, Ala. Lawrence deployed to Vietnam after mission-specific pilot training and landed in the same squadron as Silver in 1968, setting up their fateful last flight together. Prior to being designated as KIA in 1977, Lawrence was promoted through the rank of captain and then to major.

In 1993, a joint American/Vietnamese team traveled to Quang Binh Province to excavate a potential Vietnam War era crash site but harsh terrain limited access to the site. Undeterred, the U.S. team returned in 1998 and was able to excavate the crash site and recover military equipment and human remains. Analysis of equipment and specimens from this excavation led investigators to determine that the crash site was that of Silver and Lawrence’s Phantom and that the human remains were most likely from the missing aircrew. However, it would be years before new forensic techniques would emerge to allow positive identification. In June 2011, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used both mitochondrial and nuclear DNA to positively match both Silver and Lawrence to their living relatives. In September 2011, Silver and Lawrence’s remains were escorted by an Air Force Honor Guard from Joint-Base Pearl-Harbor-Hickam to Honolulu, where they were laid to rest alongside their fallen comrades.
Hickam, Hawaii to final burial locations in the mainland. Lawrence’s hometown, Phillipsburg, N.J., transported his casket on a horse drawn caisson down South Main Street to his memorial service. After the memorial service, firefighters, police and local veterans escorted the motorcade for Major Lawrence’s funeral procession to the cemetery. The entire town lined the procession route saluting and waving flags as the motorcade passed. Lawrence’s identified remains were then laid to rest next to his parents in the Raubsville Cemetery in Williams Township, Pa. Richard Lawrence, Maj. Lawrence’s older brother, said to a standing room only crowd at the memorial service that Bruce “would probably be very embarrassed by [all this], but he would also be very appreciative.” Silver’s identified remains were later buried with full military honors on June 6, 2012 in Arlington National Cemetery leaving unidentified remains of both crew members to be buried in a group burial in Section 60 of Arlington the next day. Group burials are for unidentified remains that could belong to either or both aircrew members. Silver and Lawrence’s group burial garnered full military honors including an Air Force band. Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery is also the final resting place for many of the veterans killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During their group burial at Arlington, a single F-4C Phantom II flew over family and friends as Silver and Lawrence were buried together as a crew. Ever since that hot summer night in 1968, when their wingman circled above in an effort to make contact with the aircrew, family, friends and a grateful nation have been waiting for Silver and Lawrence’s return. In the case of Silver and Lawrence, the resilience of family members, friends, the community and the nation is remarkable. Airmen in Air Combat Command can take solace from Silver and Lawrence’s story in that no matter where they go, or what they do, their Air Force family and the nation as a whole will make every effort to bring them home. We can all be assured that our fellow Airmen will show the same tenacity in caring for us and our families as Lawrence showed in his repeated attempts to join the Air Force and serve his country in Vietnam. This refusal to give up is a uniquely American value and Airmen should remember this value when things get tough in their personal lives. The determination that an individual needs to persevere as Richard Lawrence said in his brother’s memorial service they “would also be very appreciative” for all the effort their nation and community put into their return. We should all similarly commit to never giving up on ourselves or our fellow Airmen. A “never give up” attitude is the heart of Airmen resilience.
Nothing makes me happier than when I see these blades spin and the helicopter take off,”
said Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Kopplin, 33rd Expeditionary Helicopter Maintenance Unit lead flying helicopter crew chief. “Knowing I worked on it; knowing that Airmen that I lead have worked on it; knowing that we have done everything that we were supposed to do – by the book – 100 percent. When an aircraft takes off and comes back ... it’s a great feeling every time.”

Kopplin and the dedicated maintainers of the 33rd EHMU’s primary mission is to ensure that Bagram’s fleet of HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters are safe, air worthy, and combat ready so their aircrew and pararescuemen can go out and perform their rescue missions in support of NATO and Afghan forces in Afghanistan.

For the Bagram Pave Hawk maintainers, the job boils down to a single task.

“On a day-to-day basis, I get aircraft ready to fly,” said Senior Airman Hunter Rains, 33rd EHMU rescue crew chief. “The Pave Hawk is a vessel to take the PJs where they need to be and for the back-enders (gunners) to be able to protect those PJs so they are able to get around,” said Rains. “Where we come into play is that we get these helicopters ready on a daily basis and make sure the helicopter operates properly.”
The helicopter maintainers work a non-stop alert schedule to maintain high mission-capable ratings. They are ready to respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The maintenance crew out there for this mission because they are our lifeline. We take off with these HH-60s and if there are any issues in flight, you’ve got anywhere from six to seven souls on board. These guys have never let us down, and it means a lot. When the Pave Hawk maintainers get an alert call, they drop everything they are doing and sprint as fast as possible to the flight line to get their aircraft prepared to fly. We are pulling plugs, covers, tie-down straps and cranking APUs so that all our operators and PJs have to do is jump in the aircraft and set off to go rescue somebody,” said Tagoai.

Senior Master Sgt. Timothy Debeaux, 33 EHMU superintendent, has worked as a helicopter crew chief for 20 years, serving 11 years as an HH-60 crew chief. He said the HH-60 maintainers’ actions during a scramble are awesome. “The mindset during a scramble is to not be last,” said Debeaux. “The thought is if you get there earlier then maybe you will give the PJs that extra second to go rescue someone. PJs have this thing they call the Golden Hour;” said Debeaux. “The golden hour is the optimal response time from injury to medical treatment. If we take too long to launch an aircraft then that hour is cut down. If we don’t get up in a hurry then it could be too late to get that save.”

Gough agreed that the rescue mission relies on all the elements coming together quickly. “Time is life,” he said. “It is absolutely critical for us to get off the ground as soon as possible to get to whoever might be wounded out there on the battlefield. We really rely on these maintainers to always be efficient in what they are doing. They always get out there fast and allow us to get off the ground and into the battlefield where we are able to bring guys back.”

The maintainers also recognize and respect the symbiotic relationship among the rescue units. “If we can give the PJ the opportunity to reach that injured person while he is still alive, there is a great chance that he’ll live,” said Rains. They have the confidence and courage in the face of danger and adversity to be able to perform their duties effectively in a combat environment. “It’s like running a marathon, but you’re doing a sprint without being able to trip or fall down ... ever,” said Rains. “It is truly an honor and a privilege for me to lead and serve with some of the finest rescue maintainers in the world who exemplify commitment to duty, courage in the face of danger and adversity, and just a selfless dedication to serve,” said Tagoai. “They truly have answered their nation’s call time and time again. They truly live up to their motto: These things we do ... that others may live.”
Over the past seven years, the Offutt Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) program has undergone a radical transformation. Described as an average BASH program in 2005, Offutt’s current program was recently recognized as “Best in Air Combat Command” during its 2012 Safety Program Management Evaluation. At Offutt AFB, the average cost of birdstrike damage since FY09 has been reduced by over $1.6 million per year as compared to the previous five years. FY11 was the best year on record with only $29K in birdstrike damage. The ongoing effort to hone Offutt’s BASH program has resulted in an aggressive use of technology and a strong, persistent culture of innovation through overwhelming leadership, base and community support.

The transformational event was a literal baptism of fire with bent metal and cooked goose. Shortly after sunset on February 22, 2005, an E-4B assigned to Offutt AFB was on short final to a planned go around. At approximately 1,000 feet above the ground, the Boeing 747 aircraft struck a Canada goose in its number two engine. The crew immediately heard a loud bang, felt severe vibrations and smelled fumes in the cockpit. An RC-135 holding short of the runway reported seeing the E-4B’s number two engine sparking with burning debris falling from the aircraft. The remnants of the engine’s turbine section landed in the infield beyond the RC-135’s left wing and started a large grass fire. As a testament to the crew’s skill, they brought the E-4B around for an emergency landing without any further damage or any injuries to the crew. The result of this single birdstrike was over $8M in damage and a very close call for two strategically critical aircraft. Following this incident, Offutt leadership took a closer look at its BASH program and the risk posed by avian hazards.

BASH
It’s Not Just Another Four-Letter Acronym

BY 55TH WING FLIGHT SAFETY
PHOTOS BY MR. JOSH PLUEGER

The first question asked was exactly what were the hazards posed by birds to local aircraft? Offutt AFB sits less than two miles west of the Missouri River in the middle of the confluence between the Central and Mississippi migratory flyways. Several lakes, including the base lake on the approach end of the runway, are located between the airfield and river with surrounding wetlands. They provide ideal habitats for numerous local and migratory species. Agricultural fields surround the approach and departure corridors, presenting year-round feeding and roosting grounds. Additionally, the 1,500-acre Schilling Wildlife Management Area, located just four miles south of the base, and the 2,000-acre DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, less than 35 miles to the north, provide protected sanctuaries for millions of migrating waterfowl on their long journeys.

The second question asked was whether the Offutt BASH program was adequate to meet the risk? In 2005, Offutt had a typical BASH program. A Supervisor of Flying (SOF) was on duty in a truck on the airfield during flight operations. SOFs searched for birds with binoculars and called the Bird Watch Condition (BWC) along with Tower controllers and Airfield Operations. Offutt followed AFPAM 91-212 guidance on Phase I and Phase II operations. Relocation, deterrence and depredation were all part of the active effort to mitigate the risk. In the months and years following the E-4B mishap, the Offutt program has changed its approach to reducing the risk of avian hazards. First, the goal of the BASH program has been clarified. While the elimination of all birdstrikes is a noble goal in theory, in practice it is impractical and dilutes precious resources. The current BASH program is based on the recognition that birdstrikes will occur. However, damaging strikes can be reduced or eliminated. To achieve this goal, the program is focused on identification, environmental modification and mitigation.
In an effort to better utilize resources, Offutt has begun to shift focus from confronting avian hazards directly to modifying the environment that they rely on. Aggressive efforts to control rabbits, ground squirrels and other small mammals have been paired with pigeon eradication to push raptors off the airfield. Additionally, Offutt now sprays an herbicide/pesticide combination on the airfield twice a year. The sprays are based upon data from our USDA biologist to coincide with spring avian nesting seasons and fall migratory preparations. The effects of these attempts to sterilize the airfield have already been seen. Large flocks of sparrows and starlings, notoriously difficult to remove from the airfield, are no longer observed. The few remaining birds perch on the perimeter fence looking for food off base. Further mitigation efforts included removing trees around certain parts of the airfield that historically provided nesting spots for smaller birds.

Offutt’s BASH team has utilized almost every traditional mitigation tool. While propane cannons and bird foggers have proven to be of limited effectiveness, shotguns and pyrotechnics have continued to form the core of our mitigation efforts. Last fall in an effort to help address the limited range of previous methods, a Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD) was added to the BASH program. Essentially a large speaker, the LRAD allows our BASH team to project any sound file at 148dB for up to two kilometers. While still early in testing, the effect on raptors has been impressive. On multiple occasions, Red Tailed Hawks circling at altitudes of 1,000 feet or more have been driven from the airfield.

With the addition of the MERLIN™ avian radar in FY09, the Offutt BASH program began its current push to better incorporate new technologies to reduce birdstrikes. While the data has shown that the average annual number of birdstrikes and damaging birdstrikes has not changed much since FY04, large gains have been made in the damage rate per flight hour. As the program continues to evolve, focus has turned back to process itself. Technology has proven to be a formidable tool in avian hazard reduction; however, better integration and training with Flight Safety, the SOF, aircrew and tower controllers will help Offutt approach its goal of zero damaging strikes.

### Offutt AFB

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<tr>
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<th>FY04-FY11</th>
<th>FY04-FY08</th>
<th>FY08-FY11</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Birdstrikes</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>257</td>
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| Average Number of Birdstrikes | 88.3      | 89.8      | 85.7      | -4.1   | -4.60%
| Total Number of Damaging Birdstrikes | 29         | 19        | 10        |        |
| Average Number of Damaging Birdstrikes | 3.6       | 3.8       | 3.3       | -0.5   | -12.30%
| Total Annual Cost | $9,226,067.00 | $8,833,939.00 | $345,068.00 |        |
| Average Annual Cost that hasn’t changed | $1,113,825.89 | $1,716,797.80 | $1,102,871.69 | ($1,661,765.13) | -93.50%
| Flight Hours | 94,067.00 | 47,263.00 | 37,034.00 |        |
| Average Flight Hours | 10.099.10 | 9.470.60 | 12.434.70 | 2.964.10 | 31.30%
| Flight Hours Between Strikes | 130.4 | 120 | 147.7 | 27.7 | 23.10% |
| Flight Hours Between Damaging Strikes | 4,286.20 | 4,263.30 | 4,302.40 | 61.2 | 1.40% |
| Damage ($) per Flight Hour | $128.02 | $199.32 | $9.18 | ($190.14) | -95.40%
Aircrew Safety

SENTRY 40 AIRCREEK, 964 AACS, TINKER AFB, OKLA. Sentry 40 was returning to Tinker AFB when they were faced with an abnormal aircraft system malfunction – the hydraulic reservoir was at 1.5 gallons and decreasing. The FE concluded the leak was in the #2 fluid shutoff valve and pump. The AC directed the Hydraulic Leak Isolation checklist be run again, due to inconsistencies in hydraulic system. The decisive actions of the crew of Sentry 40 broke the chain of events that could have resulted in catastrophic damage to a $330 Million E-3 aircraft, and ensured the safety of 30 crewmembers. (June 12)

LT. COL. GREGORY CARMICHAEL, CAPTS. PAUL LAMERS, MATTHEW GRANTHAM, BYRON NEIRA AND DANIEL ELDER, AND STAFF SGt. JOHN BERGGREN, 17 RS, CREECH AFB, NEV. After gaining control of a crippled MQ-1B, it was noticed that an oil level was dropping very quickly. Visual inspection revealed a large oil leak running along the fuselage and propeller. Indications of low oil pressure, high turbine oil temp and low exhaust gas temp rapidly followed. Within a few seconds, the engine seized. After four minutes and a loss of 3,000 feet, the LRE took control of the aircraft and executed a successful forced landing. (July 12)

Pilot Safety

CAPT. ABRAM B. BURK, 75 FS, 23 WG, MOODY AFB, GA. Capt. Burk was flying a single-ship A-10 FAC(A) night upgrade sortie near Moody AFB. He deconflicted his IP, a 2-ship of Hogs and an inbound 4-ship as the CAS scenario was about to begin. After passing the first 9-line he waited in his block for the first set of fighters to commence their attack when he noticed the master caution light rapidly flashing in his cockpit. A quick glance at the master caution panel revealed an imminent right engine failure; his #2 motor had rapidly degenerated into a compressor stall. His flight discipline and quick action saved him from a catastrophic situation affecting the safe return of a doomed Hog! (June 12)

Ground Safety

SENIOR AIRMAN LACEY A. YOUNGBLOOD, 9 MXS, 9 RW, BEALE AFB, CALIF. As unit safety rep for the 9 MXS, Airman Youngblood increased vigilance in individual duty sections by performing over 20 Hazwaste, ground safety and traffic spot checks resulting in the identification of 12 potential hazards. Her keen attention to detail ensured all findings were corrected, mitigating possible injury to personnel and ensuring safety compliance. (June 12)

STAFF SGt. NICHOLAS TKACH AND TECH. SGt. BRETT BURCHFIELD, 1055 JOINTE BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS, VA. After completing their work in the T-18 airplane flight equipment section, Sgts. Tkach and Burchfield noticed an F-22A in the hangar leaking JP-8 fuel. They stayed on the scene, at a safe distance, until the fire department finished cleaning the fuel spill and deconflicted the aircraft. Their quick thinking and tenacious efforts brought a quick resolution to a catastrophic situation affecting the safe return of a $330M aircraft. (July 12)

Unit Safety

9TH COMMUNICATIONS SQUADRON, 9 RW, BEALE AFB, CALIF. The 9 CS was proactive in mitigating damage from an HVAC failure by relocating an ADP work station, protecting personnel and saving $16K in possible damages. They revitalized the ES0H program and instated five universal waste collection points. In addition, 100 percent environmental management system training was completed and tracked for the unit. These actions were lauded by the ES0H inspector as “the best program on Beale.” Dedication and a safety mindset netted zero discrepancies during the wing inspection. (June 12)

71ST EXPEDITIONARY AIR CONTROL SQUADRON, AL UDEID AB, QATAR. The 71 EACS suffered two power outages to the BC3 control system used to provide tactical level command, control and communications to aircraft flying in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. While squadron maintainers scrambled to rapidly identify the root cause of the catastrophic failure, the crew lost BC3 scopes, radar and radio comm. with aircraft working through all of the eastern and southern portions of the AOR. During this massive outage, they expertly employed procedural control measures to ensure safe deconfliction of 189 tactical aircraft while ensuring zero gaps in execution of tasking. (July 12)

Weapons Safety

STAFF SGt. TERRY J. BLUE, 432 AMXS, 432 WG, CREECH AFB, NEV. Sgt. Blue was able to identify six faulty home station testers and allowed deployed teams to troubleshoot the 42 defective field testers. The faulty testers provided incorrect test results and failed to adequately verify weapons/avionics electrical wiring. The inaccurate readings provided false assurance of aircraft mission readiness, capability, and personnel safety. Result of his actions – immediate recall of all 500-series AVM-101 testers Air Force-wide and replacement with the older, more reliable 300-series testers. (June 12)

STAFF SGt. GERARDO MARQUEZ, 20 AMXS, SHAW AFB, S.C. Sgt. Marquez trained over 200 Airmen on proper evacuation procedures using updated cordon overlay grid maps in the event of dropped munitions or munitions involved in an aircraft fire. He also identified eight of 16 out-of-service one step loading adapters and trained the Airmen on the importance of maintaining the safety and serviceability of the equipment the current TCTO. His desire to lead from the front ensured zero weapons safety and reliability write-ups. (July 12)

Crew Chief Safety

STAFF SGt. NICHOLAS P. COZEE, 455 EAMXS, BAGRAM AF, AFGHANISTAN. During recovery of an EC-130H, Sgt. Cozee noticed smoke billowing out from the right side main landing gear as the brakes were set. He soon realized that it was not a “hot brake” but a possible hydraulic leak that erupted after the pilot set the parking brake. He grabbed a fire extinguisher and manned the hose from a safe position to keep watch in case flames erupted from the wheel well. His vigilant perception of the hazard, quick and calm actions averted a potentially life-threatening situation. (June 12)

STAFF SGt. DAMON J. COOLEY, 7 AMXS, DYESS AFB, TEXAS. While performing daily aircraft form inspections, Sgt. Cooley noticed the nose landing gear strut of a B-1B aircraft was extended higher than the prescribed limits for an aircraft on the ground. He took action to prevent the B-1’s center of gravity from shifting too far aft and tipping the aircraft on its tail. He led a team to defuel and transfer fuel to safe levels allowing the aircraft to level down from extreme nose attitude. His proactive thinking in avert a major aircraft incident, preventing injury and significant damage. (July 12)

Flight Line Safety

TECHNICAL SGt. CRYSTAL APONTE, SENIOR AIRMEN CLAYTON BARRUS AND DAVID TROTT, 379TH EXPEDITIONARY OPERATIONS SUPPORT SQUADRON, AL UDEID AB, QATAR. This team of controllers initiated a break-out for a C-130 opposite arrival due to a direct conflict with the Flight Check aircraft conducting a recorded run in low visibility conditions. Their exceptional crew resource management and situation awareness accommodated FCG’s inspection requirements and provided decision vectors to re-sequence the C-130 for a safe landing. (June 12)

STAFF SGt. SEAN A. BUSBY, 964 EAACS, CURACAO. Sgt. Busby noticed some nickel and quarter-sized concrete rocks, wind-blown garbage, and other freight objects during pre-flight of an E-3. He organized 21 aircrew members into a FOD-walk and allowed deployed teams to troubleshoot the 42 defective field testers. The faulty testers provided incorrect test results and failed to adequately verify weapons/avionics electrical wiring. The inaccurate readings provided false assurance of aircraft mission readiness, capability, and personnel safety. Result of his actions – immediate recall of all 500-series AVM-101 testers Air Force-wide and replacement with the older, more reliable 300-series testers. (June 12)

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These programs were recognized as best practices in Air Combat Command during Safety Program Management Evaluations. If you are looking to strengthen your Safety Program in one or more of these areas, these folks are doing it exceptionally well.

You can also find an expanded list of strong Safety Programs by becoming a member of the ACC Safety CoP at: https://afkm.wpafb.af.mil/hqaccsafety
SURE, THERE AREN'T A LOT OF CARS OUT HERE. THAT JUST MAKES IT EASIER TO SPOT THE UNBUCKLED DRIVERS.

It doesn't matter where you drive. If you don't buckle up you will get a ticket.

4 | Baptistism By Fire
by Airman 1st Class Tom Brading,
Joint Base Charleston, S.C.

8 | They Broke Rule No. 4
by Lt. Col. Judd Fancher,
ACC/SEF, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va.

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by Master Sgt. Duncan C. Munro, (ret.)
Hurlburt Field, Fla.

WARNING
BEWARE OF: THAT LIFE OF THE PARTY GUY

HAS FADED MARKER ON HIS FACE FROM LAST NIGHT'S BLACK-OUT AND DRUNK-SHAMING.

THINKS EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE IS "AWESOME" AND KEEPS SHOUTING IT.

LAST SEEN: DROOLING LIKE A BULLDOG AND SWEATING UNCONTROLLABLY AS HE WORKS THE ROOM.

LOUD, DRUNK AND OBNOXIOUS IS NO WAY TO MAKE FRIENDS.

To protect yourself, VISIT WWW.THATGUY.COM

MAKES PEOPLE WONDER WHY THEY KEEP INVITING HIM TO PARTIES.

COMPETES WITH THE BIRTHDAY GIRL FOR EVERYONE'S ATTENTION.
Baptism By Fire

Airman battles 63,000 gallons of burning jet fuel—receives medal for heroism

FACT

One out of four fatal victims of smoking-material fires is not the smoker whose cigarette started the fire.

BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS TOM BRADING

At Lt. Nicholas Mercurio, from the 1st Combat Camera Squadron, didn’t set out to receive the Air Force Achievement Medal with Valor while deployed with Provincial Reconstruction Team Kunar. But because of circumstances he experienced, the first lieutenant earned the medal because he went “above and beyond.”

“My hope was that I could just go out there and do my job,” said Mercurio. His job was public affairs officer for the ongoing reconstruction mission in Kunar Province in Afghanistan. However, three weeks into his first deployment to the country, he was awakened to the sound of his roommate yelling, “We’re under attack!”

At approximately 6 a.m., an insurgent fired a rocket-propelled grenade. The grenade scored a direct hit to a helicopter fuel bladder which was perched at a forward arming and refueling point overlooking the base. The refueling station was the site of armed vehicles, helicopters, rockets, ammunition and more than 60,000 gallons of jet fuel.


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While the reality of life in a combat zone can be unpredictable, life here at home is a bit more in our control. Take a moment and consider what you can do to limit the hazard of fire.

**FIRE PREVENTION WEEK STARTS OCTOBER 7TH 2012**

The station immediately burst into flames as black smoke and fire towered more than 1,000 feet into the air above. The western mountains were covered by the smoke hung over the forward operating base as twisted bits of metal and shrapnel rained down from the sky.

“It was baptism by fire,” said Mercurio, in regards to his first experience with combat. “We trained and retrained both mentally and physically; however, you never know how you’ll react until you’re in that moment.”

“A second RPG was fired into a building near us,” said Mercurio. “It was so close our supply officer said it felt like it gave him a haircut.”

When the fuel bladder was hit, the gas started slowly burning a path down the hill. As seconds passed, the slow-burning fuel became an ocean of gasoline, leaving a trail of fire in its wake and heading straight toward the barracks housing the majority of service members stationed there.

Without any firefighting equipment, Mercurio, along with other service members, immediately took action to stop the fire. They started loading nearby sandbags into a pick-up truck and drove up to the fire to try to stop the blaze.

Sacrificing their own safety, they cut open bag after bag of sand, forcing the fire back uphill inch by inch. Adding to the danger was the .50 caliber ammunition and Hellfire missiles detonating due to the heat on top of the hill.

If that wasn’t enough, there was another variable to overcome. Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, stocked with C-4 explosives, were parked on the flight line and engulfed in flames. One of the MRAPs exploded in the midst of the chaos, flipping an officer backwards. The turret from the MRAP shot across the flight line and Mercurio witnessed one of the doors from the vehicle shoot above his head.

An hour into the battle, firefighters from Asadabad, the capital city of Kunar, arrived at the scene in fire trucks.

“We took turns using the water hoses to fight the fire,” said Mercurio. “Shoulder-to-shoulder, we fought the fire until it felt like we were going to hack out our lungs, then we’d trade with Afghan firefighters and they’d fight it, too.”

Eventually, the team brought the extensive wall of flames under control and kept the fire away from any structures. The fire finally burned itself out.

Mercurio credits his actions to his instincts and the combat training provided to him during his time at Camp Atterbury, Ind., prior to deploying to Afghanistan.

In addition, he credits the group of officers that assisted in fighting the fire with him.


According to the citation signed by Lt. Gen. David Goldfein, commander, U.S. Air Forces Central Command, the valor device was in recognition of Mercurio’s heroic actions in direct contact by an enemy force and his courageous leadership in the face of grave danger. Mercurio was an example to his peers and directly impacted the command’s ability to avoid a catastrophic loss of infrastructure, equipment and personnel.

“It’s not about winning medals,” said Mercurio. “It’s about doing your job. Our job was to help the Afghan people and the better we do that job, the faster we won’t be at war in Afghanistan.”

**CIGARETTES DON’T KNOW WHEN YOU ARE ASLEEP.**

Smoking is the #1 cause of home fire deaths. If you smoke, put it out. All the way. Every time.

For more information on how to prevent home fires, visit www.cdc.gov/homefires

FEMA coordinates the federal government's effort by promoting, leveraging the efforts of, supporting, and recovering from all domestic incidents, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terrorism.
So there I was, 10 years old, on my first season of bird-hunting. My father and his friends hunted Grouse and Woodcock for years in southern and central Vermont; this was my first season joining them. The Eastern Ruffed Grouse makes its home throughout the Appalachian region of the northeastern US, preferring to live in the thorniest and most bramble-infested parts of the woods called “Coverts.” The strategy we used hunting these birds involved assembling 3 to 8 hunters at one end of the covert, then walking line-abreast through the covert with about 25 yards between each hunter. Typically, we would add a flushing dog (we had a Black Lab) or a pointing dog (Brittany Spaniel) to the team, as the dog’s nose excels at finding hidden birds we were about to walk past. When a Ruffed Grouse flushes, or takes flight, it does so in an explosion of noise and feathers. A grouse is a very challenging bird to shoot; quick to accelerate to flying speed, instinctively able to put trees and obstructions between itself and you. We typically dressed in bright colored clothing (with an orange hat or vest) and wore brush-chaps to deflect the thorns and brambles we would wade through all day.

Did You Know?

Every year there are approximately 800 non-fatal hunting accidents reported and 100 fatal accidents.

Source: ihea.com
Rule Number 1
Always treat a gun as loaded.

Rule Number 2
Never let your gun point at anything you are not willing to destroy.

Rule Number 3
Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire.

Rule Number 4
Be sure of your target and what is beyond.

I was one of the two shooters hit and after picking myself up off the ground, was a bit confused as to what had just happened. As we unloaded our shotguns and administered first-aid, we reconstructed what happened. The bird had flown out in front and looped back, so the closest shooter to the middle on the left flank had shot twice as the bird looped back to his right. Due to the heavy brush, he shot at the fleeting glimpses of the bird, without knowing the right flank of the line was in his line of fire. He shot at the bird not knowing his target and what was beyond. I received a pellet in my back and in my leg and another hunter took five pellets in the left leg. Direct pressure stopped the bleeding and we loaded into the cars for a trip to the hospital. The doctors x-rayed me and tried to fish the pellets out of my back and leg, but were unable to find them. I went home a bit sore, but with several valuable gun safety lessons from that day. My father’s friend would not hunt for the rest of that year because of how he felt accidentally shooting his fellow hunters and friends. I forgave him knowing he made an honest mistake and we have been strong friends since. I certainly learned the importance of knowing one’s target and what lies beyond.
Did You Know?

In ACC, during the past 3 years for every fatal motor vehicle mishap, there were an additional 20 motor vehicle mishaps resulting in non-fatal injuries.

MIRROR, MIRROR on the wall
Who’s the fairest of them all?
The one who lacks wisdom in haste
Or the one who’s smiling – teeth held with paste?

Mirror, Mirror on the wall
Who’s the prettiest of them all?
Someday those stitches will go away
But those facial scars will forever stay.

Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
If I could do it over, that day I’d recall,
And take a second to click my seatbelt on.
Now that face in the mirror I once knew is gone.

Tired of being told you will die if you don’t use your seat belt? Maybe it’s time we focus more on the reality of what happens to those who don’t wear their seat belts, survive, and are “treated and released.” My pre-military experiences as a paramedic taught me quickly that being released often meant those folks were actually leaving to have major dental or facial reconstruction done.

Let’s face it; if you are reading this, you aren’t dead yet – so we’re unaware of the suffering that will be felt by our family, friends and coworkers. We have, however, made a trip or two to the dentist. We know all too well the exhilarating sound of a high-speed drill, not being able to feel our lips or jaw, and the trickling of water down our necks – all while trying to answer those dentist’s questions with a mouth full of instruments and hands. If you think having a tooth filled or a root canal is traumatic, imagine what kind of surgery is required to replace your teeth after they have been not so surgically removed by your steering wheel!

Here’s a typical scenario. You just need to do a couple of short errands so you don’t feel it is necessary to buckle up. You’re at a stoplight and reach over to change the CD when WHAMMO – some idiot slams into the back of your car. The force of impact immediately sends you into the car in front of you. After your car stops, inertia keeps you moving forward until the steering wheel or windshield stops you – usually face first. You’re pretty lucky because the impact wasn’t enough to hurl you through the windshield and onto the hood! Best of all, you’re alive and “walk-away” with a few missing teeth and some facial lacerations.

Most of us take the time each day to brush and floss our teeth, trying to reduce our trips to the dentist. So why can’t we take a second or two to latch our seat belts? I know we all are concerned about our appearances. Some even worry that their seat belts will wrinkle their clothes. But will wrinkled clothes really matter if the alternative is having false teeth anchored into your jawbone or stitches across your face to piece it back together? People do die from not wearing their seat belts, but many more are injured in horrible ways. These injuries not only cost us manpower and dollars, they also result in long-term physical and psychological damage. Try not to become one of these statistics; wear your seat belt!