The Scratching Post

U.S. Navy 2004 Pettibone Award Winning Safety Publication **Winter 2007**

VT-10 IS BASED ABOARD NAVAL AIR STATION PENSACOLA, FL

ORM, the Safety Chain, & Tots in the Tub

By LCDR Chuck "Chachi" Kuba

"I'd never do that!" At least that is what I can remember saying to myself any number of times in the past upon hearing a story about a child who had been injured after being left alone – sometimes for only a few seconds. "I'd never do that, I'm not that kind of a parent." As it turns out, I am – and you could be too.

My wife and I have 3 children ages six, three and three months, and to describe our house as a zoo on any particular day is fairly accurate. My six year old son was spending the night with some cousins about a month ago, and my wife and I were using the "force reduction" to accomplish some household chores – an exciting Friday night for the tired married folk. Our washer and dryer are located in our kid's bathroom, and I was taking care of the laundry with my three-year-old daughter in the tub while my wife fed my new baby boy. Now I know just as well as you that you never, ever leave a kid alone in the bathtub. We routinely fill the tub with about a half inch of water, I've read many of the same stories you have about tykes drowning in swimming pools and bathtubs – as it turns out, this "policy" in our house would later become a vital link in our safety chain. The buzzer on the dryer announced the completion of a cycle, and with only a momentary glance at my daughter who was sitting in the tub and playing with an old set of measuring cups, I filled a laundry basket and took the warm clothes to the living room where my wife was folding while feeding the little guy. I fully intended to immediately return to my daughter and the tub, but the phone rang – it was my mother from Pittsburgh wanting to discuss Christmas gifts.

Believe it or not, it was at this point that I actually did something right. I took the cordless phone back to the bathroom and to my daughter, but she was no longer sitting up and playing with the measuring cups. She was lying on her back, arms at her sides . . . ASLEEP! Of course, that is not the first thought that went through my head, perhaps you can imagine what did. I grabbed her out of the tub, and I must have shouted something because my wife was immediately at my side with the baby, and my daughter opened her eyes and started crying – probably because of the force of my grab. I had been out of the room for about 3 minutes.

Lesson learned - you never leave your little ones alone in the tub - seriously. Now, my daughter is a good swimmer for age three and knows how to go under water and hold her breath. Perhaps the worst that could really have happened was that she may have choked for a second or two, sat up and coughed, but perhaps not. I do know that I thanked God later that there was such a small amount of water in the tub – maybe this was the one link in the safety chain that prevented a much different ending. I'm also thankful that our family made a decision to buy a cordless telephone so that we could keep an eye on the family when it rings. I also swore I'd never share this story because of how chagrinned I am for being in this particular situation until I realized that it was other articles, just like this one, that may have prevented the worst day of my life.

So, ORM your tots tub time. If you must leave the bathroom, leave a responsible sibling to watch. Don't overfill your tub. And for safety, realize that the chores can wait another five minutes – maybe then the little one can help out with the folding!

Individual Highlights

From The Commanding Officer

CDR Brian Whitten

About this time last year I was observing the squadron as a relatively new Wildcat XO and attempting to determine the "Safety Pulse" of the squadron. Fortunately, I found the squadron's safety culture, procedures and practices, and record to be quite healthy.

Now, my objective is to promote a Safety Policy that is simple, understood, and ingrained. In short, VT-10 Safety Policy is about:

- Protecting each Wildcat;
- Managing risk;
- Pursuing goals of zero injuries, incidents, and mishaps;
- Accomplishing the mission;
- Exhibiting professional behavior;
- Encouraging involvement;
- Recognizing VT-10 Safety Department.

If this is not clear, then the following verbatim memorandum is included for further clarification. Read it, know it, and live it. Remind yourself daily. It may be the reminder that saves you, or someone like you.

MEMORANDUM

From: Commanding Officer, Training Squadron TEN
To: All Hands

Subj: COMMANDING OFFICER'S SAFETY POLICY

1. Our safety program exists for one purpose: to ensure mission accomplishment with no damage to human life or material resources.

2. I want to impress upon each WILDCAT my commitment to our safety program. In the Training Command, nothing we accomplish on the ground or in the air is worth the price of personal injury or material damage. Our safety goal is simple: **mission accomplishment with no injuries, incidents or mishaps.** This applies equally to aviation operations and off-duty activities.

3. For this program to succeed, WE MUST ADHERE STRICTLY to published standard operating procedures (SOPs), NATOPS and all directives governing the execution of our mission.

4. I direct every individual in this squadron – instructor, student or civilian staff – to stop any unsafe activity you observe, on the ground or in the air. **DO NOT** ignore something you know or suspect to be unsafe, expecting someone else to fix the problem. You may be the only one with the proper situational awareness to recognize that a problem exists.

5. I will ensure that our working spaces are safe and all facilities meet or exceed requirements for occupational safety and health. The Safety Department will administer our safety program for the benefit of all WILDCATS.

IF THERE'S DOUBT, THERE IS NO DOUBT!

"This Will Just Take a Moment"

LCDR Ken McNeill
TRAWING SIX Reserve Officer In Charge

Here is a scenario many of you will recognize. Your student's brief was solid, the weather is gorgeous and there is no aircraft wait. Everything is going smoothly and you are moments from stepping to the aircraft when your cell phone rings. It's a call from the office with an "urgent" issue. You know the kind, the issue that "just can't wait". You fill in the subject…YN1 needs to know the funding information; CNATRA is requesting production data from last weekend's detachment; a Reservist needs his orders signed before he can drill that day…etc.

"I know you are getting ready to go flying, but can I have a few minutes of your time before you takeoff?. This will just take a moment."

Have you already entered your proverbial "flying box"? Have you physically and mentally made a break from the distractions of your ground job? Have you sufficiently compartmentalized and put your full focus on the flight or are you still thinking about the unanswered emails and phone messages? Should you risk stepping out of the box to get a quick update on the pressing issue at hand? What if it really can't wait?

There in lies an excellent question. What distractions should be allowed so close to flying? Where is the cutoff? Who doesn't take a quick peek at the email inbox after checking weather or NOTAMs? Thank goodness I don't own a Blackberry. Perhaps it's a call from home. *"Honey, can I give you a short list of things to pick up on the way home from work? Can you look at the calendar and tell me what morning you can watch the kids while I take the baby to get his shots?"* If you are reading this article and this is unfamiliar territory for you because your ground job is light and your entire workload is "getting the X" then good on you – enjoy this moment in your career. However, no one is immune to such distractions no matter rank or billet.

Certainly there are times when distractions can't be avoided and it is at those times that we must implement controls. Perhaps the flight may have to be delayed or cancelled outright. If this is the case, have the courtesy to inform your student and carefully consider and ORM the impact of the delay on you and your student. However, these circumstances are most likely few and far between. Like anything else, we must discipline ourselves to compartmentalize and leave the distractions behind. If the decision is made to handle an issue after the flight, ensure that once airborne you avoid complacency and mind-wandering. Make sure to focus on the task at hand.

If you haven't done so already, decide the parameters of your box before you go flying. First, don't work right up until the last minute before your brief. Give yourself plenty of time to physically and mentally transition to your role as an aviator. Being late to a brief is disrespectful and unprofessional.

I'm sure everyone remembers as a student when you were left sitting idly, waiting for your instructor to wrap up "urgent" issues. We owe it to our fellow aviators to be on-time and fully focused. When rushed, even if you are physically on time for your brief, chances are that your mind will still be focused elsewhere. Secondly, turn off the cell phone and make a conscience decision not to check the email inbox or swing by your office one last time. Let your shipmates in your office know that you are heading out to fly so that they can cover the issues that come up in your absence. If confronted in the hallway or in maintenance control with an "urgent" matter, consider the risks involved with stepping out of your box, and whenever possible resolve the matter following the flight.

Flying and teaching, though often seemingly routine, is very serious business. The safe and quality training of our students demands our full attention. Establish your flying box ahead of time and discipline yourself to stay within those parameters. Believe me, the emails and phone calls will still be there when you return.

Adapted from "Is the Skipper in His Box Yet?, Approach, May, 2000 by Anthony J. Rizzo

Sexual Assault

Capt. Nick Woodrow

What is sexual assault? Sexual assault does not necessarily mean a rape. Sexual assault is defined by the DoD as "intentional sexual contact, characterized by the use of force, physical threat or abuse of authority or when a victim does not or cannot consent. Sexual assault includes rape, nonconsensual sodomy (oral or anal sex), indecent assault (unwanted, inappropriate sexual contact or fondling), or attempts to commit these acts"

Sexual assaults happen every day. Nationally one in four females will be assaulted during their life and one in seven males. The general age range for attacks on females in the military is 18 to 24. Nationally that number is 12 to 34. In 2004, 1, 700 sexual assaults were reported in the Department of Defense; 104 of those reported victims were male victims. Almost all cases of reported adult male sexual assaults were committed by other men and involve a greater degree of violence than do the sexual assaults of females.

Date rape accounts for the majority of the attacks. Date rape does not mean that the victim was on a date with their attacker at the time of the attack it means that an "unwanted sexual attack was committed by someone that the victim knew." Date rape is also known as acquaintance rape.

Drugs and alcohol work to weaken the defenses and the awareness of their victim making them more vulnerable to an attack. Attackers often will use drugs and alcohol as tools for their attacks.

Attackers often attempt to isolate their victim. In doing this, there will be fewer people to witness the attack strengthening the attacker's position. To help prevent an assault always use a wingman when you're out, be careful not to leave your drink unattended or don't drink too much. At the end of the night ensure that a responsible person is there to take you home. Once you're home lock your door and don't open it for anyone you don't know or trust.

Men you are not excluded from sexual assault. To drive this point home, here at Pensacola NAS there were 15 reported assaults in 2005 and 16 so far in 2006. Of those 16 this year 2 have been male. These attackers may not and usually do not exhibit any homosexual traits whatsoever.

There are two reporting methods for military members restricted and unrestricted. A restricted report allows a member to speak to a SAVI representative, a SARC, a chaplain, or a medical personnel without going through the chain of command. If the member chooses a restricted report they will receive medical attention and emotional support but will not be able to prosecute under this provision. However, the member may decide to change reporting procedures at any time up to a year to press charges against an attacker.

Unrestricted report will keep the number of people involved to a minimum. Only those deemed in the need to know will be advised of the situation. The member will receive the same medical treatment and emotional support. The chain of command will be informed and an investigation will be launched.

Time is of the essence in an assault. Critical evidence can be lost over time. If you are a victim of an assault the first thing you need to do is get to somewhere safe. Once you are safe have a friend take you to the clinic or the hospital. Do not shower, change your clothes or even comb your hair. The person who commits an assault will not usually stop with one person they will continue to assault others. An offender may only be stopped if they are prosecuted.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU ARE A VICTIM

Local Rape Crisis Center - 438-1617
Chaplain's office - 452-2341
VT10 SAVIs - LT Halfpap and Capt Woodrow
Fleet Family Support Center - 452-5990 ext 3132
911 or Clinic Emergency Room - 452-8888
Rape, Abuse, and Incest, National Network (RAINN) - 1-800-656-HOPE or rainn.org

Rapid Decompression

LT Jessica Halfpap

Not much changes here in Florida around October, but head north into the hills of West Virginia and you'll find yourself deep into the heart of fall colors, mountain air, and the pulse of Mountaineer football. Who wouldn't jump at the chance to stop by for a quick cross-country? You bet. Off we went with our warmest clothes stuffed into the T-6 luggage compartment and great plans for the evening's events with friends and family. Beautiful day, perfect tailwinds, everything going well as we take off headed for Crestview to make our turn north...

Just after we level off at FL270, Dave mentions from the back that the canopy is beginning to fog up. No problem, I'll just turn on the defog. It's at about this time that the Hollywood script would call for the John Denver background tunes to start to skip: "...take me home, country roads, to the place where-where-where-where…"

I flipped the defog switch and felt a pretty uncomfortable pop in my ears as I heard a wind-like sound along with the bells and whistles of the caution warning system. Following my first thought, I looked at the canopy seal as I wondered how those four big meat hooks could have possibly come undone. With that intact, my scan caught the cockpit altitude gauge and saw a bright yellow box climbing rapidly through numbers somewhere around 26,600ft and change. Not good. I called back to Dave – actually I don't remember what I said, probably something along the lines of "Hey man, you back there?" We quickly realized that our masks weren't working too well and our OBOGS had failed, but although we sounded like we were yelling into a tunnel we could hear each other just fine. Meanwhile, I searched the console for some switch out of place – everything looked normal. I turned the defog switch back off, thinking that's what seemed to start this mess, as Dave broke out the PCL and quickly found the steps for handling a rapid decompression. I took the radios and requested an immediate descent and return to NPA –with some difficulty, as I was quickly reminded that emergency OBOGS is not easy to talk through. We double-checked the EP steps as we continued to descend and then scoured the previous checklists trying to catch a self-induced reason for the problem. At that point, we had oxygen and were headed to a more comfortable and non-oxygen/non-pressurization-requiring altitude. All was fairly well. Except, of course, for the obvious understanding that we were not headed to WV.

We landed uneventfully back home no worse for the wear except for our spirits and a mandatory trip to the flight doc. Note to self: a loss of pressure above 25k requires medical attention. Essentially, they'll task you with balancing tricks and then deny you alcoholic beverages for the rest of the day.

We left that evening with a mild headache and a concrete determination to never use the defog system again. After a bit of research, however, I dug out the details of what happened in the plane that day and what I could have done to fix it. The defog valve – alas! – is electrically connected to the bleed air valve as both are wired to the single inflow system circuit breaker. When I attempted to turn the defog system on, the circuit breaker popped due to a short in the defog switch and cut power to both valves. The bleed air valve is designed to fail in the closed position, cutting off the bulk of the airflow that maintains pressurization. The automatic pressure regulator system, although routed in parallel to the bleed air inflow valve, does not allow enough airflow to make up for the difference, hence our loss of pressure.

In hindsight, had I checked the inflow system circuit breaker and had I known what I know now (and if you experience this in the future), I could have safely reset the circuit breaker with defog in the off position and regained pressurization. I still would have needed to come home and still would have had to see the doc, but I would have had a more comfortable ride back and would have felt a little smarter about my plane. For me it was a subtle reminder, [insert under breath "idiot" in best Napoleon Dynamite tone], to remember rule number one: check your circuit breakers. Maintenance will argue that ours wasn't a true Rapid Decompression due to the relatively slow leak of pressure; we saw a plane that depressurized in about .5 seconds and handled it as such, so the jury is still out. Perhaps had I not been quick to assume the EP then I may have done more cockpit trouble-shooting and noticed the circuit breaker. Either way, I'll leave that discussion for the armchair quarterbacking. For me, I'm chalking it up to several good lessons to review and a little extra systems insight for the future.

Fire Safety

Maj. Andy Jackson

If you are at all like me, you grew up as a guru of flame and destruction. You probably managed to create some of the most fantastic combinations of flammables, model rocket engines, bottle rockets and whatever innocent inanimate object you could find. Then you would enjoy the execution of your flawlessly conceived demolition plan. Whether this description makes you smile with memories or scowl at the depravity of it all, I have a cautionary tale for you.

Growing up the way I did I am not nervous or shy around open flame. I feel comfortable starting the grill or shifting a log in the fire with bare hands. But on a brisk morning in October I overestimated my own understanding and experiences in flame control. The task at hand - to burn down a brush pile that had been accumulating for a couple of years

and was full of felled trees and trimmings, grass from mowed fields, and random collections of brush. As a result there was dry old timber at the bottom and green wet materials on top. The pile was pretty big, about 35 feet long and 15 feet wide. I was late getting there so one end had been lit by my step-dad who grew up on a farm and was familiar with this kind of thing. Luckily the wind was very calm so we decided to burn from both ends. I grabbed the gas without worry or thought and headed to the other side. I am sure many of you are already rolling your eyes as you have figured out what happened, but for the rest of you here is how it played out…

Figuring that starting with gas was no different than kerosene or lighter fluid I wasn't concerned. I did have enough forethought to be wearing jeans, heavy shoes, and a hat. I doused the appropriate area with the gas taking care not to get any on me. Then I placed a rag on the very edge of the soaked area and poured on it as well, figuring that every good flame needed some kind of delay or a wick. I stepped away from the pile for a minute to chase down the matches. Unknown to me was that during those seconds the gas vapors were spreading through the lower parts of the pile. When I got back to my spot I lit the match, eagerly anticipating the pyre I was about to create. I was rewarded by the distinct "swoosh" sound as the vapors ignited and blew up well before I had planned. It took less than a second, but flame came up my jeans, softened the plastic lettering on my shirt, and enveloped my arm as I managed to close my eyes and turn away. Knowing what had happened I dropped to the fresh dirt around the pile and rolled around. It looked ridiculous, and may or may not have been effective, but it was instinctive.

Eventually I stood up and surveyed myself for injuries. The heat had made it to my head singeing my eyelashes, sideburns, and even the back under my hat. My nose and lips were mildly burned. My left hand had been "sunburned". My right arm was already showing blistering and was red from fingers to mid-bicep with a few open cuts and gashes (from the flame or rolling around I don't know). I headed off to the emergency room and got all fixed up with some wicked strong medications and some bandages wrapped in something. Next time I'll have "salve" on hand. Now, we can all laugh at it in hindsight, but I will swear to you that first and second degree burns on 15% of my body was absolutely one of the most painful experiences I have had. And when I think about how close I came to actually losing something like an eye or use of my fingers, I feel pretty lucky.

So the lesson is simple. Wear the appropriate protection, have the knowledge necessary for execution and be prepared for things to go wrong. Also, throw the match from a distance. Just kidding – use the right tools for the right job. In case you haven't figured it out gas is not good for bush.

Safety Standdown Lesson Learned

LCDR Steve Jones, VT-10 Safety Officer

How many times have you been sitting in a Safety Standdown thinking about that tee time you have that upcoming weekend, or how uncomfortable your chair was, or how much you wished the guy beside you would stop hogging the armrest? We have all been there. I remember one such day back when I was an Ensign during flight training in Corpus Christi, Texas. Fortunately for me I paid attention long enough to learn something that would eventually save my bacon.

The topics that day were fairly standard for a Safety Standdown. One person had a flying story. Another person talked about driving safety. Of course, the Flight Surgeon gave a brief that grossed everyone out with pictures that would be considered illegal in many states. Then there was the cooking safety brief. "Cooking safety? Why do I need to put up with this crap!" I thought to myself. I listened anyway, although my attention span was very short.

I did not remember most of what this guy talked about during his brief, but for some reason I did remember one important fact he mentioned during his ten minutes of fame on stage. Along the way his brief came upon the topic of grease fires. He asked, "What would you do if you had a grease fire in your kitchen?" He then proceeded to make it very clear that you should never put water on a grease fire nor try to take a flaming pan of grease outside.

Fast forward three weeks. I had just returned to my apartment after a long day of flying one of my student flights. Being hungry I decided it was time for some food. A quick scan of the refrigerator revealed few options so I opened up the freezer. To my stomach's delight I spotted my fare: frozen french fries! My only decision now was how to cook them. The options were located right there on the back of the package. After reviewing the options I decided to fry them up in a pan of hot oil. I pulled a pan out, threw it on the burner, and poured in the oil. I then proceeded to crank up the heat to speed things up a little.

After a few minutes I realized that the one drinking glass I owned was fifteen feet away on my coffee table in the living room. For a split second I remembered another lesson from the safety standdown, and that was to never leave the kitchen when you are cooking. I thought to myself that it would only take seconds to get my glass. Besides, what could happen in that short period of time?

As I picked up the glass I heard a sound that I distinctly remember hearing before. It sounded like a propane grill being lit. Unfortunately, that sound was coming from my kitchen and was accompanied by a sun-like glow coming from the same area that my pan of oil was heating up. It did not take but a second for me to figure out that there was now a fire in the kitchen. I ran back to the kitchen to see what was going on. At that point I learned just how bad a grease fire could be.

The door to my apartment was about five feet from the stove in the kitchen. What was my first thought? You guessed it: "I'm going to pick up this pan and set it outside!" With the short distance I had a strong urge to just pick up the pan and walk to the front door with this raging pan of fire. As I reached for the handle I had a flashback. I could clearly see that guy at the safety standdown a few weeks earlier telling me not to pick up the flaming pan and try to take it outside. Now what? Luckily a fire extinguisher was under the sink and I used it to dispose of the fire. The damage was limited to a charred range hood, an apartment engulfed in smoke, a hefty fire extinguisher recharge fee from apartment management, and a couple of hours cleaning up a huge mess of fire extinguishing agent and burnt grease.

So what is the lesson here? The obvious lesson is that cooking safety is important. But the other lesson to recognize is that safety standdowns can teach all of us valuable information that can save us, our loved ones, and those we lead. The information may not seem important at the moment, but emergencies always surprise us and every advantage we have at combating them is helpful. Since that time I can recall many other lessons I learned at safety standdowns that I applied later to help myself or someone else.

We have safety standdowns so often that they start to be come routine. Many of the topics are repeated, and sometimes the topics seem so far removed from our daily lives that we believe that the lessons do not apply to us. We must always remember, as I quickly learned, that no matter how obscure the lesson is it could happen to us. As leaders and future leaders, we must also remember that these lessons may not apply to us directly but we will eventually have the opportunity to pass the knowledge on to those we lead to keep them safe. You never know when you may learn something that will save your life or the life of one of your shipmates.

Safety Blast From the Past……

The following article appeared in the Fall, 1999 Edition of *The Scratching Post*. While times and aircraft have changed, the valuable lessons learned back then remain the same. Interestingly enough, this same thing happened recently and created an uncontrollable high power situation in a T-6 on the ground. The same mistake almost cost us an aircraft and crew over seven years later! Let us learn from the mistakes of others so we do not repeat them ourselves.

Names and Places have been changed to protect the Innocent....

1stLt Gordon
VT-10 SNFO

Situation: An instructor and his student (to be referred to from here on as Student X) were enjoying pizza at Mobile Regional awaiting sunset to complete a Fam 7.

The less than capable student diligently began replacing his dark visor with his clear visor. Quickly, the student removed his helmet knob and immediately started recalling the assembly instructions from Jim at the paraloft (to be referred to from here on as Jim)... Step 1, twist the button counter clockwise until you hear a click then release the tab and rotate the button.... Step 2... and so on

"Hmmm..." thought student X, "any three year old could assemble or disassemble this helmet." Unfortunately, for Student X, he had forgotten to bring his three-year-old son with him. Encountering numerous difficulties with his helmet, the student finally cranked the knob in and declared to himself, "good enough for government work."

Now lets leap 20 minutes into the future. The instructor and Student X begin taxiing toward the runway. Student X thought he noticed something brush his thigh. He silently began to do a quick FOD check and inventory his items....

"Pen...check, pencil...check, kneeboard...check, zippers zipped" thought the student to himself, "it must have been a strap settling." Or so he hoped.

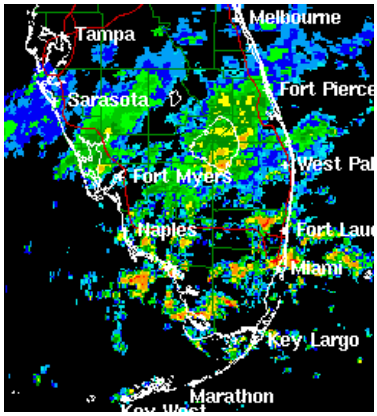
Student X's Fam 7 went without incident and the student was thankful to be back at Pensacola after a long day. During the students FOD check he recalled the incident prior to takeoff that had caused him to inventory his gear. The student now realized his helmet knob was missing....

In retrospect, Student X was wrong on so many levels. In fact, we could discuss at great length how Student X should have properly installed his helmet visor, or his lack of SA, or his lack of crew coordination, etc, etc, etc. However, Student X did do something right. He knew what he had brought in with him and inventoried it. Luckily for Student X and his instructor this chain of events had a happy ending.

Yes FODing a cockpit is embarrassing, but it is preferable to flying or allowing an aircraft to fly when you're not sure if there is FOD. By following the Safety's FOD Prevention Program, we can reduce the number of incidents of FOD. Less FOD means less mishaps. Finally, remember, only you can prevent FOD.

Have You Met My Friend Murphy?

LT Rolando Chang



It was Wednesday after a long weekend in Key West. Tropical depression Alberto had turned our out Friday to Sunday good deal into a Friday to Wednesday great deal. With the weather looking good, my student and I planned the first of the two legs home to Tampa, with a drop in for approaches in the Fort Meyers area. The leg was just over 220 NM and we would have plenty of time for terminal area work.

After flight filling and getting our weather brief, we took off at about 1100. Weather was calling the route clear, and the Tampa area to have scattered thunderstorms in the vicinity. We flew at FL200 on the quick flight to the Fort Meyers area and dropped in for a couple of approaches at Southwest Florida International and Page Field. On the descent into Fort Meyers, we noticed the clouds building up to the north, as had been briefed. After finishing up with the terminal area work, we climbed to 6,000' and started making our way up to Tampa, a short 95 NM away. On the climb out, we hear approach talking about the thunderstorms up ahead, and we also hear them vectoring traffic around the cells. At 6000' and about 60 NM from Tampa, all we see ahead of us is a grey wall of clouds. At FL200 we may have been able to easily work our way around, but at 6000', it wasn't looking good. We asked ATC if there was any way for us to get around the storms to the east and were told that the entire area between us and Tampa was completely clobbered by thunderstorms.

We quickly decided that proceeding onto Tampa was not a good idea. I asked ATC for clearance back to Fort Meyers and asked the student to look up the airports in the IFR Supplement to see which ones, if any, had contract fuel. At this time, ATC wanted to know, and never very patiently, what airport we wanted to go to. I told them Page Field in order to get them off our backs. The student at that point informed me that neither airport in the Fort Meyers area had contract fuel. I continue to scan the chart for options and see that Homestead ARB is about 100 NM away. I know they have contract fuel and the weather was CAVU towards Miami on our flight up! A quick fuel calculation later and I determine that we have enough gas to get there…a quick change with ATC and we were on our way!

20 NM from Homestead and we get switched to Homestead Radar control. They inquire what we would like to do. I tell them that we'd like to full stop. A short pause and they come back and tell us that we need to contact base operations since we don't have PPR#. I tell them that we are a weather divert and don't require a PPR#. We've are about 10 NM to the west and have the field in sight. The controller starts giving us vectors to the south and informs us that there is an emergency in progress and that the runway is closed. An F-16 has blown a tire and is sitting at the departure end of the runway…the last 1000' are unusable due to the emergency. Low fuel lights come on. I look and see that the runway is 11K feet long. I inform ATC that we only need 4000' of runway to land. More vectoring. Geez…we could land on the parallel taxiway if we really needed to! I inform ATC that in about five minutes, I'm going to declare minimum fuel. "Roger"…more vectoring…

While we are being vectored, I continue to look for other airfields around us…who cares about contract fuel at this point. I think I see space between the 100 lb. tick mark and the fuel needle. We declare Min Fuel with Radar. They ask us if we have the field in sight… We've had it in sight the entire time. They clear us for the visual approach to runway 5 and advise us that the last 1000' is unusable. Uneventful landing with more than plenty of runway left over! We are the only aircraft on the ramp…obviously they don't get much transient traffic these days.

I can definitely say that I was a bit nervous those last ten minutes. We took on 154 gallons of fuel (including over-wing), the most I've ever seen put into a T-6A. Just goes to show, you can never have enough contingency plans. Murphy's law definitely has a way of sneaking up on you when you least expect it. It would have probably been much easier to justify buying non contract fuel in Fort Meyers, than a flame out south of Miami.

TRAINING SQUADRON TEN
250 SAN CARLOS ROAD
SUITE H
PENSACOLA, FL 32508

PHONE:
(850) 452-3516

FAX:
(850) 452-2757

We're on the Web!
See us at:

https://www.cnatra.navy.mil/tw6/vt10/

Questions?
Email the Program Leader
Michael.Kahn@Navy.Mil

About VT-10

VT-10 has an 70 member Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps instructor staff that currently trains over 400 Student Officers annually. Training Squadron TEN has been awarded five Meritorious Unit Commendations and Seven Chief of Naval Education and Training "Shore / Technical Training Excellence Awards", the most recent in 2002. "Wildcat" safety initiatives have earned the squadron Twenty Chief of Naval Operations Safety Awards, the most recent in 2005. The squadron was awarded the Towers Award for safety in 1978. In 2004 the command was awarded the U.S. Navy Pettibone Safety Publication Award for the Scratching Post newsletter.