

TORCH

Air Education and Training Command's

May/June 2009



**CAN SUNSCREEN
PREVENT AIRCRAFT
MISHAPS?**
When to call a flying no-go
PAGE 22

JOE VS. H2O
Water skiing enthusiast went too far
PAGE 8



TRUE GRIT
Instructor pilot conquers life-threatening tumor
and transforms into 'extreme' athlete
PAGE 12

IT'S LATE NIGHT WITH NED
Fighter pilot struggles through harrowing combat
mission with bouts of spatial disorientation
PAGE 18

Soaring into Summer



“As we soar into summer, having fun in the warmer weather should be a priority ... but not at all costs. We need to strike a good balance. We can't forget that summertime is also one of the deadliest seasons of the year for mishaps. By thinking before acting and making good choices, we can sort out what's fun and what's foolish. In other words, live to play, but also play to live.”

— Col. John W. Blumentritt
AETC director of safety

TORCH 
www.torch.aetc.af.mil

8 Joe vs. H₂O

COVER STORY

The author's best friend, Joe, was like a fish in the water. It seemed there was nothing he couldn't do in the lake near where they lived. He was even an exceptional water-skier. But as his comfort with water grew, so did his risk taking. Tragically, he finally discovered his limits.

12 TRUE GRIT



by Tech. Sgt. Matthew Hannen

About four years back, when Lt. Col. John Turnipseed had a golf ball-sized lump on his adrenal gland, he was one bad adrenaline rush away from a sad eulogy. But after a successful surgery and a relentless inner drive, this once near-death pilot from Laughlin AFB, Texas, today moonlights as an extreme racer. Also, an expert tells you how you can safely prepare for an adventure race.

18 It's Late Night with Ned

An F-16 fighter pilot finds himself flying a night combat mission over Iraq to give close air support to U.S. troops under attack. But when a sandstorm adds to the visibility problems, the pilot finds himself in nearly as dire a situation as those he was sent to save.

TORCH TALK 2

Readers discuss a dog attack and mauling, a runaway fighter aircraft, graphics, the 15th Anniversary Issue, a 'fowl' error, the worst drunk driving mishap in history, a lightning strike, and more.



AROUND THE COMMAND 4

Airman run over by vehicle — twice! Why he lives to tell about it ... Woman chokes on candy; co-worker saves her ... The Heimlich maneuver.



TALES OF THE STRANGE 6

Woman collides with grizzly bear; motorcycle crash a unique encounter ... Avoiding collisions with wildlife.

THE ALERT CONSUMER 7

A message to die for — no texting while driving ... Cell phone facts.

HANGAR FLYING 22

Can sunscreen prevent aircraft mishaps?



CLEAR THE RUNWAY 24

Vance instructor pilots save the day using self-aid buddy care ... Talon turns 50.

May/June 2009
Volume 16, Number 3

TORCH is published bi-monthly to help promote safety awareness in Air Education and Training Command, the Air Force and Department of Defense. This funded Air Force magazine is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military services. Contents of **TORCH** are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force. The editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Directorate of Safety, Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, following public affairs publication guidelines outlined in DOD Instruction 5120.4 and Air Force Instruction 35-101. All photographs are Air Force photographs unless otherwise indicated.

Gen. Stephen R. Lorenz
Commander

Col. John W. Blumentritt
Director of Safety

Timothy P. Barela
Editor
timothy.barela@randolph.af.mil

Sammie W. King
Senior Designer
sammie.king@randolph.af.mil

David M. Stack
Designer
david.stack@randolph.af.mil

Tech. Sgt. Matthew J. Hannen
Photojournalist
matthew.hannen@randolph.af.mil

Subscriptions and Contributions: To request subscriptions or address changes, or to submit articles, photographs or artwork, e-mail information to torch.magazine@randolph.af.mil. Or you can write to: Editor, **TORCH**, HQ AETC/SEM, 244 F Street East, Suite 1, Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4328. You also can fax to: (210) 652-6982 or DSN: 487-6982. For customer service, call (210) 652-5818 or DSN 487-5818. Include your name, full unit address, phone number, fax number and e-mail address on all submissions. Unit distribution is based on a ratio of one copy per seven persons assigned. For personal subscriptions, write to New Orders, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954.

Visit our Web site at:
www.torch.aetf.af.mil



FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Col. **JOHN W. BLUMENTRITT**
AETC Director of Safety

FIRST BLOOD

Multiple helicopters converged on the crash site to save the downed pilot. Suddenly, an apparent surface-to-air missile attack began as what appeared to be flaming red golf balls shot out toward the approaching aircraft. The helicopter pilots took evasive actions as screams of “Taking fire from the tree line!” blared from two crackly speakers.

Not ideal circumstances for the day of my first solo flight.

A memorable summer 25 years ago held quite a few firsts for me. My first flight in the TH-55A training helicopter took place in May 1984 at Fort Rucker, Ala. Then I got to fly my first solo flight a month later on June 13 with a whopping 12.2 hours of flight experience! As fate would have it for this eventual director of safety, that summer also happened to be the first time I witnessed a flight mishap.

As part of our preparation to wrestle the nearly 1,500-pound aircraft alone, we watched our counterparts fly around the pattern from nearby bleachers. And to help us learn radio procedures, we listened to the action via two staticky speakers complete with 1980s technology.

Even with only a dozen flight hours, we noticed the struggle one student had while soloing around the airfield the first time, which in turn earned a radio call to land. After a “pep talk” from an instructor and take off for a second pattern, the crash into a nearby tree line soon followed.

Flight instructors sped to the crash site in a swarm of TH-55As. The student, armed with a device that shoots flares in the air to mark location, panicked and began launching those red “golf-balls” directly at the helicopters that were coming to the rescue. You can imagine the response from the pilots, most of whom had thousands of hours of combat time in Vietnam.

So with about two months in the Air Force and eleven training flights under my belt, I had witnessed a crash, the rapid response, what seemed to be an enemy attack, and evasive action on the part of the seasoned instructor pilots.

A flight of fighter jets roaring over the Alabama pines would not have been unexpected at that point.

First blood was light for the student pilot, as scratches only delayed continuation of training for a few days. In fact, the officer walked the stage and graduated with pilot wings about a year later.

However, lessons learned from this first-blood experience have lasted me a lifetime. In a very graphic display, I discovered that you can learn from other people’s mistakes, internalize that knowledge and apply that wisdom to your own behavior — or even to influence others.

I also learned how quickly mistakes can transition into tragedy. Whether on- or off-duty, mishaps repeatedly demonstrate that one can go from happy to dead in about 30 seconds.

John W. Blumentritt

“The student, armed with a device that shoots flares in the air to mark location, panicked and began launching those red ‘golf-balls’ directly at the helicopters that were coming to the rescue.”

SCARY STORY

Wow! Scary story on Stacy Pearsall ("Hunted! War Hero Mauled by Dog," March/April 2009 issue, cover story). I, too, like to listen to music while jogging either early in the morning or late at night (less traffic, cooler temperatures and just fits into my schedule best).

My dad always warns me about this practice (he worries about human predators), but I always kind of dismissed his advice as being overly cautious with his "baby girl." But I have to admit, this story

makes me think twice about it. I'll still probably be forced to work out either early in the morning or late evening because of my busy schedule, but I think I'll at least take Ms. Pearsall's advice and lose the iPod while jogging. I also carry a tiny can of pepper spray (courtesy of the aforementioned dad).

Anyway, thanks for a great story. Stacy Pearsall truly is a war hero. Too bad the dog didn't know that.

*Kelli Simpson
Via e-mail*



STAND TALL... AND CARRY A BIG STICK!

Reference the "Hunted!" story in your March/April 2009 issue: If I encounter an aggressive dog when jogging, I stand my ground and try to make myself look as big as possible ... and I carry a sawed off handle from an old rake. It's enough to make a dog (or human) think twice about attacking you. And, if a dog did attack, you could

jam it in his mouth to help keep him from biting. I've had to scare a few aggressive dogs away at times during my runs ... maybe it was my stick or maybe it was the confidence the stick gave me that made the dogs turn tail and run (they could tell I meant business and wasn't going to back down).

*Senior Airman A.C. Kendrick
Air Force Reserve*

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.

RUNAWAY FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

I read with interest the article "Crew Chiefs Stop Runaway F-16 Fighter" in the March/April 2009 edition of Torch ("Clear the Runway," page 24). You can just picture the three maintainers desperately running along the brakeless, out-of-control F-16 trying to throw chocks underneath the tires to stop it. I'll bet you can't find that technique in a technical order or emergency checklist. But good on them for thinking fast and averting a disaster that could have badly damaged multiple aircraft or even killed someone.



*Retired Tech. Sgt. Tony Martinez
Via e-mail*

NICE PACKAGING

I just saw the November/December 2009 issue of Torch at my Air National Guard unit — the 149th Fighter Wing — last weekend. I hadn't looked at it for a while, and I wanted you to know I enjoyed reading it.

The graphics are impressive but don't overwhelm the text. I have seen magazines with color, typesets and illustrations that are awesome but make the print hard to read. I found Torch's articles both easy to read and good reading.

Also, with so many publications going electronic, I am glad that I can still sit back and turn the pages of Torch.

*Master Sgt. Greg Ripps
Lackland Air Force Base, Texas*



15TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

A 'FOWL' ERROR

I read the article "Hudson River Hero" (15th Anniversary Issue of Torch, page 32) about U.S. Airways Capt. Chesley Sullenberger's aviation skills with great interest, but I can't resist the urge to correct one common error. His aircraft intercepted a flock of Canada geese, not Canadian geese (as indicated in the first paragraph of the story, within the fourth line). Geese do not have any nationality, even if they are hatched in Canada.

*Lt. Col. James Bahosh
McGuire Air Force Base, N.J.*

Thank you for catching our "fowl" error. We appreciate your feedback.

SERVING THE 'MOVERS AND SHAKERS'

Our office received the Special Anniversary Issue of Torch Magazine, titled "Our First 15 Years."

It's a wonderful edition!

I work for the Air University Foundation. We are a non-profit organization and our sole purpose is to support Air University and its programs. We schedule a meeting of our trustees twice a year. Our trustees include the mayors of Montgomery and Prattville, Ala., retired general officers who are actively involved in the local community, as well as most of the "movers and shakers" in the tri-county area. We are going to include a copy of your anniversary issue in each trustee's welcome packet.

It's a great vehicle to get the Air Force story out to a large segment of the tri-county area. I have a background in



newspapers and magazines, so I have a real appreciation for the awesome job the Torch staff does. Thanks for the support!

*Ann Easterling
Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.*

WORST DRUNK DRIVING MISHAP IN HISTORY

I encouraged all the members of the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing to read the article "Painful Past" in the Special Anniversary Issue of Torch, pages 12-14. It is a good read and makes you think.

I was at Fort Knox, Ky., in May 1988 when the worst drunk driving accident in U.S. history killed 27 kids and parents from Radcliff, Ky., as they were coming

back from a church trip to Kings Island, Ohio. I will never forget the devastating impact this had on the entire community — some lost their entire family. I also will never forget the spot on I-71 southbound where they died — the heat was so intense from the fire, it even melted the surface of the interstate.

The Torch article recounts this story from the perspective of an Air Force couple who lost a daughter in that horrific crash.

*Lt. Col. Kenneth E. Tilley
Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan*

A DUAL 'CHARGE'

I read your 15th Anniversary Issue of Torch and was impressed with the quality of the stories you've printed over the years.

I particularly enjoyed reading two articles: "Charged Sarge" (page 16) and "Charles in Charge" (page 22).

It is amazing that Ray McKinney ("Charged Sarge") survived being struck by lightning while outside puffing on a

cigarette. And as a former smoker, I had to laugh when he so comically summed up his ordeal: "Yeah, I eventually quit smoking. ... And I gave up cigarettes, too." Believe me, at one point in my life, a lightning strike would have been the only thing that would have gotten me to put down my cigarettes.

Additionally, I got goose bumps when I read about Tech. Sgt. Chuck Fouch's heroic efforts to save his neighbor from that apartment fire ("Charles in Charge"). Obviously, an angel guided him through the black smoke and fire that day.

*Ann Treadwell
Via e-mail*

RETIREMENT 'GIFT' IDEA

As a civilian contractor soon to retire after 48 years combined Air Force and contract service, I plan to subscribe to your outstanding Torch Magazine through the on-line subscription. I also hope to continue to get your wonderful calendars after I retire.

*Kent Harper
Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas*

Our on-line subscription, which lets you view the electronic version of Torch, is a great way to get the magazine at your personal residence free of charge. Good luck in your retirement! We appreciate your interest in Torch.

RUN OVER BY CAR ... TWICE!

WHY AIRMAN LIVES TO TELL ABOUT IT

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. — Staff Sgt. Trevor Adams isn't claiming to be bulletproof, but he did manage to survive being run over by two different vehicles just split seconds apart.

Adams, a 22-year-old C-130 crew chief with the 58th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base had been on a motorcycle ride with eight friends June 22, 2008. While traveling on Interstate 25 just north of Albuquerque on a sunny midday, he hit a pothole on the edge of the road. The impact blew out his rear tire and caused him to lose control of the bike while zooming along at 70 mph.

Adams desperately tried to regain control of his bike by forcing himself to remain calm and not over-steer or overreact, tips he learned in the motorcycle safety course.

"Having tried to do all that was possible to regain control, I ended up in the dirt median separating the north and southbound interstate," Adams said. "I tumbled across the median and went into oncoming traffic travelling at 70 mph."

Tech. Sgt. Travis Knotts and his wife, Stephanie, who were both riding in the motorcycle group that day, watched in horror as Adams was thrown off the bike into the path of traffic.

"As he rolled, a mid-sized SUV ran over him," said Knotts, an assistant section chief and crew chief with the 550th

Aircraft Maintenance Unit at Kirtland. "I thought he was dead."

The sport utility vehicle, which was traveling in the left lane, struck Adams with such force that it "pinballed" him into the right lane where a second vehicle struck him.

"I couldn't believe this was happening; I was scared," Adams said. "I had never been in an accident aside from a fender bender before. Once the SUV hit me, an incredible amount of pain started to overwhelm me. When the second car struck, the pain just magnified by 10."

Even though he was in agony, Adams knew he needed to get off



After blowing out a tire, Senior Airman Trevor Adams of Kirtland AFB, N.M., lost control of his motorcycle while going 70 mph. He crashed and then was run over by two vehicles, resulting in torn ligaments in his right knee, nerve damage to his foot and some road rash. He credits the minimal injuries to his protective gear.

the road before another vehicle could run him down.

"I couldn't move my legs, so I low-crawled to the side of the road using my arms," he said.

Stephanie, who is a registered nurse, immediately came to his aid, as did the rest of their group. Others also stopped to lend assistance, including a doctor.

They kept him calm and breathing normal until a helicopter could whisk him away to the University of New Mexico Hospital for emergency care.

While his motorcycle sustained minimal damage, Adams wasn't quite as lucky. He tore three ligaments in his right knee, had road rash along his entire right leg, and suffered nerve damage in his right foot.

But he still feels fortunate.

"Having a helmet on while getting run over by an SUV probably saved my life," he said. "My head had a lot of hard impacts, but my helmet absorbed them. The face shield on my helmet was shattered — that could have been my face."

He also credited the protective padding and tough leather from his jacket, pants, gloves, and boots for preventing even more skin damage and possibly even broken bones.

Additionally, he touted the merits of riding in groups.

Traveling in groups not only allows other drivers to see you better, but if something does go

wrong, you have several friends there "to take care of you," said Adams, who claims he is going to take a break from motorcycle riding to let his body heal and to give his family a break from the worry. But for those who do continue to ride, the sergeant recommends taking advantage of the motorcycle safety classes the Air Force offers.

Knotts said he believes that's good advice.

"No matter how good of a rider you think you are," Knotts said, "there is always something that can get the drop on you."

— Tim Barela and Tech. Sgt. Matthew Hannen

by Tech. Sgt. Matthew Hannen

WOMAN CHOKES ON CANDY



CO-WORKER SAVES HER

VANCE AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. — A piece of candy robbed a woman of lung-filling air and the ability to call out for help at Vance Air Force Base Dec. 5. Luckily for her, a co-worker stood ready to deliver an early Christmas present ... the gift of life.

Rose Palacios, a 71st Comptroller-Contractor Squadron accounting technician, was working quietly at her desk when she began to choke on a piece of candy.

"At first I thought I could just cough it up out of my throat," she said. "But that didn't work."

As her face turned blue, Palacios staggered from her desk, panicking. Deprived of air and speech, she was unable to respond to the startled inquiries from those around her.

"I've heard about people choking; I've seen stories on TV," she said. "But I could never imagine what it really feels like. It was the scariest moment I have ever experienced."

When co-worker David Gindlesberger saw Palacios in distress, he took action. He jumped up from his chair, ran to her and performed the Heimlich maneuver.

The candy dislodged and flew out of Palacios' throat. She gasped, and then took hungry gulps of air.

A financial analyst, Gindlesberger attributes his swift, life-saving reaction to his active-duty training. Before starting work as a civilian, he retired from a 22-year military career in security forces.

"I knew how to perform the Heimlich maneuver from all my prior military first-aid training," he said. "This is why the military does so much training ... you'll react quickly and remember what to do."

When food becomes lodged in the trachea, it makes breathing impossible. Every year nearly 3,000 people die from

accidentally inhaling their food, according to the American Red Cross. Thousands more end up in the hospital after nearly choking to death.

Knowing how to extricate food from the windpipe, either when assisting someone or while choking alone, is a valuable skill (see "The Heimlich Maneuver").

Those who witnessed the rescue need no more convincing.

"David is a very humble person and doesn't think his actions were a big deal," said 2nd Lt. Tara Nelson, a financial services officer. "But it is a big deal to save someone's life."

A grateful Palacios would agree.

"I'm thankful Dave was there to help me and knew what to do; otherwise, I probably wouldn't be here now," she said. "It also made me realize how important it is to know what to do in the event that someone is choking. It's literally the difference between life and death."

— 2nd Lt. Lynn Aird
71st Flying Training Wing
Public Affairs

THE HEIMLICH MANEUVER

- 1 From behind, wrap your arms around the victim's waist.
- 2 Make a fist and place the thumb side of your fist against the victim's upper abdomen, below the ribcage and above the navel.
- 3 Grasp your fist with your other hand and press into the upper abdomen with a quick upward thrust. Do not squeeze the ribcage; confine the force of the thrust to your hands.
- 4 Repeat until object is expelled.

— The Heimlich Institute

By using the Heimlich maneuver, David Gindlesberger saved Rose Palacios from choking on a piece of candy Dec. 5 at Vance AFB, Okla.



by 2nd Lt. Lynn Aird

WOMAN GRIZZLY COLLIDES WITH BEAR

MOTORCYCLE CRASH A UNIQUE ENCOUNTER

ALBERTA, Canada — A 50-year-old Canadian woman killed a grizzly bear last year, and she didn't even have a gun.

According to the Calgary Herald, the woman was riding her motorcycle in Kananaskis Country, Calgary's mountainous backyard, when a 500-pound grizzly ran out in front of her. With little time to stop or react, the woman plowed into North America's largest predator, killing the bear and sending the woman hurtling over the handlebars of the bike.

Her husband, who was riding another motorcycle just behind her, witnessed the collision, which was just south of Highway Pass in Alberta. He watched the scene unfold in front of him as his wife struck the animal and flipped over the handlebars — and the bear — into a crumpled heap on the roadway. The motorcycle ricocheted off the grizzly and skidded down the road.

Jamie Campbell of the Foothills Regional Emergency Medical Service told the Herald that smashing into the bear was pretty much like hitting a wall: "It stopped; the lady kept going."

Miraculously, the woman, who was wearing a helmet at the time of the crash, escaped the frightening encounter without life-threatening injuries,

EMS told the Herald. She was taken to Oilfields Hospital in Black Diamond with injuries to her hands from the fall.

"There's lots of wildlife that gets hit, but not bears and motorcycles very often," Campbell told the Herald. "So this is quite uncommon. Deer versus cars — lots. Occasionally, deer versus motorcycle. I don't think I've done a bear versus motorcycle in my career yet."

Campbell said the woman was lucky to come away without more serious injuries because a grizzly bear is a "pretty solid" object to hit.

Not to mention what might have happened to the woman if the bear were only wounded and hadn't died on impact. An angry grizzly can kill a person with one powerful swipe of its 3-to-4-inch claws.










by Sammie W. King

AVOIDING COLLISIONS WITH WILDLIFE

Wildlife vehicle collisions are a serious matter across the country, affecting both wildlife populations and public safety. The National Cooperative Highway Research Program estimates there are between 725,000 and 1.5 million wildlife vehicle collisions annually in the United States, resulting in more than \$1 billion in property damage. According to this highway research program, 200 human fatalities and 29,000 injuries occur every year in the United States as a result of these accidents.

Here are a few tips to help drivers avoid hitting wildlife:

-  Many animals are more active during dusk and dawn, when visibility is reduced, so stay alert.
-  Follow speed limits.
-  Pay close attention to wildlife crossing signs.
-  Slow down and be alert if you see an animal cross the road, as there are probably others nearby. This is especially true with deer.
-  Have passengers assist by scanning sides of roadways.
-  If an animal is spotted on the side of the road, slow down, turn on your flashers to warn other drivers, and pass with caution, as animals may be startled and react erratically by running onto the road.
-  Try your best not to swerve if an animal is in the road. Instead, apply your brakes firmly and sound your horn in short bursts. If you must change your path, only do so when you can maintain control, as many accidents are caused not by actual collisions with wildlife but rather by attempts to avoid them.

— Federal Highway Administration

A MESSAGE TO **DIE** FOR

A 17-year-old driver in New York swerved into oncoming traffic and hit a truck head-on, killing herself and her four passengers. She had been texting while driving. A California train engineer was involved in a collision near Los Angeles that killed 25 passengers and injured 130 others. He had been texting at the time of the mishap. A 27-year-old Arkansas driver crashed his vehicle into another car, killing the driver. He was charged with negligent homicide, because he had been drinking a beer at the time ... and also had been texting.

Texting and talking on cell phones while driving is dangerous. On Air Force bases and other military installations, it's against the law.

Recent studies show the following about texting and cell phone usage while driving:

Driver inattention is involved in about 80 percent of crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The American Automobile Association says that 46 percent of teenagers text while driving. And according to a recent University of Utah study, drivers talking on their cell phones were 18 percent slower braking than other motorists and caused impairment on par with driving with a blood alcohol level of .08 — above the legal limit.

In September, the Transport Research Laboratory conducted a study of the impact text messaging has on driver performance. They used participants in the 17- to 24-year-old age group who described themselves as regular users of text messaging and used phones with standard key pads. Using a driving simulator, they concentrated on reaction times, car-following ability, lane control and driver speed. The findings of this study should be a major cause of concern and are downright scary.

What did texting drivers do wrong?

While driving and texting, drivers failed to detect hazards, responded to hazards more slowly and were exposed to risk for longer periods of time. The drivers were less able to keep a constant distance behind the lead vehicle. There were large increases in variability of lane position and many more lane departures, which in actual traffic increases the likelihood of collision.

Reaction times were slower when reading or writing a message. Reaction time for drivers trying to compose a text message increased from 1.2 to 1.6 seconds. At highway speeds, drivers can travel more than a mile while texting! Slower reaction times resulted in an increased stopping distance of three car lengths.

Compared to three earlier Transport Research Laboratory stud-



Photos by iech. Sgt. Matthew Hamen / digital composite by Sammie W. King

Texting while driving is quickly becoming the new "driving under the influence," according to safety experts.

ies, reaction time impairment caused by texting was apparently greater than drinking alcohol to the legal limit, smoking pot and talking on a hands-free phone. This impairment is caused by the increased mental workload required to write a text message, less physical control caused by holding the phone, and visual impairment caused by continually looking back and forth from the phone display and the road ahead.

So, what should we do with all these facts and figures?

It is painfully obvious that cell phone usage while driving, whether it be talking or texting, is quickly becoming our next "driving under the influence." Don't get in the habit of texting and driving. If you already do it, stop! Pull over to conduct your cell phone business. Don't ride with drivers who are texting. Ask them to stop. Concentrate on traffic and other drivers while you are behind the wheel. Your life may depend on it.

— Naval Safety Center

CELL PHONE FACTS

- Cell phone use accounts for 2,600 vehicle fatalities and 300,000 collisions annually nationwide.
- Risk of collision increases by up to 400 percent when talking or texting on a cell phone while driving.
- You can reduce your risk. Before you drive, turn your cell phone off. Let voicemail capture your messages, both voice and text. Pick up your messages later, once you've completed your journey. If you have to call or text, pull off the road safely and stop.

— American Automobile Association



Two friends were playing a game while water-skiing, but
their horsing around turned to tragedy when one suffered fatal injuries.



JOE VS. H₂O

Tragedy strikes best friends
in water skiing mishap

By GREG JOHNSON, as told to TIM BARELA
Photos by Tech. Sgt. MATTHEW HANNEN

Growing up in California, Joe and I had been inseparable. Yeah, we were both military brats, which right away placed us in an “exclusive club” based on our experiences, and we had a lot of the same interests. But it was our differences that seemed to bring us together.

I was shy, a bit cautious and kind of a loner. Joe was my polar opposite in that respect. He was outgoing, a risk taker and had an electric personality that was a magnet for both girls and guys. I was four inches taller than Joe, and a good bit stronger, but he “ruled the world.”

To tell you the truth, I didn’t much like him when I first saw him. To me he was a bit loud and obnoxious. But maybe I also envied his easy way with people, which at the time, I used to mislabel him as a “player.”

The funny thing is there was no grand moment that triggered our friendship. I mean, he didn’t save my life, I didn’t clobber a bully for him, or anything like that. Fate put us in the same history classroom, sitting side-by-side. And he just kind of grew on me. At first, I wanted to dislike him. But he had a quick wit, and despite my best efforts to ignore his antics, I found myself laughing at his jokes more times than not.

Lacking the same quick wit, I’m not sure what he saw in me. Maybe it was

just that he enjoyed making the quiet kid laugh. Or maybe it’s because every comic needs a straight man. Or, you know how when some people laugh it’s contagious? I’ve been told I have that kind of laugh, so maybe he simply liked getting a chuckle out of me as much as I grew to enjoy his rhetoric.

At any rate, laughter turned to talking. Talking turned to getting to know each other better. And getting to know each other better turned into hanging out with each other all the time.

We both enjoyed basketball and baseball. We had fun camping. But perhaps

“I was sick to my stomach as I saw Joe ricochet off of the wall and lay facedown and motionless in the water.”

what we enjoyed most was spending time in the water. It didn’t matter ... a swimming pool, pond, lake or ocean, we’d spend hours in the water.

Of course, it’s no surprise that two young teenagers would take risks that would make their parents cringe ... if they knew about it. And we were no different. We dove off of cliffs and bridges. We surfed in water that was probably a little too rough for our experience level.

But our real love was driving a fast boat and water-skiing.

Joe had an older brother, Mark, who often took us out on the lake. We all took turns driving the boat, and we became quite good at water skiing. But as our skill grew, so did our risk taking. We tried more tricks like holding the rope handle in our teeth, or trying to do a flip off of a high-speed jump over a wake. And, yes, it became competitive in a friendly sort of way. We’d challenge each other to see who could perform the most “death-defying” act.

Our mindset at the time was, “What is the worst that can happen? You slap the water hard, which stings, or maybe you make a fool of yourself.” But that was all part of the fun.

It didn’t bother me that Joe would win most of the water skiing feats of skill and courage. For one thing, he was a better skier than me. For another, our personality traits came into play here. Remember, I was the more cautious one; he was more of a risk-taker.

So it’s ironic that one of my risks came into play on that fateful day.

We were engaged in a water skiing contest that I can only equate to a game of HORSE in basketball. Basically, you’d go out on the skis, perform a trick, and the other guy would have to match you. If he failed, he would get a letter. I can’t tell you the crude name two teenagers used



When Joe hit the rock wall, his friend felt there was little chance that he would survive such a violent impact.

for this game, but for the sake of this story, we'll call it WIMP.

We'd played this game a lot, and I was the WIMP more often than not. But one of the advantages that I did have over Joe was reach. Along with my height advantage, my wingspan was significantly longer than his. On this day, we were skiing near some cliffs that were off to our right. I told Mark to get me as close to them as possible.

He obliged.

When we neared the cliffs, I aimed my ski tips toward them and made a pass that brought me within a few feet of the cliffs. I touched the cliff wall and quickly darted back toward the wake and the boat. All in all, this wasn't that skillful of a trick, but it does involved a bit of courage (or stupidity) to get so dangerously close to the rocks.

Joe playfully scoffed at my attempt to get him a letter. "How about a challenge?" he said.

"Hey, I'm just warming up," I retorted, pointing out that this was the first run of the day.

At any rate, Joe still had to complete the task. As he neared the cliff, he placed the rope handle in his teeth, as if to make light of my non-challenge.

"Show off!" I yelled, grinning.

But my smile quickly contorted into a look of horror as the rope snapped out of Joe's mouth and he lost his balance and smashed into the cliff wall.

I couldn't hear the collision over the roar of the boat's motor, and my own voice hollering "Stop!"

I was sick to my stomach as I saw Joe ricochet off of the wall and lay facedown and motionless in the water.

As Mark jumped into the water and swam frantically toward his brother, I stayed with the boat as he had ordered and watched for any sign of movement. But, instinctively, I think I knew even before I heard Mark scream, "He's not breathing! Get help!"

We buried Joe less than a week later. His head had simply slammed too hard into the jagged rock wall, and he died almost instantly.

I still miss Joe. He showed a shy kid who didn't have a lot of friends how to come out of his shell and experience life and people. And he taught me my first real lessons in risk management — you're not invulnerable, don't get complacent, use good judgment, be a good wingman.

I said earlier, that when Joe and I met, he didn't do anything grand like save my life. But, I guess in retrospect, he actually did. ❖

What's Up with Water Skiing?

▶ As a team, the boat operator, skier and observer need to learn safe skiing skills. Before your team hits the water, know your equipment, teamwork, boating laws and the fundamentals of the sport.

▶ Wear a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device designed for water-skiing at all times. It will allow you to rest in the water while waiting for the boat, it protects the rib cage and cushions falls, and its bright color will help others in the area to spot you.

▶ Skiing in cold water or weather increases your susceptibility to hypothermia. Special precautions, such as wearing a wet suit, should be taken.

▶ If you're the boat operator, before pulling up to the skier, double check the path ahead for obstacles and ensure the towline is not caught in the propeller or wrapped around the skier. Never accelerate until the skier is holding the towline handle, with the ski tip or tips showing above water and in front, and signals by hollering, "Hit it!"

▶ Never attempt sharp turns with the boat, especially if the skier is cutting sharply outside the wake on either side.

▶ In addition to relaying the skier's and operator's signals, the observer is responsible for watching the skier at all times. Having an observer on board allows the driver to give full attention to the variety of tasks necessary for safe motorboat operation. Boating mishap statistics indicate an alarming increase in skiing accidents resulting from improper lookout.

▶ When skiing, be alert for cross-wakes, partially submerged objects, swimmers, rafters or anything that might come between you and the boat.

▶ If you are going to fall, relax! Try to make a smooth water entry. Never fall forward over the top of your skis. You



If you fall while water-skiing, relax! Try to make a smooth water entry. Never tumble forward over the top of your skis.

can stop suddenly by sitting to the back of the skis and dragging your hands.

▶ After you have fallen, hold one ski out of the water in an upright position to warn approaching boaters.

▶ When a skier falls, return with the boat quickly. Other boaters may not easily see a skier in the water, and the presence of the tow boat may keep other boaters away from the general area.

▶ Since a large percentage of serious water skiing injury accidents are the result of improper operation by the driver during skier pickup, approach with caution from the driver's side so the skier is always in view and on your side of the boat. Never back the boat up to a person in the water. The engine should be shut off when you are near the skier so there is no danger from the propeller.

▶ Minimize the danger of collisions with other boats, other skiers or fixed objects by staying out of congested areas and well-traveled traffic lanes. Avoid skiing close to shore, around bends or in shallow water. Stay out of fishing areas. It is best to "scout" your area before you ski.

— California Department of Boating and Waterways

TRUE GRIT



Instructor pilot conquers life-threatening tumor and transforms into 'extreme' athlete

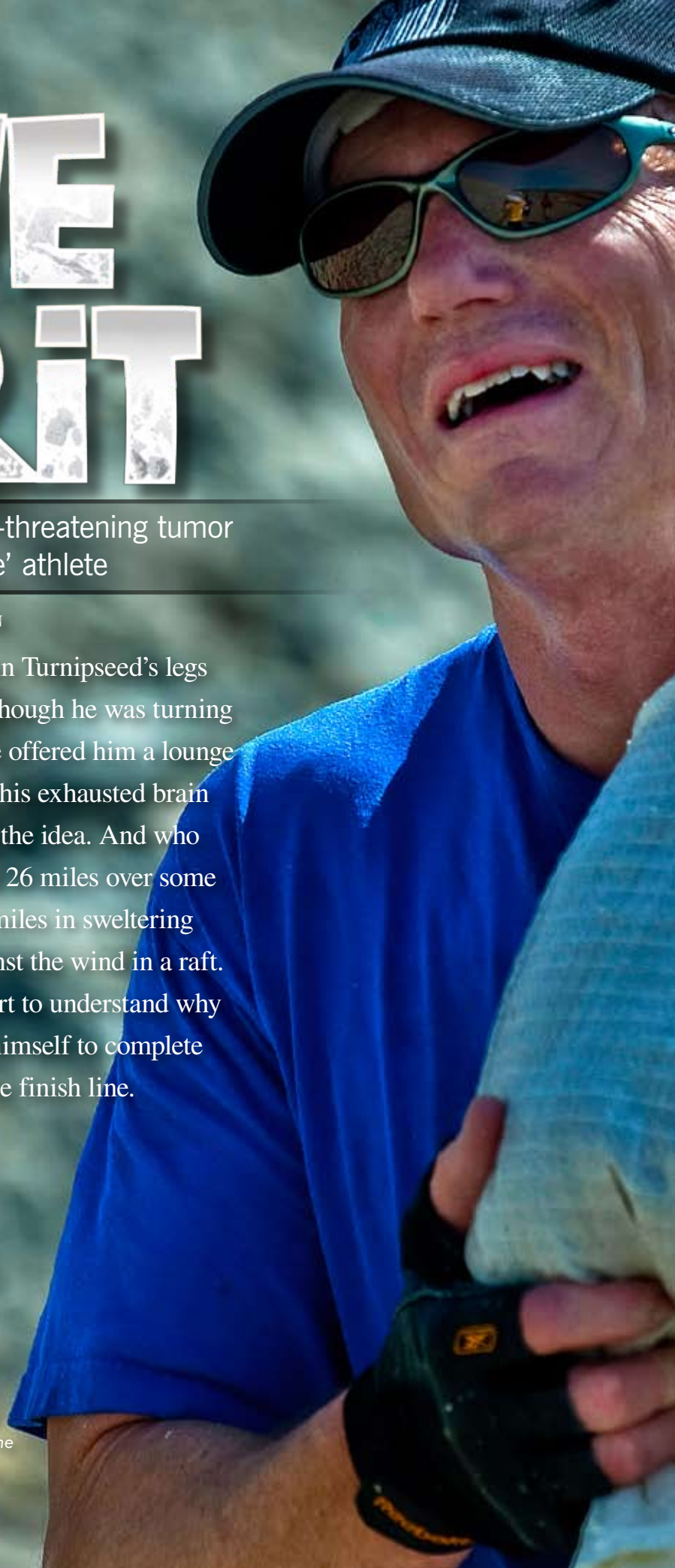
Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. MATTHEW HANNEN

With every step, Lt. Col. John Turnipseed's legs burned so badly it felt as though he was turning into a human torch. Had someone offered him a lounge chair and a cold drink right then, his exhausted brain and body might have flirted with the idea. And who could blame him? He'd just biked 26 miles over some rough terrain, ran another seven miles in sweltering heat, and paddled two miles against the wind in a raft.

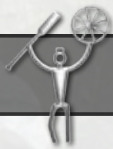
But you'd have to know his heart to understand why he would, without a doubt, push himself to complete that last grueling 400 strides to the finish line.

Turnipseed is no quitter.

Hauling a 20-pound bag of sand uphill proved to be one of the most grueling parts of the extreme race for Lt. Col. John Turnipseed.







The colonel and the other three members of the “Big Cat” team he captained finished second in the extreme team category of the Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, 5th Annual Adventure Race April 18 with a time of 4:14:47. They trained hard for months to safely ready themselves for this challenge. But Turnipseed has endured tougher battles.

Four years ago, he was fighting for his life.

A T-6 Texan II instructor pilot and the director of operations for the 85th Flying Training Squadron at Laughlin, doctors diagnosed Turnipseed with a rare disease called pheochromocytomas when he was stationed at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. By the time he was medically evacuated to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington D.C., in July 2005, he had a golf ball-sized tumor on his adrenal gland.

“The tumor would cause me to get an adrenaline rush, but not in a good way,” Turnipseed said. “My blood pressure would double to twice the norm for hours at a time on some days. Not fun. I was thinking, ‘What’s wrong with me?’ ”

Indeed, classic symptoms of pheochromocytomas — or pheos for short — are recurring episodes of increased blood pressure, a racing heart, severe headaches, excessive sweating and anxiety that can create feelings of impending death, according to Dr. James Norman, a world renowned surgeon and an authority on the disease.

Norman said pheos is difficult to detect, and a lot of people are diagnosed with it too late — as in during autopsies.

Turnipseed pointed out that it is a good idea for anyone starting an exercise program to get a physician’s OK.

“If military doctors hadn’t discovered this disease in me, my blood pressure might have become so intense that it would have popped a blood vessel in my head, which would have caused a stroke and probably death,” said the 41-year-old Turnipseed. “I’m lucky to be alive.”

After surgery to remove the deadly tumor, the St. Louis, Mo., native’s health improved quickly and dramatically.

“The tumor would cause me to get an adrenaline rush, but not in a good way. My blood pressure would double to twice the norm for hours at a time on some days. Not fun. I was thinking, ‘What’s wrong with me?’ ”

Putting on a healthy layer of sunscreen was essential

for Turnipseed and other racers as they spent more than four hours in the relentless sun.





The 35-mile course provided some tough challenges for Turnipseed and his extreme team. At left, the colonel pushes his bike through a nearly 2-foot deep creek and up a muddy embankment, and then pedals up a dirt road (top) during the 26-mile biking portion of the race. He also had to run seven miles and raft two before he could call it a day.



With his body feeling good, he had a new lease on life. He started exercising every day and following a strict routine that included a warm-up, cool-down and stretching to prevent injury to his limbs. As he grew stronger, he began swimming, biking and running. By the time he was in pilot instructor training at Randolph AFB, Texas, he'd been bitten by the triathlon bug.

Even with the demands of his job and spending quality time with his wife and four young children, he still manages to race in nearly one triathlon per month. Not to mention, he has enough 5K T-shirts to fill a small walk-in closet.

So participating in Laughlin's Adventure Race was a no-brainer. Some 400 people challenged themselves on the physically demanding 35-mile course, which started on base and ended at Laughlin's Southwinds Marina on Lake Amistad. More than 50 teams from four different bases joined the fray, with 13 extreme teams — those in which all four participants had to bike, run and raft the entire course without substitution.

Turnipseed, with an obvious appreciation for life, trains hard to safely tackle the rigors of a triathlon or adventure race. He also ensures he stays well-hydrated and uses a lot of sun block to avoid getting crispy. And he knows the symptoms of heat stress and to stay within his limits. But in addition to safety, he also has another motivation for his strict regimen ... his students.

"Most of the pilots I train are nearly half my age," he said. "So, really, I'm an old man to them. I think it's important to show them

"Most of the pilots I train are nearly half my age. ... I'm an old man to them. I think it's important to show them that I am ... maintaining a (high) level of fitness."

With support from family, friends and teammates, Turnipseed and his team finished second in the extreme category of the race. Pictured, Turnipseed kisses his wife, Tricia, while their four children were also there to greet their father and his Big Cats teammates at the finish line.



Big Cats teammates, from left to right, Capt. Mike Lashinshki and 1st Lt. Stella Glojek lead the way as Turnipseed and Lt. Col. Todd Craigie carry the raft to the finish line. All are T-6 Texan II pilots at Laughlin AFB, Texas.

that here I am in the twilight of my career and I am still working out, eating right and maintaining a (high) level of fitness."

He says this attitude is right in line with the fitness culture the Air Force is trying so hard to establish.

"In this expeditionary era, physical fitness is a priority," Turnipseed said. "You might be called on to go outside the wire or do a variety of tasks inside the wire that are physically intensive. We can't have people getting injured, passing out and having heart attacks — especially in the hot environments where we always seem to go. You can't afford to be completely out of shape." ✈



Digital composite by David M. Slack



10 TIPS FOR AN ADVENTURE RACE

The rigors of a 35-mile adventure race like the one at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, April 18 can take a terrible toll. Heat injuries, dehydration, and strains and sprains are just some of the problems participants can face along the way.

Lt. Col. Kevin VanValkenburg, Laughlin's medical staff chief, who has been the medical director for the adventure race since 2006, offers the following advice to survive the ordeal.

- 1.** Start training three to six months prior to the race, and do exercises similar to the events in which you will be participating.
- 2.** Get acclimated to the climate in which you will be racing. One of the mistakes people make is they get on a treadmill inside an air-conditioned building and then all of a sudden they are outside in a race where they are being overheated. They are going to find themselves in trouble with heat stress.
- 3.** Do not exercise too strenuously two to three days before the race. Only work out lightly to keep the joints and muscles warm and loose.
- 4.** Ensure you are eating well so your nutrition levels are up. This is not the time to diet, as your body needs the energy to function properly.
- 5.** Get a good night's sleep before the race.
- 6.** Ensure you have a good pair of shoes. If your running shoes are more than six months old or have logged 500 miles, then you probably need to replace them to help avoid injury.
- 7.** Inspect your equipment to ensure it is set up and ready to go before the race. A faulty bike or raft could lead to disaster. And don't forget protective gear, such as your helmet for biking and your life jacket for rafting.
- 8.** Remain hydrated at all times. You should start out with at least 20 ounces of water before running and drink about 20 ounces every hour in temperatures less than 100 degrees and 20 ounces every 30 minutes in temperatures greater than 100. Forced hydration on a schedule is the best approach. If you wait until you feel thirsty to drink, it's too late.
- 9.** Team members need to monitor each other every step of the way during these events. Some participants go in with the mindset they are going to finish the race no matter what. Sometimes they need a good wingman to tell them when enough is enough.
- 10.** Watch out for traffic. Beware of the road hazards and the environment, to include vehicles going by at high rates of speed.



It's Late Night with Ned!

By Retired Lt. Col. NED LINCH

Photo by Staff Sgt. JAMES L. HARPER JR.

In the dark during a sandstorm, an F-16 pilot struggles with spatial disorientation while flying a combat mission over Iraq

The mission was intense. I had to fly my F-16 Fighting Falcon over Iraq at night in a sandstorm to conduct emergency close air support for troops surrounded by the enemy. Sound like a perfect setting for an in-flight catastrophe? ... It was.





by Master Sgt. Rob Trubia

Wearing night vision goggles still couldn't prevent Ned Linch from becoming spatially disoriented.

In pilot training, nose high/low unusual attitude recoveries were beat into us for a good reason — to mitigate a mishap from human factors and spatial disorientation. My undergraduate pilot training instructors ingrained these recovery maneuvers in my mind to become second nature for such situations. That night over Iraq, I had to knockoff my F-16 attack and rewind back to T-37s in the middle of a combat maneuver ... several times.

The last place you want to be is at 200 knots, 70 degrees nose high in an F-16 fully loaded with bombs, fuel tanks and a targeting pod. But there I was, and the same procedures ingrained into me at pilot training work just fine in combat, despite the hair-raising circumstances.

Unusual attitudes and spatial disorientation are never planned or anticipated. But, perhaps, when we step out the door to fly, we should plan on and anticipate experiencing a date with this monster to avoid a serious cockpit error. Believe it or not, spatial disorientation is actually pilot error (perception error — that is, you failing to react properly to the situation). It's preventable and you, the pilot, must maintain the focus and discipline to properly recover from the error.

In my case, I had to accept the risk for pilot error to help others in need, but I was prepared with options to mitigate the risk to avoid error.

There are three types of spatial disorientation. During that harrowing night over Iraq, I experienced both Type I and II spatial D, and lucked out on not experiencing Type III only because I remained focused and disciplined.

Type I is unrecognized spatial disorientation in which the pilot has no idea anything is wrong. The key to preventing a mishap in this case is an effective crosscheck as well as previous training, flight preparation and an organized cockpit. During my date with Type I special D, I'd look outside and try to locate the imaging infrared strobe, maneuver the jet, and then look back in at my instruments to verify what I had just done. I kept getting spatially disoriented and had to constantly look inside the

cockpit and strain to see the dimly lit attitude indicator to stay orientated. Because of the weather, I was unable to scan quickly enough; thus, I found myself in an unusual attitude on more than one occasion.

Type II spatial D is recognized disorientation. In most cases, the pilot believes there's an instrument malfunction. The key to recovering from this type is to backup your aircraft data interface with your standby aircraft data interface or the heads up display and then believe and trust your instruments. In my case, I knew before I made an aggressive maneuver that I was going to experience spatial D. I anticipated it after every turn.

I had to trust my instruments and my wingman.

Type III spatial D is the worst. Many times the pilot is unable to recover from this type of spatial D because he knows something is not quite right, but he is unable to mentally and physically respond. It's like the pilot's brain is "locked up" just like your desktop computer often does. The only way to recover is either to eject in a single pilot aircraft or transfer the control to the other pilot/crewmember in a crew aircraft.

While attempting to fly visually in the dark with night vision goggles and no illumination, I experienced spatial disorientation like I've never had before in the F-16. Spatial disorientation is a dangerous condition pilots face when they don't have sufficient references to maintain proper control of the airplane. And the F-16 is an aircraft with a design that increases a pilot's susceptibility to this hazard.

Of course, the weather conditions compounded the problem. A major sandstorm had already shut down the area of responsibility for a few days. The conditions certainly weren't suitable for a tactical flight, nor for locating the troops hysterically calling for help on the radio. Because of the reduced visibility and zero illumination, it was not only hard to tactically maneuver, but difficult to locate the troops who could only be identified by a small, handheld imaging infrared strobe.

I had to turn off all cockpit lights except for keeping my attitude indicator dimly lit. I had my heads up display turned down to a barely readable glow of green. My wingman, in a sensor trail position became my talking altimeter.

There is usually very little time to react in a Type III situation, so immediate action could save your life.

Psychologically speaking, sensory inputs to the brain arrive via two paths — the shortest path is the emotional side that reacts prior to the reasoning side inquiring, evaluating and then making a sound decision. This is where flight discipline comes into play to block the “short circuit” to help keep the focus to prevent Type III.

What prepared me most for combating spatial D and having a successful mission were all those undergraduate pilot training T-38 backseat instrument sorties with the hood and the many

night formation approaches on the wing in the weather ... especially in “pop-eye” conditions (in and out of thick weather).

Don’t forget to take advantage of training opportunities because you never know when you might need those critical skills. You might be the next flight lead experiencing spatial D over hostile territory at night in bad weather with others desperately needing your help. ✈

Retired Lt. Col. Ned Linch was the chief of flight safety for 12th Air Force and Air Forces Southern Command at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. A command pilot, he accumulated more than 3,000 flying hours in the F-16 and F-111, including over 150 combat hours.

by Staff Sgt. Brett R. Ewald



Proven Tips to Prevent Spatial Disorientation

1. Plan: You need to have a basic game plan to recover the aircraft. This should have been hammered into your brain in pilot training. Effective and thorough flight planning, plus an organized cockpit, will reduce the chances of task saturation, situational awareness issues, channelized attention and mis-prioritization — all areas that contribute to spatial disorientation. A backup plan with several options will give you the capability to always have an “out.” Realize it can happen to anyone, especially if fatigued, regardless of your experience or proficiency. So be ready!

2. Anticipate: You need to plan on experiencing spatial D on every flight and be ready for it, especially if you’re stepping out into marginal weather or you know you’ll be flying close formation in weather or at night. For a night ocean crossing mission in a fighter, you’ll most likely experienced spatial D so be ready to be trapped over the North Atlantic with no

options but to focus and recover. The more proficient you are in your aircraft with recent experience, the less likely you’ll experience spatial D (if you’ve been out of the cockpit for more than three weeks, your chance of spatial D increases). Take-off and landing, air refueling and tactical operations (low altitude in hazy weather, for example) are critical areas where you will have a higher chance of experiencing spatial D, so anticipate it. Also be ready for it during dynamic and demanding phases of flight and/or when there are other pre-conditions. Weather, night, formation, night vision goggles, fatigue, hypoxia, G stress, emotional compartmentalization issues, to name a few, are potential areas for distractions which increase your chances for a breakdown in your crosscheck. They can all lead to spatial disorientation.

3. Recognize: If you do experience spatial D, the first step is to recognize the situation. The faster you’re able to do this,

the greater the survival rate for you and your aircraft.

4. Confirm: Next, you need to confirm the spatial D. Crosscheck all instruments to confirm your attitude. If you hear a lot of wind noise, you’re probably headed toward dirt. If in close formation, you might be straight and level, so take a quick peek at the heads up display. It’s very difficult to suppress information from unreliable sources (your vestibular system) when in formation. You just have to hang tight and concentrate on flying.

5. Recover: Execute a nose low or high unusual attitude as you were taught in pilot training. If you’re in close formation, recovering might just be simply getting into the correct position. Many times you’re straight and level and it just seemed you were in a turn because you were riding high or low on your flight lead.

— Retired Lt. Col. Ned Linch

CAN SUNSCREEN PREVENT

Sunscreen saves lives. It provides a protective layer between the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays and our delicate skin. But can it prevent aircraft mishaps? How in the world can a bottle of Coppertone save a pilot?

While this may seem like an odd question, it is something that the pilots at Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas, face. Lake Amistad, famous for its fishing, is a haven for undergraduate pilot training students and instructor pilots alike. But the water provides a distraction from the harmful effects of the sun. When the UV index hovers at 10 or 11-plus, residents of Del Rio need to take extra precautions, such as sunscreen and sunglasses, before heading to the lake.

But can forgetting to don your sun protection factor — or SPF — really affect your flying the following week?

I received the answer to this question from a student pilot who took an unnecessary risk. And no, he was not doing unsafe maneuvers in the T-6 Texan II. He forgot to put on sunscreen while at the lake. This is a mistake that to most may lead to sunburn and pain in the short-term, but the job demands on military pilots put them in

a unique situation. A flight environment brings certain physical and physiological demands that are specific to the field.

As most aviators know, you shouldn't fly with a cold. But what about with sunburn?

The aforementioned student, as expected, got very badly burned. His neck, back and shoulders were red and painful to the touch. After completing a walk-around, both the student and the instructor began strapping in. When taxiing to the runway, the student came to an agonizing realization: The harness straps severely intensified the pain in his shoulders.

While holding before takeoff, the student made an unwise decision. He removed his harness straps, taking them completely off his shoulders, and proceeded to begin the flight.

To reiterate, the student flew the sortie, minus the shoulder straps — a vital piece of protective equipment.

Would you have made the same decision? Hopefully not.

While the sortie for this student was uneventful, what would have happened if he had to eject?

AIRCRAFT MISHAPS?

By 2nd Lt. ELIZABETH COMBS

Photo by STEVE THUROW



In one scenario, he would try to get his shoulder straps on before ejecting, only to be in an improper body position for ejection. In this case, he could face broken bones or whiplash.

But what if there was not enough time to get properly strapped in the shoulder harness? This situation holds a much more significant problem, as he would only have a safety belt around his waist and leg straps to hold him in the seat. Upon ejection, this student would have been exposed to upward of plus-15 Gs (gravitational forces), forcing his upper body forward, possibly injuring his back, snapping his neck, or "even cutting him in half," according to Col. John W. Blumentritt, Air Education and Training Command director of safety.

If he somehow survived the ejection, problem number two would be to stay in the leg and waist straps. Assuming his leg straps were tight enough to keep him in the remainder of his harness, he would have the difficult task of trying to stabilize himself while steering his parachute. But with the shoulder straps removed, the upward momentum could be enough to pull him out of his leg and waist straps and away from the seat, in which case he would endure a horrifying

freefall that ultimately ended with him hitting earth at roughly 120 mph, Blumentritt said.

To put it mildly, the odds for survival would be greatly stacked against this student.

So the moral of this story is to wear sunscreen, right? No. While sunscreen is beneficial to protecting your health, the big picture here is to remain operationally ready. By taking risks with your body, you are potentially taking yourself out of the fight. As this student discovered, even a seemingly insignificant decision can have the biggest impact on you, your family and the mission.

Risk management is something we preach on a daily basis but don't always live by off the airfield. Had this particular scenario turned south, we could have lost a student. Realize that you are the most important resource to the Air Force. Without the people, the fight doesn't happen.

Lieutenant Combs is an aerospace physiology operations officer with the 47th Flying Training Wing at Laughlin AFB, Texas.

SAVE THE DAY

VANCE INSTRUCTOR PILOTS USING SELF-AID BUDDY CARE

by David Yamada, Honolulu Advertiser

VANCE AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. — (AETCNS) Capt. John and Katie McGregor used the skills learned in self-aid buddy care training to aid three civilians who were injured in a small plane that crashed near Kalaeloa Airport in Oahu, Hawaii, late last year.

John is a T-6 instructor pilot assigned to the 8th Flying Training Squadron at Vance Air Force Base. Katie is a T-1 instructor pilot assigned to the 32nd Flying Training Squadron. Both graduated from the Air Force Academy in 2004 and attended Joint Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training at Vance, graduating in June and August of 2006, respectively.

The McGregors were on vacation in Hawaii from Dec. 16 to Dec. 25 with family. On Dec. 19, the couple was driving back from a surfing lesson with Katie's sister and brother-in-law, Jessica and Jim Rosenberg.

"We were driving down the road northeast of the airport," John explained. "Then we saw the plane coming in making about a 60-degree bank turn and descending quickly. It just didn't look right to us."

"John was driving, and he was the first person to notice that something was off," Katie said. "He does a lot of visual flight rules training patterns with new student pilots, so it was easy for him to identify how abnormal it looked."

Moments later the McGregors saw the crashed plane a quarter mile up the road. The aircraft was a single-engine Piper Cherokee. It had gone through several power lines and kiawe trees, shearing off one of the wings and leaving it in the middle of the road. The fuselage had slid to a stop beneath a different tree on the left-hand side of the street.

The McGregors and Rosenbergs pulled over immediately to assist with the situation. Army Capt. George Aubert, who had been driving down the road coming from the opposite direction, also pulled over to lend a hand.

"The first thing we did was check the people," Katie said. "It was a female pilot and two passengers, a married couple."

The windscreen and side windows of the cockpit of the air-



A single-engine Piper Cherokee crashed in Oahu, Hawaii, Dec. 19, injuring all three people on-board.

craft had popped out, leaving very little broken glass behind. Working together, John and Aubert were able to safely reach the civilians inside the wreckage, undo their seat belts and pull them to safety.

"They were all conscious, but were suffering from some shock," according to John. "They also all had some serious bruises and lacerations."

Being members of the military, the McGregors and Aubert had received self-aid buddy care training. Fortunately, the same was true for Katie's family members — Jessica Rosenberg is a former combat medic in the Army, and Jim Rosenberg is a member of the Coast Guard Reserve, as well as a civilian pilot.

Jim was familiar with the Kalaeloa Airport area and was able to call 911 and direct medical assistance to their location. The officers applied direct pressure to bleeding wounds, elevated the passengers' lower extremities as best as possible, and kept the passengers warm, calm and conscious until the paramedics arrived.

"Thanks to our flight experience, we also knew that the aircraft had to be secured," Katie said. "There was smoke coming from the cowlings, so we shut off the fuel source and disconnected the battery to prevent an explosion."

About five minutes after the emergency call was made, the Kalaeloa Airport crash response team arrived on the scene. They provided oxygen to the passengers until ambulances arrived to take

them to the hospital; by this time both the husband and wife in the crash were in serious condition. Fortunately, all three people in the crash survived.

"The important thing in this unfortunate situation is that everyone survived," Katie said. "What we did is what we would have wanted someone to do for us."

"Really, any military member in the same situation would have done the same thing," John added. "It just happened to be us this time around."

— 2nd Lt. Lynn Aird
71st Flying Training Wing Public Affairs



Vance Air Force Base, Okla., pilots Capt. John and Katie McGregor used the skills learned in self-aid buddy care training to assist three civilians injured in a small plane that crashed in Oahu, Hawaii, Dec. 19. The couple's flight training also played a role in safely securing the crashed aircraft.

by 2nd Lt. Lynn Aird

TALON TURNS

50

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. (AETCNS) — The test pilot who flew the T-38 Talon on its maiden flight 50 years ago said April 10 that during the historic sortie he felt he was on the safest mission of his career.

Then something dawned on him.

"I hadn't landed it yet!," said Lew Nelson, one of the speakers at a celebration held on the grounds of the Northrop Grumman facility here to commemorate the golden anniversary of the Talon's first flight.

Nelson did conclude that April 10, 1959, flight by landing the Talon safely for the first time, and thus began five decades of the venerable supersonic jet trainer's service in developing 75,000 pilots — and still counting — who would strap into it to earn their wings.

"Every fighter and bomber pilot trained by the Air Force in the past 50 years has been trained in the T-38," said Maj. Gen. Greg Feest, 19th Air Force commander at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, who served as keynote speaker at the event attended by several hundred Northrop Grumman employees and invited guests. "The impact this aircraft has had has been profound. We have relied on the T-38 to ready our young aviators to meet the challenges of aerial combat to ensure air domination."

The Air Force received its first T-38 in January 1961 after its initial testing. It has proven a bargain at an initial cost of \$756,000 per aircraft, despite recent upgrades to its avionics and propulsion systems, said Duke Dufresne, a Northrop Grumman senior vice president.

"When you couple the relatively low cost of this aircraft with its exceptional safety record and ease of maintenance, I think it's safe to say the T-38 has been one of the most cost-effective investments in pilot training the Air Force has ever made," Dufresne said.

Of the initial 1,187 Talons produced between 1959 and 1972 at Northrop's Hawthorne, Calif., facility, more than half are still in service. The Air Force operates most of the fleet, and the Navy and NASA also fly the T-38.

In its early years, the T-38 held several performance records. The

Air Force Thunderbirds used the airframe from 1974 to 1982 because of the Talon's economic operation and high performance.

Maj. Gen. David Eichhorn, Air Force Flight Test Center commander at Edwards AFB, Calif., who also spoke at the ceremony, said he shares two significant milestones with the date of the T-38's maiden flight. April 10 is his birthday, and he began his own aviation career April 10, 1977, when he entered undergraduate

pilot training at Vance AFB, Okla.

He said the T-38 provided the first real thrill of his pilot career.

"You run it up, plug in the afterburners and release the brake," he said of his initial T-38 experience. "Then you feel it push you back in the seat, and you go, 'Whoa! This is cool!' The first time you do it, that's a big, big thrill."

He said his training in the Talon provided the foundation for his military aviation career.

"I've had almost 1,000 hours in the jet, having flown it at four locations now," he said. "It has been a tremendous workhorse for the Air Force. It's very economical and very effective at what we have asked it to do."

The Talon is not likely to end its Air Force service anytime soon. A replacement trainer on the horizon would not likely see service for at least eight to 10 more years. With its upgrades, to include a re-designed wing that will retrofit the entire fleet, the Talon is expected to fly past 2020 if needed, which would give the first supersonic jet trainer a service life of more than 60 years.

"Today, we say thank you to this amazing airplane for its service to our nation and the thousands of dedicated people who have worked tirelessly to create, modify, produce and maintain the T-38 over the years," Feest said. "It has served its nation well in the past. It continues to serve its nation today, and the Air Force will rely on it for tomorrow."

— Michael Briggs

12th Flying Training Wing Public Affairs



by Tech. Sgt. Matthew Hannen

The T-38 Talon celebrated the 50th anniversary of its first flight April 10. It has helped develop 75,000 pilots — and still counting!