

WISDOM and HUMOR

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Basic Birdman Wisdom

Courtesy of Bluejacket.com (edited)

Every takeoff is optional. Every landing is mandatory.

If you push the stick forward, the houses get bigger. If you pull the stick back, they get smaller. If you keep pulling the stick all the way back, then they get bigger again.

Flying isn't dangerous. Crashing is what's dangerous.

It's always better to be down here wishing you were up there than up there wishing you were down here.

The ONLY time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.

The propeller is just a big fan in front of the plane used to keep the pilot cool. When it stops, you can actually watch the pilot start sweating.
Never trade luck for skill.

When in doubt, hold on to your altitude. No one has ever collided with the sky.

A 'good' landing is one from which you can walk away. A 'great' landing is one after which they can use the plane again.

A smooth landing is mostly luck. Two in a row is all luck. Three in a row is provocation.

Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make all of them yourself.

When a flight is going extremely well, something was forgotten.

Human kind has a perfect record in aviation. No one has ever been left up there.

You know you've landed with the wheels up if it takes full power to taxi to the ramp.

When one engine fails on a twin engine airplane you always have enough power left to get you to the scene of the crash.

The probability of survival is inversely proportional to the angle of arrival. Large angle of arrival equals small probability of survival and vice versa.

Never let an aircraft take you somewhere your brain didn't get to five minutes earlier.

Stay out of clouds. The silver lining everyone keeps talking about might be another airplane going in the opposite direction. Reliable sources also report that mountains have been known to hide out in clouds.

Always try to keep the number of landings you make equal to the number of take offs you've made.

Weather forecasts are horoscopes with numbers.

Never run out of altitude, airspeed and ideas all at the same time.

It is not a good idea to eject over an area you have just bombed.

Equipment problems that go away by themselves will come back by themselves.

If no liquids (such as fuel, oil, grease or hydraulic fluid) are leaking out of an aircraft, it's safe to say there are none within.

Northrop's Law of Aeronautical Engineering - When the weight of the paperwork equals the weight of the airplane, the airplane will fly.

If you have to fly "Hangar Queen" during squadron fly-off keep one hand on ejection seat handle during cat shot.

The most hazardous evolution in naval aviation is the end of deployment fly-off.

Black Shoe Axiom: There are more airplanes in the ocean than there are submarines in the sky.

Similarities between air traffic controllers (ATC) and pilots: If a pilot screws up he dies. If ATC screws up the pilot dies.

Flying the airplane is more important than radioing your problem to a person on the ground incapable of understanding it or doing anything about it.

A pilot who doesn't have any fear probably isn't flying his plane to its maximum.

You start with an empty bag of skill and a full bag of luck. The trick is to fill the bag of skill before the luck runs out.

The First Epistle of the Carrier Pilot

Editor: My first contact with this priceless piece was in late 1951. The author is unidentified, but it appears written by a Marine Aviator flying the F4U Corsair from a straight-deck carrier. It was recently pulled from Internet. The Tailhook Association says it is by Captain Milton V. Seaman (Navy or Marine?) and courtesy of Walter Spamgenberg.

1. **V**erily I say unto all ye who wouldst fain operate the great bent wing bird from the tilting airdrome: for it doth require great technique, which cometh to no man naturally. Yea verily, it is acquired only by great diligence and perseverance, and great faith in the Father Almighty.
2. **H**earken ye unto the Centurion: for he speaketh from vast wisdom and great knowledge. He hath experienced a vast number of cat shots and traps, and hence is a sadder and wiser man than thee.
3. **H**eed ye not those who speaketh of the romance and glamour of the high seas, be ye not swayed when they extol the sting of the salt spray upon thy lips and the roll of a stout deck beneath thy feet and the exotic peoples of foreign lands.
4. **V**erily, it shall come to pass: that the salt spray windeth up in thy joe, and the roll of the stout deck wilt send thee to the fantail with a retching in thy belly.
5. **H**e wouldst remove thee far from thy loved ones, and cast thee amongst the riff-raff of all nations: who shall then approach thee with an extended hand and open palm.
6. **T**urn thee a deaf ear unto all these things, for he speaketh as a man with a head full of missing buttons, and his mouth quoteth from recruiting pamphlets.
7. **B**eware of the sadistic inhabitant in the land of Fly One, and regard him with exceeding wariness. For while he bringeth thee up to the spot, and his visage smileth confidently at thee, he concealeth a serpent in his breast, and plotteth all manner of evil against thee.
8. **H**e smileth not for thee, but smirketh at thy youth and helplessness. He dines lustily upon the Nugget, and gloateth greatly at his power over thee. The manner of torment which he inflicteth on thee is great.
9. **H**eed ye his signals promptly, else he windeth thee up mightily and sendeth thee off whilst thou art still checking thy gauges or whilst the bow goeth down into the depths of a wave. For he is a man of great imagination and enjoyeth a jest mightily. His cunning knoweth no bounds.

10. **K**now ye well the officer called "landing signal," and trust him not: for he is a doltish oaf and is poorly coordinated. Verily, whilst he also doth wear the wings of gold, he is a prodigal, and his judgments are untrue.
11. **H**e has eyes with which to see, but they are weak: he distinguisheth day from night with exceeding difficulty.
12. **Y**ea, he waveth off Angel Donald, saying, "Land ye not on a pass which is so long in the groove."
13. **M**ake him thy friend. When ye doth engage in a game of chance, calleth not his two little pair with thy full house, for he prizes a winning hand above all things, and he will love thee.
14. **I**ncite him not to anger, else he bringeth thee in low and slow, and spinneth thee into the spud locker.
15. **C**ursed be he who dost tarry long in the wires after his trap: he causeth his wingman to be waved off on a roger pass, and the next man to become long in the groove.
16. **H**e fouleth up the pattern mightily, and giveth the Air Boss all manners of gastric disorders.
17. **H**e is thrice damned, and all people, even unto the Yellow Shirts, shall revile him and use strong language in his behalf: for he is indeed a plumber and plague upon the Air Group.
18. **R**ender unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. As the Two-finger turn-up is the signal to fly, so to is the Cut the signal to land.
19. **T**herefore I say unto you: Holdeth ye not off after the cut: for whosoever floateth into the barriers soweth great anguish in the breast of the Maintenance Officer and causeth a blue cloud to form at the bridge.
20. **T**he wise pilot engageth a three wire smartly, but the fool shall dwell in the pattern forever.
21. **H**ell hath no fury like a Catapult Officer scorned. Therefore treat him with great kindness and speak ye unto him in soft and tender tones.
22. **V**erily I say unto thee: Whosoever arouseth the wrath of the Catapult Officer wilt soon receive a cold shot, and his next of kin shall know great anguish and sorrow.
23. **H**earken unto his teachings, and heed his signals with great diligence: for he is a man of great and unnatural cunning.
24. **H**e windeth thee up mightily, and faileth to fire when thou art ready. He then shooteth thee off when thou art not, and into the mouth of the deep.
25. **B**eware ye of the Old Man, and regard him highly: for unto thee, he is not unlike the Almighty. When he approacheth, linger ye not in Flight Deck Control, for he falleth like a whirlwind upon the idle and luncheth upon JO's without compassion.
26. **H**e regardeth the newly made major with raised eyebrow.
27. **Y**e shalt remain out of his sight, and let him not know thee by name: for whosoever shalt arouse the ire of the Old Man shall go many times to the Chaplain.
28. **G**ive ye heed unto all these things. For as they are the bitter fruits of those who hath preceded thee, so shall your words be as blessings unto those who shalt follow thee, and the Carrier Pilot shall live forever and ever.

DEDICATED TO ALL THOSE WHO FLEW BEHIND ROUND ENGINES

Author is unknown, likely a USAF type based on turbine starting procedure and mention of crew chief.

We gotta get rid of those turbines; they're ruining aviation and our hearing...

A turbine is too simple minded, it has no mystery. The air travels through it in a straight line and doesn't pick up any of the pungent fragrance of engine oil or pilot sweat.

Anybody can start a turbine. You just need to move a switch from "OFF" to "START" and then remember to move it back to "ON" after a while. My PC is harder to start.

Cranking a round engine requires skill, finesse and style. You have to seduce it into starting. On some planes, the pilots aren't even allowed to do it..

Turbines start by whining for a while, then give a lady-like poof and start whining a little louder.

Round engines give a satisfying rattle-rattle, click-click, BANG, more rattles, another BANG, a big macho FART or two, more clicks, a lot more smoke and finally a serious low pitched roar. We like that. It's a GUY thing..

When you start a round engine, your mind is engaged and you can concentrate on the flight ahead. Starting a turbine is like flicking on a ceiling fan: Useful, but hardly exciting.

When you have started his round engine successfully your crew chief looks up at you like he'd let you kiss his girl too!

Turbines don't break or catch fire often enough, leading to aircrew boredom, complacency and inattention. A round engine at speed looks and sounds like it's going to blow any minute. This helps concentrate the mind!

Turbines don't have enough control levers or gauges to keep a pilot's attention. There's nothing to fiddle with during long flights.

Turbines smell like a Boy Scout camp full of Coleman Lamps. Round engines smell like God intended machines to smell.

It Came Upon Naval Aviation That On Moonless and Overcast Nights All Shall Become believers!!

The Gospel According to St. Fresnel of the Miraculous Lens (The device that guideth aircraft to a safe landing)

Author is unknown, but obviously it is about an EA-6B pilot, written sometime after July 1971 when that aircraft entered the fleet.

Chapter One, Verses One through Six

1. In the Beginning, God created the heavens, and the Aircraft Carrier, and the seas upon which to float it; and yet there was complete darkness upon the face of the earth. And, as we traveled, there came to us, as a voice out of the darkness, an angel of the Lord, saying, "On centerline, on glideslope, three quarters of a mile, call the ball." I reflected upon these words, for I was still yet engulfed in complete darkness. With deep feeling and doubt overwhelming my countenance, I glanceth towards my companion at my right hand and saith, "What seeth thou, trusted friend?", and there was a great silence. Gazing in a searching manner and seeing naught, I raised my voice saying, "Clara....."

2. And God spoke to me, and He said, "You're low....power". As the Lord saith, so shall it be, and I added power; and lo, the ball riseth up onto the bottom of the mirror. But it was a tainted red glow, and surely indicateth Satan's own influence. And God spoke to me again saying, "Power...Power.Power!!!!.....fly the ball." And lo, the ball riseth up and off the top of the lens, and the great darkness was upon me.

3. And the voice of the Angel came to me again, saying, "When comfortable, twelve hundred feet, turn downwind." Whereupon I wandered in the darkness, without direction, for surely the ships radar was beset by demons! and there was great confusion cast upon CATCC, and there was a great silence in which there was no comfort to be found. Even my tacan needle spinneth.....and lo, there was chaos; my trusted companion weepeth quietly unto himself and from close behind I heard weeping and gnashing of teeth of our flock. There was a great turmoil within my cockpit for a multitude of serpents had crept therein.

4. And though we wandered, as if by Providence I found myself within that Holy Corridor, and at twelve hundred feet, among my brethren seeking refuge; and the voice of the Angel of the Lord came to me again, asking of me my needles, and I raised my voice saying, "Up and centered", and the voice answered, "Roger, fly your needles..." I reflected upon these words, and I raised my voice in prayer, for though my gyro indicated it not so, surely my aircraft had been turned upside down. Verily, as Beelzebub surely wrestled with me, a voice, that of my trusted companion, saith to me calmly, "Friend.....fly thy needles, and find comfort in the Lord." And lo, with deep trembling in my heart, I did, and He guided me to centered glideslope and centerline, though I know not how it came to be.

5. And out of the great darkness, God spoke to me again saying, "Roger ball" for now I had faith. And though the ball began to rise at the in close position, my right hand was full of the Spirit, and it squeaked off power and as in a great miracle my plane stopped upon the flight deck, for it had caught the four wire which God in his infinite wisdom had placed thirty feet further down the flight deck than the three wire.

6. And thus bathed in a golden radiance from above, our pilgrimage was at an end, and my spirit was truly reborn. And as I basked in the rapture, God spoke to me one final time, and He saith, "Lights out on deck..."

THE BALLAD OF RABAU (Sung to "After the Ball is Over.")

Editor: This song was written shortly after the 11 November 1943 attack on Rabaul, apparently by someone in Air Group Seventeen (VB-17 – VF-18 – VT-17). It came to my attention in a book by Robert Olds, published in 1944, titled HELLDIVER SQUADRON. Although written about VB-17, it offers a unique glimpse into life aboard ship and the training and operational missions of all the Air Group 17 squadrons during their first combat deployment aboard USS BUNKER HILL – The Holiday Express.

After Rabaul is over,
After the close of day,
Count up the Japs and Zeros
But just let me get away;
Take all your Navy Crosses
Medals and ribbons too
Along with my orders and stuff them
Up your old avenue.

After Rabaul is over,
After "Bull" Halsey's day,
MacArthur can have the credit
Just send me home to stay;
I don't want to be a hero
So take back your wings of gold
To hell with the southwest Pacific
I just want to grow old.

Now that Rabaul is over,
None of them got away;
Forty-four Japs in a record
Shot down in a single day,
Give Douglas our Air Group's story
To claim in his Army bunk,
Just give me a bottle of whiskey,
I just want to get drunk.

Now that Rabaul is over,
I want to spend my days
Back in the States just reading
Army communiqués;
Back with the wine and women
A desk job and what is more,
Tell all the Admirals and Generals
To hell with this goddamn war.

THE MIDWAY TRIP (SUNG TO THE YELLOW ROSE OF TEXAS)

This ditty appeared in the May 1997 Reunion Newsletter, but no one is willing to claim authorship. It was most likely written sometime around 1955 when the angled-deck made night-fliers out of everyone, but prior to 1962 (when the AD became the A-1). It was probably "appropriated" from another squadron and reworded. VF-21 traded their Demons for Phantoms in 1963. VF-24, the other jet squadron that year, flew Crusaders. (Some earlier vintage jets really were untrustworthy). The SNB was retired in 1959.

We went aboard the Midway
To take a little trip,
We wound up on the beach
So the jets could use the ship.

The flight deck it was crowded
The jets were going down,
The air boss said "start jet engines,"
But no one heard a sound.

The next day all their planes were fixed
The jets got set to start
But by the time the wind arose
It started getting dark.

Now we all know the jet jockeys
Are really hot to fly
But rather than get launched at night
I know they'd rather die.

The Air Boss pulled out all his hair,
And cried out "what's the use,"
While all the hot jet jockeys
Were playing acey-duce.

The next day dawned bright and clear
The pilots praised the lord
But of the eight that launched that day
Just one got back aboard.

The other seven made one pass
They were really going great
When suddenly a red light glowed
They'd reached their bingo state.

This bingo state is something
They all do shout about
While resting out at Miramar
I saw two more flame out.

Their skipper now works the boilers,
Their XO shovels coal,
They're working on a steamer
That's headed for the pole.

They're no longer flying Phantoms
And probably never will,
They're flying SNB's
To get their monthly thrill.

They sit around a'dreaming
About their southern cruise,
While tearing up their shellbacks
That they will never use.

While back upon the midway
These were the captain's words
Let's get those AD's back aboard
Those jets are for the birds.

But those AD's on the fantail
Are quickly turning black,
When seeking foxtrot corpen
The ship does blow its stack.

The CatOofficer had me tensioned
I only picked my nose
Then found myself inverted
Think I really got the hose.

The Air Boss is in his cabin
He was thrown out of pri-fly
It's now run by boot ensigns
Who know nothing of the sky.

The chaplain's running V-1
The dentist has the conn
The navigator has a new job
It's swabbing out the john.

CIC is in the galley
The mess cooks are on the deck
So around the bar we'll rally
And we sing "what the heck."

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