Air Education and Training Command's

# TORCH

September/October 2008

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An historical perspective on a modern 'disease'
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# Message from 'Nam

After barely surviving an aircraft crash following a bombing mission over North Vietnam 40 years ago, a pilot says lessons he learned still apply to today's aviators

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The 2009 Torch Calendar will be available in November. Ensure you get your copy early.



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TORCH

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**Cover** digital composite by David M. Stack
**Back cover** digital composite by David M. Stack

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FROM THE
# VICE COMMANDER

*By Maj. Gen.* **Anthony F. Przybyslawski**
*Vice Commander, Air Education and Training Command*

# RISK MANAGEMENT ... IT DOES WORK!

Historically, the time between Memorial Day and Labor Day has been spoiled by ground mishaps and fatalities. However, when the Air Force wrapped up its 101 Critical Days of Summer safety campaign this year, it became clear that we enjoyed the safest summer in the last 10 years!

But we still need to improve.

Even though we suffered eight fewer deaths than the yearly average of 24, we still lost 16 Airmen in ground mishaps — four from our Air Education and Training Command family. The Air Force experienced six automobile, five motorcycle, four sports and recreation-related deaths, and one fatality from a home-maintenance injury.

AETC's losses included:

- A technical sergeant who crashed into a ditch driving on a road closed for construction.
- A staff sergeant who crossed the centerline on a motorcycle and collided head-on with a truck.
- An Airman who struck the end of a concrete barrier; when he exited his vehicle to check for damage, a truck hit him.
- A master sergeant who was at home working on his vehicle when it fell off of the jack and crushed him.

There's a common thread these mishaps share … a little risk management would have made a difference in the outcome.

**"Even though (the Air Force) suffered eight fewer deaths than the yearly average of 24 (this summer), we still lost 16 Airmen in ground mishaps — four from our Air Education and Training Command family.**

Here's how I apply risk management to my life. I create a 15-second mental checklist by asking three questions:

1. What am I about to do?
2. What could go wrong?
3. What could I do to mitigate those problems?

For example, my gas grill is a few years old, and I really need to replace the igniter. So, how long is the gas on before the igniter starts the fire? Better keep that lid open. Smelling propane is a dangerous indicator!

It's a simple process to use on and off duty … teach it to family and friends. It starts first thing in the morning and ends last thing at night, and applies to every action we take.

As we head into fall and hunting season, be aware of the hazards that lurk in everything we do. Roads are still dangerous, and injuries are present in sports and recreation activities.

I ask you to continue your commitment to safety throughout the year. This will help you and your wingmen stay vigilant and safe both on and off duty.

# A SUPER HUMAN EFFORT

Heckuva job on the cover stories titled "Troubled Waters" (July/August 2008 issue, page 8). I especially liked reading about the "Horror at Harkers Island" (page 10), where Staff Sgt. Jay Rosenberry turned into "Superman" and saved three children from drowning in the ocean.

It's amazing the physical and mental strength some people can muster during a crisis, and our armed forces seem to have more than their fair share of these heroes. I'm sure their training helps a lot, but it's also that the services seem to simply attract people with these courageous qualities. They make me proud to be a U.S. veteran.

Anyway, your articles couldn't have come at a better time as I recently read a news report that said nationwide drowning deaths were on the rise this year. Hopefully, your stories will help bring about some awareness and prevention.

*Eli Miller*
*Via e-mail*


## 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.**

# A DISAPPOINTING READ

I read the article "Too Much Chlorine in Pool Leaves Combat Controllers Coughing, Vomiting" (May/June 2008 issue of Torch, page 5) and was kind of disappointed.

In the article you mentioned, "The base fire department responded to the medical emergency." Well, that may be, but I can tell you that two ambulances and an AMBUS responded with emergency room and flight medicine medics/emergency medical technicians for treatment and transport to the emergency room. The ER hospital staff came together as a team to treat the combat control students and handled the mass casualty situation very well.

The hospital staff that was a part of this unfortunate incident was commended by everyone for the quick treatment, transport and overall outcome. The article I read mentions nothing about the hospital, ER or its medics. As the flight chief of emergency services, I can tell you that they did an awesome job that day. I think their performance is worthy of mentioning in that article.

*Master Sgt. John "Chip" Coleman*
*Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., Medical Center*

***We appreciate your feedback and further insight on the noteworthy emergency response to this mass casualty mishap.***

by Tech. Sgt. Larry A. Simmons


# TORCH RULES!

Torch Magazine rules! Give them another national award for speedy delivery! When I arrived in country as the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing flight safety officer, the latest issue of Torch was sitting on my desk.

Torch Magazine is worldwide!

*Maj. John Ryon*
*Southwest Asia*

# WOUNDED WARRIOR

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Matthew Hannen

I just read the story "The Price of Freedom" (May/June 2008 issue, page 8) a second time before e-mailing you. … The article was very well done. It is a shame stories like these are not told more often. To meet with Staff Sgt. Matt Slaydon and his wife and see how proud Matt was to serve our country must give you chills up and down your spine. Matt and Annette are very strong individuals. I hope the government is taking care of them in a proper matter.

*Retired Senior Master Sgt. Harry Mirra*
*Philadelphia*

I'm the chief of Air Force Mortuary Affairs Policy and Programs at the Pentagon. Our survivor assistance team members work with all of the Air Force wounded warriors, and we have been in contact with Staff Sgt. Matt Slaydon from the day that he was injured to the present date. So you can imagine our interest in your May/June 2008 issue of Torch that featured Matt and his wife.

The issues went fast, and we ordered more. The magazines will be used to help stress the importance of taking care of our Airmen and to ensure that commanders understand the importance of assigning family liaison officers to our wounded warrior families as soon as possible.

We ensured that a family liaison officer was assigned to Sergeant Slaydon and his wife as soon as he returned from Iraq to assist with anything that they might need. We also have funded many of his TDYs so he could speak to leadership and tell his story. We speak with him or his wife several times a week and have assisted them with numerous requests, such as helping them receive payment on travel vouchers, obtain a passport, and much more.

*First Lt. Kandis M. Sallustio*
*Arlington, Va.*

I'm the commander of the 56th Civil Engineering Squadron. We're honored to have one of our explosive ordnance disposal Airmen — Staff Sgt. Matt Slaydon — on the cover of Torch (May/June 2008 issue). As you can imagine, this edition is going like hotcakes. Thanks!

*Lt. Col. Anthony R. Ramage*
*Luke Air Force Base, Ariz.*

I'm the project officer for the Department of Defense Public Web. Kudos for an outstanding feature on Staff Sgt. Matt Slaydon ("The Price of Freedom") … extremely well written.

*Laurent Fox*
*Pentagon*

I am a retired Air Force enlisted member and serve as the coordinator for the oral and maxillofacial surgery residency program in the 59th Medical Wing. I just read the article "The Price of Freedom," and I have to tell you that Staff Sgt. Matt Slaydon is a major war hero in my eyes. He has paid a great price for our freedom.

His wife Annette is a hero, as well. She has taken her wedding vows quite seriously. Annette has shown some of the younger people that marriage is not just for the good times; if you truly love someone, you love them with your whole heart. … It's what's on the inside of a person that counts (the heart, compassion, love, loyalty, trust, etc.). Annette, I salute you.

I have been married for 37 years. My husband is my soul mate, and I would stand by him no matter what. Annette has helped to rejuvenate my faith in human nature.

Best wishes to Annette and Matt. With their faith and love in each other, they can handle any obstacle thrown their way.

*Cheryl A. Tholen*
*Lackland Air Force Base, Texas*

Thanks for writing such a beautiful story ("The Price of Freedom"). Matthew and I both shed tears after reading it.

*Staff Sgt. Matthew and Annette Slaydon*
*Randolph Air Force Base, Texas*

AROUND THE COMMAND

# 'THE HARDEST JOB I EVER HAD'

*MCCHORD AIR FORCE BASE, Wash. (AFPN)* — I can still remember the event years later as if it happened yesterday. I received a phone call from the noncommissioned officer in charge of the military personnel flight. He informed me that I had one hour to report to the office in service dress and lead a casualty notification team.

The fatality wasn't in my squadron or from the base. The deceased Airman was stationed in Germany, and his next-of-kin lived in Montana. Our base was the closest Air Force installation to their home.

I arrived at the MPF a few minutes later and received instructions about where this town was located, what to say and do when we got there, and what not to say. As a commander I had to do some unpleasant things, but this was going to be the hardest job I ever had to do.

A chaplain and a nurse joined me as the other notification team members. We drove four hours through three states and arrived at 2 in the morning.

My heart pounded fast as I entered the residence and then read the statement: "On behalf of the chief of staff of the Air Force, I regret to inform you of the death of your son."

The emotion and grief they felt at that moment has stayed with me to this day. There wasn't a more somber task than what I had just carried out, and I vowed to use this tragic event as a teaching lesson for those under my command.

That particular Airman died because he fell asleep at the wheel of his car and drove into oncoming traffic. He was on his way home from an extended weekend visit to France and had not given himself proper rest. His failure to do the safe thing not only took his life, but it caused tremendous pain and suffering for his family, friends and fellow Airmen.

The consequences of your actions are not yours alone. They can and will affect others, and you need to think about that each day as you go about your activities.

The Air Force goes to great measures to ensure your safety on and off the job because you are a valuable member of the team. So the next time you hear someone giving a safety briefing or telling you how to wear protective equipment, imagine someone notifying your next-of-kin that you are dead because of your failure to do the "safety" thing.

Don't let your actions force someone else to do the hardest job they will ever undertake.

*— Col. Tracy Smiedendorf*
*62nd Maintenance Group commander*

File photo

***When an Airman fell asleep at the wheel,*** *he drove into on-coming traffic and was killed. An officer had to notify his next-of-kin.*

# THE MAGIC FORMULA TO AVOID A DUI

by Tech. Sgt. Matthew Hannen/digital composite by Sammie W. King

*MCCONNELL AIR FORCE BASE, Kan. (AFPN)* — I was 18 years old, had my own car and was driving home on a rainy night. Of course, this was 29 years ago, so gas was under a dollar; my 8-track tape player was playing, and I was going to see the world at the expense of the Air Force.

A set of headlights appeared in my lane, and with no time to react, we impacted. The hood folded. The engine pushed through the dashboard, and I slammed into the windshield.

Blinded by the blood pouring from my head wounds, I climbed from the wreckage. I stumbled to my feet only to collapse and wake up in the hospital.

The officer said the other driver was drunk and was going at least 80 mph when he smashed into me. It was my second accident with a drunk driver in less than a year.

Fortunately, my wounds healed, and I set out on my career as a security police law enforcement specialist. At every chance, I would seek out drunk drivers to see them punished while developing a well-deserved reputation for zero-tolerance.

Fast forward 10 years to my own revelation: I'm at a unit barbecue, where the beer keg flowed.

I intended to drive because I knew I wasn't drunk. Well-trained in the effects of alcohol, I felt I was much too smart and experienced to drive drunk.

Nevertheless, the unit had received portable breathalyzer units, and I was curious to see how they worked. Of course, I doubted I'd even consumed enough beer to register a reading. Imagine my surprise when the reading showed I was "over the limit." I was in denial.

I grew upset when my lack of situational and self awareness almost put me in a position for which I so adamantly and vehemently condemned others. If my self-awareness was so far off, had I unknowingly driven drunk before?

I thought about the many driving under the influence apprehensions I'd made. The drivers almost always felt they were not drunk, even as some poured themselves out of the car and low-crawled to me.

These situations have convinced me law enforcement alone is not the key to DUI prevention; the primary tenants must include education and prevention. This takes a concentrated effort by all Airmen.

When you drink, no matter the amount, your judgment is clouded. If you accept this, you'll avoid having to see the commander with your career on the line or ending up in a jail cell.

If you think you're always in control when you drink, you're just a bad statistic waiting to happen. And there will be life-threatening consequences for you and the innocent bystanders.

Follow the only plan known to work: Any drinking means no driving.

*— Chief Master Sgt. Alan Houchens*
*22nd Security Forces Squadron*

## THE ALCOHOL EFFECT

**About three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.**

**Many people who cause these mishaps simply didn't understand at the time how quickly alcohol could impair them both physically and mentally. They paid for this ignorance dearly.**

**Once alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream, it is rapidly distributed throughout the body. It affects almost every cell (including those all-important brain cells), organ and level of functioning.**

**The most profound early effect is on the central nervous system. It acts as a sedative, producing relaxation and a sense of well-being.**

**Alcohol reaches the brain within minutes. It keeps passing through the brain until the liver has had time to oxidize it. The flow of oxygen to the brain is reduced, which can affect the ability to function and think clearly. Ultimately, judgment and reflexes are impaired.**

**— National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

TALES OF THE STRANGE

# MAN HEAD-BUTTS PIT BULL, LOSES EAR

*BOULDER, Colo.* — When a man from Boulder head-butted a pit bull, the dog retaliated by biting half of the man's right ear off, police said.

According to witnesses, 36-year-old Edward Valdez started playing roughly with his friend's dog when the animal lashed out. The attack took place Aug. 19 near Boulder Creek Path in front of the public library on the 1000 block of Canyon Street, said Boulder Police Department spokesperson Sarah Huntley.

"Several witnesses said the victim was being overly aggressive with the dog, grabbing it by the face and pulling it around roughly," Huntley said. "Then, for reasons known only to him, he yanked it by the ears and head-butted it. I guess the dog decided she'd had enough, and bit his ear off."

The 4-year-old female pit bull, Freya, belongs to Robert Heinrich of Longmont, a nearby suburb. By the time police arrived at the scene, they found 31-year-old Desarie Leonard crying, but the dog, the owner and the victim were gone.

Leonard said she witnessed the whole event and believed the dog acted in self defense. She told police that after the attack, Valdez, with his severed ear in tow, headed in one direction, while Heinrich and Freya walked away in the other.

Officers found Valdez a short distance away, bleeding badly and holding the bottom half of his detached ear. They took him to the Boulder Community Hospital, where doctors reattached the ear and released him later that same day.

When officers located Freya and her owner, they took the dog to the Boulder Valley Humane Society, where she was held in quarantine under an "aggressive animals prohibited" law, Huntley said.

"Any animal that breaks a person's skin needs to be quarantined for 10 days to ensure that it doesn't have rabies," explained Lisa Pedersen, the Humane Society's chief executive officer.

Freya has since been released back to her owner, Pedersen said. She added that Heinrich won't face charges because Valdez, a transient, was nowhere to be found after being treated at the hospital. Without the injured man's official statement, no charges could be filed, she said.

"If police officers had been able to locate the victim, we would have continued the investigation further," Pedersen said. "But according to eyewitness reports, the bite seemed to be provoked anyway."

*— Tim Barela*

## DON'T GET BIT

Each year, nearly 4.7 million people in the United States are bitten by dogs — 80 percent of them by familiar canines. The good news is that most bites can be prevented by following these simple rules:

***1.*** *Before petting someone's dog, ask the dog's guardian for permission. If it's OK, approach slowly and quietly. Let the dog sniff you first, then pet the dog's sides or back gently.*

***2.*** *Never sneak up on or pet a dog that is sleeping or eating. Animals can bite when they're startled or frightened.*

***3.*** *Never pet a dog that is playing with a toy or eating. Dogs are often protective of toys and food.*

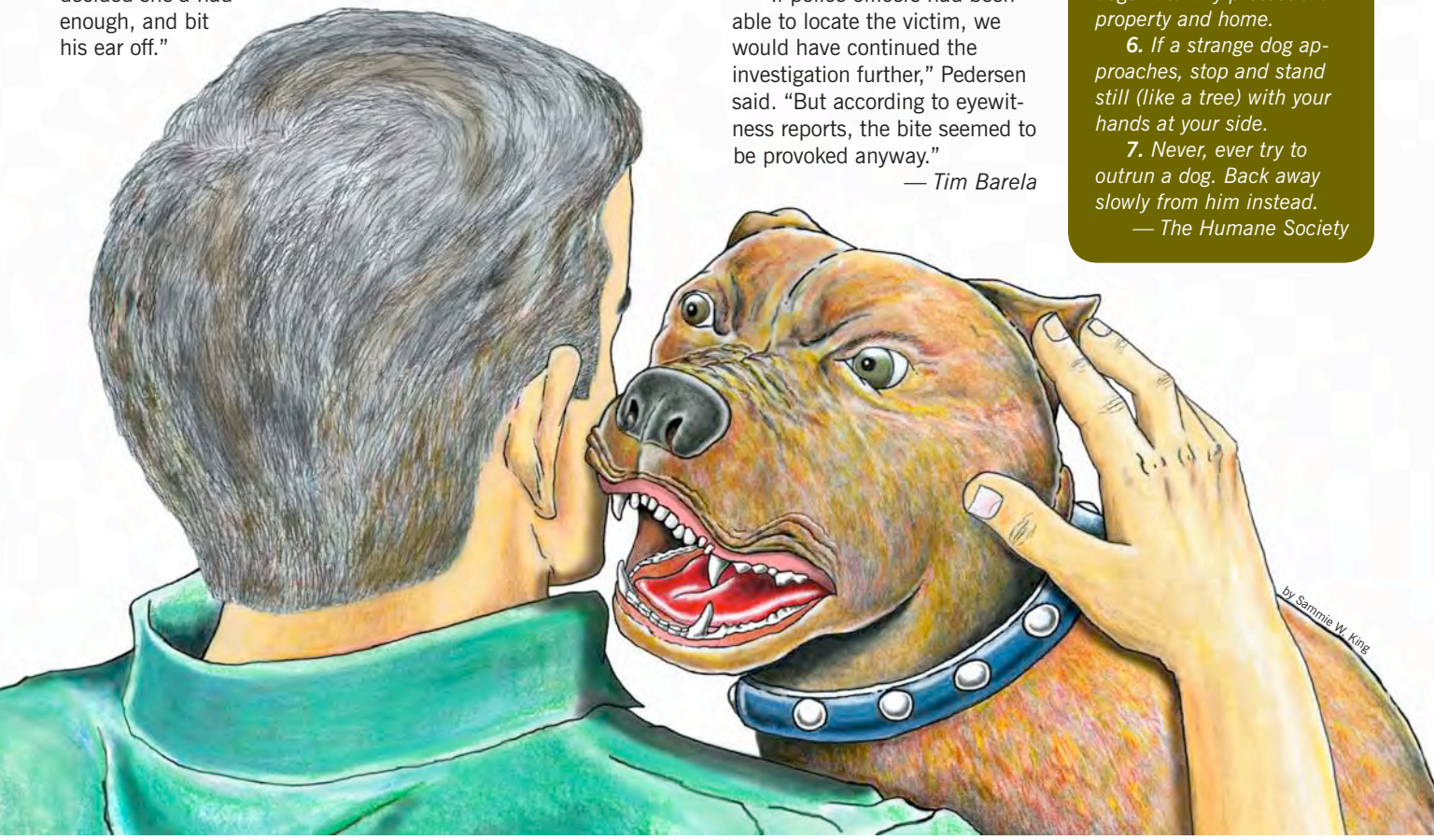
***4.*** *Never try to pet a dog that is in a car. Dogs will often protect that space.*

***5.*** *Never pet a dog that is behind a fence. Most dogs naturally protect their property and home.*

***6.*** *If a strange dog approaches, stop and stand still (like a tree) with your hands at your side.*

***7.*** *Never, ever try to outrun a dog. Back away slowly from him instead.*

*— The Humane Society*



# DOING YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING?

## AAFES QUALITY ASSURANCE TEAM PUTS SAFETY AHEAD OF SALES

by Tech. Sgt. Matthew Hannen

*DALLAS* — When military families shop for the holidays or any time of year, the last thing they should have to worry about is the safety or quality of the products they purchase. At the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, selling you safe products is a top priority.

Thanks to a small army of AAFES quality assurance professionals, many worries are alleviated long before a product hits the store shelves.

Consisting of 41 associates across the globe, the AAFES quality assurance team's mission is to provide troops and their families with the highest possible level of consumer protection for the full range of merchandise available at AAFES locations worldwide. AAFES quality assurance accomplishes this mission through a wide range of quality control systems, including inspection; product testing and analysis; feedback and recalls; supplier quality assistance; social compliance; and sanitation.

"Military shoppers should expect nothing less than safe, reliable and high quality merchandise when shopping their (exchange)," said Tom Rebman, AAFES director of quality assurance. "This command's quality assurance team is at work every day to ensure the exchange facilities' products have passed the most rigorous and thorough of inspections."

Last year, a quality assurance test revealed that a toy being sold by the exchange contained a high lead count. After receiving the results, AAFES quality assurance associates quickly contacted the Consumer Product Safety Commission to initiate a nationwide recall.

"This recall is just another example of the diligent work the AAFES quality assurance team does to protect military families," Rebman said. "From our lab at headquarters to the distribution centers and suppliers' facilities, our team of inspectors, veterinarians and even a gemologist work day in and day out to bring the safest and most reliable products to every member of the military family."

*— Army and Air Force Exchange Service*

### HAZARDOUS RECALLS & ALERTS

To review an updated list of product hazardous recalls and alerts, please visit the Army and Air Force Exchange Service Web site at *www.aafes.com/pa/news/QA_Recalls.htm*.

# Old Airplanes and Staying Safe in the Real World

## Commander talks about recent aircraft crashes and handling a risky business

*By Gen.* **Stephen R. Lorenz**

It's no secret. We're flying some old airplanes.

In fact, aging airplanes continue to consume much of our attention. We are currently replacing the wing boxes on our C-130s, first delivered in 1956. Late last year, we grounded our F-15Cs, first delivered in 1974, after one literally broke apart in the sky. And more recently, we have focused on the T-38, which was first delivered in 1961.

In April, two Air Education and Training Command pilots died in a T-38 crash at Columbus Air Force Base, Miss. The investigation board performed a thorough analysis of the wreckage, and we now know that the cause was a broken part — a lever in the wing. The lever broke as the airplane taxied, and this caused the flight controls to be ineffective on takeoff. This is the first time this part is known to have failed.

As soon as he found out about the levers, my predecessor, Gen. Bill Looney, directed a halt in flying to allow inspection of every lever in the fleet. If a lever was cracked, or even if it had a nick, gouge or scratch, our team replaced it.

But we didn't stop there. We learned that the lever suffers high stress when flight controls are moved on the ground with no power, so we stopped this practice. In addition, our T-38 pilots paused to study the accident and the malfunction. We have also teamed up with Air Force Materiel Command to take two important steps. First, we studied the levers in depth to react to the original problem. More importantly, we are being proactive by disassembling multiple aircraft to look for additional parts that may develop similar problems.

Because there is a very small chance that these levers may fail at some unspecified time in the future, AFMC is manufacturing new, stronger levers for all T-38s. As soon as these are available, we will install them.

Gen. Stephen R. Lorenz

Some people will ask, "Why don't we stop flying until these levers are ready?" It's a good question, and we did consider this. After a full discussion with commanders, flight engineers, maintenance experts and instructor pilots, we decided that continuing to fly was the right thing to do. In making this decision, we weighed the risk of

by Tech. Sgt. Matthew Hannen


***When a lever in a T-38 wing broke**, the aircraft crashed, resulting in the death of two pilots from Columbus AFB, Miss.*

flying with that of not flying — including the loss of pilot proficiency. Arriving at this decision was not easy, but the experience taught us important lessons about staying safe in the real world.

Safety is critical, but if we wanted to be perfectly safe, we would never fly. In fact, we wouldn't travel in our cars, play sports or walk to the park. In all of these activities, there is a small chance that an accident will happen. Even though we know this, we seldom think twice about driving to work, playing basketball or walking down the street. We all accept risk in order to live our lives.

***"Safety is critical, but if we wanted to be perfectly safe, we would never fly. In fact, we wouldn't travel in our cars, play sports or walk to the park. … We all accept risk in order to live our lives. … Accepting that risk, however, does not relieve us of the responsibility to be proactive."***

In the Air Force, we must accept some risk to accomplish our mission. The T-38 is a safe plane to fly. You have my word that if I learn of information to the contrary, we will stop flying immediately. In the meantime, we accept the inherent risks of flying to accomplish the mission of producing pilots.

Accepting that risk, however, does not relieve us of the responsibility to be proactive. Just as we are tearing T-38s apart looking for other parts that could break, we should all look around our shops and seek out areas where our people are at risk.

When we find a dangerous situation, or one finds us, we must pause to consider our options. We should learn as much as we can and seek inputs from all levels. After taking time to think, commanders and supervisors should implement the safety measures that best minimize the risk to our people while allowing us to accomplish our mission. They should explain the problem and the plan of action to their people. After this, everyone should monitor the situation as they get back to work.

We can never drive risk to zero. We can, however, continuously strive to make our workplaces and processes safer. As Airmen, we have come a long way. My grandfather used to tell us how he participated in too many funeral processions when he attended pilot training in 1919. Since then, Airmen have been tremendously successful in reducing risk while training and fighting in the air. Now it is our turn.

General Lorenz is the commander of Air Education and Training Command at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

# Message from 'Nam

UBON

After barely surviving an aircraft crash following a bombing mission over North Vietnam 40 years ago, a pilot says lessons he learned still apply to today's aviators

*By* **Tim Barela**
*Digital composite* **David M. Stack**

by Dave Nolan


*Through the blackness of the moonless night, an eerie hush fell over the jungle as if all the wildlife had fled or gone into hiding. First Lt. Pete Nash sat upright against a tree, bleeding to death. His body had been scrambled like an egg. He didn't know it, but he had 17 broken bones, a collapsed lung, and his chest was filling up with blood.*

*His labored breathing and low groans broke the silence and seemed to echo through the darkness. Confused, he couldn't recall how he came to be here. Where was he? What had happened? Was anyone coming for him?*

*The answers to these questions escaped him. He only knew one thing. ...*

*Pain.*

After returning from a bombing mission over North Vietnam Sept. 19, 1968, 1st Lt. Peter R. Nash and his aircraft commander, Maj. Roger O. Clemens, crashed their F-4D fighter jet nearly three miles short of the runway at their home base of Ubon Airfield, Thailand. Sadly, Clemons died in the crash. Nash, however, survived to tell the tale and, hopefully, pass on some lessons learned that still apply to modern aviators.

Nash grew up in Townsend, a small Montana farming community along the Missouri River. His dad served as the town's physician/surgeon and as a part time farmer and rancher. During the summers, young Pete worked hard on his father's ranch, cutting and stacking hay, fixing fences, irrigating fields or any other number of chores.

But his head remained in the clouds.

"From as early as I can remember, I loved airplanes," he said.

His town had an active Civil Air Patrol program, which had sparked Nash's insatiable appetite for jets. So it was no surprise to anyone when at the age of 18 in 1961, Nash went to the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Seven years later at age 25, he found himself assigned to the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing at Ubon, flying his 61st combat mission in the F-4. Fifty-one of the missions, including the latest, had been over North Vietnam; the other 10 had taken place over Laos.

"We flew around the clock at Ubon — airplanes going all the time," Nash said. "I primarily flew at night."

The lieutenant belonged to a strike squadron, and its primary mission was armed reconnaissance. Or more specifically, most of their missions were to bomb enemy resupply and troop vehicles along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a complex route through rugged mountains, dense primeval rainforests and raging rivers.

"There were always trucks along the trail, but they weren't that easy to spot in the daytime, much less at night," Nash said. "They were camouflaged and hidden by the tree canopies in the jungle."

That's why most missions involved two-ship formations. The first F-4 would drop flares to light up the trail. The second aircraft would then "unleash hell on any enemy vehicles" they spotted below.

Of course, North Vietnamese soldiers never did take to kindly to that.

"We were fired on all the time," Nash said. "Boom! Boom! Boom! All around us. One good thing about flying at night, though, you could see the tracers coming at you. If you saw a red ball headed your way, you could take evasive action."

Still, it wasn't uncommon for planes to return to base sporting small holes from 85-milimeter rounds.

"But you don't have much time to think about it or be afraid," Nash said. "There's a lot to do, and you're so focused on the mission."

**"Our normal approach rate on final descent should be around 750 feet per minute. We were coming down a little more than 2,500 feet per minute — over three times as fast as we should have been."**

***1st Lt. Peter R. Nash***

On Sept. 19, Nash and Clemons flew together for the first and last time. As the senior pilot, Clemons served as the aircraft commander, flying in the front seat of the cockpit. Nash was the pilot systems operator, commonly referred to at the time as the GIB (guy in back).

"They tried to pair you up with guys you were familiar with because communication is better; but often that didn't work out," Nash said. "If you were low-ranking like me, then you flew with just about anybody. In 61 missions, I must have flown with 20 different guys."

With the lead plane carrying flares, Clemens's and Nash's F-4 had been stuffed with a load of 500-pound bombs that night.

"We took off, did a refueling, and then headed out to do an armed reconnaissance on a river ferry system," Nash said.

The ferry and the area around it were favorite targets of the Americans because enemy trucks would get backlogged there as they waited to cross the river.

"It was a pretty routine mission," Nash said. "The lead aircraft dropped the flares, we dropped our bombs on some supply trucks, and then we headed home."

Who would have thought that the combat mission over hostile territory would be a piece of cake, and the landing over friendly territory would turn into a nightmare?

As had been agreed upon during the mission brief, the lead aircraft executed a ground control approach and landing back at Ubon without incident. During this type of approach, the air traffic controller vectors the aircraft and crew in for a landing.

For some reason, however, Clemens requested a tactical air

navigation approach as they neared the airfield. During this approach, the pilot uses ground navigational aids to land the plane.

"You really shouldn't change briefed plans without a good reason," Nash said. "If we'd stuck to the flight plan, what followed would have never happened."

As they approached the runway, Nash knew something was wrong. He should have been able to see the runway on radar, but wasn't getting a reading.

Perplexed and distracted by this anomaly, the lieutenant hadn't noticed that his aircraft commander had dropped the nose of the F-4 and was descending too fast.

"Our normal approach rate on final descent should be around 750 feet per minute," Nash said. "We were coming down a little more than 2,500 feet per minute — over three times as fast as we should have been.

"I was probably distracted too long trying to find the runway on the radar, and, of course, the reading was being affected because the nose of the plane was too low," he said. "Still, I certainly should have been watching the approach lights closer because nighttime approaches are difficult. There are no visual cues at all, no horizon; it's completely black out there."

When Nash finally realized they were getting too low, he voiced his concerns to Clemens. But he said the aircraft commander seemed confused or spatially disoriented, because he didn't react.

"Actually, even though a pilot is supposed to trust and use the aircraft instrument panel at night and in weather, he probably looks outside some too," Nash said. "But that's when you can fall victim to the black hole effect."

This phenomenon happens when it's completely black outside and the only things pilots see in front of them are darkness and the runway lights. Fliers can get fixed on the runway lights and then have a tendency to drop down into the "black hole" in front of those lights.

"(Clemens) simply didn't comprehend what I was telling him; perhaps his instruments were 'hung up' and giving him false readings," Nash said. "I probably waited too long to take control of the aircraft because I was waiting for him to react. I finally took the stick."

**"When we found Major Clemens, he was already dead. … The whole incident shook me up pretty good; it was my first rescue and the first time I'd ever had to put anyone in a body bag."**

***Capt. Vernon P. Wagner***

Just as Nash began to level off the aircraft, it hit the trees.

"About that same time, I decided to eject," he said.

That's when things went really bad.

"The ejection system did not perform as advertised," he said. "I ended up blasting through the canopy."

Because the aircraft was damaged in the impact with the trees, the canopy was stuck on the F-4. But it moved just enough to make the ejection seat "think" it was gone. Nash shattered the canopy like a brick smashing through glass. The impact splintered his helmet into pieces and knocked him unconscious.

"But the helmet did its job because my head was still intact," he said.

Between hitting the canopy and already being so low, his parachute didn't have time to do its job either. It trailed behind him like a long streamer and got caught up in a tree. Somehow, Nash ended up propped against a tree trunk in a sitting position, still unconscious.

Unbeknownst to him, the downed aircraft slid along a muddy rice paddy and hit a small hill, which propelled it 30 feet in the air before it landed nose first in the watery paddy, some 50 feet from the injured lieutenant.

Clemens never ejected. Stuck in the wreckage and wedged underneath the instrument panel, the pilot's head and shoulders were trapped under water. Nash seemed fortunate by comparison.

"Not too many people survive through-the-canopy ejections, so I guess I was lucky," Nash said.

Yes, he clung to life, but barely. He regained consciousness about 20 minutes after he'd punched out of the aircraft. His head and his right arm were about the only things spared. He used his right hand to activate his survival radio and send out a homing beacon.

"When I came to, I was obviously hurting," he said. "Thankfully, because of shock, I don't remember too much."

Busted up seemingly beyond repair, he had 17 broken bones, to include a compound fracture of the tibia and fibula in his right leg, a broken left ankle, a shattered left hip, three pelvic fractures, four broken ribs, a broken left shoulder, fractured vertebra, and more. He also suffered a collapsed lung, internal bleeding and massive bruises to his shoulders where he hit the canopy.

Shortly after their F-4 had disappeared into the trees, two HH-43 helicopters were dispatched from Ubon with rescue crews aboard. Sgt. William C. Murphy, a medical technician from the first helicopter, found the injured pilot. Meanwhile, the second aircraft dropped off Capt. Vernon P. Wagner, a flight surgeon.

"I'd seen the parachute stream draped over the trees and figured someone must be attached, so I had the helicopter set me down nearby," Wagner said. "But it was pitch black out there, and I had to walk along rice paddy dikes to try to find him."

Suddenly Murphy yelled, "Hey, Doc, he's over here."

Wagner made a beeline in the direction of the medic's voice.

"I stepped into the rice paddy and sank," Wagner said, his eyes widening at the memory. "I actually had to swim to get to them."

When the doctor arrived at the scene, the first thing he noticed was the sickening fractures to Nash's legs.

"His feet were pointing in a direction they shouldn't have been pointing," Wagner said.

But more concerning to the flight surgeon was the injured pilot's labored breathing.

"I knew he had a collapsed lung and probably had blood pooling in his chest," Wagner said. "And there was not much I could do to help him. It was simply too dark, and I didn't have the right equipment."

*"I'm hurting, Doc,"* Nash said in a hoarse whisper.

"Looking at him, I had a rough idea that was true," Wagner said with a slight chuckle. "The one thing I could do was provide him some comfort; so I gave him some morphine."

Then, with a deep breath, the doctor said, "Pete, I know you're hurting, buddy, but I have to get you out of here."

Murphy and Wagner loaded Nash onto a litter and started carrying him to the helicopter, which was about 100 meters away. With Murphy on the front of the litter and Wagner on the back, they had to traverse a slippery, muddy dike between the rice paddies.

"I'm small and I was no bigger in those days," said Wagner, who had nearly died from meningitis as a boy. "Suddenly I felt this sharp pain as my back gave out, and I slipped."

He dropped his end of the litter and dumped Nash into the rice paddy.

"Pete hollered in pain and had a few choice words for me — all justified, of course," Wagner said with a laugh. "Luckily, he has amnesia, so he doesn't remember that part. The standing joke in my unit was that he had only 15 fractures before I picked him up, but 17 by the time we got him to the helicopter."

After loading him on the chopper, Wagner stayed behind to help locate the wreckage and the other pilot.

"When we found Major Clemens, he was already dead," Wagner said. "I spent the night in the jungle — I got out there about midnight and didn't get back to the base until about noon the next day. The whole incident shook me up pretty good; it was my first rescue and the first time I'd ever had to put anyone in a body bag."

***Two old friends*** *(Wagner, left, and Nash) got together again at Randoph AFB, Texas, in*

Meanwhile, the helicopter took Nash to Camp Friendship, near Korat, Thailand, where he was stabilized and treated for pneumonia. Five days later, he transferred to Utapoe Air Base, Thailand, where Dr. (Capt.) Courtney Brown put him back together again.

A month and a half later, he was shipped to a Navy hospital in San Diego. They let him go home right before Christmas. He spent seven months with a cast on his right leg and another five months in physical therapy. A few months later, still not able

*August for an 8th Tactical Fighter Wing (Ubon Airfield, Thailand) reunion.*

to walk properly, he marched into the flight surgeon's office at George Air Force Base, Calif., and tried to convince doctors to let him back on flying status.

"They just laughed at me and said, 'You shouldn't even be in the Air Force,' " Nash said.

They may have snickered, but they were dead serious. They put him on a temporary disability retirement.

Six months later, using money from the retirement and his GI Bill, Nash decided to go to medical school. In 1973, the Air Force declared him fit to return to duty. He finished up the last two years of his medical school through the Air Force Institute of Technology as a captain in the service and then did his internship at Keesler AFB, Miss. After his internship, he went to flight surgeon school at Brooks AFB, Texas. Next he went to Luke AFB, Ariz., "because that's where all the fighter jets were."

But even though he manned the back seat of jets as a flight surgeon, he still hadn't been medically cleared to fly them. It wasn't until 1978, 10 years after his ejection, that he received waivers to pilot Air Force aircraft again. He "drove" F-4s for a year, then moved on to A-10 Warthogs.

Ironically, as an aircraft crash victim, flight doc and pilot, Nash became a natural to serve on mishap investigation boards. It was through his work on these investigations that he became the first person to document actual cases of a pilot killer — G-induced loss of consciousness. His work helped lead to G-LOC prevention programs that still save pilots' lives today.

"If it hadn't been for guys like Vernon Wagner, I wouldn't have been around to make these kinds of contributions to safety," Nash said.

Speaking of Wagner, because Nash ended up as a flight surgeon, just like his rescuer, the two found themselves at the same global medicine course at Brooks 10 years after the mishap.

"I'd often wondered what happened to Pete, because I'd never seen him or talked to him since that day in the jungle," Wagner said. "Then between lectures, I'm standing around the coffee pot and see an officer with pilot wings, a physician's badge and a nametag that read, 'Nash.' "

Wagner walked up to him and asked, "Is your first name Pete?"

"Yeah," Nash replied.

Wagner smiled and said, "Man, you look a hell of a lot better than the last time I saw you."

## LEARN FROM THE PAST

▶ Don't change flight plans without a good reason. If we had stayed with the original plan for our landing approach, the mishap would not have occurred.

▶ Don't get distracted. Because I couldn't find the runway on the radar, I spent far too much time adjusting the radar and wasn't monitoring the approach. By the time I realized what was happening, it was too late. Fly the airplane first.

▶ Once it becomes apparent that ejection is necessary, don't hesitate. Punching out well within the ejection envelope can save you from injury or death.

*— Dr. Peter R. Nash*

# Baghdad Brotherhood

## Air Force firefighters train Iraqis

*By Tech. Sgt.* **Amanda Callahan** / *Photos by Tech. Sgt.* **Jeffrey Allen**

A sea of silver bunker gear forms as firefighters waste no motion while swiftly helping one another adjust masks and don air tanks. Thick, black smoke billows out of a nearby building, and the firefighters line up to man hoses, rescue the injured and keep a close eye on each other.

It is not until the last ember is suffocated, and helmets and masks are removed that one realizes this isn't the average group of first responders. The soot covered firemen come from different sides of the runway … not to mention different parts of the world.

The 447th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron's fire department at Sather Air Base, Iraq, started training local Iraqi firefighters about three years ago. The Air Force firemen work with nearly 130 firefighters from New Al Muthanna

***Dousing the flames in a burning training facility*** *at Baghdad International Airport solidifies training between the new rotation of U.S. Airmen to their Iraqi counterparts.*

Air Base and the Baghdad International Airport at least three times a week. The training includes classroom lectures and live-fire exercises.

To teach the Iraqi firemen, many of the Air Force firefighters use the training they received through the Department of Defense Louis F. Garland Fire Training Academy at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas. In addition to the technical knowledge gained through the academy, the fringe benefits of going to a joint technical school play an important role for the firefighters.

"Fire school, along with the military, teaches teamwork and working with others from outside areas," said Staff Sgt. Grant Gimpel, one of the 447th fireman. "Goodfellow's fire academy incorporates all the services of the (Department of Defense), and this is one area that helps out when training with the Iraqi firefighters."

***Deployed firefighters*** *with the 447th Air Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron at Sather AFB, Iraq, somtimes need interpreters when doing training with Iraqi firemen. But they all say the experience has proven well worth it.*

Initially, the U.S. firefighters faced a challenge many Americans training Iraqis have had to overcome — the ever present language barrier.

"We have interpreters to help with that, but it's still difficult to figure out what each other is saying," said fireman Tech. Sgt. Paul Jacques.

They overcome by using hand signals, learning bits of each other's languages and using the translators.

According to firefighter Tech. Sgt. Michael Morgan, the training they provide to the Iraqis is in compliance with the National Fire Protection Agency 1001 because risk management is a priority for the trainers.

"It is through careful planning that we ensure the safety of the trainees and trainers," Morgan said. Because everyone involved realizes that "even a training event can get out of hand, and someone could get hurt."

Ultimately, the goal is to provide the training the Iraqi firefighters need to stand on their own, according to Senior Master Sgt. Michael Brown, the 447th ECES fire chief, who is serving his third rotation there.

"These guys embrace the chance to help the Iraqi firefighters create their own independent fire protection," Brown said. "We've got a lot of hard-charging, committed professionals; and with their knowledge and expertise, we are able to transfer that knowledge to the Iraqis."

Chief Raad, Baghdad International Airport fire chief, appreciates the training and the live-fire exercises his American counterparts provide.

"We need exercises (like this) to make us proficient," Raad said.

The Iraqi fire chief also told of the good relationship the firefighters have and the cooperation and support he receives from the American firemen.

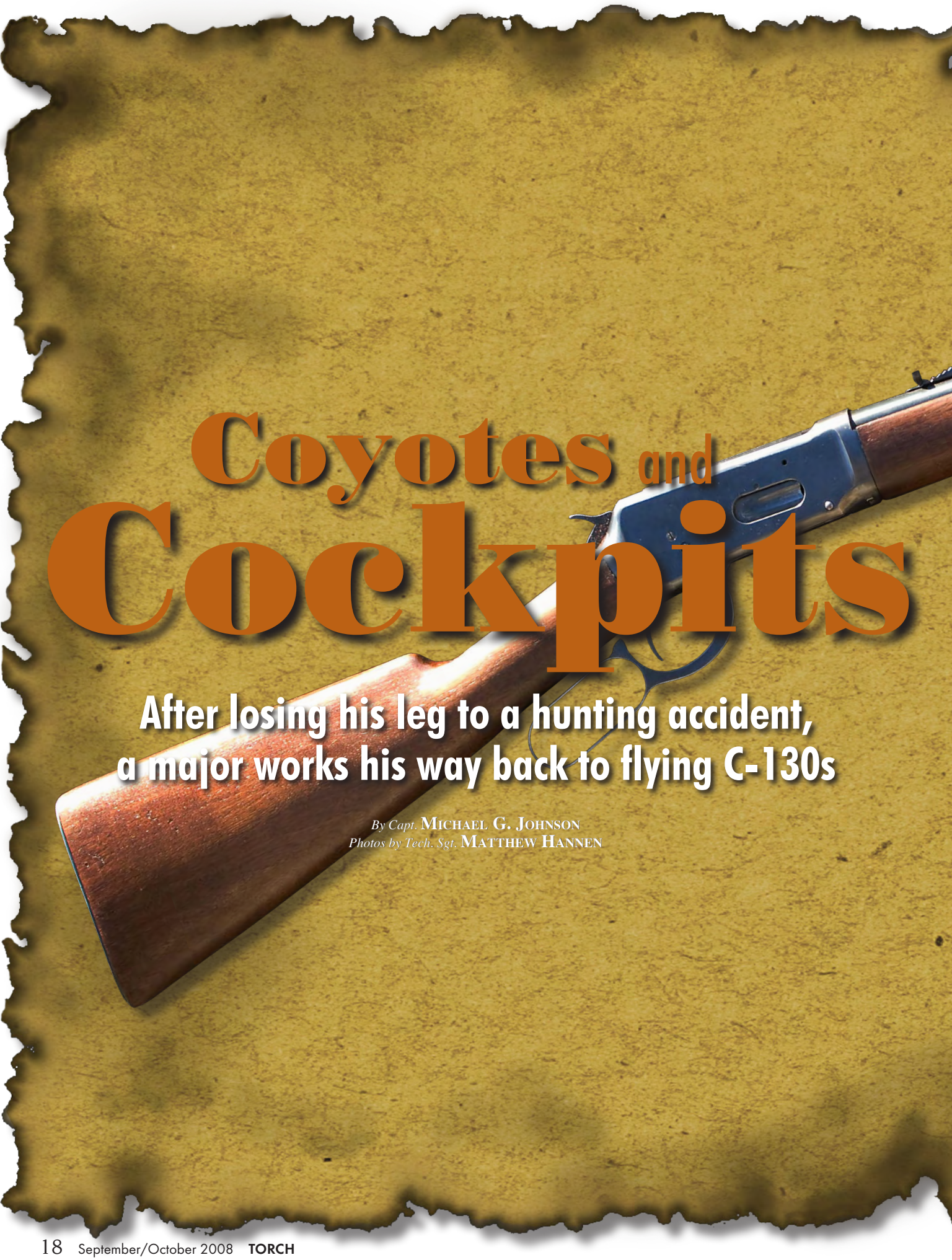
"We're the same family, same job," he said. "There's no military, no air force … just brother firemen."

Sergeant Callahan is with the 447th Air Expeditionary Group public affairs at Sather Air Base, Iraq.

## Deployed Fire Safety Tips

- *No smoking in tents. Use designated smoking areas.*
- *In the event of a fire or medical emergency, call 911.*
- *Ensure smoke detectors are in your work centers and living quarters.*
- *If not, contact civil engineering to have one installed.*
- *If they are present, check that they are operational by testing them weekly.*
- *Ensure fire extinguishers are marked and operational.*
- *Don't block entrances and exits. Ensure there are always two ways to evacuate.*
- *Don't overload circuits or piggyback electrical appliances.*
- *Keep all lamps away from walls of tents and flammable objects.*

*— 447th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron Fire Department*



# Coyotes and Cockpits

## After losing his leg to a hunting accident, a major works his way back to flying C-130s

*By Capt.* MICHAEL G. JOHNSON
*Photos by Tech. Sgt.* MATTHEW HANNEN

Maj. Alan Brown grew up the way many boys in the West do — with hard work and a love for the outdoors.

In 1994, he became a C-130 Hercules pilot with the Wyoming Air National Guard and was living the dream of many, flying whenever he could and spending the rest of his time hunting, fishing and helping out on his father's farm.

But that dream came to a screeching halt one cold night in southern Wyoming.

Early in the day on Jan. 21, 1999, Brown had flown a training mission with the 153rd Airlift Wing where he was an aircraft commander. He then brought his good friend and flying partner, Steve Friedman, home for dinner. After finishing their meal, the two set out to hunt coyotes just across the border in northern Colorado.

They were driving along a desolate road when they spotted a coyote. The major reached for his gun as Friedman quickly pulled the pickup over to the side of the road.

"When I went to pull (the gun) out, I was totally focusing on the coyote," Brown said.

He worked quickly to pull the gun from its case and get the shot, but the weapon got hung up. Maintaining his focus on the coyote, he jiggled the gun to shake it loose.

The gun fired into his right leg.

With the loud bang followed by the stinging burn of hot lead, Brown knew he was in trouble.

"I can't remember how (the gun) got off safety, but it shot right through the lower femur above the knee" the major said. "We found out later that much of my femur was gone."

In the "middle of nowhere" and potentially bleeding to death, Brown says his friend's quick and decisive actions saved his life.

"Make no mistake, the only reason I'm here today is because of Steve," Brown said. "We go way back; he's just an exceptional guy."

Friedman gave his wounded buddy a piece of cloth to use as a tourniquet. Brown tied it around his leg just above the wound and cranked down to help stop the bleeding.

Friedman, meanwhile, put the pedal to the metal and pointed the truck in the direction of Greeley, Colo., the nearest town with a hospital.

Their cell phones didn't work in the remote area.

Then, a little luck. As Friedman drove as fast as he could toward Greeley, he spotted several buses at an intersection.

"(Steve) pulled in front of the buses and stopped to ask for help," Brown said. "One of the guys happened to be an EMT (emergency medical technician)."

Snow had started falling hard enough to prevent a helicopter from flying to the rescue. Thankfully, the EMT had a working cell phone and made arrangements with an ambulance to meet the men halfway.

"(We met the ambulance), and they took over," Brown said. "With only a few exceptions, that's about all I remember until five weeks later when I woke up in the hospital."

**"I can't remember how (the gun) got off safety, but it shot right through the lower femur above the knee. We found out later that much of my femur was gone."**

Brown had been placed in a drug-induced coma, and the first three weeks following the mishap were dedicated to saving his leg. After numerous vein grafts, surgeries and a transfer to Denver to see one of the best trauma surgeons in the country, the major was still going downhill fast. He was on a ventilator and a dialysis machine.

Doctors made a tough decision.

"They told my parents and girlfriend at the time, Gina (who later became his wife), 'We have to remove the leg or he's going to die,' " he said.

After the amputation, the major's condition immediately improved. In a short time he was discharged from the intensive care unit to a rehabilitation floor.

He spent two months in the hospital. He spent five weeks of that time in a coma. When he regained consciousness, his leg was gone.

"People ask if I was freaked out (when I woke up)," he said. "No, I knew I was in the hospital. I knew I had a pretty bad accident. So when I saw my leg wasn't there, it made sense."

by Tech. Sgt. Mark Getsy


***Even though he had his right leg amputated*** *after a hunting mishap, Maj. Alan Brown (shown here while deployed to Southwest Asia) was able to work his way back into the cockpit of a C-130 with his unit at the Wyoming Air National Guard.*

by Tech. Sgt. Mark Gatsy

***His goal was to resume a normal life,*** *and with the help of his family, friends, Guard unit and modern technology, Brown has been able to accomplish that.*

As he regained consciousness and awareness, he asked his mom, dad and best friend two questions.

"I asked, 'Is Phinney around?' — Phinney is my wife's nickname — and they said, 'Yes she'll be here in about 20 minutes.' I was relieved," he said. "The second thing I asked is, 'Can I fly again?' All of them said yes."

While Brown was in a coma, his family, friends and squadron co-workers laid the groundwork for the major to fly again. They had a list of names of pilots who were flying with an above-the-knee prosthesis.

About three weeks after his release from the hospital, the major received his first prosthesis. He taught himself to walk again and began going to the gym.

"For the next several months I was just trying to get back, trying to get my strength back more or less and just resuming everything that I could," he said.

Gradually, one sit-up at a time, he began regaining his strength. His life began falling into place.

About six months after the accident, Brown met Raymond Francis, a prosthetics expert from Ohio with a soft spot in his heart for military people.

"He's been excellent at getting me and many other military guys back on our feet — literally," the Air National Guardsman said. "I got hooked up with him and this higher-tech, more high-activity leg. Shortly after that I made two trips to the (flight) simulator."

Still trying to walk well at the time, Brown was eager to see if he could fly again.

"I had to work at it, but I never crashed," he said about his first flight in the simulator.

In June 2000, about 15 months after the accident, the Federal Aviation Administration gave the major a check ride and reinstated his medical clearance. One week later, he received an interview with a civilian airline company.

"That was totally coincidental," he said. "I had my application in with them for a couple years. They had no idea I had even lost my leg."

Nevertheless, he ended up getting the job.

He flew with the airline for three-and-a-half years before being furloughed in March 2003. Afterward, he spent more time trying to regain his flying status with the Guard.

In November 2004, Gen. John Handy, then commander of Air Mobility Command, visited the major's wing, but Brown wasn't there that day. During his visit, the general talked about all the great things the Air Force was accomplishing, including allowing the first above-the-knee amputee to fly again at Andrews Air Force Base, Md.

When the general opened the floor to questions, one of Brown's friends told the general about him and asked why he couldn't fly.

The general looked at him and said, "Let's talk about this after this briefing." Then, the general met with Brown's friend and the wing commander to discuss the major's situation.

"He told my wing commander he wanted me to resubmit my package to fly again and that he wanted to be kept posted the entire time about what was going on," he said. "That was in November of 2004. I found out at the beginning of October 2005 that they were going to give me a waiver to fly again."

In August 2006, Brown attended pilot re-qualification training at Little Rock AFB, Ark., — seven years and five months after he lost his leg. Today, he's again a C-130 pilot in the Wyoming Air National Guard.

"We accomplished more in that half hour with (General Handy) than I had been able to the whole time before," he said with a look of relief. "All I was trying to do was resume my life the way (it had been)."

While Brown says he has never considered himself fortunate to be an amputee, he claims modern medicine and science have helped eased the burden.

"We're lucky to be amputees (at a time) when there's so much technology to make our lives good, make our lives more normal," he said. "I've also had backing at my unit. Our wing commander has never done anything but offer support, and that's been awesome."

Brown hopes others can learn two important lessons from the mishap that interrupted his life.

"First of all, (if you have a limb amputated), your life is not over," the major said. "Second, as far as the accident goes, just count to three before you act. There's nothing that important that you have to act hastily and have an accident like this."

He added that if people learn from his mistake, then his leg won't have been lost in vain.

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Captain Johnson was with the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs in Southwest Asia. (AFPN)

## Five Gun Safety Rules

1. Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.
2. Always keep your gun on safety until ready to use.
3. Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.
4. Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
5. Always identify your target and know what is beyond it.

*— National Rifle Association*

# GET-HOME-ITIS

***NOTE:*** *This story was reprinted from the May 1968 issue of Combat Crew Magazine, a Strategic Air Command safety publication. But the lessons learned still apply today, especially with the holiday season approaching and aircrews wanting to get home to spend time with their families.*

Crewmembers on the whole are a hale and hearty lot, but they can on occasion suffer from a common disease: "get-home-itis." In the dormant stage, this common crew ailment is an ever present nuisance. In the active state, however, it can be very dangerous.

You won't find the term in any dictionary or medical text. Nonetheless, it is a term that is accepted and widely used. Roughly defined, it means, "An intense and compelling desire to return to home station at the earliest possible time at the expense of aircraft checklist deviations and general disregard of good judgment."

Wanting to get home in time for Christmas is a classic example.

In a well-developed state, get-home-itis will probably kill if you permit it to relax good judgment and proper use of the aircraft checklist. Case in point, a Strategic Air Command accident investigation board documented an advanced case of get-home-itis that resulted in the loss of an aircraft and injuries to crewmembers.

The incident involved the faithful and reliable old C-47 Skytrain. This aircraft and crew were assigned to fly a survey of a proposed low-level bomber/navigation route. Heavy snows had obliterated the objects they were looking for, so the survey was abandoned.

The crew had devoted three days flying back and forth between southern and northern Air Force bases looking at the snow, and had scheduled a takeoff for home on the fourth day.

A check of the weather on the morning of the proposed flight home revealed a front moving in with forecast winds up to and beyond 35 knots, somewhat above safe limits for the C-47. The first tinge of get-home-itis crept in at this time, as takeoff time was moved up a few hours … or as soon as everyone could be rounded up.

With little difficulty the crew met at base operations just over an hour before takeoff. They were motivated because no one wanted to spend any more time away from their home base and family if it could be avoided.

They whipped up a flight plan, filed a clearance and jumped into a waiting bus that proceeded to take them to the aircraft.

Nine minutes after filing their clearance, the aircraft was on fire!

What went wrong?

The accident investigation board found that weather was not a contributing factor to the mishap. It wasn't, but it certainly contributed to the case of get-home-itis. The board did find that improper checklist procedures were used and attributed the mishap to pilot error. They also found that the pilot had a little help from the ground crew in getting the blaze going.

The crew arrived at the aircraft and began a somewhat hurried pre-flight, making certain omissions and deviations from tech data. Some signal — not to be found in the regulations — was exchanged between the transient maintenance man and the pilot, resulting in the chocks being removed prior to moving the C-26 power cart away from the aircraft.

The maintainer was trying to pull the power cart away by hand (the self-drive unit was inoperative), when he heard the engines rev up and saw the Skytrain moving toward him.

***A C-47 Skytrain*** *caught fire and was destroyed in the 1960s after the aircrew got a case of "get-home-itis," which led them to cut corners on checklist items.*

# AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON A 'DISEASE' THAT STILL AFFLICTS MODERN AIRCREWS

*By Lt. Col.* **Richard N. Oster**

He beat a hasty retreat, trying to attract the attention of the co-pilot, but no one was looking outside.

At this time the crew was preoccupied with low oil temperatures and had decided that it was too low to taxi. Somehow the brakes were released, although break release point had not been reached in the checklist.

With a fingernails-across-the-chalkboard screech, the number two propeller struck the power cart in the worst possible place — the highly flammable fuel tank.

Instantly, the tank ruptured and burst into flame, setting the aircraft on fire as well.

The ensuing blaze ensured scrambling base firefighters earned their pay that day.

Three navigators and a hitch-hiking passenger in the cargo department had no difficulty getting out of the rear cargo door — particularly when eight hands grabbed the handle simultaneously. The flight mechanic beat feet not too far behind the passenger and navigators.

However, the two pilots felt trapped inside the burning aircraft.

By the time they shut down the engines and were heading for the rear of the Skytrain, one or more of the Plexiglas windows on the right side of the aircraft burned through, permitting flames to enter the cabin. The pilots thought the entire cabin was on fire, so they attempted to escape out of the forward part of the C-47.

By now, dense black smoke filled the aircraft, making vision and breathing difficult.

The desperate aviators finally attempted to escape via the pilot's left sliding window — a tight squeeze, to say the least. Ground personnel helped pull the pilot through the tiny window. Meanwhile, the co-pilot had blacked out, and firefighters had to yank the unconscious man through the same small opening.

There's more in the report about the flight mechanic going back into the aircraft looking for the pilots, and the rapid response on the part of the base firefighters who extinguished the flames in less than three minutes. But the primary point is never let get-home-itis interfere with good judgment or use of the aircraft checklist.

In this case, to beat forecast weather and to get home a little earlier, the crew started engines with improper use of the checklist and performed items out of sequence.

Ironically, in their pursuit to get home early, the navigators went home three days late; the pilot and flight mechanic arrived home nine days late; and the co-pilot got home 21 days late after a two-week detour to the hospital for smoke inhalation.

The poor old C-47 never did get home, as it was damaged beyond economical repair.

Needlessly costing the government a serviceable aircraft, the mishap also very nearly took the life of a pilot.

Actually, no one item caused the mishap, but combined "cockpit malfunctions" with "ground crew malfunctions" guaranteed the result. The bottom line, follow checklists and keep yourself well-insulated from the "disease" known as "get-home-itis."

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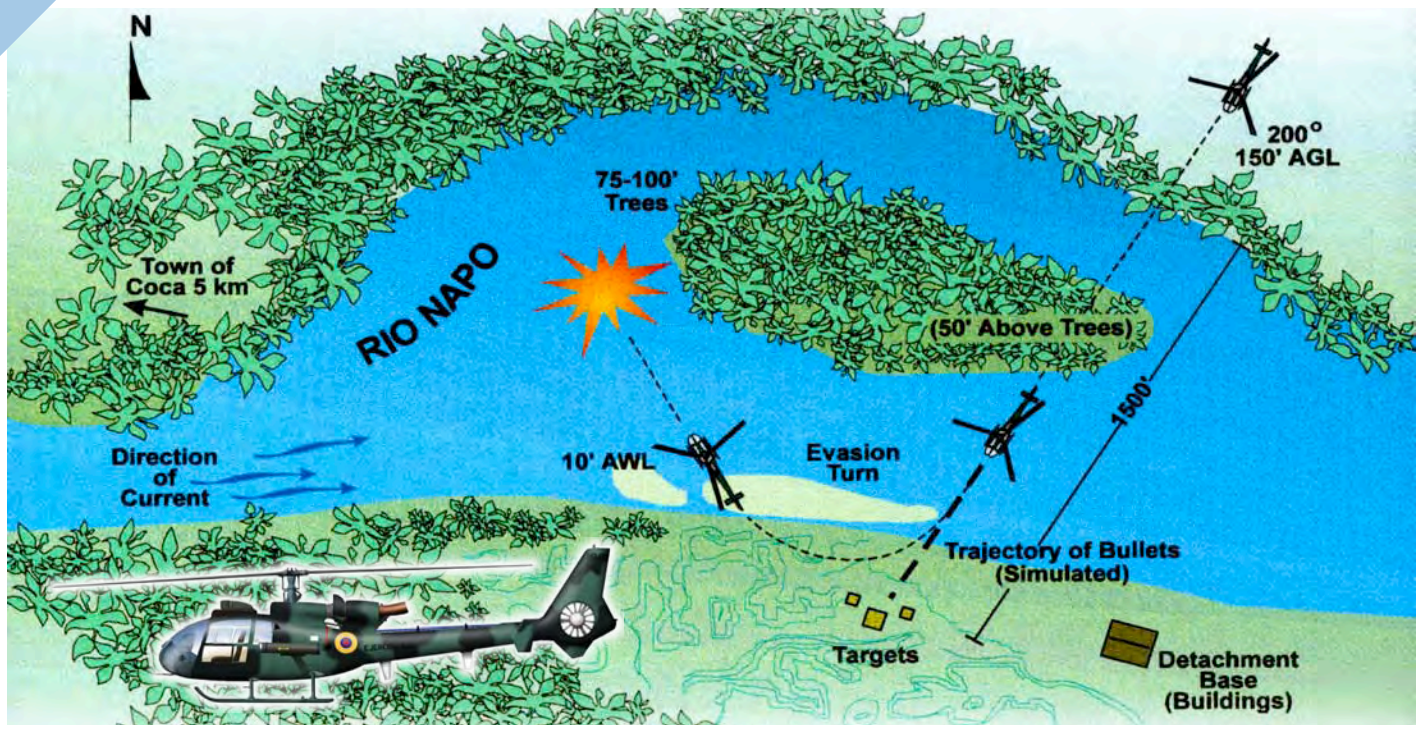
Colonel Oster was a member of the 43rd Bomb Wing at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., in 1968. The 43rd deactivated at Little Rock Jan. 31, 1970, then reactivated in April 1970 at Anderson Air Force Base, Guam, where it remained until it deactivated Sept. 30, 1990.

*"With a fingernails-across-the-chalkboard screech, the number two propeller struck the power cart in the worst possible place — the fuel tank. Instantly, the tank ruptured and burst into flame, setting the aircraft on fire as well. The ensuing blaze ensured base firefighters earned their pay that day."*

U.S. Air Force photo

# 40 DAYS AND 40 NIGHTS
## THE ANATOMY OF A MISHAP INVESTIGATION




***An SA-342 Gazelle gunship*** *crashed into the Napo River in a remote jungle in northeastern Ecuador with two American special ops servicemembers aboard. This chart shows the path of the aircraft and where it crashed into the water. The Ecuadorian pilot was killed; one of the Americans was seriously injured.*

I got the call on a Sunday afternoon while working the chains at my 9-year-old son's football game. An SA-342 Gazelle gunship helicopter had crashed into a river in a remote jungle in northeastern Ecuador with two American special ops servicemembers aboard. The Ecuadorian pilot was killed. One of the Americans, a Navy SEAL, escaped without injury, but the other, a Navy lieutenant, lost his lower left leg in the mishap.

Since the lieutenant was assigned to a unit at Hurlburt Field, Fla., I had been selected to serve on the mishap investigation board.

"Why me?" I thought.

Being tasked to serve on one of these boards is almost never convenient. The calls come in the middle of family vacations, on wedding anniversaries, during children's birthday parties … and football games. At the drop of a hat, safety investigators are taken away from family and normal duties at home units for nearly 40 days and 40 nights.

**"It's overwhelming when you walk up to the wreckage of a mishap and realize you have to sift through thousands of pieces of evidence."**

It's not easy suddenly changing roles. In my case, which took place in 1996, I went from piloting MH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters to investigating a major mishap in a foreign country.

And I won't lie; it's overwhelming when you walk up to the wreckage of a mishap and realize you have to sift through thousands of pieces of evidence. You're thinking, "How am I going to figure this out?"

Where's Matlock, Magnum P.I. or Sherlock Holmes when you need them?

But when I got there, I realized I simply had to put trust in my training.

To serve on a mishap board, investigators will have completed intense safety courses at the Air Force Safety Center. With its insightful instruction, which includes a crash lab, they become well-prepared for the daunting task they face.

As investigators go through the process taught, the "Ah, ha!" moment will come.

However, as the 16-hour days pile up, most will have some "Why me?" moments as well. Nevertheless, the importance of what they're doing won't be lost.

These professionals will determine what happened and why. They will find existing deficiencies, and then come up with recommendations that will save lives in the future.

In the case of the downed helicopter in Ecuador, we identified some problems and made recommendations that helped change special ops training programs for the better. These recommendations are still helping protect our aircrew members to this day. Moreover, we ensured that the lieutenant didn't lose his leg in vain.

Why me? … Why such a system?

Because *you* are our greatest natural resource. And if saving you by preventing another mishap costs me another 40 days and 40 nights, sign me up!

*— Col. John W. Blumentritt*

# FAILURE TO EXECUTE CRITICAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURES COSTS TWO PILOTS THEIR LIVES

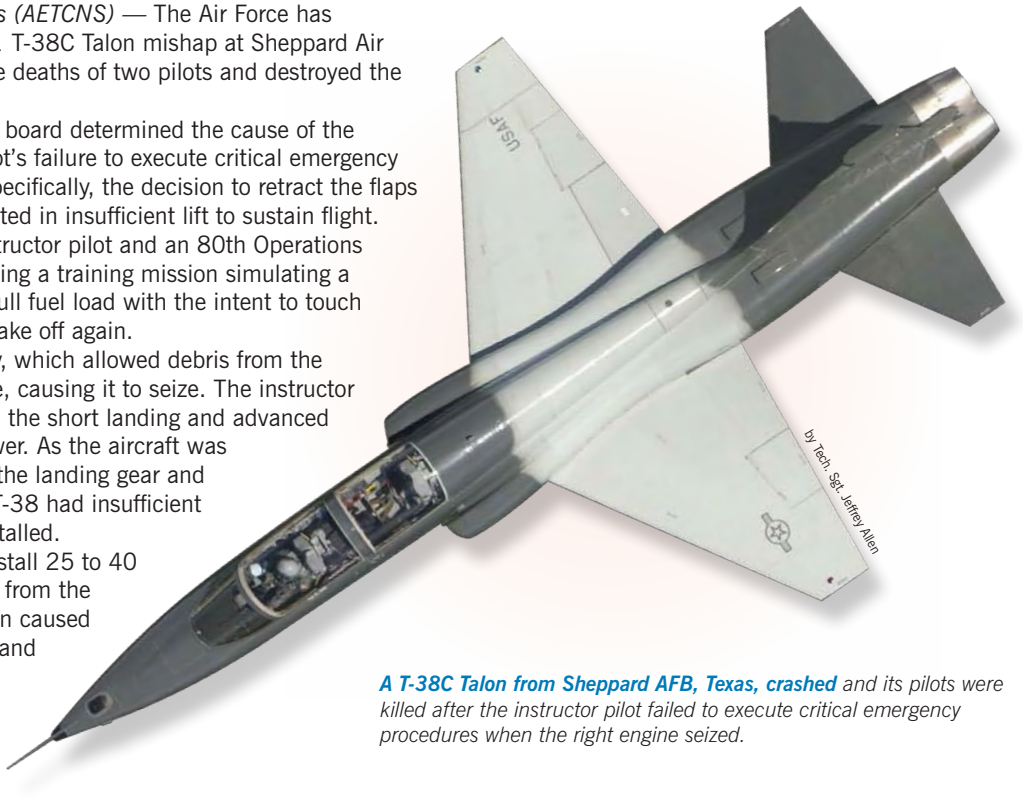
*RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AETCNS)* — The Air Force has completed its investigation of the May 1 T-38C Talon mishap at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, which resulted in the deaths of two pilots and destroyed the multi-million dollar airplane.

In August, the accident investigation board determined the cause of the mishap was based on the instructor pilot's failure to execute critical emergency procedures upon right engine failure. Specifically, the decision to retract the flaps rather than leaving them extended resulted in insufficient lift to sustain flight.

A 90th Flying Training Squadron instructor pilot and an 80th Operations Support Squadron student pilot were flying a training mission simulating a single-engine landing approach with a full fuel load with the intent to touch down on Sheppard's runway and then take off again.

The T-38 landed short of the runway, which allowed debris from the overrun surface to enter the right engine, causing it to seize. The instructor pilot took command of the aircraft upon the short landing and advanced the left engine throttle to maximum power. As the aircraft was climbing from the ground, he retracted the landing gear and the flaps. With the flaps retracted, the T-38 had insufficient power and airspeed to sustain lift and stalled.

With their T-38 in a fully developed stall 25 to 40 feet above the ground, the crew ejected from the aircraft. Their near simultaneous ejection caused contact between the two ejection seats and disrupted the direction and sequence of the ejection. Both were killed on impact with the ground.




by Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Allen

***A T-38C Talon from Sheppard AFB, Texas, crashed*** *and its pilots were killed after the instructor pilot failed to execute critical emergency procedures when the right engine seized.*

# MIDAIR COLLISION KILLS F-15 PILOT

*LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (ACCNS)* — Air Force officials wrapped up their investigation into the Feb. 20 F-15 Eagle midair collision off the coast of Florida that caused two of the fighter jets to crash and cost one of the pilots his life.

According to the accident investigation board report released in August, both pilots failed to clear their flight paths and didn't anticipate their impending midair collision.

While one pilot was killed, the other ejected from his aircraft and sustained minor injuries that required no treatment. Both aircraft, totaling $83.3 million, were assigned to the 33rd Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

Other possible contributing factors investigated by the board included a loss of flight proficiency during the November 2007 to January 2008 stand-down of the F-15 A-D fleet; a lack of a pilot and integrated mission operational risk management program; and a lack of an integrated training rule program that identifies and informs squadron leadership and flight members of training rule violations. However, there was insufficient evidence to determine that any one of these particular factors or combination of these factors directly contributed to the mishap.

by Master Sgt Shaun Withers

***When two F-15 Eagles from Eglin AFB, Fla., collided,*** *one of the pilots was killed and both of the multi-million dollar fighter jets were destroyed.*

Investigators determined that maintenance and the airworthiness of the aircraft were not factors in the mishap.