

Air Education and Training Command's
TORCH
November/December 2009



AERIAL 'GAS CAN'
Carrying on tradition of safe refueling
PAGE 22

BIZARRE HISTORY OF VEHICLE MISHAPS PAGE 8
A look at the first vehicle accident and other odd ones

WHAT SAVED HERO'S LIFE? PAGE 16
Officer credits personal protective equipment

AMERICAN VS. SWISS PAGE 20
A focus on pilot error, the real threat

Hearts Apart

Wounded during an enemy rocket attack in Afghanistan, a Purple Heart recipient talks about the day that almost kept him from ever returning to his young bride and 11-day-old daughter

The Bizarre History of Car Accidents

Since the first person died in a car mishap in 1869, streets have become far busier and a lot more dangerous. Every day, 101 people die on U.S. roads. Take a look at some of the more bizarre incidents.



Courtesy of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office

11 5 Stupid Things Drivers Do

From cutting off big rigs, to backing up a vehicle on the exit ramp, people truly do some dumb, dangerous and different things when they get behind the wheel.

12 Hearts Apart

COVER STORY

Wounded during an enemy rocket attack in Afghanistan, a Purple Heart recipient talks about the day that almost kept him from ever returning to his young bride and 11-day-old daughter.

16 What Saved Hero's Life?

An Air Force officer credits personal protective gear with surviving an enemy assault.

20 American vs. Swiss

American and Swiss cheese are not only good on hoagies, they play a role when it comes to the study of human factors in aviation mishaps, as well.

TORCH TALK 2

Readers discuss kitchen catastrophes, a master gunsmith, shooting your own toe, electrical fires, money and safety, aircraft photos, the 2010 Torch Calendar and more.



AROUND THE COMMAND 4

Spotting Disasters: How to avoid a train wreck ... Moms Collide: A ride home can turn so dangerous.

TALES OF THE STRANGE 6

DWI on a Recliner? Man pleads guilty to driving souped up easy chair while drunk ... Uncommon DWI 'vehicles.'



THE ALERT CONSUMER 7

Don't shoot your eye out! ... A few tips from the shooting range.

HANGAR FLYING 22

Aerial 'Gas Can': Refuelers extend tradition of safe service.



CLEAR THE RUNWAY 24

Air Force finishes safest flying year ... F-15E Crash: Crew deaths blamed on target altitude discrepancy ... Officials release MQ-1B accident report.

November/December 2009
Volume 16, Number 6

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Col. JOHN W. BLUMENTRITT
AETC director of safety

LET THE MASTER ANSWER

The phrase “*respondeat superior*,” which is Latin for “let the master answer,” isn’t one of those buzz-phrases you frequently hear around Air Force circles.

But employers and their lawyers are quite familiar with this key legal doctrine. *Respondeat superior* is complicated, but in a nutshell, it is a provision by which employers may be held financially responsible for the actions of their at-work employees. For example, if a lackadaisical pizza delivery driver negligently runs over one of our Airmen, the company the driver works for may have to pay for the injuries.

Smart employers, who realize they may be held answerable for careless actions performed by employees, are well served by bolstering a culture of safety. These wise leaders attempt to detect deficiencies in the area of safety during the recruiting, interviewing and probationary periods of employment. Once employees are accepted into an organization, they are immediately immersed in mishap prevention programs. Anyone unable to adapt is eliminated.

Few Air Force commanders, supervisors or Airmen are familiar with *respondeat superior* doctrine. Yet members of our team embrace the concept of accountability, which is a loftier mindset. Indeed, Air Force “masters” must answer well beyond the financial liability that burdens their downtown counterparts.

AETC recruiters and early mentors, such as military training leaders and flight instructors, are accountable for identifying those with a propensity for unsafe behavior. Traffic citations, alcohol related incidents, and even financial irresponsibility can be indicative of inadaptability for military service or a flying career.

Air Force recruiters, trainers and educators must be prepared to answer for people they bring into the organization and for those they send forward for expeditionary duties.

Commanders and senior-level leaders retain a similar but higher burden of responsibility and accountability – even when they are not directly in control. Following the collision of the USS Frank E. Evans with an Australian aircraft carrier in 1969, Cmdr. Albert S. McLemore was held accountable for the massive loss of life, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, even though he was asleep in his quarters.

AETC Commander Gen. Stephen R. Lorenz, when emphasizing accountability, frequently references an earlier collision at sea between the USS Hobson and USS Wasp. He cites a 1952 *Wall Street Journal* editorial that, in part, reads, “The captain of a ship, like the captain of a state, is given honor and privileges and trust beyond any other men. But let him set the wrong course, let him touch ground, let him bring disaster to his ship or to his men, and he must answer for what he has done.”

If the “master” must answer in the world of commerce, then the wise business owner should influence employees and shape a desired culture that will limit carelessness and costly accidents. Military professionals, for different reasons, must do the same.

The business owner leverages this stance to protect profits.

Air Force leaders do so, above and beyond, to protect the nation.

“Air Force ‘masters’ must answer well beyond the financial liability that burdens their downtown counterparts.”

John W. Blumentritt

HUMAN INTEREST

Interesting articles on Tech. Sgt. Rhodello Nuval ("Born to Be a Chef," cover story) and William Moore Jr. ("Through the Eyes of a Gunsmith," page 8) in your September/October 2009 issue of Torch.

I love the way you always approach the human interest angles while getting your safety messages out.
*Mary Sullivan
Via e-mail*

WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

Reference your article "Skeet Shooting Mishap Leads to Big Hole in Big Toe" (September/October 2009 Torch, page 6), I always wondered how people managed to accidentally shoot themselves with a rifle or shotgun. It's not easy to point the long barrel at yourself. But where there's a will, there's a way, I guess. There's no shortage of people who seem to "turn off" their brains in these types of mishaps.

*Senior Airman A.J. McWilliams
Air Force Reserve*



Courtesy photo

'SHOCKING AND SAD'

What a shocking and sad story on the family of three who were electrocuted and killed ("Arc Enemy," September/October 2009 issue, page 7). What a tragedy.

*Sam O'Conner
Detroit*

LETTERS TO TORCH

Have a comment or complaint? Letters to Torch may be sent via e-mail to: torch.magazine@randolph.af.mil. Or mail to Torch Editor, HQ AETC/SEM, 244 F Street East, Suite 1, Randolph AFB TX, 78150-4328, or fax to DSN 487-6982 or commercially to (210) 652-6982. For customer service, call DSN 487-5818, or commercially at (210) 652-5818. Please include your name, address and phone number.



File photo

'MONEY IN THE BANK'

I enjoyed reading your article titled "Money in the Bank" (July/August 2009 Torch) and definitely could relate to the subject of money and safety. These are two important messages, and I appreciated how you related one to the other.

*Jim Giacobbe
Lackland Air Force Base, Texas*

A PICTURE WORTH FRAMING

I am writing because my husband is an instructor in the T-1 at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas. I wanted to frame a picture for him of the T-1, and I know he loves the picture you included in your 2008 Torch Calendar. I have looked everywhere for it, but cannot find it in your photo link on the Web site. Could you e-mail that picture to me?

*Rachel Soeken
Via e-mail*

Absolutely! Thank you for your interest in Torch.



by Tech. Sgt. Matthew Hammen

2010 TORCH CALENDAR

I have handed out Torch calendars for the past three years, and now the maintenance instructors here start bugging me for them early. Those guys love the Torch calendar much better than the other boring government ones. Thank you Torch staff!

*Joe A. Valdez
Hill Air Force Base, Utah*



The 310th Fighter Squadron is already a customer, but we would love additional copies of the Torch calendar. The F-16 on the front of the calendar is from our squadron, and many of our instructor pilots would love to have a calendar of their own as well as send one home to family members.

*Jan M. Cutrona
Luke Air Force Base, Ariz.*



I always get a lot of compliments on the Torch calendar hanging on my wall.

*Trooper Travis Hall
San Antonio*



I enjoy your calendars so much and willingly share them with others when I have extra copies. The 80th Operations Group members also enjoy Torch magazine and read it as it comes each time. Fortunately we are able to get our hands on it at various places within the 80th Flying Training Wing. Your photojournalists truly get the shots worth keeping.

*David R. Hess
Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas*



The folks in Air Force Flight Test Center safety truly love the Torch calendars and have them up all around the office. We basically support every airplane in your calendar and then some! Thanks again for publishing a great Air Force calendar!

*Col. Mike McKenna
Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.*



I'm a contractor with the 654th Aeronautical Systems Squadron and an ex- T-37 instructor pilot from years ago. I really enjoy your calendar. ... Keep up the good work.

*James Miklasevich
Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio*

During my tenure as an Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corp detachment commander at Tuskegee University, Ala., I greatly appreciated and was impressed with the recruiting and retention power of distributing the annual Torch calendars. Our cadets really enjoyed them. I have transitioned to Air Force Junior ROTC as the senior aerospace science instructor at Central Cabarrus High School and anticipate the same excellent result. We have 180 cadets, and the calendars provide extra incentive for our future leaders to seek and stay focused on an Air Force career. Thank you for your outstanding work.

*Retired Lt. Col. Nelson English
Concord, N.C.*



The Torch calendars come in very handy at work (Air Force Personnel Center) because we use the Julian dates provided. Also, the pictures are always outstanding. Thanks for the great work you do with the magazine and calendar.

*Robert Rivera
Randolph Air Force Base, Texas*



The Torch calendar is always the best! I look forward to it each year.

*Gina P. Bradley
Harvest, Ala.*



I am the administrative assistant for the 664th Aeronautical Systems Squadron-Joint Primary Training Systems Program (T-6A and T-6B). Our building also houses members of the 663rd Aeronautical Systems Squadron (T-38) and the Foreign Military Sales for T-6A Morocco, Israel, Iraq and Afghanistan. The people here enjoy receiving the Torch calendar. Thanks!

*Carol D. Stollings
Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio*



SPOTTING DISASTERS

HOW TO AVOID A TRAIN WRECK

By Gen. **STEPHEN R. LORENZ**
AETC commander

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas — “I can hear that train coming down the tracks.”

If you're like me, then you've heard people use this analogy to describe an inbound issue or challenge. We all face challenges each and every day — they are nothing new. The challenges range in significance and in ability to impact our organizations. Although the potential challenges do have unique characteristics, all have one thing in common: the sooner a leader can spot them, the more a leader can do to manage how the challenge will influence their organization.

In reality, it's pretty easy to know when a train is coming down the tracks. They are big, make lots of noise and are typically accompanied by warning lights and bells. Trains typically run on a schedule, making it even easier to know when to either step to the side or hop onboard. We rarely get the same notification from an impending crisis in the workplace. More often, they appear, seemingly from out of thin air, and immediately consume more time than we have to give. Through frustrated, tired eyes we wonder where the crisis came from in the first place. Even though we vow never to let it happen again, deep down we know that it's only a matter of time before the next one hits our organization by surprise.

Such an outlook is what helped create an entire school of thought called crisis management. We have crisis action teams and emergency response checklists, and we build entire plans describing how to effectively deal with the train that we never saw coming. These impacts can be hard to absorb and typically leave “casualties” behind. Wouldn't it be better to prepare for specific contingencies and not rely on generic crisis response checklists?

“In addition to cultivating a culture of candor within an organization, a successful leader must be able to maintain objectivity in order to spot inbound trains.”

Wouldn't it be better for the organization if a leader knew about the train long before it arrived?

So, how does a leader get the schedule for inbound trains? In many cases, just getting out of the office and talking to the members of an organization can help a leader identify potential issues and areas of risk. By the same token, if you are a member of an organization and know of an upcoming challenge, it is your responsibility to research and report it. Candor within an organization is critical to success; information must flow in all directions to maintain efficiency and effectiveness.

In addition to cultivating a culture of candor within an organization, a successful leader must be able to maintain objectivity in order to spot inbound trains. After all, allowing emotion to creep into a leader's perspective may provide short-term success, but will eventually create mid- and long-term unintended challenges. Rising above the issues at hand makes it far easier to hear the potential challenges and competing interests before they arrive.

Candor and objectivity alone will probably help catch 90 percent of the issues before they impact an organization. To achieve 100 percent, a leader must work hard to avoid complacency. When things get quiet within an organization, it doesn't necessarily mean that everything is being handled successfully. In fact, the hair on the back of every leader's neck should start to stand up when things get quiet. After all, it probably means the leader isn't involved enough in the daily operation of the unit and that the first two elements, candor and objectivity, are being overlooked. This is the time to be even more aggressive about candor, information flow and objectivity.

Leaders who work hard to enable candor, remain objective and discourage complacency get a unique opportunity to steer their organizations in the best direction when challenges or crises loom. As they identify the inbound trains, leaders can decide whether to maneuver clear or to hop onboard. You see, each inbound train is an opportunity. It is a chance to fight for new resources — money and/or manpower — and to unify their team toward a common objective. Leaders should anticipate inbound trains as a means to improve their organizations.

Now, crisis action teams and emergency response checklists certainly aren't bad things. After all, no matter how hard you try, there will always be something that catches your organization by surprise. When you see a train coming down the tracks, don't just stand in front and brace for impact. Be ready to take full advantage of the opportunities they create. Not only will you be more efficient and effective, but you will ensure that your organization will continue in the best direction to achieve short-, mid- and long-term objectives.



by Tech. Sgt. Samuel Bendet

MOMS COLLIDE

A RIDE HOME CAN TURN SO DANGEROUS



Hand photo by Tech. Sgt. Samuel Bender; digital composite by Sammie W. King

HURLBURT FIELD, Fla. — It's 4 p.m., quitting time for a lot of people heading west on U.S. Highway 98. The speed limit is 55 mph, and everyone's in a hurry.

Long day at work — traffic flows at about 60. One young mother heads east, on her way presumably to pick up her son from school, and another heads west with her daughter on her way home.

East-bound mom is crossing Highway 98 and is hit by the west-bound mom.

An Air Force major stops to render first aid to Victim One (East-bound mom). She is in and out of consciousness. The car's front door is jammed and people are trying to pull the door open to free her legs.

There is gas leaking on the ground. One lady is concerned about possible sparks from the battery igniting the gasoline.

Victim Two's vehicle is empty in the median with a deployed airbag. She is in the driver's seat of another car being assisted by the vehicle owner. She has neck pain, a bump on her head and her arm is hurt, but she is responsive. A woman brings Victim Two's daughter to her. She is unharmed.

Victim One's cell phone rings. It's her son's school wondering why she hasn't picked him up yet.

Victim One is still in and out of consciousness and convulsing. The major, a combat life-saver, is still supporting her neck, trying to keep her with him by talking and encouraging her to fight.

First responders then arrive at the scene and take control. They attempt to open the door, but are unsuccessful. One grabs the big saw and starts it up. People back away to give them space.

Paramedics successfully remove the door and place Victim One on a stretcher. She is conscious, yet moaning from the intense pain, as they load her into the awaiting ambulance.

Meanwhile, another paramedic puts a brace around Victim Two's neck. Then they move her from the vehicle on a backboard.

An unmarked police car races to the scene to direct traffic, and cars begin to flow around the accident. Before returning to their vehicles, one person asks bystanders and assistance-givers to say a prayer for

the victims. Soon, the crash site clears and speeds pick back up — almost like nothing ever happened.

This account is true, as I saw it all unfold and assisted at the scene. Luckily, all involved were wearing seat belts, and the young girl was in her car seat.

I pray Victim One pulled through to see another day ... to see her son.

Complacency and speed can impact lives in an instant. Highways are dangerous because drivers are too careless. They don't realize a lot can happen on the way home.

The day after the mishap, as I drove to work, the crash and the victims were still fresh and vivid in my mind. I saw another woman speeding on her way to wherever. She was behind me and sped up to pass me on the right, just barely missing the car in front. As she zoomed past, I noticed she had two or three young children with her. She continued down the highway weaving in and out of traffic.

If she only knew ...

— Master Sgt. Mark Young
505th Command and Control Wing

DWI ON A RECLINER?

MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO DRIVING SOUPED UP EASY CHAIR WHILE DRUNK

DULUTH, Minn. — A Minnesota auto body mechanic pleaded guilty Nov. 19 to driving his motorized recliner while drunk.

Sixth Judicial District Judge Heather Sweetland stayed 180 days of jail time and ordered two years of probation and a \$2,000 fine for 62-year-old Dennis Anderson. In August 2008, Anderson crashed his converted easy chair into a parked Dodge Intrepid, according to a Proctor Police Department report. The police report said that Anderson admitted to drinking eight or nine beers before he left a bar in the northern Minnesota town of Proctor on his cushioned ride.

When he crashed into the car, prosecutors say Anderson's blood alcohol content was .29, more than three times the legal limit. He was not seriously injured, the police report said, with only an abrasion to his right elbow.

Police said the chair, which was powered by a converted lawn-

mower, is "decked out." Along with a race car steering wheel, gear shifter, headlights and a power antenna, it has such amenities as a stereo, cup holders and a National Hot Rod Association Sticker on the headrest.

Gas-powered, police estimated it could travel 15 to 20 mph.

According to the police report, an officer found Anderson at the crash site and noted that he had "very slurred speech" and a "strong odor" of alcohol. Anderson told the officer that the "shifter had broken," which caused him to lose control of his furniture. The officer checked Anderson's driver's license and discovered it had been revoked because of a previous drunken-driving conviction, the report said.

Police impounded the recliner after the crash. More than a year later, on Nov. 6, the infamous easy chair sold at auction for a whopping \$10,099.

UNCOMMON DWI 'VEHICLES'

Here are five not-so-common "vehicles" police have busted people on for driving while intoxicated.

◆ Recliner ◆ Horse ◆ Bicycle ◆ Lawnmower ◆ Scooter



DON'T SHOOT YOUR EYE OUT!

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas
— When I was 13 years old, I used to transport my Crossman pump-action BB gun with mounted scope in a hockey bag on my moped. I learned how to shoot by setting up a box with a target in the hallway in my house when my parents weren't around. I "perfected" my technique on the streets of my northwest New Jersey neighborhood shooting at my friends.

These "war games" were fun, but in hindsight, very dangerous.

And, today, as a parent, it definitely isn't the way I want my son to learn to handle a weapon.

While the worst I ever suffered were some stings through my Levi Strauss blue jeans, I knew I'd been dumb and lucky. We all were. None of us lost our eyesight to an errant BB.

Thankfully, when it came time for my 6-year-old son, Harrison, to sample some different weapons in early December, he did so under the safety umbrella of a Cub Scout adventure camp in San Antonio. The anticipation of shooting slingshots, bows and arrows, BB guns and air cannons was nearly more than he could stand. The same kid I have to drag out of bed every morning to barely make it to school on time woke me up at 5 a.m. He was fully dressed and ready to go even with the sun still nowhere in sight.

As we arrived at the camp, Harrison, who like many kids his age can get easily distracted, was wide-eyed and focused as the range masters went over the proper handling and safety instructions on each weapon. All the boys wore ballistic eye protection.

I had to laugh when the instructors took



Lining up his slingshot at a target down range, 6-year-old Harrison Bendet uses dog food as ammo. The Cub Scouts used the dog food for safety reasons, not to mention it's biodegradable.

the extra safety precaution of making the Scouts use dog food as the ammunition for the slingshots and fired soft stress balls out of the air cannons. Many of the parents scoffed at the dog food, with one dad indignantly asking, "Where's the ball bearings?"

But the boys hardly seemed to notice the biodegradable ammo. They were having too much fun.

Harrison missed his target the first few times he tried to shoot the BB gun as he scrunched his face as close to the rear sight as he could. I told him to squeeze, not pull, the trigger and control his breathing. As I gave him instruction, it reminded me that as parents, we are often mentors and teachers for a variety of tasks. Even when you don't think they're paying attention, children are watching us and learning ... the good and the bad stuff.

When my son finally hit the target, he couldn't contain his excitement.

"Dad, can I get a BB gun?"

I didn't want to put a damper on his enthusiasm, so I remained non-committal

by saying, "Well, you never know; it's almost Christmas."

But inside, the parent was coming out in me full force. And what I really wanted to do was echo the sentiments of Santa Claus when Ralphie, from the classic movie "A Christmas Story," asked him for an official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot range model air rifle with a compass in the stock:

"You'll shoot your eye out, kid."

— Tech. Sgt. Samuel Bendet

A FEW TIPS FROM THE SHOOTING RANGE

- ◆ Never point a weapon at anyone.
- ◆ Always wear eye protection.
- ◆ Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.

The **Bizarre** **History** of Car Accidents

The tragic, peculiar and heartbreaking

By **JONATHON RAMSEY**

*Photos courtesy of the **MONROE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE***





A car lost control and ran through a wooden wall in Monroe County, N.Y., 1940s.



Courtesy Library of Congress

A car hangs over a bridge in New York City's Central Park, 1915.

It is said that 42-year-old Mary Ward was the first person to die in a car accident. The manner of her death is straightforward: She was run over by a car. The intriguing note behind it is that she was run over by the steam-powered car she had just been riding in. In 1869, when there were hardly any other cars on the road, Ward fell out of the car while it was rounding a bend and landed underneath it. A wheel rolled over her and broke her neck, killing her instantly. In addition to the first traffic fatality, that might make Mary Ward the first bizarre car death on record.

Roads are far busier and a lot more dangerous nowadays. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 37,261 died in car accidents in 2008. While that is the lowest number of traffic fatalities since 1961, it still amounts to 101 people dying every single day on U.S. roads. The NHTSA breaks the total number down into numerous categories, by which one can get a thorough assessment of how people are losing their lives behind — and sometimes in front of — the wheel.

Each year among the thousands of accidents, there are handfuls that defy description — the type that make you wonder, “What were they thinking about?” All of them are tragic, but beyond that some are just a little odd, some are incredible, some are frightening, and some will make you want to say a prayer every time you get behind the wheel.

Based on the number of close calls, though, it's a little surprising that more people don't fall victim to their own eccentricities. Take Vermont resident Don Robar, who was alleged — by his passenger — to have smoked crack cocaine and gone for a drive, and then sped up to 80 mph and crossed the median into oncoming traffic while he was inhaling keyboard cleaner. Robar hit an oncoming car, but incredibly the only person injured was the passenger in Robar's car, the one who had tried to get him to stop.

Or the case of David, a 23-year-old German man who had

a few drinks in Limbach-Oberfrohna, then got in his car and drove in the wrong lane at almost three times the speed limit. He hit an embankment in his Skoda station wagon, and he and his car flew 115 feet through the air, landing in the roof of a church. Miraculously, he only suffered broken bones.

It shouldn't be surprising when alcohol or some other impairing drug is a factor in unusual auto-related fatalities. Nevertheless, in many cases it isn't drug impairment that is the specific cause of death. North Carolinian Rodney Cates lost control of his truck and crashed. Police later said “alcohol contributed to the accident.”

What killed Cates, however, wasn't the crash, but the truck's radio, which flew out of the dash and hit Cates in the head hard enough to end his life.

Still, there are plenty of incidents that don't involve mind-altering substances, but rather just a series of odd and ultimately fatal coincidences. A woman in Oregon, Ana Aguilar, was driving and hit 77-year-old Nora Wallis, knocking Wallis down and killing her. But the scene of the accident was a Safeway parking lot, and police determined Aguilar was only going between 2 and 3 mph. Wallis didn't die from being hit, but from her head hitting the pavement.

Jacqueline Green, a 33-year-old mother in Wales, was trying out her son's go-kart for the first time. Making her way down the street at no more than 28 mph, she hit a curb and was thrown into the roadside railings where she was impaled.

A woman in Brazil, 67-year-old Marciana Silva Barcelos, was on the way to her husband's funeral. She was riding in the front seat of the hearse that was carrying his casket. Unfortunately, the hearse was rear-ended by another car. The impact slammed the coffin forward, crushing Barcelos and killing her instantly.

The Web site Fark.com is a repository of news-of-the-weird, and of course there are more than a few bizarre car accident stories to be found. Drew Curtis, site founder, had succinct advice when asked what is the best way to avoid ending up featured in one of Fark's car-related pieces.

“They seem to mostly happen at night,” said Curtis, “probably because alcohol is more likely to be a factor then. Wear a seat belt, and don't drive drunk.”

Even with that, alcohol didn't appear to be a factor in the weirdest car accident death Curtis had heard of.

“I wrote a Neonatal Progress Note system for Kosair Children's hospital about 10 years ago,” Curtis said. “During debugging I'd always ask if there were any special cases that the system hadn't accounted for that needed fixing. One particular one came up that still stands out: A baby was born with no mother. Somewhere on I-65 late at night

a man was driving with his pregnant girlfriend when he got into an accident. The woman was cut in half, but the baby popped right out and slid into a snow bank. It was found by a couple of folks who stopped right after the accident. The real kicker here was when the guy's wife was notified of what happened.”

“Each year among the thousands of accidents, there are handfuls that defy description — the type that make you wonder, ‘What were they thinking about?’ ... Some are incredible, some are frightening, and some will make you want to say a prayer every time you get behind the wheel.”

Some people who end up passing away behind the wheel don't need any accidental help doing it, because it's what they planned on. An extraordinary case of road rage involved Serena Sutton-Smith, who drove her car into the back end of another car on the side of the road, and then didn't take her foot off the accelerator. As Sutton-Smith laid on the gas, the car's front tires kept spinning; one of them disintegrated, and the sparks from the steel rim grinding against the road caused the engine to catch fire. Sutton-Smith didn't get out as the entire car caught fire, and she perished in the flames with her foot on the gas.

Gerald Mellin was another who met the end he apparently sought. After a messy divorce, the 54-year-old businessman took a rope that he kept in the trunk of his Aston Martin, tied one end to a tree and the other around his neck. He then got behind the wheel and sped off, decapitating himself.

On the other end of spectrum are people doing the innocuous things that all of us have done, and paying a hefty price when it goes fantastically wrong. Jolynn Banner was going to the car wash and needed to enter a code into the machine. She opened the door of her car to reach the pad, sticking her head out of the vehicle. Her foot came off the brake, and the car rolled off. Before she could get her head back inside, her neck was crushed when it was trapped in the open door, which was being squeezed by the building.

The unpredictable nature of so many car accidents does make it difficult to try and avoid them — after all, that's why they're called accidents, and the highly unlikely circumstances are what make them bizarre. All are tragic, more than a few were avoidable, and none of them will be forgotten. ✨

Mr. Ramsey is a writer with AOL Autos. Article reprinted with permission.



A car was crushed by a truck in Monroe County, N.Y., 1940s.

5 Stupid Things Drivers Do

5 Back up when you've missed your exit on the highway

Even if you're an expert driver, you have to assume the cars traveling 55 mph and above on the freeway may not all contain equally skilled motorists. Some may panic and swerve into the paths of other cars if they see you backing up; you also prevent others who want to pull off the freeway from doing so. If you miss your exit, take the next one and turn yourself around.

4 Drive at speeds upward of 80 mph

"Driving faster than 80 is a recipe for disaster and maybe death," says Jonathan Adkins, communications director of the Governors Highway Safety Association. "At such aggressive speeds, it doesn't matter if you are wearing a seat belt or not — you aren't likely to survive. Also, you ruin your gas mileage by driving so fast. If you won't slow down to save a life, slow down to save a buck."

3 Make a U-turn on the highway

An 11-year-old boy was killed last summer in Westchester County, N.Y., when his father's vehicle, stopped at a railing gap in the left lane of a busy parkway, was struck from behind. If you want to go opposite the direction you're traveling, take the next turnoff, cross over the highway and take the next entrance.

2 Cut in front of big rig trucks

Your car may weigh 2,500 pounds; a semi tractor trailer may weigh 20,000 or more. Do the math, and figure out your chances of that trucker being able to stop before he hits you. Always give big rigs plenty of room, and always assume their drivers have been on the road many, many hours and may not be as fresh as the produce they're carrying in their trailers.

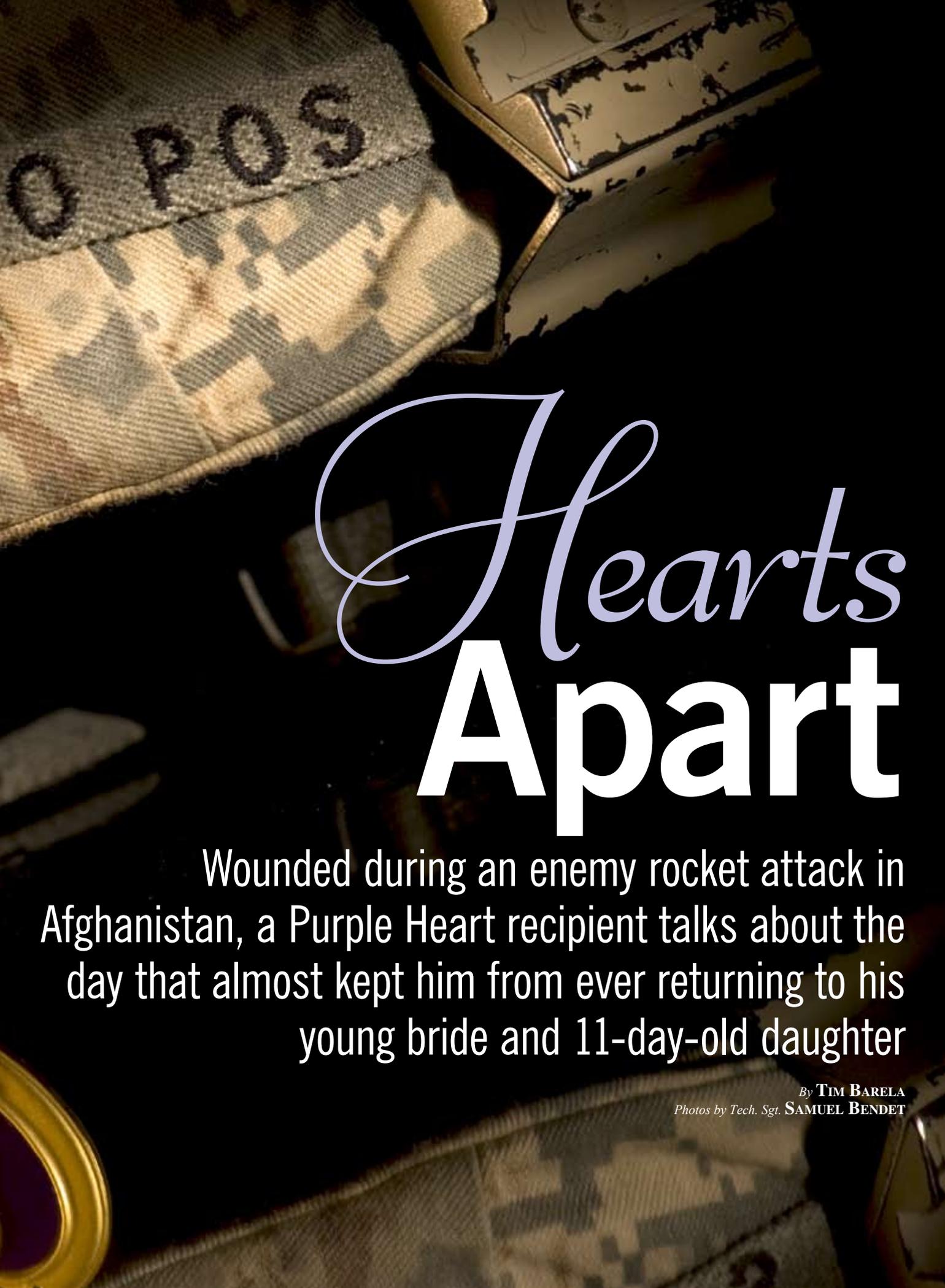
1 Take your eyes from the road for more than a second or two

"Drivers need to focus on driving," Adkins says. "Too many of us multi-task and don't focus on the task at hand — arriving to our destination safely. Is that call you are making so important that it's worth risking your life or someone else's?" Drivers also involve themselves in other, equally dangerous activities like eating, drinking, applying makeup, reading, texting and doing anything BUT keeping an eye on the road.

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With his blood still staining his helmet, which ironically lists his blood type, Capt. David Golden received the Purple Heart in October for combat injuries he suffered in Afghanistan.



Hearts Apart

Wounded during an enemy rocket attack in Afghanistan, a Purple Heart recipient talks about the day that almost kept him from ever returning to his young bride and 11-day-old daughter

By **TIM BARELA**
Photos by Tech. Sgt. **SAMUEL BENDET**



Capt. David Golden lay face down in the dirt. His head felt as though it had just been viciously kicked by a professional soccer player wearing a steel-toe boot. He reached up and touched his forehead. His hand came back covered in blood.

Dazed, he still retained enough of his senses to know an enemy rocket had just exploded nearly on top of him.

This wasn't how it was supposed to be.

He was just a month shy of returning home from a sometimes brutal deployment on the front lines of the war on terrorism in Afghanistan. Eleven days ago his wife, Andrea, gave birth to their first child — a beautiful baby girl they named Odessa.

He'd never revealed to Andrea how much danger he'd been in — not the many ambushes, the enemy firefights, the death on both sides. She didn't need to know the frightening details while going through a pregnancy alone in San Antonio, where they had no family. She was a strong woman, but she didn't need that burden.

This entire combat tour strengthened his resolve to see his wife again and hold his little girl for the first time. Up until now, when he was so close to that goal, he'd been lucky. ...

Golden heard desperate screams coming from inside a nearby bunker. He shoved himself off the dirt and ran for the shelter.

Golden, who was deployed from the 562nd Flying Training Squadron, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, at the time of the Sept. 28, 2008, enemy attack, had a 107 mm rocket explode only 8 feet from him. As he dove away from the blast, shrapnel glanced off his ballistic eyewear, and embedded in his forehead. While the metal fragment shattered the glasses, a flight surgeon would later tell Golden that his protective eyewear had not only saved his eyesight, but in all likelihood, it had saved his life.

“Anybody who ever doubts the benefits of personal

Still bloodied and bandaged (above),

Capt. David Golden was able to return to duty the next day after an enemy 107 mm rocket exploded 8 feet from him at Zerok, Afghanistan, Sept. 28, 2008. At right, Golden stands in front of the mortar pit at the Zerok combat outpost where he was talking to the crew just moments before the rocket attack. He and the entire mortar pit crew were injured, but all survived and eventually returned to duty.

protective equipment can come talk to me,” the Louisiana native said. “Whether it’s glasses, a helmet or a safety restraint, they are designed to protect you from injury and save your life.”

The captain arrived in Afghanistan five months earlier in May 2008 to serve as an electronic warfare officer at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E in the eastern Paktika Province. He remembers reassuring his wife before he left for the deployment that 100 percent of the EWOs who had deployed returned home injury-free. Most never even sniffed the front lines, and spent their deployments safely behind a desk.

He quickly learned that would not be his wartime role.

Golden was assigned to an Army airborne infantry battalion. His job included maintaining combat-capable vehicles and training soldiers to use counter radio-controlled improvised explosive device electronic warfare equipment.

Not only was he serving on the front lines, but he found himself riding in military convoys that seemed to always stir a hornet’s nest ... relentless ambushes by enemy forces.

“I admit, my first time outside the wire, I was nervous,” the 29-year-old said. “We traveled down roads that weren’t really roads, but more like dry river beds. They are a haven for anyone wanting to plant IEDs.”

He rode with Army explosive ordnance disposal members in their intimidating rolling fortress, a heavily armored vehicle known as the JERV (joint EOD response vehicle).

“On my first convoy, we were ambushed twice,” he said. “The opposition always let you leave the base, but often attacked on the return trip home.”

During that initial outing July 2, 2008, he was traveling in the front of a convoy of 25 vehicles and 60 troops when insurgents launched a rocket propelled grenade attack ... an early fireworks show for the 4th of July.

“It was intense because it was a drawn out ambush area, and we were driving along a cliff that had a several hundred



Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo

When traveling in convoys, Golden (second from right) would ride with an Army explosive ordnance disposal team in their armored vehicle. Here he points to the spot where an armor-piercing round struck during an ambush while he'd been manning the turret.

foot drop-off to the right," Golden said. "We pushed through it after four or five minutes, but that's four or five minutes with somebody shooting at you, which makes it seem much longer.

You don't have time to get scared; your training kicks in and you just do. Our gunner was firing on enemy targets, while we kept feeding him ammunition."

When that attack was over, the gunner asked Golden to relieve him in the turret because he had something in his eye.

"It was my first time in the turret," the captain said of the armored perch. "I had training, but no real-life experience."

The convoy approached a village, and Golden waved to children in the street who were running around begging for candy.

"It was always a good sign to see kids playing outside," he said. "You'd seldom see an attack with children around. And you'd almost never get attacked on the same convoy twice."

But when an IED exploded in front of his vehicle, Golden knew "usual" wasn't going to play today. Terrified boys and girls scattered as another ambush began. Suddenly, he was thrust into the role of gunner, and began shooting at hostiles.

"I swiveled in the turret trying to find a target," he said. "I

opened fire on the mountain ridges with an M240 machine gun. I saw a muzzle flash up on a hill and engaged an enemy machine gunner with 30 to 40 rounds. We saw the rounds impact and saw the gunner drop."

"I opened fire on the mountain ridges with an M240 machine gun. I saw a muzzle flash up on a hill and engaged an enemy machine gunner with 30 to 40 rounds. We saw the rounds impact and saw the gunner drop."

He also had to fire a grenade launcher after the M240 jammed. But shortly after that, Apache helicopters arrived on scene, and the ambush was officially over.

"It's a good feeling to be escorted by the Apaches," he said with a grin.

When they arrived back at Orgun-E, they found a big black scar on the JERV where an armor-piercing incendiary round hit less than a ruler's length under the turret where Golden had been.

"That was a little too close for comfort," he said with raised eyebrows.

As bad as the convoys were, traveling to a combat outpost in the small town of Zerok was even worse.

"Zerok was a fight from the day I got there until the day I left," Golden said. "The first time I went there, the enemy launched 11 rockets at us."

Living conditions there also weren't the best. They were somewhat austere like one might expect when fighting a war. Troops might get one hot meal a day, the showers seldom

“The whole time I’m putting the tourniquet on him, the soldier is yelling, ‘I’m gonna die!’ And then he’d beg God for forgiveness. I looked him in the eye and said, ‘My name’s Dave, and you’re going to be OK.’”

worked and most everyone had to hand wash their clothes in a bucket. While there, Golden’s team slept in shifts in the JERV.

When the captain got one last call to go to Zerok to fix some equipment, he felt uneasy, like he was pushing his luck.

“I was a month from going home, my baby girl had just been born, and I was determined to get to see her,” he said. “So it made me a little more nervous than usual.”

His team was flown in by helicopter, and they fixed the antenna problem the first day. However, mechanical issues with the helicopter kept him at Zerok an extra 24 hours.

On that fateful second day, Golden had just put on all his personal protective gear simply to walk across the compound to use the latrine. It was a pain, but this was no place to get complacent. On his way to the latrine, he stopped by the mortar pit where the crew had been launching mortars all day. They were at about 90 launches, and they all shared a laugh when they realized they’d soon hit the century mark.

At that instant, Golden heard a slight whistle, and instinct took over. He dove as the enemy rocket hit with violent force.

Wounded, he ran into the bunker where he heard the screams.

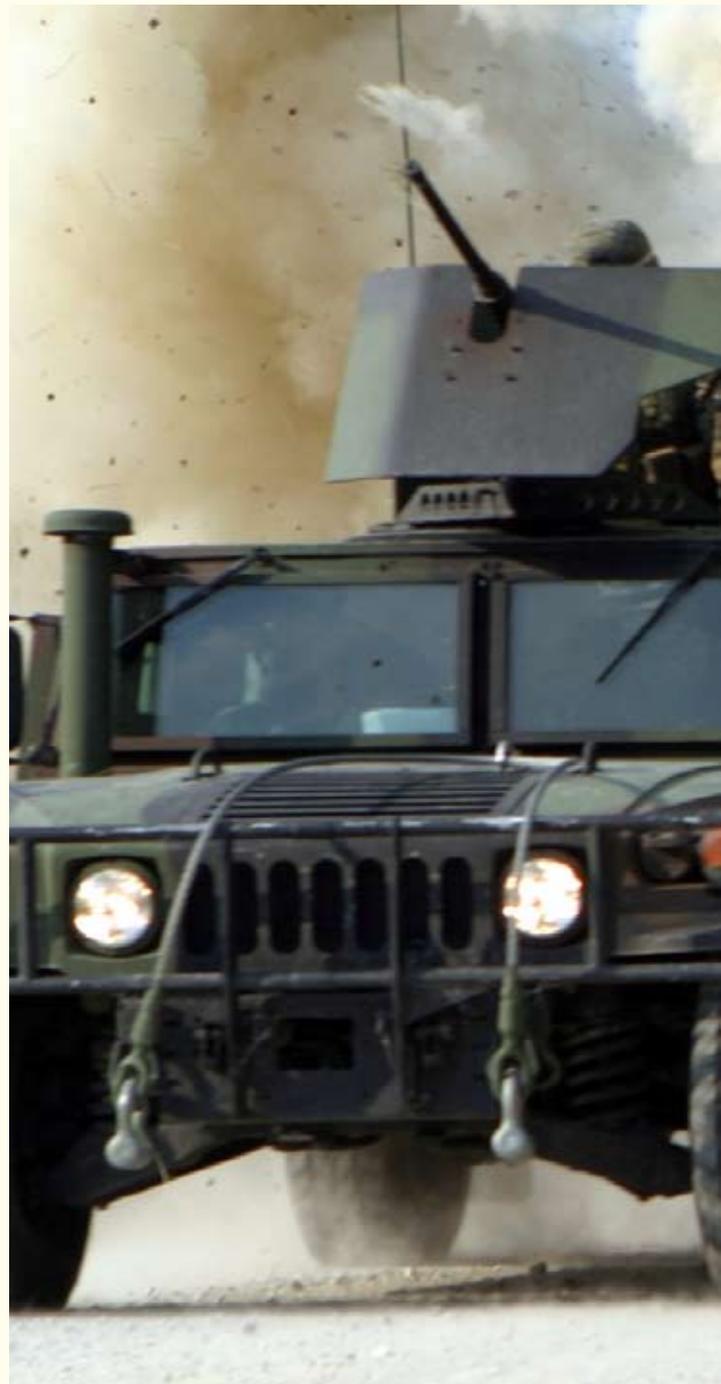
“A lot of people assume I ran into the shelter to help the person hollering hysterically inside,” he said. “But, no, I ran to it because it was a bunker. At the time, I was thinking more about self-preservation and taking cover.”

Nevertheless, once in the bunker, he saw an Army specialist wildly yelling into a radio. Only, he wasn’t holding the hand microphone. He clutched his right arm, which was drenched with spurting blood.

“I picked up the radio mic, and let them know that the mortar pit crew had been taken out, and that we had wounded that needed help,” Golden said. “Then I went to the specialist and wrapped a tourniquet around his arm. It wasn’t the prettiest job, and I didn’t know if it would save the arm, but I felt it would save his life.”

Tending to the wounded soldier actually calmed Golden. He

With rocket-propelled grenades blasting all around his convoy during an enemy ambush, the scene Golden witnessed was similar to this training exercise, which mimics a grenade attack.



What Saved Hero's Life?

Much like back home where a seat belt or a motorcycle helmet can be the difference between life and death, Capt. David Golden credits his personal protective gear for saving his life during an enemy attack in Afghanistan.

“If it wasn’t for my personal protective gear and training, I’m not sure I’d be here today, and I certainly wouldn’t be here with my full eyesight,” he said.



Courtesy Connecticut Army National Guard

OFFICER CREDITS PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GEAR

That's because the shrapnel from a rocket explosion hit his ballistic eyewear, shattering the glasses but saving his left eye.

"Our flight surgeon said I surely would have lost my eye and probably worse if not for the eyewear," Golden said.

"I also think all my body armor and my helmet helped me survive the blast just 8 feet away.

"It may seem a simple thing, but it's a pain to wear your

PPE all the time," he said. "I was just walking to the latrine that day, and it would have been easy to forget my glasses, or just get complacent and not wear them. Thankfully, I didn't do that."

His reward? Focusing his eyes on his beautiful baby girl for the first time only a month later.

— *Tim Barela*

had served as a volunteer firefighter for five years and was still one back home in Cibolo, Texas. He'd seen trauma worse than this before in car accidents, and his training just kicked in and allowed him to focus on the mangled, crimson mess.

"The whole time I'm putting the tourniquet on him, the soldier is yelling, 'I'm gonna die!' And then he'd beg God for forgiveness," the captain said solemnly. "I looked him in the eye and said, 'My name's Dave, and you're going to be OK.'"

But the fact is Golden wasn't at all sure of that. The soldier had an arterial wound and had lost enough blood to paint a desk. He was going into shock.

"So first I stopped the bleeding, then I talked to him to try to keep him from going into shock or passing out."

Golden was lottery-lucky that day. The injury to his head wasn't serious even though his face was covered with blood. But another soldier was even luckier. He had been only 2 feet from the explosion and came away with barely a scratch. The blast force went in the opposite direction and only knocked him down. Meanwhile, an army captain had one of his eyes dislodged, and an Afghan soldier sustained an injury to his knee. An Army sergeant, who got the worst of it, had severe wounds to his back. Miraculously all survived and eventually returned to duty.

"I realize how fortunate I was," Golden said. "The difference between being slightly wounded and being maimed or killed can come down to a fraction of an inch or a split second ... or the proper PPE."

Golden called his wife, Andrea, the night of the attack.

"I told her I got hurt," he said.

Then the phone went dead.

As Golden desperately tried to get reconnected, Andrea told her mother, who had come to visit for the birth of their baby, that David had been injured but she didn't know why or how badly.

"When I called her back to tell her I was OK, she was calm and collected, but I didn't know what she was thinking," he said.

That's because Andrea had gotten good about hiding negativity from her husband. Just like he protected her from the horrors of war because he didn't want her to stay up at nights worrying, she had kept things from him.

She wanted to protect him, too.

"While he was gone, nearly everything that could go wrong did go wrong," she said, shaking her head at the recollection.

San Antonio got hit by a tropical storm that blew off a section of their roof, knocked down a tree in the backyard and took out a portion of their fence.

"I was seven months pregnant outside in a storm at about 11 at night hammering a section of our fence back up so our two dogs could go out to go to the bathroom," she said.

But those weren't her only challenges. Their air conditioning unit stopped working, and a faulty window on their house just shattered one day, almost as if it sought to test her resolve.

And there was more to come.

One of their two cars broke down on the highway with a fuel injector problem. When it was in the shop, everything of value inside, including a GPS unit, was stolen. Also, while it was still being repaired, Andrea went into labor. As she attempted to

drive to the hospital, their second vehicle wouldn't start. While trying to get the engine to turn over, the battery exploded.

"I was like, 'You've got to be kidding me. I can't believe this is happening.' It was just one fiasco after another," said Andrea, who was also juggling a full-time job as a design engineer and teaching six aerobics classes at Gold's Gym. "But there was no sense in telling Dave because he couldn't do anything about it, and he would just worry and stress over it."

She simply didn't want him to carry that kind of burden.

"I figured he had enough on his mind and enough to go through," she said.

"I had no idea how much Ande put up with," Golden said. "She's a strong woman — always has been, always will be."

About a month after the attack, Golden finally got to hug his wife and his 6-week-old daughter, Odessa. They, along with his parents and his squadron commander and director of operations, greeted him at San Antonio International Airport.

"It was funny because I had just been responsible for taking care of a bunch of troops and been in firefights and ambushes, but meeting my daughter for the first time was much more frightening — I had butterflies in my stomach," he said. "All the other things I was trained to do, but I didn't yet know how to be a father. I didn't know how to change a diaper or fix her milk. I was a nervous wreck."

Still, she received his palpating heart instantly.

In an October ceremony in the Randolph base theater, Golden received a different kind of heart — the Purple Heart, a medal bestowed on armed forces members who have been wounded or killed in the service of their country. He also earned the Combat Action Medal for the firefight in which he manned the turret during the ambush.

Golden moved to Naval Air Station Pensacola shortly after

the Purple Heart ceremony to help stand up the new combat systems officer school. He is the commander of the aircrew flight equipment shop in the 479th Operation Support Squadron, which is attached to the 479th Flying Training Group.

Golden said he is humbled to garner the Purple Heart.

But it will always be secondary to earning the hearts of his two ladies ... no longer hearts apart. ♣

"It was funny because I had just been responsible for taking care of a bunch of troops and been in firefights and ambushes, but meeting my daughter for the first time was much more frightening — I had butterflies in my stomach. All the other things I was trained to do, but I didn't yet know how to be a father. I didn't know how to change a diaper or fix her milk. I was a nervous wreck."



Courtesy photo

Golden meets Odessa for the first time at the San Antonio airport as he returns home after spending six months on the front lines fighting the war on terrorism.



Now in Pensacola, Fla., where Golden is a flight commander helping to stand up a new combat systems officer school, he gets to enjoy playtime at the beach with Andrea and Odessa, now just over a year old. The flight surgeon who treated his wounds told him that if he hadn't been wearing his ballistic eyewear, he may never have gotten to see his baby girl. These days, Odessa holds her daddy's heart in her hand ... so to speak.

American vs. Swiss Cheese

Refocusing on pilot error, the real threat

By Retired Lt. Col. EDWARD H. LINCH III

Digital composite by DAVID M. STACK

American cheese versus Swiss cheese can send your taste buds into a mouth-watering dilemma when it comes to hamburgers and hoagies. It turns out these sandwich complements also can spark debate in flying safety circles when it comes to the study of human factors in aviation mishaps.

In the pursuit of understanding pilots and aircraft accidents, the study of human factors in aviation has evolved with many philosophies, theories and causation models dominating our safety culture. Dr. James Reason's "Swiss Cheese Model," the most popular causation model used throughout the health care and aviation industry, including within the Department of Defense, equates human systems to multiple slices of Swiss cheese. Organizational influences, unsafe supervision, preconditions for unsafe acts and unsafe acts (errors and violations) are all slices of cheese in his model. If the holes (weaknesses, hazards, failed or absent defenses) in each slice of cheese line up with each other, then a mishap will occur.

The "Swiss Cheese Model" is deeply intertwined in our mishap investigation process as the foundational model for the Human Factor Analysis and Classification System. However, one constant remains; the majority of flight mishaps are not caused by the system, but by pilots making mistakes. These types of mishaps could have been prevented by having a clearer focus on basic airmanship: skill, proficiency, discipline, and judgment and decision-making.

After studying mishaps in the Air Force for years, however, I've noticed a trend that can't be overlooked.

It's the last slice of cheese in Reason's model: unsafe acts, which are the pilot's errors and violations.

Skill-based errors are the root cause of many mishaps. Examples of these types of mistakes can include stick and rudder errors, inadvertent operations, as well as checklist, procedural and maneuvering errors.

Additionally, errors in judgment and decision-making can cause problems. These mistakes can include risk assessment, task misprioritization, ignored warnings, rushed operations, problem solving, weather avoidance, failure to go-around or aborting a takeoff, to name a few.

Other hazards are perceptual errors — improper response to spatial disorientation, visual illusions, etc.

And, finally, there are outright violations, which highlight the pilot's attitude and lack of discipline in the cockpit. These involve deliberately breaking training rules and regulations.

We're our own worst enemy regarding errors and violations.

Not to discount Dr. Reason, I've got a new causation "cheese" model to consider in the study of human factors: "The American Cheese Pilot Error Model." It's about personal responsibility and choices.

"The American Cheese Pilot Error Model" is a single slice of cheese that totally focuses on the pilot, versus the system. Yes, the organization and supervision can influence the pilot. Yes, preconditions (physical and mental limitations, fatigue, personal readiness, etc.) can set aviators up for a bad day. But, it all boils down to the last slice of cheese, which is the pilot and the choices he or she makes.



The pilot-in-command is the one ultimately responsible for preventing errors during all aspects of the flight, from flight planning to debriefing. No one has ever been forced to fly by the organization or supervisor, and the pilot is the one who chooses to fly with excessive preconditions. He's the one who signs for the aircraft. He's the one who chooses to push the envelope and fly when he's too fatigued, distracted, or having personal, supervisory or organizational issues, for example.

He's the one who can knock-it-off.

It's all about the pilot!

The pilot is the one who has to figure out how to fit into the organization and meet the needs of his supervisor by managing his personal life and staying proficient at flying the aircraft without negatively impacting him, his crew or his aircraft.

Human factors, in my opinion, can be defined as anything affecting your life that you can control, change, transfer or eliminate to bring about a different outcome by planning and anticipating as you respond in a fluid environment. It involves staying ahead of the aircraft by *preparing* for the "worst case" and *anticipating* the next event in the chain. ... Actually, this concept can be applied to all aspects of life.

Channelized attention, misprioritization, task saturation, failure to communicate, loss of situational awareness, and improper, late or no reaction to change, for example, are common preconditions that can be controlled, changed, transferred or eliminated by a pilot's actions. To do this, he's got to know his aircraft like the back of his hand, which means proficiency not only in the aircraft but with emergency

procedures in the simulator, too. Pilots need to know their flight/crewmembers and their capabilities; know their own limitations and don't exceed them; and fly simple, realistic and focused tactics to complete the mission versus over-tasking with complex plans with little margin for error or room for contingencies. Aviators need to be prepared to quickly respond to changes in a fluid environment, formulate a plan, stick with it, and not let external pressures force them into a corner. They need to keep the focus and not let their guard down. They can relax once they're in the chocks.

The Swiss Cheese Model is a great tool to analyze the overall safety system and dissect a mishap; however, it doesn't address the root cause and how to proactively combat it.

"The American Cheese Pilot Error Model" encourages pilots to focus on keeping skills and proficiency high, making sound decisions with conservative judgment, and maintaining strict discipline. Remember, combating human error is tough. I challenge pilots to take a look at themselves the next time they fly and see if they have the proper focus to fly and successfully complete the mission safely.

Let the debate between American and Swiss continue. But, remember, sometimes no matter how you slice it, these two cheeses work best when "consumed" together. ✈

Before his retirement, Lt. Col. "Ned" Linch was the chief of flight safety for 12th Air Force at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. He is a command pilot with more than 26 years of flying experience in the Air Force (F-16s and F-111s) and airlines (727s and MD-88s).

AERIAL 'GAS CAN'

REFUELERS EXTEND
TRADITION OF SAFE SERVICE

Story and photos by Airman 1st Class **AMBER ASHCRAFT**



*A KC-135 Stratotanker refuels
a C-5 Galaxy over the Black Sea.*

“Aerial refueling is like a symphony. We’re up (front) trying to (maintain) the tanker’s air speed, the boom operator in the back is calmly keeping the receiving aircraft in position for refueling, and the receiver is working pretty hard to stay in the directed envelope.”

INCIRLIK AIR BASE, Turkey (AFNS) — On Nov. 12, 1921, a “wing walker” named Wesley May transferred himself to a Curtiss JN-4 airplane from a Lincoln Standard in mid-flight with a can of fuel strapped to his back. He poured the fuel into the gas tank of the JN-4 and completed the first actual mid-air transfer of fuel in what was meant to be nothing more than a stunt. Little did he know his feat would eventually become a cornerstone event enhancing the Air Force’s unrivaled global strike and global mobility capabilities.

Nowadays, large tankers, including the KC-135 Stratotanker and the KC-10 Extender, use booms to complete air-to-air refueling instead of gas cans.

At Incirlik, the “gas can” mission falls on the shoulders of Airmen in the 90th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, a deployed group comprising 120 Air National Guardsmen who rotate here from their home stations.

“Aerial refueling is like a symphony,” said Col. Steven Berryhill, a 90th EARS KC-135 pilot and commander of the Alabama Air National Guard’s 117th Air Refueling Wing. “We’re up (front) trying to (maintain) the tanker’s air speed, the boom operator in the back is calmly keeping the receiving aircraft in position for refueling, and the receiver is working pretty hard to stay in the directed envelope.”

Whether rain or shine, day or night, Airmen from the 90th EARS fly sorties to refuel C-17 Globemaster III and C-5 Galaxy aircraft destined for Iraq and Afghanistan from the United States, Germany and even Spain.

“We don’t have to fly far to do what we have to,” Berryhill said. “Incirlik is in the center of it all, and the most used air track for refueling is the Black Sea.”

A key component of an air refueling mission is the in-flight refueling specialist, known more commonly as the boom operator. The boom operator is the tanker pilot’s eyes and ears at the rear of the aircraft. He also is responsible for safely connecting the boom to the receiving aircraft.

“We just fly the tankers and keep them in the air; we’re basically bringing the boom operator to work every day,” Berryhill said. “We can’t do this mission without him.”

The receiving aircraft trusts the boom operator to fly the boom into position for the mid-air refueling. The receiver uses visual cues from antennas on the bottom of the tanker. The boomer also uses

external lights directing them fore and aft. When the boom makes contact with the receptacle, the boomer uses a control stick to maneuver the boom in sync with the receiving aircraft while maintaining a safe distance. Throughout the whole time, the boom operator keeps in constant communication with pilots in both aircrafts.

“It’s my job to make sure things in flight flow smoothly,” said Senior Airman Mitchell Harwood, a 90th EARS boom operator. “Every mission is unique and offers a different experience.”

Airman Harwood uses each experience to maintain composure in any situation.

“About a week ago, we were flying a mission at night,” Berryhill said. “The weather was pretty terrible, but it didn’t deter Harwood from his job. He coached them into position and calmly reassured them with specific direction to keep the connection flowing. We all felt safe and confident with his direction.”

Though weather can sometimes be an annoying factor, refueling in the air is still safer and faster than ground refueling in a combat zone.

Aerial refueling allows an aircraft to land and offload cargo quickly, then get back in the air as soon as possible. When air-refueled, an aircraft is exposed to a narrower window of being a sitting target and it’s not out of use as long.

“We can off load 100,000 pounds of fuel in 25 minutes (in the air) compared to the four hours it takes on the ground,” Berryhill said.

The air refueling mission is the keystone of the air bridge necessary for almost any military movement; a fact not lost on the Airmen of the 90th EARS.

“I walk with confidence and pride in what I do,” Harwood said. “I’m lucky to be young and have this enormous responsibility, working with amazing people who put their trust in me to keep them safe. I love the Air Force and being a boom operator. If I could do this for the rest of my life, I would.”

No matter if an Airman is a guardsman, reservist or on active duty, the mission continues in different ways. The 90th EARS

ensures mission success with people like Harwood, continuing the tradition started nearly 90 years ago by wing walkers like Wesley May.

Airman Ashcraft is assigned to the 39th Air Base Wing Public Affairs Office at Incirlik AB, Turkey.



Prior to a refueling sortie, Col. Cliff James a KC-135 pilot, runs his pre-flight checklist.



From top, a T-43 Bobcat, T-1 Jayhawk, T-38 Talon and T-6 Texan II from Randolph, AFB, Texas, fly a composite sortie. In fiscal 2009, the Air Force had 17 major aircraft mishaps, the lowest in its 62-year history.

by Tech. Sgt. Samuel Bender

AIR FORCE FINISHES SAFEST FLYING YEAR EVER

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. (AFNS) — Fiscal 2009 finished as the safest flying year in the 62-year history of the Air Force.

The service suffered 17 Class A mishaps, one where there is loss of life, an injury resulting in permanent total disability, the destruction of an Air Force aircraft, or property damage or loss exceeding \$1 million (that dollar amount changed to \$2 million beginning in fiscal 2010). The next best year was fiscal 2006 with 19 Class A mishaps.

The most Class A mishaps ever occurred in 1952, when 2,274 were reported, according to Air Force Safety Center records.

The safety center reported that six Air Force members died in the 2009 mishaps, down from 13 in 2008. Air Education and Training Command suffered no pilot losses to aviation mishaps last year, command flight safety officials said.

Air Force Chief of Safety Maj. Gen. Frederick Roggero told the *Air Force Times* that for air and ground crews, the service emphasizes a "culture of compliance and discipline" because the cause of most accidents is the same:

"Somewhere down the line, someone busted a rule," he said.

The fewer aircrew mistakes last year could be attributed, in part, to risk management initiatives such as consideration of a mission's hazards before launching and better communication and awareness by crews as they fly, the general told the Times.

Commanders, aircrews, maintainers, supervisors, and command and wing safety teams "are really doing their jobs," said William C. Redmond, Air Force Safety Center executive director. "It's back to basics, and compliance is king from what we are seeing."

Col. Sidney Mayeux, Air Force chief of flying safety, echoed those sentiments.

"Aviators are following the rules ... and are making smarter risk decisions," the colonel said.

Mayeux said he's proud of the Air Force's performance this year in aviation safety.

"We're seeing great dividends across the Air Force," he added. "We're holding each other accountable. ... I think it is working."

— Terry Walker

377th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

F-15E CRASH

CREW DEATHS BLAMED ON TARGET ELEVATION DISCREPANCY

by Staff Sgt. Aaron Allmon



LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (ACCNS) — An F-15E Strike Eagle crashed in Afghanistan July 18 because of the flight lead weapons system officer's incorrect assessment of a training target's elevation, according to Air Combat Command officials, who released the results Dec. 1.

The crew was killed upon impact, and the \$55 million aircraft, assigned to the 4th Fighter Wing, was destroyed.

There was no damage to personal property.

According to the ACC Accident Investigation Board report, two F-15Es were practicing night high-angle strafe attacks on their return to Bagram Airfield when the flight lead incorrectly assessed the target's altitude as 4,800 feet above sea level. The target was actually at 10,200 feet. Neither crew recognized the discrepancy.

The flight lead flew the first practice strafing attack, but discontinued the approach because his angle of attack was too shallow. The mishap crew began their attack and impacted the ground 10 seconds later. No attempt to pull out of the attack was made, and neither the pilot nor the weapons systems officer tried to eject.

The board found five factors significantly contributed to the mishap: misperception of the operational conditions in the target area; an erroneous expectation for a typical night strafing attack; inexperience by the flight lead and the mishap crew at executing night strafing; channelized attention; and an improper cross check during the attack.

When an F-15E Strike Eagle crashed in Afghanistan on July 18, the crew was killed and the \$55 million aircraft destroyed.

OFFICIALS RELEASE MQ-1B ACCIDENT REPORT

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (ACCNS) — An MQ-1B Predator flying a mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom lost contact with its ground control station, or GCS, and crashed in a forward operating area April 20, according to an Air Combat Command Accident Investigation Board report released Nov. 24.

The Predator was an asset of the 432nd Air Expeditionary Wing, Creech Air Force Base, Nev., and was flown by the 111th Reconnaissance Squadron, Texas Air National Guard, Ellington Field, Texas. The aircraft was carrying one Hellfire missile and did not return to its forward operating base after contact was lost. The wreckage was recovered the next day, downwind of the Predator's last reported position.

The loss of aircraft and its components is valued at about \$4.6 million.

According to the report, the aircraft lost its return link, a data

transmission capability from the aircraft to the GCS. Attempts to re-establish the return link were unsuccessful.

The investigation board determined the cause of this mishap was a catastrophic electrical system failure most likely caused by a short circuit along the 28-volt power lines. Because of the damaged state of the wreckage, the board president was unable to identify more specifically where the failure occurred.



An MQ-1B Predator like this one crashed in a forward operating area April 20 when contact with the ground control station was lost.

by Staff Sgt. Suzanne M. Jenkins