

# The Scratching Post

U.S. Navy 2004/2005 Pettibone Award Winning Safety Publication

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## Mishap Free Flight Hours

**127,734**

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

### “Smokey Morning Drive”

2LT Adam Peachman

It was a hot and humid Thursday morning in May. I drove with my windows down and my stereo turned up that morning. I was driving past the marina on base when I noticed a car horn sounding. The horn persisted which was strange and there was no noticeable change in volume. As I was driving by the marina a bystander was staring at me. It was at that point I realized maybe the horn was mine. I turned down my stereo and tried pushing on my horn and nothing happened thus confirming it was my horn in check. While I looked down to push on my horn all of the gauges were flipping through their whole range of motion and all the lights were intermittently turning on and off. I continued driving since I was less than a mile from my parking spot where I could more properly diagnose my trucks problems.



About 100ft before San Carlos Drive, my engine died. White smoke started coming out of the engine compartment. I rolled for about 200ft while more smoke was coming from the engine compartment; it was thick acrid smoke. I pulled off the road about 100yds away from the gate to the T- 1 hangar. Without even thinking I pushed on the parking brake, bent down to pop the hood, and hopped out of the truck. The smoke burned my eyes and throat and smelled just like the flight instructors described an electrical fire. I ran around to the front and tried to

open the hood but realized that the hood had not actually popped open. The smoke was getting thicker and the paint was starting to boil. The smoke was very thick now pouring from under the hood. The flames were burning the sides of the truck from under the wheel wells. I could hear the spattering of melting plastic dripping as well as the siren of the crash crew fire truck coming through the gate by the T-1 hangar. I stood there helpless, watching my truck get beat with a metal rod and coated in water and extinguisher. I realized that there was nothing I could do. The fire crew thoroughly doused the engine compartment and sprayed in the cab as well because the fire had started eating through the firewall and was melting the dash and electrical components underneath. Once the fire crew was not actively putting anything out, I approached the heap of melted 98 Dodge and just stared into the black mass for a while. They told me to get anything I could out of the cab because they were going to douse it again. The first time I actually sat down after what seemed like a couple hours of commotion I realized what actually happened... my truck caught on fire. I had no truck.

There are many things that could have caused the fire in my truck. I had an aftermarket chip installed, which was connected to several electrical components in the engine compartment as well as in the cab. The most likely reason, I believe was an insufficiently rated power wire for a stereo amp. The wire had a fuse on it, but I believe that it malfunctioned and started the fire. It was installed correctly, so my only thought was that the power wire was not rated for the amp it was powering, or the fuse was malfunctioning for the same reason.

2LT Adam Peachman

# From The Commanding Officer

Lt Col Jeffrey Macloud, USAF

VT-10 has been a safe place to fly for a long time. Skipper Whitten's focus on professionalism and accountability has fostered a fantastic Wildcat safety culture. I'd be an idiot to tinker with that. So I won't.

We can, however, continue to improve. We will do that over the next year or so by reconfirming our professionalism and accountability. In that light, let's break down what those two words really mean related to safety.

## Professionalism

Professionals are committed, competent and continuously improving. Every Wildcat instructor and student should be committed to the mission of VT-10. Your commitment is the horsepower that drives mission accomplishment. When all Wildcats are committed, then no Wildcats will be over-tasked, over-tired and over-worked. Make yourselves available. Gain and maintain situational awareness of the squadron's operational requirements and adjust your schedule to make the mission a priority. Not only will you help the squadron, you'll become a better aviator in the process.

Which leads to competence. There is no such thing as barely competent, or marginally competent, or almost competent. You are either a competent aviator or you are not. We give you checkrides every year to assess your competence, but those checkrides are a fleeting glance into a very small window. Your real competence is measured day by day, flight by flight. And the best measuring stick is your own set of personal standards – which need to be very high. An honest self assessment is crucial to determining if you're competent. If there's a question, it's your responsibility to get the practice and assistance you need to regain competency. And, even if you are competent, there's always room for improvement.

Continuous improvement is not a decision or a personality trait – it's a habit. Aviators who avoid self-criticism, shun peer scrutiny, and are not curious about their profession will atrophy. Conversely, aviators who honestly self-assess, seek feedback (debrief), and ask lots of questions of their peers and instructors will continuously improve. Simply put – lazy aviators are dangerous. Dynamic aviators are much, much more competent and, therefore, safer.

## Accountability

Commitment, competence and continuous improvement make it very easy to hold yourselves and your peers accountable. I will hold you accountable as well. One of the personality traits of this squadron that I enjoy the most is the very apparent comfort level you all seem to have with fessing up when something goes counter to your plan or regulations or common sense. This is accountability at its very best. And, it's impossible to overstress the importance of this fantastic habit. A free and accurate flow of information speaks of commitment, breeds competence and leads to everyone's continuous improvement. But it doesn't come without strings.

One of those strings is trust, and it's pulled three ways. From the front office perspective, I trust that the ready room will notify me when incidents occur so that I can make sure the squadron is on track. From the ready room perspective, you need to be able to trust that the front office will react with fairness, calmness and the proper perspective when incidents occur. And from the student's perspective, they have to trust that we're all leading them down the correct path to their wings and the rest of their flying careers. Trust is imperative in accountability. Another of the strings that lead to accountability is courage and integrity. We all have to have the courage and integrity to speak up when necessary, do the unpopular but correct thing, and/or accept the consequences of a bad decision, even if made in unavoidable circumstances. Courage isn't defined as acting without fear, but instead acting in spite of fear. And integrity is acting despite fear and regardless of who is or is not watching.

Accountable professionals are inherently safe.

That's it, folks. Be professional. Be accountable. You'll inherently be safe. It's my privilege to serve as Katt 101. Let's together continue safely down the vector to 200,000 mishap-free flight hours!

Crunch

## “Scratching Post”

CDR Thad Dobbert, USN  
VT-10 Executive Officer

When I first got here, I saw a collection of articles on one of the squadron bulletin boards. It was called The Scratching Post. I looked through the articles and found them very interesting and observed that the articles were safety oriented. However, the question I kept asking myself was, why is this publication called the “Scratching Post”? What does that mean and how does that imply safety? Well as I perused the internet one day I decided to look for an answer. I started with [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com).



The definition it provided for a scratching post stated the following:

“-noun- a block or post of wood, usually covered with carpeting, on which a cat can use its claws.” I learned nothing with that definition that I hadn’t already known. Ok....A scratching post is used by a cat...duh!! And everyone knows the Wildcat is our mascot. The Wildcat is a distant cousin of the Feline (a.k.a. cat) family.

So I can see that obvious connection. But why not Cat Nip, Ball and String or maybe even the forbidden Kitty Litter as a name for the publication? Well, cats are territorial, self sufficient and pragmatic. Scratching is a way for cats to tell others of their presence. It provides other cats information about this territorial feline; where are the limits, what you can expect if you enter the area. Pragmatism is the consideration of the effects of an action, or consequences, as well as the action itself. It tells a story. Is the light bulb beginning to brighten? A scratching post is a device to allow a cat to continue its instinctive behavior without causing damage to expensive property like your couch, drapes or even the box spring to your mattress. It is a pragmatic solution to a realistic issue. A good safety program is pragmatic. Not only do we discuss the actions by which an event happens, but we discuss the consequences of those actions, and offer solutions to prevent future undesirable events. The Scratching Post! The Purrfect name for VT-10, Training Wing Six, and I dare say the Navy’s Safety publication.

“DO IT RIGHT”

XO

## “Boating Safety”

BM1 Joel Henderson, USCG  
USCG Station Pensacola, FL

With the summer here it is time to prepare our boats to enjoy the many rewards and opportunities our marine environment offers. With this in mind ensure your boat is safe and meets all safety requirements and regulations. The checklist should include, but not be limited to:



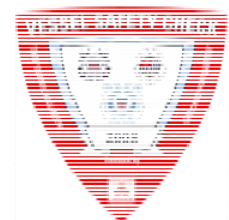
Equipment:

- Navigation tools.
- Boat hook.
- Mooring lines and fenders in good condition.
- Paddles and /or oars.
- Visual distress signals with current expiration dates.
- Horn working correctly, in good condition.
- Bell onboard.
- Throwable flotation aid immediately available.
- Fire extinguishers conveniently placed, fully charged, in good condition
- Anchor, anchor line appropriate for the area,
- Life Jacket (PFD) suitable for each person on board, readily accessible, in good condition.
- depth and conditions.
- Compass properly adjusted.
- Vessel’s papers, registration or documentation certificate
- Up-to-date charts for the area.
- Personal papers, current operator’s certificate or license on board.

Stay in control of your craft and respect the rights of others lawfully enjoying the waterways. Another good idea is to make a Float Plan, which should include where you are heading and at what time you are expecting to be back. Leave it with a reliable person who can be depended on to notify the Coast Guard or other rescue organizations in case you do not return as scheduled. Also remain sober and alert when out on the water.

You can arrange for a free safety check of your boat by contacting your local Coast Guard Auxiliary.

BM1 Henderson



## “In and Down”

LT Brooke O'Brien USN

During a C4003 event with a previously passive airsick student, I finished up the high work with my student still feeling good. We flew over to Choctaw under a low ceiling (around 3000 ft) but when we checked in with Choctaw Tower they reported being full. I decided to backtrack to Summerdale. During the quick trip back to Summerdale we got bounced around a little bit from the weather starting to move in, although maintaining VFR. I set up for a practice PEL into Summerdale. My student reported not feeling very well and I told him to just sit back and observe the demo. At low key he said he was getting sick. It had been several weeks since I had done any PELs (this was my first On-Wing and I had only flown instrument flights since finishing the FITU a few weeks back). So I elected to continue the maneuver for my own training, plus it was a demo anyway. After I waved off, I cleaned up the flaps but left the gear down because I was still in training mode and was planning on continuing regular pattern work or possibly a PEL from the pattern. Thinking he was just passively airsick, I asked my student how he felt, and he said he had in fact vomited, and still felt nauseous. I decided to abort the flight because he needed PELs and pattern work to complete the flight and wouldn't be able to get any more training done with the way he was feeling. At this point my focus changed from training to getting home safely from Area 1. I climbed up ATIS reported runway 7 active. On Course Rules I pushed the power up to accelerate to 250kts, at this point the aircraft didn't feel

right and we were barely making 200kts. My gut told me something was wrong and I checked the gear, sure enough it was down. I shouted an expletive and grabbed the gear handle and cleaned up. Then, realizing immediately my second mistake, I shouted another expletive, and I'm not the swearing type of person. After explaining to my student what just happened, we checked in at point Golf, Tower told us to report the numbers for 19! Just the perfect way to end the



perfect flight... I turned sharply to the left and attempted to intercept course rules for 19, thoroughly pissed off at this point for my own mistakes and for the disconnect between ATIS, Approach and Tower for not informing us that 19 was in fact the active runway. Luckily, we managed to get around to 19 without further incident and we full stopped and taxied back “In and Down!”

To add insult to injury, my next door neighbor is a T-6 mechanic, and by the time I went to return my gear and was walking across the hangar, the aircraft had already been towed in for inspection and my neighbor threw his hands in the air at me, and I realized I had just created work for him!

Aside from having a better scan, or simply remembering that the gear was still down after I decided to abort, next time a student is airsick or I decide to abort a flight for any reason, I will clean up, climb up and THEN talk about the situation

or troubleshoot, whatever the case may be. If you start talking about the situation too much (similar to debriefing a high work maneuver, before actually cleaning up) you might move on and forget to do something! Change is the mother of all RISK! Anytime your plan changes, double and triple check that all your ducks are in a row!

LT Brooke O'Brien

## “Cure for the Common Cold, Not Exactly...But”

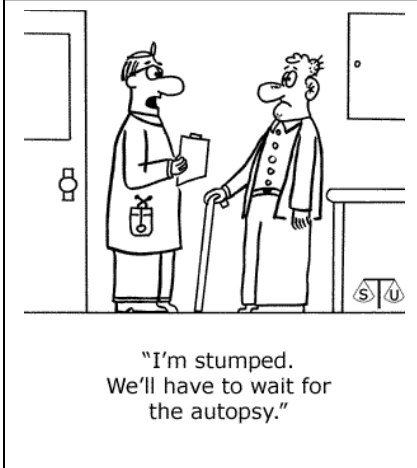
LT Bryan Currie, MC (FS)  
USN

I recently had a student tell me in the ready room before his flight that he was having, “Some trouble clearing his ears.” He told me this as he gathered his flight bag and headed to the ready room to meet his instructor. I had to interrupt the brief. The end point of this story was the student didn't fly that day.

**Lesson one, I'M SAFE is the first part of the brief, don't give the instructors and me ammunition for bar stories at your expense!**

Trouble clearing ears, sinus congestion, coughing may be due to any number of medical conditions including sinus congestion, coughing may be due any number of medical conditions including sinus disease, seasonal allergies, pneumonia, but most frequently the common cold. These colds are usually attributed to viruses we pick up from each other (no, not the fecal-oral way you sickos), but from particles we share through sneezing, coughing, etc. These symptoms can be a

grounding issue due to the increased risk of middle ear barotrauma or sinus blocks which may lead to longer grounding, incapacitation, and a true safety of flight issue. These colds typically last for 7-10 days and can increase frustration and loss of training time.



We haven't discovered a cure for the common cold, but we may have discovered a way to make those sniffles go away faster. Reducing the duration of colds may be as simple as a trip to your local drug store. A recent study published in the Journal of Infectious Disease showed that taking one zinc acetate lozenge containing 13.3 mg of zinc within 24 hours of the onset of common cold symptoms reduced the duration of the cold to four days as compared to seven days with placebo. The authors suggested that the beneficial effects seen in the zinc group were due to the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects of zinc. The patients in the study took one lozenge every 2-3 hours while awake during their illness to get the added effects. Zinc has been shown to cause some gastrointestinal side effects so should be taken with food. Zinc can also alter the absorption of some medications including antibiotics so you should always discuss taking zinc with your flight surgeon if you are taking other medications. And while not on the

official grounding medication list, the reason why you may be taking zinc is most likely the grounding issue so talk to your doc.

**Lesson two, you must be 100% better and off all meds before going med up.** Perhaps zinc may accelerate this process; the jury is still out so talk to me if you have any questions. Help me, help you keep VT-10 as safe as ever.

Doc  
Human Weapon Systems  
Technician

## “I’d Rather be Lucky than Good.” Lefty Gomez

Maj Bill Evans, USAF

Gomez was a pitcher for the New York Yankees. Lucky for him he wasn't a military aviator. Because the dangerous business of military aviation rarely forgives those who plan for luck. Planning to be lucky is planning for failure. And, failure in military aviation can lead to tragedy - from standing at attention



in front of the Commanding Officer to lying in a casket.

Now I'm not going to claim that I haven't been

lucky at times. Occasionally, I didn't have quite enough in my “experience bag” to deal with a situation and had to reach into the “luck bag” and hope the answer was there. The important thing is to always make sure **when you pull something out of the “luck bag”, put what you have found into the “experience bag”.**

If you don't fill up your experience bag as you empty your luck bag, you'll eventually find your luck bag empty. If that day ever comes, you'd better hope you have a good ejection seat.

As a fellow aviator, I ask that each time you put something in your experience bag; you also take the time to offer your experience up for others to put in their bags. The converse also holds true. If you are one of the younger, slightly bolder, aviators, take the time to learn from those who have gone before you. Your own experience bag does not have to be filled with things you have pulled out of your own luck bag. As my dad still says, “Son I know you are going to make mistakes, but please don't make the same ones I made.” Every flying community usually has multiple forums for sharing experiences and learning from each other. These range from formal safety publications (Approach, Combat Edge, Torch, etc...) to informal settings like the squadron heritage room/bar. Use them, learn from them.

As the old saying goes: “There are bold aviators and there are old aviators, but there are no old, bold aviators.”

Those who have survived their bold days (and if they were smart, there weren't very many of those days) have learned that being bold and relying on luck will not work forever. **“I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.”**

Thomas Jefferson

In contrast to Lefty Gomez, Thomas Jefferson would have made a great military aviator.

Maj Bill Evans



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## About VT-10

VT-10 has an 80 member Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps instructor staff that currently trains over 400 Student Officers annually. Training Squadron TEN has been awarded seven Meritorious Unit Commendations and

Seven Chief of Naval Education and Training Awards, the most recent "Shore / Technical Training Excellence Awards", the most recent in 2005. "Wildcat" safety initiatives have earned the squadron Twenty-one Chief of Naval

Operations Safety Awards, the most recent in 2005. In 2004 the command was awarded the U.S. Navy Pettibone Safety Publication Award for the Scratching Post newsletter.

