

Commander's Call Topics



May 9, 2013

"We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles."

Jimmy Carter
39th President of the United States

*DEERS information
on lockdown.
Please see Page 2.*

Live to ride, ride to live another day

As we promote Motorcycle Safety Month, there's no better way to tell that message than through the eyes of a young Airman who recently went through a motorcycle certification course and has also witnessed the tragedy of ignoring the important rules of the road. Airman 1st Class Alexander Riedel, a writer with the Air Force News Service, gives us his personal account:

Some memories are Kodak moments – the kind you want to recall again and again. Others are more sinister, hanging around unwanted, as a reminder of life's darker side. One such ominous memory combines one of my greatest joys and my greatest fear into a valuable life lesson.

On a beautiful, warm summer evening, the alarm bell rang at the fire-station where I volunteered during college. Within a few minutes, my crew and I arrived at the scene of a downtown motorcycle accident.

A lifeless body lay several feet away from the wreckage. After a collision with a car, only a mangled ball of iron was left of the motorcycle. The rider was dead on arrival, while the driver of the car walked away unharmed.

Despite this experience, last year I decided to get a motorcycle. It is the best way to travel on a summer day, whisking through traffic while enjoying easy parking at my destination. For me, it is the only true way to explore America's highways—in a community of riders, who greet each other like friends, even in the big cities.

Knowing full well that my decision brought inherent risks, I applied through the base for a certified new rider's course. I relearned basic bike operation, traffic rules and safety techniques that would give me a safe start on a machine three times my own body weight.

And it was time well spent: While road signs and laws translate directly for motorcyclists, the actual dynamics of the road change dramatically for bikers: Riding a motorcycle places you low on the totem pole of road safety.

Because automobile drivers often have no idea how fast motorcycles travel, they misestimate their approach or breaking distances. Very often drivers don't even see riders until it's too late. Add to that drivers distracted by texting, cell phone conversations or other disruptions, and the possibility of an accident rises drastically. As much as possible, I try to increase my personal safety by anticipating others' actions and making sure that drivers have noticed me before I enter intersections or change lanes.

Parity on the road means that motorcycle riders are responsible for their own actions. At times bikers may overestimate their riding skills and underestimate the bike's power. Adherence to speed limits and traffic rules can go a long way toward staying within a "safe zone."

Finally, before I "hit the road," I make sure I am prepared so that I could literally hit the road with little or no consequence. Before I trade the protection of a car for the joy of open-air riding—with only inches between me and the pavement—I make sure I'm wearing complete head-to-toe gear. I have seen first-hand that "road rash" is an understatement.

I do not regret my decision to ride. Yet, I always remember the rider who didn't survive. I carry the memory with me every time I clasp the chinstrap of my helmet—knowing that I want to enjoy my life on two wheels and ride so I can live another day. I hope you do the same, and greet me when we pass each other on the open road.

*A1C Alexander W. Riedel
Air Force News Service*

► TRENDING ...

"They come in from a society where (sexual assault) occurs. The same demographic group moves into the military. [We need to change the way people think when they walk through the door.](#)" -- Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A Welsh III during the service's fiscal 2014 budget request to the Senate Armed Services Committee

► RESOURCES

AF.mil

<http://www.af.mil>

Airman magazine

<http://www.airmanonline.af.mil>

Air Force Outreach

<http://www.afoutreach.af.mil>

Military OneSource

<http://militaryonesource.af.mil>

Military HOMEFRONT

<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod>

Air Force Personnel Center

<https://mypers.af.mil>

<http://www.afpc.af.mil>

Air Reserve Personnel Center

<http://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil>

Department of Defense News

<http://www.defense.gov>

Department of Veteran Affairs

<http://www.va.gov>

TRICARE

<http://www.tricare.mil>

U.S. Government Website

<http://www.firstgov.gov/>

Employment Opportunities

www.usajobs.com

www.nafjobs.org

Air Force Association

Scholarships

<http://www.afa.org/afaid/scholars.asp>

Air Force Safety Center

www.afsec.af.mil

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

May 9, 1983 - A C-141 crew from the 18 MAS at McGuire AFB became the first all-female crew to fly a round-trip mission across the Atlantic.

May 10, 1913 - Didier Masson and Thomas Dean, flying for Mexican General Alvarado Obregon, conducted the first aerial bombing in an American war by bombing Mexican Federal gunboats in Guaymas Bay, Gulf of California.

May 11, 1966 - At Holloman AFB, a Surveyor spacecraft made the first

softlanding under its own power to demonstrate its ability to softland on the moon.

May 12, 1950 – Capt. Chuck Yeager flew the number one Bell X-1 research aircraft on its last flight above Edwards AFB.

May 13, 1942 - The first US bombardment squadron, the 15th, sent to England without aircraft. It flew the first US AAF operations over Western Europe on July 4th against enemy airfields in the Netherlands.

May 14 1923 - The Army accepted the first PW-8 prototype. It evolved into the Curtiss Hawk series of biplane pursuit aircraft. The “W” designated water-cooled engine.

May 15-16, 1951 - Communist forces launched the second phase of their spring offensive against Republic of Korea Corps in the east in a last attempt to drive UN forces from the Korean peninsula. FEAF day-time aerial attacks limited the enemy’s tactical assaults to night.

► CURRENT ISSUES

[Warrior Games 2013: Games makes injured man feel like Airman again](#)

Surrounded by his Air Force Warrior Games teammates as he trains to represent his service in archery, rifle shooting and sitting volleyball, Tech. Sgt. Axel Gaud-Torres feels like an Airman again.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[DEERS locks down access to some information updates](#)

Base identification card issuing offices will no longer be able to manually correct or update certain types of personnel information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, Air Force Personnel Center officials said May 9.

► FAMILY, HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Official warns of predatory businesses, offers Airmen finance tips](#)

Holly Petraeus, the head of the Office of Service Member Affairs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, discussed predatory business practices and personal financial tips with the military community here May 6.

► CURRENT ISSUES

[DARPA seeks bold, imaginative, innovative officers](#)

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency needs eight motivated officers for the fiscal 2013 Service Chiefs' Fellows Program, Air Force Personnel Center officials announced.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit

<http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil>.

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