Air Education and Training Command's

TORCH

September/October 2006

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FALL!

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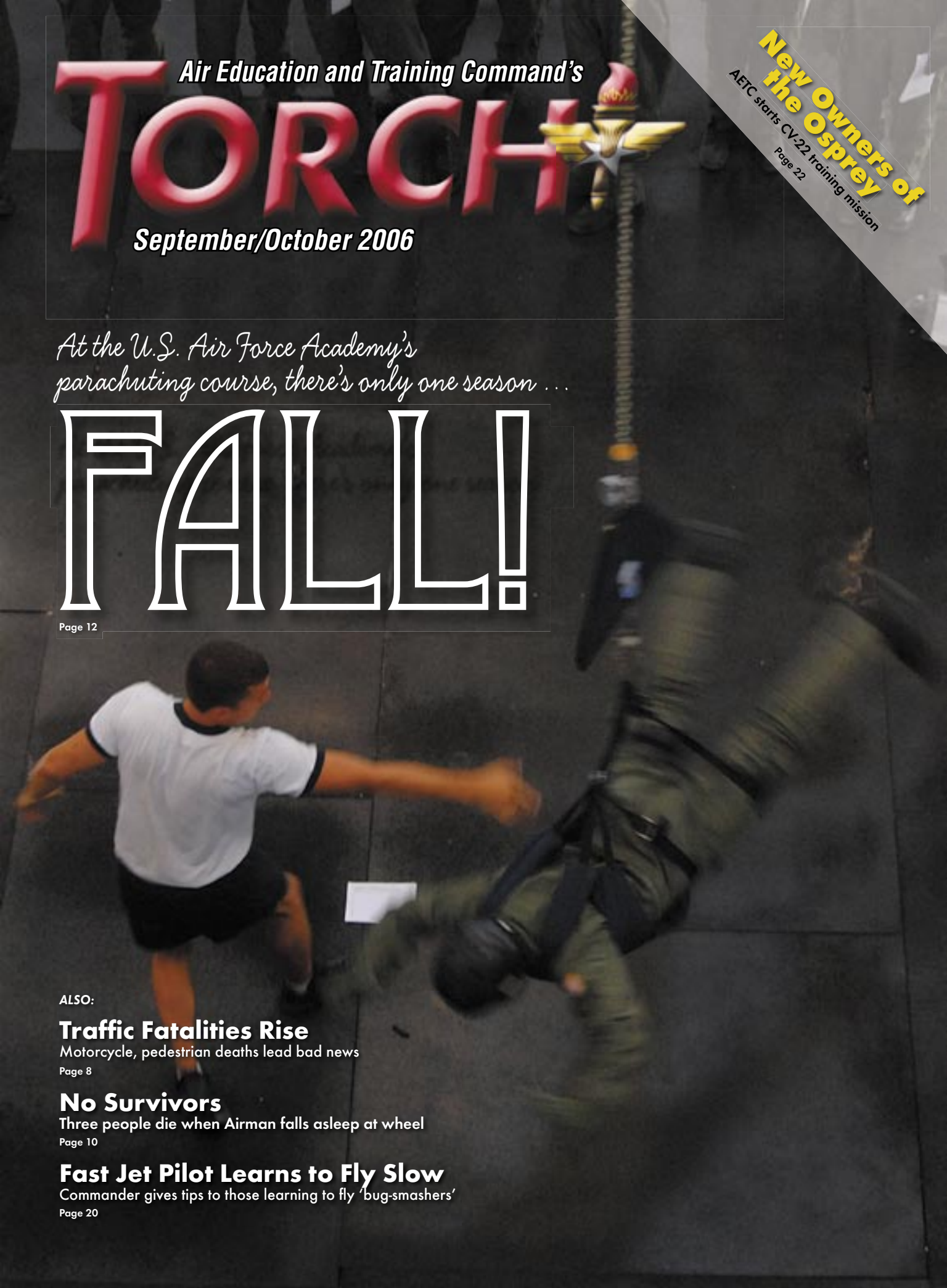

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Cover photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Hannen
Back cover composite illustration by Sammie W. King

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FROM THE
DIRECTOR

By Col. **Frank A. Palumbo Jr.**
AETC Director of Safety

Passing the Torch

They say when the time comes to retire, you'll know it. I have come to that time and am about to join the ranks of the retired after Oct. 1.

For the past two years, I have had the pleasure of leading the Headquarters, Air Education and Training Command Safety Directorate, responsible for overseeing all of this large and very challenging command's programs. My message has been constant: Safety is each individual's responsibility, and commanders are the ones who shape the safety culture in their units.

Because of the dedicated efforts of many of our people and leaders, I believe we have had some success in improving our safety mindset across AETC. We have been able to hold the line on our flight mishaps, and we have kept fatalities to a minimum during the summer safety campaigns.

I wish I had an answer to reducing private motor vehicle mishaps, both two- and four-wheel, but I do not. This category continues to hurt not only us but also the entire Air Force as it is where we lose most of our people. Obviously, if I were to make one big recommendation as I leave, it would be for all of you to work harder at reducing mishaps in this category.

"We will continue to be the one command that first touches a majority of our newest Airmen. It is this first touch scenario where we can plant the seeds of safety early on in a career."

AETC and the Air Force will continue to face many challenges with force shaping and lean initiatives. Our mission in AETC doesn't change though, as we will continue to be the one command that first touches a majority of our newest Airmen. It is this first touch scenario where we can plant the seeds of safety early on in a career. I ask each of you to work hard at getting this done, as it is a large key in achieving success at mishap reduction.

I wish to give special thanks to the Torch staff for being a huge key in marketing our safety message. If there is one thing we can be proactive about, it is selling the message. The Torch staff continues to put out a national and Department of Defense-level award winning magazine, along with the annual calendar and posters. Congratulations to them!

I leave you in the fine hands of Col. John Blumentritt, coming to you fresh from running the safety shop at 19th Air Force. He will serve you well. My best wishes to him and to the AETC Safety Directorate in continuing the mission.

Until we meet again, may God bless all of you.

Frank A. Palumbo

COULD HE HAVE BEEN SAVED?

I read with interest the article titled "Air Force Releases Report on Major's Death" in the July/August 2006 issue of Torch ("Around the Command," page 5). The investigation cited the cause of death as a pre-existing heart condition known as Long Q-T Syndrome, along with five other factors.

The other factors it listed included:

- The strenuous exercise of the pararescue/combat rescue officer preparatory and indoctrination course.
- Hypoxia induced by the 50-meter underwater swim.
- The major's use of dietary supplements and over-the-counter medications.
- The major's unyielding determination to complete the course.
- The rescuers' problems securing an airway and delay in attaching the defibrillator.

It's difficult for me to understand how two of the "five other factors" could have happened.

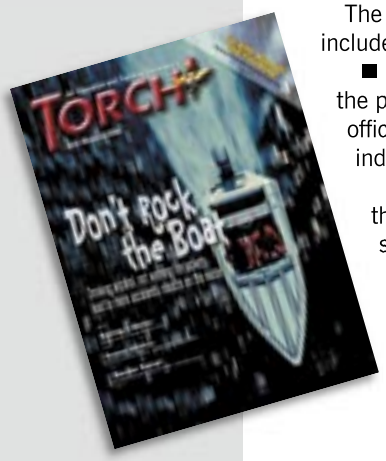
My first concern is with the major's use of dietary supplements and over-the-counter medications. In such a strenuous course, it seems that those supplements/medications should have been restricted or monitored more closely.

My second concern is with the "rescuer's problems securing an airway and delay in attaching the defibrillator." In such a strenuous course a defibrillator should have been close at hand and the instructors should have been trained in its use. Moreover, it's hard to believe trained pararescue and combat rescue officer instructors could have so much difficulty securing an airway. Isn't that something they are trained to do?

If I'm this guy's family member, I have a hard time accepting that my son, husband, brother, and/or father might have survived if only the instructors had been better trained or prepared to do what they are supposed to be better trained and prepared to do – save lives.

I hope there were more extenuating circumstances. Otherwise, the family might always wonder, "Could he have been saved?"

Dennis Johnson
Via e-mail



LETTERS TO TORCH

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CONFLICTING REPORTS

I'm confused regarding the reporting on the C-5 crash at Dover Air Force Base, Del., in both your May/June 2006 issue and your July/August 2006 issue of Torch.

In the May/June issue ("The Scare in Delaware," page 18), you quote Col. Udo McGregor as saying the 100 percent reason everyone aboard survived the crash was because the pilot did a wings level landing.

In the July/August issue ("Human Error Leads to Dover C-5 Accident," page 25), you report that "the accident investigation board determined the pilots and flight engineers did not properly configure, maneuver and power the aircraft during approach and landing.

Which is it?

Jerry Benson
Via e-mail

The comments by Colonel McGregor were his opinion at the time, which is why the author attributed them to him. In that same article we pointed out that "a board of experts has convened and is investigating the cause of the accident. The unclassified findings will be released to the public as soon as the board results are released." Those official findings are what you read in the follow-up article. Thank you for your interest in Torch.

by Doug Curran

BOATSANDBREWS

I knew that it wasn't good to operate any vehicle — on land, air or water — while under the influence of alcohol, but I didn't know how much quicker the effects of alcohol take affect on a boater ("Don't Rock the Boat," July/August 2006 issue of Torch, page 12).

Thank you for keeping us informed. Keep up the good work.

Army Capt. 'Bo' Smithe
Los Angeles

COMPARING APPLES & ORANGES

This is a counter response to Tech. Sgt. Charles Ottinger's comments about "Don't Make Rash Decisions on Cell Phone Use in Vehicles (July/August 2006 issue of Torch, "Torch Talk," page 3). As an avid cell phone user myself – on and off base — I have to say that cell phone use while driving can be very dangerous.

The Department of Defense's policy change banning their use on military installations unless using a hands free device is a very good idea. I can count on both hands since this policy took affect the number of folks that have still pulled out in front of me or wandered into my lane while fumbling with cell phones pinched between their cheek and shoulder.

But even hands free devices can sometimes cause problems. I know personally while using mine, I've missed exits or almost ran stop signs/lights because of trying to discuss "critical" family crises with my wife or daughter. In these situations it would have been advisable for me to either postpone the conversation till arrival at home or work, or just pull over for the safety of everyone.

Ottinger makes a bad comparison between driving and pilots flying. When pilots are flying they are operating their aircraft in a large, open environment with no one else around but their wingman. Their communications are limited, but they are also vital to the operation of the aircraft and the mission. They aren't having a side conversation with the misses back home about little Johnnies' big fight at school that just got him suspended for two weeks or banned from school sports.

We "ground flyers" (or "cage drivers" as motorcycle riders call us) are operating in a very congested area with limited maneuverability, and our communications via cell phones are not critical to the task at hand (watching for other drivers on cell phones, children, stray pets, chunks of blown truck tires, etc.) And, unfortunately, additional cell phone use "training" is not going to make a lick of difference – good risk management is!

Retired Master Sgt. Jerry T. Floyd
Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas

YOU 'SENT A CHILL UP MY SPINE'

Thank you for the informative article "Death Toll Rises for Kids Using Inexpensive, Inflatable Pools" (July/August 2006 issue, "The Alert Consumer," page 7). It sent a chill up my spine when you described how most deaths occur when kids aren't expected to be near the pool – i.e., a parent gets distracted on the phone for a few minutes and the child disappears unnoticed into the backyard.

I have to admit I've lost track of my children more than once while answering a phone call. You can almost picture a mother or father scouring the house for a missing child, all the while the child is drowning in an inflatable pool (which has no protective barriers). I have also been guilty of leaving the inflatable pools filled up in my backyard, even when they are not in use.

Thanks to your article, I'll be more on guard.

Katie Tanner
Via e-mail

by Tech. Sgt. Russell E. Cooley IV

COOL CARGO AIRCRAFT

Awesome shot of the C-17 on the back cover (July/August 2006 issue)! I have it hanging up in my office. It would make one cool poster.

Airman 1st Class N. Bell
Via e-mail

SERGEANT CONVICTED OF NEGLIGENT HOMICIDE

BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, La. — A panel of officer and enlisted Airmen found a Barksdale senior NCO who fell asleep at the wheel guilty of negligent homicide and careless driving during a three-day special court-martial that ended here June 15.

The court sentenced Master Sgt. Kenneth Sciara, 2nd Maintenance Squadron, to 30 days confinement, forfeiture of $100 pay per month for nine months, a reduction in rank to technical sergeant, and a reprimand for his role in an August 2005 automobile accident that killed a teenager and seriously injured three adults.

The maximum possible sentence at a special court-martial is confinement for 12 months, forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for 12 months, reduction to E-1, and a bad conduct discharge.

Sciara pleaded not guilty to the two crimes.

Prior to the night of the crash, Sciara routinely drove from Bossier City to New Orleans and back on weekends to visit his wife — a four and a half hour drive — after working normal 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. workdays, Monday to Friday. He routinely returned to Bossier City late Sundays.

by Staff Sgt. Matthew Hannen

After falling asleep *at the wheel, a sergeant killed a teenager.*

As required for any member of the 2nd Bomb Wing, making a drive of more than three hours, Sciara would receive a written pre-departure safety briefing from his supervisor before leaving, said Col. Gerald Bruce, 2nd Bomb Wing Staff Judge Advocate.

On July 31, 2005, Sciara left New Orleans at 9:15 p.m. and stopped once to refresh himself. Later, as he approached his exit near Shreveport at about 1:30 a.m., he fell asleep, drifted off the highway, and struck a group of people standing on the shoulder.

The group, four adults and a 15-year-old youth, were about to load a broken-down motorcycle onto the back of a truck. Sciara's car hit them, killing the youth and severely injuring three adults.

At the time of the court-martial, Sciara had served 19 years in the military and except for this incident had a good military record.

— 2nd Bomb Wing Public Affairs

'GOOFY' LOOKING 'HAT' KEEPS HEAD INTACT

In April I took a bike ride through my subdivision to get in a quick 10 miles. I'd worked late that day to support a couple of fly-bys we were doing for the opening day baseball games for the Dayton Dragons and the Columbus Clippers. I threw on my biking gear and helmet and off I went.

Thirty minutes later I was oh so thankful that I was wearing a helmet.

Without warning, a car heading in the opposite direction on the road turned across my path. It happened so fast that all I had time to do was grab some rear brake and attempt to lay the bike down.

I never quite made it all the way down when the right front bumper of the car impacted the left side of my bike. This collision immediately put me down on the road, and I slid under the front end of the car as it drove up onto the bike.

The driver suddenly stopped and got out to see what in the world he'd hit. He was shocked and horrified to see me laying there. I had to convince him to get back in the car and put it in reverse to keep me from being pinned under the vehicle.

I suffered some nasty road rash, cuts and bruises, a torn rotator cuff and a sprained ankle. My bike was destroyed. But you know what? Who cares? Everything I listed — from my injuries to the busted bicycle — can be repaired, replaced or will heal on its own.

I even ruined my expensive Giro Pneumo bicycle helmet …perhaps the best $120 bucks I ever spent.

You see, just after the accident I vividly remember thinking how hard my head hit the pavement. I never lost consciousness; in fact, I never even had a headache! The Styrofoam shell inside the helmet absorbed all the impact and split in three places.

Sure, I still get teased and ribbed about the bike, the spandex shorts and the whole race bike culture as a 200-pound fighter pilot trying to emulate a 130-pound Tour de France rider. … It's a laughable caricature if there ever was one. And I laugh right along with them, because I can — thanks to that goofy looking helmet.

— Lt. Col. John M. Thompson
162nd Fighter Squadron

HOT STUFF:

FIREFIGHTERS TEST NEW PROTECTIVE GEAR

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. (AFMCNS) — Being a firefighter is arguably one of the most physically demanding jobs. For that reason, the Air Force is finding ways to make the job easier.

Sixteen firefighters here tested new protective gear that may increase comfort, mobility and mission effectiveness for more than 3,600 active-duty and 2,800 Air Force Reserve firefighters.

Joseph Rivera, Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency's Fire and Emergency Services program manager said the firefighters tested an upgrade to the joint firefighter integrated response ensemble, or JFIRE. The test could lead to the replacement of the existing chemical protective overgarment with a lighter chemical protective undergarment.

Basically, the undergarment replaces the existing overgarment when firefighters are dressed for various mission-oriented protective postures, known as MOPP, including MOPP-4, the most serious posture. Currently, firefighters are required to wear their chemical gear under silver proximity suits. If the new chemical protective undergarments are approved, they will be worn under battle dress uniforms, which will be covered with the silver suits when responding to emergencies.

"JFIRE allows firefighters to egress aircraft under MOPP-4 conditions or respond to other emergencies with toxic atmospheres," Rivera said. "The ensemble allows firefighters to transition from filtered canister air to supplied bottled air when operating in oxygen-deficient environments, or where superheated air and gas exists."

Rivera said the undergarments, which look like a hooded, fitted jogging suit, are lighter, and the mesh-like design breathes, which makes it cooler.

— Lois Walsh
96th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

photos by Senior Airman Mike Meares

While testing the Air Force's new firefighter protective suit, *Senior Airman Stephen Finkenhoefer (top right) drags a hose and Airman 1st Class Cody Ponder, climbs a ladder, all made easier with the lighter-weight gear.*

by Staff Sgt. Matthew Hannen

A LOOK AT 'CRITICAL' SUMMER WRAPUP

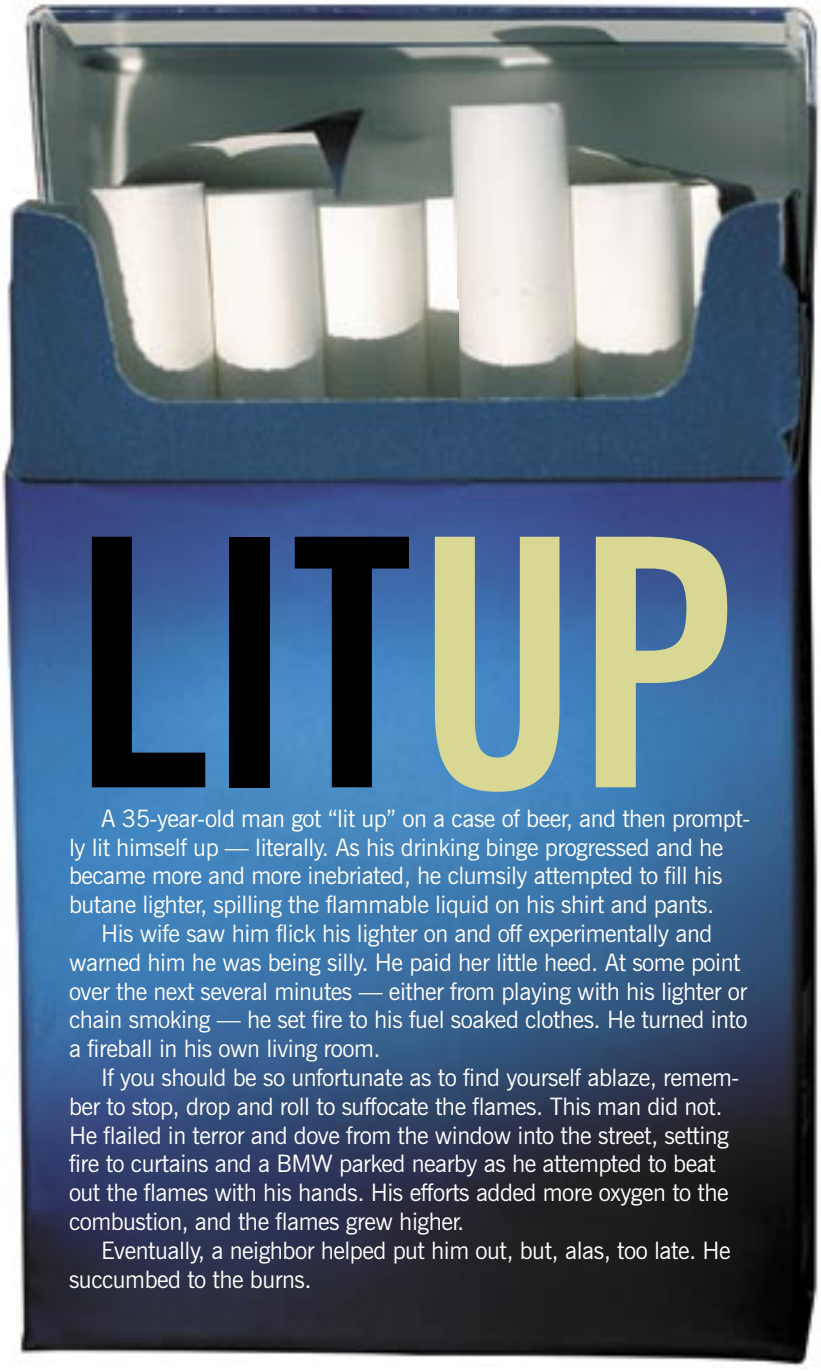
Air Education and Training Command had two fatalities during this year's 101 Critical Days of Summer safety campaign, which started May 27 (Memorial Day weekend) and ended Sept. 4 (Labor Day weekend).

Both fatalities resulted from vehicle mishaps that occurred over the Memorial Day weekend. In the first, a captain died in a single vehicle mishap when the vehicle she was a passenger in departed the road and struck a tree, killing her and the vehicle operator. The second mishap involved a military member riding a motorcycle, which struck a sport utility vehicle that failed to yield. Overall, this was a reduction of the three fatalities in summer 2005.

— Ron Kirby, AETC Ground Safety

A HOT IRON-Y

An Airman received second degree burns when he tried to iron the wrinkles out of his battle dress uniform using a steam iron. The problem? To save time, he was wearing the uniform.



LIT UP

A 35-year-old man got "lit up" on a case of beer, and then promptly lit himself up — literally. As his drinking binge progressed and he became more and more inebriated, he clumsily attempted to fill his butane lighter, spilling the flammable liquid on his shirt and pants.

His wife saw him flick his lighter on and off experimentally and warned him he was being silly. He paid her little heed. At some point over the next several minutes — either from playing with his lighter or chain smoking — he set fire to his fuel soaked clothes. He turned into a fireball in his own living room.

If you should be so unfortunate as to find yourself ablaze, remember to stop, drop and roll to suffocate the flames. This man did not. He flailed in terror and dove from the window into the street, setting fire to curtains and a BMW parked nearby as he attempted to beat out the flames with his hands. His efforts added more oxygen to the combustion, and the flames grew higher.

Eventually, a neighbor helped put him out, but, alas, too late. He succumbed to the burns.

'FIRE' ANTS

A woman was found burned to death, her body still on fire on a grassy area adjacent to her home in Rome. A lighter and a melted gas can were discovered nearby. After months of investigation, police turned up no evidence of foul play, and believe her demise was due to her habit of dousing anthills with gasoline while she smoked cigarettes.

'RESURRECTING' A CAREER

Seven fire-fighters decided to impress their chief by secretly setting fire to a house, then heroically extinguishing the blaze. The men apparently hatched the plan to help a fellow fire-fighter who was on suspension.

Unfortunately, in trying to resurrect the fire fighter's career, their plans backfired when the man became trapped by smoke and flame and died in the arson attempt. Now it's not his career that needs resurrecting — it's his life.

DON'T LISTEN TO TEACHER

Police said a lawyer demonstrating the safety of windows in a downtown Toronto skyscraper crashed through a pane with his shoulder and plunged 24 floors to his death. A police spokesman said the man fell into the courtyard of the building as he was explaining the strength of the building's windows to visiting law students.

GENERIC DRUGS: ARE THEY SAFE?

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Are generic drugs safe? In a word: Yes.

All generic drugs in the United States must go through the Food and Drug Administration's rigorous approval process to ensure they are chemically identical to the brand-name drug. The truth is that generics give you the same medicine and the same results as their brand-name counterparts.

Same Medicine, Same Results

The FDA requires pharmaceutical companies prove that the generic drug contains the identical amount of the active ingredient and works the same way as the brand-name drug. The pharmaceutical company also must manufacture the generic drug under the same strict quality guidelines as a brand-name drug. Plus, the FDA scientists, chemists and microbiologists reviewing generic medicines must have the same qualifications as those reviewing the brand drugs.

Sometimes the generic manufacturer may not be allowed to use the same color or shape because of patents protecting the brand drug. These are only cosmetic differences that in no way impact the safety or effectiveness of the generic version.

Just as Safe, But for a Lot Less

Buying generic is completely safe *and* will save you money at the pharmacy counter. Generic drugs cost much less than the brand-name version. When you buy generic drugs, your co-pay is only $3 (under TRICARE) — that's one-third of the $9 co-pay for brand-name drugs. It makes sense to ask for the more affordable generic drugs when filling prescriptions at your local pharmacy.

The Defense Department's long-practiced mandatory generic drug policy requires pharmacists to fill your prescriptions with a generic drug, if one is available. TRICARE will fill prescriptions for brand-name drugs that have a generic equivalent *if* your prescribing physician establishes medical necessity for using the brand-name drug. If you have a prescription for a drug that has no generic equivalent, your pharmacist will give you the brand-name drug at the brand-name co-pay.

Why Are Generics So Cheap?

Brand-name drug companies develop new drugs under patent protection, giving them the sole right to sell the drug. When the patent expires, generic drug companies may submit a shortened new-drug application to the FDA for approval to market an equivalent product under its chemical, or "generic," name. Under the shortened new-drug application process, the generic drug manufacturer does not have to repeat expensive research on ingredients or dosage forms that are already FDA-approved. This saves the pharmaceutical company time and money — and they pass the savings along to you.

By using generics, you will enjoy a safe and less expensive alternative to brand-name drugs. Buying generics saves you money today and helps the Defense Department save money, ensuring the future of the TRICARE benefit.

— David N. Tornberg
Deputy assistant secretary of defense for clinical and program policy

Traffic

Motorcycle and

Fatalities Rise

pedestrian deaths lead the bad news

An increase in motorcycle and pedestrian deaths contributed to an overall rise in highway fatalities in 2005, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced Aug. 22.

The total number of fatalities rose 1.4 percent from 42,836 in 2004 to 43,443 in 2005, while the rate of fatalities was 1.47 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, up from 1.45 in 2004.

Despite the spike in motorcycle and pedestrian fatalities, Acting Secretary of Transportation Maria Cino noted other fatality trends were improving. She explained that the number of young drivers dying in car crashes declined in 2005 for the third straight year, while the number of children who were killed in crashes also declined. The largest drop was for children ages 8-15.

"We have no tolerance for any numbers higher than zero," Cino said. "Motorcyclists need to wear their helmets, drivers need to buckle up, and all motorists need to stay sober."

The acting secretary said the increase in vehicle fatalities comes from the dramatic rise in the number of motorcycle fatalities and increases in the number of pedestrian fatalities over the previous year. She noted, for example, that motorcycle fatalities rose 13 percent from 4,028 in 2004 to 4,553 in 2005, and that almost half of the people who died were not wearing a helmet.

Motorcycle fatalities rose 13 percent from 4,028 in 2004 to 4,553 in 2005, and almost half of the people who died were not wearing a helmet.

The number of pedestrian fatalities increased to 4,881 in 2005 from 4,675 in 2004, she added. NHTSA is investigating this year's increase in pedestrian fatalities to determine the cause.

Cino said NHTSA is working to reduce the number of motorcycle fatalities by encouraging motorcyclists to get proper training, always wear helmets, and absolutely never drink and ride. She added that the department's Federal Highway Administration is working with state and local governments to improve pedestrian safety and that the agency is providing more than $600 million over the next three years to help states develop pedestrian safety programs.

Specifically, NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System shows that, between 2004 and 2005, the number of young drivers (16-20) killed declined by 4.6 percent from 3,538 to 3,374. Fatal crashes involving young drivers declined by 6.3 percent from 7,431 to 6,964. Meanwhile, the number of children 0-15 dying in crashes dropped from 2,622 in 2004 to 2,348 in 2005.

Cino added that the number of people injured in motor vehicle crashes declined 3.2 percent from 2.8 million in 2004 to 2.7 million in 2005. Passenger vehicle occupant fatalities also dropped by 451, from 31,866 in 2004 to 31,415 in 2005, the lowest level since 1994.

In addition, the number of fatalities from large truck crashes declined slightly from 5,235 to 5,212, while the number of occupants killed in rollover crashes increased 2.1 percent from 10,590 to 10, 816. And the number of SUV rollover fatalities dropped 1.8 percent from 2,929 to 2,877.

"We will not be satisfied until the fatality and injury numbers reach zero," said NHTSA Administrator Nicole Nason.

NHTSA collects crash statistics annually from the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to produce annual reports of traffic fatality trends. The 2005 report can be seen at: *www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/ncsa/ppt/2006/810639.pdf.*

This story is courtesy of the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

THE GOOD NEWS

- The number of people injured in motor vehicle crashes declined 3.2 percent from 2.8 million in 2004 to 2.7 million in 2005.
- Passenger vehicle occupant fatalities dropped by 451, from 31,866 in 2004 to 31,415 in 2005, the lowest level since 1994.
- The number of fatalities from large truck crashes declined slightly from 5,235 to 5,212.

THE BAD NEWS

- Total number of fatalities rose 1.4 percent from 42,836 in 2004 to 43,443 in 2005.
- The rate of fatalities was 1.47 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, up from 1.45 in 2004.
- The number of pedestrian fatalities increased to 4,881 in 2005 from 4,675 in 2004.

No Survivors!

Three people die when Airman falls asleep at the wheel

By Tech. Sgt. **Lawrence Richards**
Photos courtesy of **Texas Department of Public Safety**

In late April, a 23-year-old Airman first class from Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, crossed the center line while driving south on Texas Highway 195. He had a head-on collision with another vehicle driving in the opposite direction on the two-lane, undivided highway. The Airman and both occupants of the other vehicle died from injuries sustained in the crash.

The Airman had only gotten three hours of sleep the night before the accident, because, according to this mother, he'd had trouble sleeping because he was excited about graduating from technical school. He had already driven nearly 140 miles that day, had made a stop at his sister's house, and was 35 miles into the next leg of his trip when the accident occurred.

Accident investigators say it appears the Airman fell asleep at the wheel.

According to the National Sleep Foundation and their *Sleep in America* poll, 60 percent of drivers on American roads have driven while sleepy and 37 percent of those polled admitted to having fallen asleep at least once while driving in the last year.

The true statistics for drowsy driving, though, are difficult to determine. Many people won't admit to putting themselves and others in such a dangerous predicament, and it is often difficult for police to determine if those killed in accidents died as a result of falling asleep behind the wheel.

How dangerous is drowsy driving?

Driving while drowsy has been proven to be exceptionally dangerous; reaction time is impaired, as are judgment and vision. More than 100,000 police-reported accidents each year in the United States are attributed to falling asleep behind the wheel. Many of these accidents occur at full speed as often the drivers do not wake in time to apply their brakes prior to impact.

It is estimated that being awake for 18 hours has an equal effect on performance as having a blood alcohol concentration of .08 percent, which is legally drunk in all 50 states. Almost all police officers surveyed reported that they had pulled over a driver they thought was drunk, but was sleepy instead.

Some people are at a higher risk of falling asleep while driving than others. High risk categories include: drivers under the age of 25; shift workers; those

with sleep disorders such as sleep apnea; and business travelers or those who frequently experience jet lag.

We in the military often fall into some or all of these categories. Our jobs often force us to work long hours and variable shifts. This is why we must be especially aware of drowsy driving and must ensure our co-workers are aware as well.

Knowing the warning signs of being drowsy can help you determine when you may be unfit to drive. These are some signs that you should stop driving: difficulty focusing, frequent blinking or heavy eyelids; daydreaming; trouble remembering the last few miles driven, missing exits or traffic signs; and drifting from your lane, tailgating or hitting a shoulder rumble strip.

These symptoms, however, are not always conclusive. According to a report on drowsy driving crashes by the American Automobile Association, nearly one quarter of all drivers identified as "asleep" when they crashed reported not feeling at all drowsy just before their crash.

The most important thing you can do to reduce your chance of driving while drowsy is to get the proper amount of sleep. Most of us need seven to nine hours of sleep to maintain proper alertness. In addition, here are some other ways you can help avoid this danger:

- *Plan to drive long trips with a companion.*
- *Schedule regular stops.*
- *Drive during daylight hours.*
- *Avoid alcohol and medications which may increase your drowsiness.*
- *Consult your physician if you suspect you may have a sleep disorder.*
- *Consume the equivalent of two cups of coffee's worth of caffeine.*

Keep in mind that caffeine takes about 30 minutes to enter the bloodstream, will not greatly affect those who regularly use it, and is a temporary fix. A short nap will improve your wakefulness faster and more effectively. Some other traditional measures used to counteract drowsiness while driving include:

- *Roll down the car windows.*
- *Turn up the radio.*
- *Stop to stretch.*

These methods have long been used in varying effect to enhance wakefulness, but all are less effective than avoiding sleepiness in the first place.

The threats posed by drowsy driving are truly eye-opening, but the methods of lowering your risks are simple. Learning the signs, risks and countermeasures of drowsy driving will do much to help lower your chances of being involved in a drowsy driving accident.

Remember, a stop at a rest stop or hotel is worth it when your life and the lives of others depend on it.

Sergeant Richards is with the 316th Training Squadron at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas.

Top Risks for Falling Asleep at the Wheel

- *Drivers under the age of 25.*
- *Shift workers.*
- *Those with sleep disorders such as sleep apnea.*
- *Business travelers or those who frequently experience jet lag.*
- *Impaired drivers.*

Warning Signs of Drowsy Driving

- *Difficulty focusing.*
- *Frequent blinking or heavy eyelids.*
- *Daydreaming.*
- *Trouble remembering the last few miles driven.*
- *Missing exits or traffic signs.*
- *Drifting from your lane, tailgating or hitting a shoulder rumble strip.*

– Information courtesy of the National Sleep Foundation

***Images of the wreckage** show why there was little chance of survival in the aftermath of this head-on collision. The news gets even more grim: A recent survey showed that 37 percent of those polled admitted to having fallen asleep at least once while driving last year.*

At the U.S. Air Force Academy's parachuting course, there's only one season . . .

FALL!

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. MATTHEW HANNEN

He'd found the courage to jump out of the Twin Otter aircraft soaring 4,500 feet above terra firma. He'd survived the heart-stopping 10 seconds of free-fall at 120 mph, with a wind rush that can peel your lips back. He'd guided his chute to the landing zone. Now there was one last task for this parachuting student on his first solo jump — simply land. … Easier said than done.

While hanging from a harness, *Cadet Joshua Hausman gets some tips from instructor Staff Sgt. Steve Ramos on the proper procedures for jumping out of a plane.*

"The cadet got target fixation," said Senior Master Sgt. Ron Sherrill, superintendent of the 98th Flight Training Squadron at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo.

As the student came in to land, he saw the landing control truck in the middle of the field.

"He thinks to himself, 'I don't want to hit the truck,'" Sherrill said. "He was so focused on watching the truck that his body automatically adjusted to the direction he was looking and his canopy followed. In an instant he was off his mark."

Hello, truck!

"He slammed right into the vehicle because he was watching the truck instead of focusing on where he wanted to land," Sherrill said.

"He stood up and walked away; it would have hurt an old guy like me. The young cadets are flexible at their age. But it's also a testament to the safety equipment we use."

The academy's AM 490 jump training is roughly an eight-day course … roughly because not every student lasts that long. Some "bail" because of fear; others fail because they can't master the stringent safety standards.

"The cadets come through with little to no jump experience most of the time," according to Master Sgt. Rick McClure, a jumpmaster instructor. "This is the only skydiving course I know of in the world that offers free fall on your first jump … solo free fall anyway."

The course starts with three to four days of grueling ground training, followed by the students getting in Twin Otter airplanes and putting their new skydiving skills to the test in the air.

"It's a lot of hard work — a lot of difficult things you need to put up with — but the payoffs of the jump are so worth it."

After finishing an already tough first year at the academy, about a third of the cadets enter the intensive AM 490 ground training.

It involves hours of parachute landing falls; emergency procedures; arching for better control on the descent; and various other skills students need to be able to do in their sleep.

In the end, some cadets actually become jump instructors themselves.

"It's kind of a love/hate relationship," said skydiving cadet instructor Jared Krueger, a junior from Cincinnati. "It's a lot of hard work — a lot of difficult things you need to put up with — but the payoffs of the jump are so worth it. It is so nice to come down here and escape the pressures of classes, athletics and military training. Plus, we get to see how an operational squadron works, how it will be in the flying world."

Jumping out of an airplane is definitely not a natural thing for anyone. Some of the common concerns that students go through before jumping are fears of death, not performing up to standards and graduating.

Performance anxiety is a biggie, McClure said.

"A lot of the guys who come through the academy have never failed in their life," he explained. "And jumping out of an aircraft isn't exactly for everyone. So if they don't make it or even have trouble in a certain area, it's not uncommon for cadets to get so disappointed that they cry."

Some of the cadets have never even flown in an airplane before. So when they go up, all they have to rely on is their training, McClure said. If they overcome their fear, it's a huge accomplishment that no one can ever take away from them.

But they do have fear. Who wouldn't?

"I was scared until I started falling; then I felt sheer terror," Cadet Erin Johnson said of her first jump. "After my chute came out, I felt so much better**.** Then I worried about the landing. But I landed, and I didn't hurt anything. It was really cool. The instructors did a great job teaching us. We did arch count pulls till forever — I could do them in my sleep. They prepared us really well."

In reality, skydiving is a safe sport, McClure said. He pointed out that, statistically speaking, it is actually more dangerous to drive to work than it is to jump out of a plane.

***Cadets** practice landings from different platforms.*

Anxiety kicks in *as cadets step to a Twin Otter aircraft for their first jump.*

Jump Instructor Cadet Sky Jenson *coaches a student out the door of the aircraft.*

The academy did experience one death back in the 80s when a parachutist was caught in rotor winds coming from the west over the mountains.

The academy responded to this tragedy by installing weather stations throughout the front-range. This allows them to not only monitor winds on the airfield, but those of the surrounding terrain as well.

Another safety precaution the jump school has taken is to upgrade their parachutes.

The old parachute was a round vented P-78, which was green and 28 feet in diameter. You could steer it, but it relied mostly on the wind drift for landing. The new parachute is a performance design 300-square-foot parachute. They are multicolored for student identification under canopy. They are rectangular in shape for better control. They have steering lines, which not only enable the pilot to steer, but to have stand-up landings as well (the old chutes didn't have this capability).

The new parachute also helps the cadet understand the physics of flight, because the chute, for all intents and purposes, is like the wing of an aircraft.

Since using the new parachute, the school has reduced off-drop-zone landings by 95 percent. It has also reduced injuries (primarily to the ankle, leg and back) by 60 percent.

Nevertheless, not all jumps go as planned. Tech. Sgt. Jason Tepool, noncommissioned officer in charge

Cadets are required to jump *out of a Twin Otter aircraft five times to pass the course.*

of parachute demonstrations at the academy, can attest to this fact having had two malfunctions during his career. He has jumped more than 1,300 times.

"On my 72nd jump, I had a malfunction where my main parachute failed to open," he said. "I used my reserve, and everything was fine. Another time I was doing a tandem jump as a tandem instructor, and our parachute malfunctioned. I had to go to my reserve on that, as well. Afterward the person I was jumping with realized what happened and thanked me for saving his life."

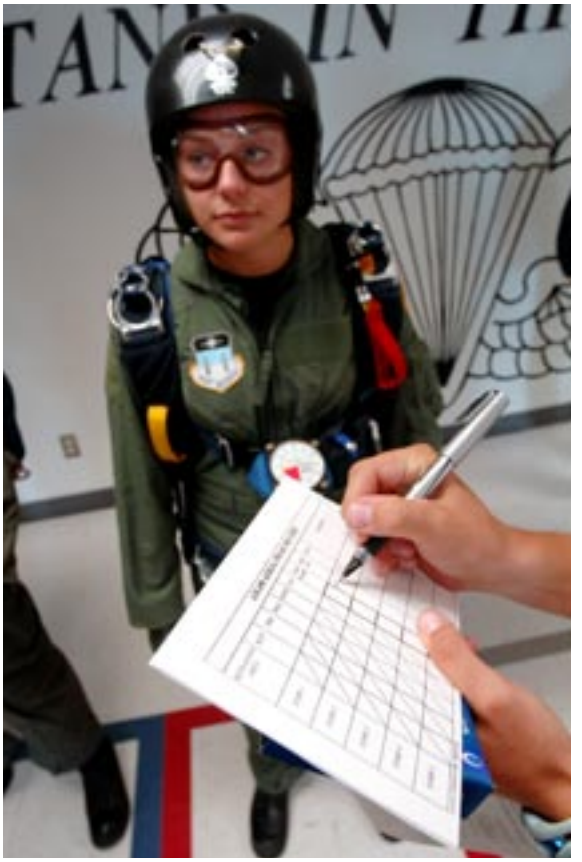
In the end it all comes down to the instructor's innate ability to mentor and mold the cadets.

The kind of training done at the 490 course is repetitive, intensive and it's going to make you sore, Sherrill said. The goal is to build in muscle memory on the ground. That way when the cadets get in the air, their brains can tell their bodies what to do and their bodies will do it, he said.

Jump students have to overcome many natural instincts to jump out of an aircraft. Their survival instincts tell them to crawl back into the plane, or to try to grab the back of the airplane to halt their fall, or to flail when they are falling. They have to fight those instincts.

Students don't get in trouble unless they willfully break a safety rule, Sherrill said.

"For example if a student decides he wants to fall longer before opening his parachute and intentionally doesn't deploy the chute, then we would document that on the training cards," he said.



Using an AM 490 Aerial Phase Record, *Cadet Caroline White, a jump instructor, tracks Cadet Meredith Leake's progress by marking another task complete.*

But for the most part, the students come away with a life changing experience.

"What they learn from this is that they can face fear," Sherrill said. "They can put their faith in what they have been trained to do, and then they can follow through and do it. That is part of the character development."

PULLING THE CHUTE

When the U.S. Air Force Academy switched from the old round P-78 parachute to the new performance design 300-square-foot rectangular parachute, they received immediate returns for cadet skydivers, in terms of safety. They included:

- *Improved canopy visibility because of the multicolored design.*
- *Better steering and control.*
- *Stand-up landings, instead of fall landings.*
- *Reduced off-drop-zone landings by 95 percent.*
- *Reduced injuries (primarily to the ankle, leg and back) by 60 percent.*

A LEAP OF FAITH

Photographer jumps out of airplane

I woke up before my alarm clock sounded. I'd had a restless night of sleep. But who wouldn't? This July 18 I'd spend wondering if it would be my last. Those are the kinds of thoughts that run through your mind when you are going to jump out of an airplane at 11,000 feet for the very first time. I didn't want them to change my name from Matt Hannen, to "Splat" Hannen.

I drove to the U.S. Air Force Academy parachute training facility in the 98th Flight Training Squadron around 9 a.m. I'd be doing a tandem jump, meaning I would be strapped to a jumpmaster via harness, and he would deploy his parachute after dropping for about 10 seconds.

As I was getting out of my car, I happened to look up at the sky and spotted nearly a half dozen parachutists dropping above my head. I grabbed my camera and took a few images.

As I watched them, I thought, "What did I get myself into?"

I was then greeted by Staff Sgt. Steve Ramos, a videographer, who would be documenting my loco leap from a perfectly good Twin Otter aircraft. He guided me to a prepping area inside a hangar, where I put on a blue harness. Ramos informed me I also would be required to wear a canula (a nose breathing tube used for oxygen).

I then donned a brown swimmer-like cap, which fit over my ears and covered my head snuggly. I looked at the cap gravely and thought, "Death shrouds."

During the jump safety brief, an instructor told me to arch my back and throw my arms out in front of me to keep me from falling in the wrong direction after jumping out of the aircraft. This already complicated things for me, as I thought you could only fall in one direction … down.

Continuing, the instructor said that just before the parachute opened, I would need to bring my arms in and my feet together so no limbs could get caught up in the parachute as it opened. I nervously caressed my arms.

Upon landing, I would need to bring my feet up as close to my chest as possible; otherwise, I would land on my knees and possibly be dragged by the parachute. I tried to remember if I'd seen any cactuses near the landing area.

Next, I watched a video demonstrating what I was about to do and signed some papers promising not to sue after severely injuring myself.

After we took off, I was so nervous it took every muscle in my mouth not to show it. I tried to appear nonchalant, but I don't think I was very convincing.

"So, have you done this before?" asked Senior Master Sgt. Ron Sherrill, superintendent of the 98th FTS.

"No," I replied as calmly as possible.

"It's OK," Sherrill said. "Thousands have jumped before you, and thousands will jump after you. Are you excited?"

"Yes," I replied almost robotically.

"Well, you couldn't be with a better tandem jumpmaster (Master Sgt. Rick McClure)," Sherrill said. "If he feels something is wrong, he will fix it before you know anything has happened. I would let my wife and children jump with him and not even think twice."

The cynical side of me couldn't help but wonder how much life insurance the friendly superintendent had on his family.

Ramos stepped in to start videotaping my experience, and asked, "So, Matt, what are you about to do?"

"Ahh, die!" I replied.

"No, it's not 'die'; it's dive – skydive," said McClure, giving a reassuring

smile like any good jumpmaster would.

I kept telling myself I should be savoring this experience. The academy has a fantastic safety record for skydivers. I just didn't want to be that one person who did it wrong and ended up being a blemish on that superb record. Not to mention, when you work for a safety magazine, you don't want to inadvertently become its cover story.

As a few jumpers disappeared from the safety of the plane, I knew I was next. The butterflies churned in my stomach. Then, my time was up.

McClure instructed me to follow his orders closely. He asked me to undo my seat belt (I did so reluctantly), disconnect the canula (goodbye precious oxygen), and walk over to him so he could strap me into his parachute. Next, we shuffled slowly to the back of the plane, waiting for the OK to jump.

He said, "All right, inch yourself out to the edge real slow."

I followed his instructions, and the next thing I knew I was falling out of the plane. No going back now!

I heard McClure saying, "Arch 1,000, arch 2,000, arch 3,000."

I remembered my training and arched and kicked my feet back as far as I could. As I did this I looked in front of me at the horizon, and Ramos popped out in front of me like a curious bird witnessing my dive. Free-falling at 120 mph, the wind rush forced my mouth open (or maybe it was the silent screams), and I had to hold my goggles so my glasses wouldn't fly off my face. But my fear turned into the thrill of my life.

"... Jumping out of an aircraft at 11,000 feet ... I didn't want them to change my name from Matt Hannen to 'Splat' Hannen."

— Staff Sgt. Matthew Hannen

Suddenly, the chute was pulled, and we were being jerked really hard – like being lassoed off of a horse at a dead run. Then, just as suddenly, everything slowed down as the chute caught and we began to float.

McClure told me to relax because this was the best part of the jump. He advised me to take in the view. I did. The mountains, the academy … what a feeling!

McClure interrupted my basking to ask me if I wanted to have some fun.

"Sure," I replied.

He said, "If you start feeling sick, let me know."

Before you could say, "Please, Mommy, I want to go home," we started doing loops and spins. Weren't we pushing our luck?

Soon, it was time to land. McClure reminded me that the most important thing was to keep my feet up as high as possible when landing so the parachute wouldn't drag me. … Again, thoughts of a cactus impaling me.

He came in almost perfectly on a round sandpit about 10 feet wide. I landed without incident and with a lot of relief. McClure gave me a high five and then grabbed the parachute so we could head back into the hangar to go over my form.

Turns out my form and landing were nearly perfect. I was proud of myself.

Of course, 30 minutes later I was still patting myself on the back for jumping from 11,000 feet without a scratch. With these thoughts soaring through my brain, I climbed a 2-foot stepstool to take more pictures and promptly fell off. I landed on my left arm, straining my wrist and skinning my elbow.

Oh well. Humble pie is better served at 2 feet than 11,000 feet.

— Staff Sgt. Matthew Hannen

video images by Staff Sgt. Steve Ramos

Fast Jet Pilot Learns to Fly Slow

Commander gives tips on 'driving bug-smashers'

By Col. **Russ Hodgkins**
Photo by Master Sgt. **Lance Cheung**

There I was … doing my joint tour running the command center at European Command Headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. I'd been out of the cockpit for almost four years and was expecting an assignment, probably another staff job. Like always, I wasn't anticipating any great deals from the personnel system.

We were a little bit busy with a minor dust-up in the Middle East, so I was putting in some pretty long days. On one of these days, a piece of paper showed up in my inbox labeled "Assignment Notification." I looked at the paper and read, "Vice-Commander, CAP-USAF." The duty location box read "Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala."

Maxwell again! Mama isn't going to like this. My wife was just getting over living there while I went through Air War College. Our rental house had roaches the size of small automobiles. "You *better* get that changed," she told me, emphasizing "better" in such a way that I knew it wasn't a suggestion, but an ultimatum.

So I called the boys at Randolph AFB, Texas. "What's a CAP-USAF?" I asked. They explained that it's the active duty outfit that works with the Civil Air Patrol.

I explained my plight. I left out the roaches bit, knowing that complaining to guys in San Antonio about roaches would be like complaining to guys in Washington D.C. about traffic. They listened sympathetically, as they always do, before responding.

"Well, this is a pretty hard fill for us," they said. "We need a pilot since it's a flying billet. But give us a day to look around a little, sir."

"Whoa! Slow down cowboys! Did you say 'flying billet'?" I asked.

"Oh yes sir … wasn't that on the rip?"

"Ahhh, no. Just out of curiosity, what would I fly?"

"Little Cessnas and things like that. The same airplanes the CAP flies."

"Well, I'll be. You're sure this is an active-duty assignment?"

"Oh, yes sir. It's active-duty."

So I called the wife. "Sorry honey. I'm the only one available. …"

The Civil Air Patrol *operates the largest Cessna fleet in the world and is funded by the federal government. The vast majority of its 530 corporation-owned aircraft are Cessna 172s or 182s.*

Fast forward a few years. Yes, the roaches in Alabama are as bad as always. And I still spend more time behind the desk than I do in the cockpit. That's to be expected, as I've moved from vice commander to commander. But I get to go fly as often as the paperwork monster allows.

I don't claim to be an expert on general aviation aircraft, but I think I can pass on some lessons learned from my experiences. I had 4,000-plus hours in jets (EF-111s and T-38s) before I got this job, and the last airplane I flew with a prop was a T-41 when I was a cadet. But this still might be beneficial to those of you out there thinking of joining your local aero club or starting to fly general aviation aircraft. The following is what I think a military jet aviator should do to learn to fly a "bug-smasher" in the general aviation environment.

Take it seriously.

If you do nothing else, do this. Many of you out there probably know someone who has killed himself in a general aviation aircraft mishap. (If you don't, you will.) In many cases, these mishaps involved breaches of flight discipline that would not be tolerated in an Air Force aircraft.

Why? Because often times reasonably smart guys, who should know better, don't take flying a light aircraft seriously.

Flying a light airplane may not be as challenging as a jet, but it's more complex than, say, riding a bicycle. You can kill yourself just as dead in a light aircraft as a jet. So, spend your time in the books, learn about your aircraft, the local area, and *definitely* all those Federal Aviation Administration rules that don't apply to military flying but sure apply to you now.

Learn about the idiosyncrasies of the piston engine and how to take care of it.

If you study general aviation accident statistics, you'll learn about half of the aircraft mishaps due to "material factors" are engine related. So learn how that big piece of metal up front driving the fan works and how to take care of it.

You'll soon learn there are all sorts of extra colored knobs in the cockpit that control things like the "prop pitch," "mixture," or "cowl flaps." Generally, these knobs are like Tweet throttles, pushing or pulling them doesn't necessarily make you go faster, but mishandling them will cause bad things to happen.

Ground school books are full of graphic pictures of broken connecting rods or cracked cylinder heads that will illustrate this point. So learn how to handle the engine controls correctly. There are many resources to help you learn. My favorite, and certainly one of the most readable, is a series of articles by John Deakin at AVWeb, *www.avweb.com/news/columns/182146-1.html*.

Respect the weather.

You really need to respect the weather when flying a general aviation aircraft. There are a few reasons for this.

In the first place, when the weather gets bad, you're in it! You don't normally have the option of flying over it (and flying around it takes a *long* time).

In the second place, the flight instruments in light aircraft are not particularly reliable. For some inexplicable reason, a device called a "vacuum pump" drives most general aviation aircraft gyros. These have a history of breaking at very inopportune times, like when you're in the clouds. Some reliable sources attribute about one-quarter of all light aircraft mishaps to vacuum pump failure.

In the third place, even when the vacuum pump is working and driving the gyros correctly, the instruments in most general aviation aircraft are pretty lousy anyway. Let me point out that when I learned to fly Tweets, some still had J-8 attitude indicators, so I know a little about lousy instruments. In any case, don't expect to find a nice "T" cross-check on the panel of the typical light aircraft.

Also, if you fly with an aero club that has more than one aircraft, you'll find that the instrument panel layout in light aircraft is rarely standardized. And finally, since you may not be flying on a regular basis, you need to keep in mind that your personal instrument meteorological conditions currency will suffer and plan accordingly.

Landing won't be as easy as you think.

I found landing the hardest part to re-learn about flying a light aircraft. It's certainly not impossible to learn, but don't expect to be highly proficient at landing on your first pattern. Spend enough time in the pattern to get it right. Additionally, spend some time practicing simulated forced landings — both in the area and in the pattern. Someday you may have to do one for real.

Stick with what you know.

One of the great appeals of general aviation to many is the looser environment and the greater freedom you have when flying other forms of aviation. You can do lots of things and go lots of places that you can't in a military jet.

However, you need to realize that without someone looking over your shoulder, the opportunity to do something really dumb is increased, as well. So think about the things you do when flying a military aircraft, such as rigorous preflight planning and flying instrument flight rules to the max extent practical, and apply this philosophy to your civilian flying.

Sure, you're not *required* to file a visual flight rules flight plan, but not filing one is pretty stupid. Remember, as a military pilot you have been brought up with a very disciplined approach to aviation. Carry this over to your civilian flying, and you'll stay safe.

There's probably a lot more ground I could cover; but if nothing else, I hope this information has given those of you thinking about flying in the general aviation environment a few things to think about.

Fly smart — fly safe.

Colonel Hodgkins is the commander of the Civil Air Patrol-U.S. Air Force at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

NEW OWNERS OF THE OSPREY

AETC STARTS CV-22 TRAINING MISSION

By Master Sgt. **AUSTIN CARTER**
Photo by Staff Sgt. **MARKUS MAIER**

Osprey sighting: *The first Air Education and Training Command CV-22 sortie prepares to take off at Kirtland AFB, N.M., July 19.*

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. (AETCNS) — It's now official. The CV-22 Osprey, which has been incrementally delivered here since March, is now an Air Education and Training Command asset.

The owner has been Air Force Special Operations Command, but after the recently completed operational utility evaluation and final transfer and acceptance maintenance inspections, the four tiltrotor aircraft here are now in the AETC inventory. The last Osprey made the transfer July 14.

"It's like buying a car," said Lt. Col. Jim Cardoso, commander of the 71st Special Operations Squadron, the 58th Special Operations Wing unit which will conduct future training on the aircraft. "You want to know if the blinker doesn't work and have it fixed before you buy it. It makes sure there are no surprises in what we're accepting from the losing command."

The long and sometimes serpentine path for a new aircraft to be accepted is more complicated than testing a light switch or kicking the tires.

"[Getting the Osprey] is like buying a car. You want to know if the blinker doesn't work and have it fixed before you buy it. It makes sure there are no surprises in what we're accepting from the losing command."

After the aircraft started arriving in the spring, the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center began the evaluation needed to find out the answer to the question: "Is the aircraft suitable for training?" To accomplish this, AFOTEC tasked AFSOC's 18th Flight Test Squadron in Florida to create a detachment to test the aircraft. The final sortie of the three-week evaluation was June 29.

Early in July, the final transfer inspection was conducted in conjunction with the aircrafts' periodic maintenance to save time and hours.

"It was AFSOC and AETC maintainers working together, one set doing the 'transfer' inspection and the other doing the required 'acceptance' inspection," Cardoso said. "All four aircraft are now transferred to AETC. It was done piecemeal — whenever the aircraft came up for periodic inspection — but it was done quickly."

Although the two teams of inspectors worked closely during this phase, the acceptance portion was more intensive, said Chief Master Sgt. Michael Hall, NCOIC of the 71st Aircraft Maintenance Unit. That's simply because the acquisition of an entirely new aircraft into the Air Force inventory means new problems must be resolved.

"We had a few expected glitches, mostly with the database," Hall said. "It's a simple transfer of a database of maintenance scheduling when we're accepting an older aircraft. But the CV-22 is new, and we found ourselves setting up a whole new database, which we had to make sure was accurate and up-to-date."

Kirtland's Osprey community is not finished jumping through the inspection hoops yet.

Next is the initial operational test and evaluation to begin in the fall of 2007, in which the Osprey will be run through the paces to ensure it's fit for operational employment. Last month the entire squadron went to Edwards AFB, Calif., for five weeks to help out with one phase of the developmental test. The CV-22 will be in the California desert to help in the electronic warfare integration assessment, which tests its electronic warfare system capabilities.

"We're basically trying to help find out if the electronic warfare system does what the contractor says it will do," the colonel said. "We're helping to find out if the CV-22 is operationally suitable to do the mission."

Eventually, Cardoso said, the inspections lead the aircraft to its final goal in January 2009 — the initial operation capability. This will be the moment the warfighting command certifies the aircraft is fully mission capable.

"Everything is geared toward that moment," he said.

After the return of the Osprey community from California in August, the CV-22 was deemed ready to begin its mission here — training flight crews.

"After the [assessment] we can solely concentrate on being a school," Cardoso said. "In September we'll be like all the other squadrons in the 58th SOW; we'll be training, which is what we've been building up to since the squadron stood up in May 2005. It's exciting to finally be doing what we've been set up to do.

"Six months ago, seeing a CV-22 over the Albuquerque skyline was a 'Gosh, what's that?' moment. Six months from now it will be commonplace. This is not a rumor; it's happening."

Sergeant Carter is with the 58th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs at Kirtland AFB, N.M.

CLEAR THE RUNWAY

33RD FIGHTER WING SLATED FOR F-35 TRAINING MISSION

WASHINGTON — Air Force officials announced plans to assign the mission of training new Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and allied F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter pilots and maintainers to the 33rd Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

The wing will transfer from Air Combat Command to Air Education and Training Command when it assumes the F-35 training mission.

Final planning for the move is dependent on the results of the ongoing environmental impact analysis process that is required by the National Environmental Policy Act and designed to identify and assess potential environmental impacts of the proposed action.

The first of the F-35s, a family of next generation, stealthy, multi-role fighter aircraft, should begin arriving at Eglin by 2010. The wing will include Sailors, Marines, Airmen and allied military personnel and all three versions of the new fighter – conventional take off and landing, short take off and vertical landing, and carrier variants. The Lightning II's advanced airframe, avionics, propulsion systems, stealth and firepower will make it an affordable, lethal, supportable and survivable aircraft for warfighters around the globe.

***F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter** pilots and maintainers will train at Eglin AFB, Fla.*

courtesy Lockheed-Martin

The 33rd Fighter Wing's F-15 Eagles will be redistributed throughout the Air Force to active duty and Air National Guard units, replacing older F-15s in the inventory. The final F-15 is slated for reassignment in the summer of fiscal 2010.

In the next few years, AETC will stand up a new wing structure for the F-35 training mission with approximately 2,200 people. It is unknown at this time how many people will transfer from one mission to another.

The 33rd Fighter Wing, whose mission is to "maintain the world's best rapidly deployable air control and air superiority forces for theater combatant commanders," is a combat-flying unit assigned under ACC's 9th Air Force and is a major tenant unit on Eglin AFB.

The wing operates two flying squadrons, the 58th and 60th, along with the 33rd Operations Support Squadron, the 33rd Maintenance Operations Squadron, the 33rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, the 33rd Maintenance Squadron, and the 728th Air Control Squadron.

PILOT ERROR CAUSES PREDATOR CRASH

file photo

***An MQ-1 Predator** armed with an AGM-114 Hellfire missile flies a training mission. The MQ-1's primary mission is interdiction and conducting armed reconnaissance against critical, perishable targets.*

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (ACCNS) — Pilot error caused an MQ-1L Predator aircraft to crash during a reconnaissance mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom March 20, according to an aircraft accident investigation report released in August.

There were no injuries in the incident, and the aircraft crashed in an unpopulated area. Damage totaled approximately $4.3 million. The aircraft is assigned to the 15th Reconnaissance Squadron, 57th Wing, Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

At the time of the incident, the pilot was flying the remotely piloted aircraft to a new reconnaissance mission location at an airspeed in excess of 110 knots. As a result of flying at this speed, the aircraft rapidly lost altitude, arriving at the new location approximately 2,000 feet below the required clearance altitude.

The pilot mistakenly concluded this rapid loss of altitude was because of a control problem with the aircraft. In an attempt to correct the problem, the pilot turned off the stability augmentation system pitch and roll axes. This caused the aircraft to go into a steep dive, thereby losing its satellite communication link. Once the link was lost, the pilot was unable to regain control of the aircraft, and it subsequently crashed.

Investigators concluded failure to control the remotely piloted aircraft and the resulting crash were a direct result of the pilot's decision to turn off the aircraft's stability augmentation system pitch and roll axes.

GRAVITY-INDUCED LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS LEADS TO F-16 MISHAP

by Tech. Sgt. Mike Buytas

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (ACCNS) — An F-16CJ pilot ejected from his aircraft over the Atlantic Ocean April 5 after experiencing a gravity-induced loss of consciousness and awaking to find his aircraft in an unrecoverable dive, according to an Air Combat Command report released in July.

The pilot suffered serious injuries during the high-speed ejection, which took place while the aircraft was traveling in excess of 750 mph. The aircraft, assigned to the 20th Fighter Wing, Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., crashed into the ocean approximately 80 miles northeast of Charleston, S.C., and was destroyed. The cost of the aircraft loss is estimated at nearly $23 million.

At the time of the incident the pilot was performing a high-gravity maneuver during a basic fighter maneuver training mission. The investigating officer concluded there was substantial evidence that physical fatigue from flying five high-G sorties in three days, an extended layoff from flying and the mental stress associated with his instructor pilot upgrade training were contributing factors to the pilot's loss of consciousness.

A pilot was seriously injured *when he ejected from his F-16, which was in an uncontrollable dive at more than 750 mph.*

UNCONTROLLABLE FIRE COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED

by Staff Sgt. Mark Borosch

A training munition released *by a B-1B bomber started a fire that burned nearly 26,000 acres.*

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (ACCNS) — A training munition released by a B-1B aircraft at the Melrose Bombing Range Nov. 30 started a fire that burned approximately 26,000 acres of grazing and farmland and damaged or destroyed privately owned structures, fencing, wells, livestock, animal feed and crops, according to Air Force investigators.

The aircraft, on a training mission from Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, released a Bomb Dummy Unit on the range, located approximately 24 miles west of Cannon AFB, N.M. The munition's spotting charge, roughly equivalent to the charge of a shotgun shell, started the fire. One Melrose volunteer firefighter suffered a broken ankle en route to the fire. There were no human fatalities.

According to the accident investigation board report released May 16, Cannon AFB's Operations Support Squadron and Civil Engineer Squadron leadership failed to recognize the level of fire danger and implement reasonable safety measures to mitigate the risk of an uncontrollable fire at the range.

At the time of the mishap, the risk of an uncontrollable fire was high because of a myriad of factors including an understaffed range fire department, inoperable communication equipment, a large amount of vegetation overgrowth and high winds. Despite the existing hazards, range personnel permitted aircraft to drop practice munitions known to start fires when the fire condition and risks exceeded the resources available to control a potential fire.

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