

will work. It matters that the pilots are well-protected and their gear is well-maintained.”

Bunting was working alone at his sewing machine at the beginning of a shift, making intake and exhaust covers for the Hawk’s aircraft when a 1.5-inch sewing needle snapped and lodged itself in his safety goggles. He had been having problems with needles bending. It was while replacing the second bent needle that his near-mishap occurred. ”I looked in real close to see why it was binding,” said Bunting, ”and I accidentally hit the pedal with my foot.” When Bunting’s foot hit the pedal, the sewing needle snapped in half. The force from the break caused the needle to shoot out and puncture the right side of his safety goggles. “At first I thought it just had bounced off,” Bunting said. “I really was surprised.”

Bunting’s incident is a prime example of how important it is for Marines to follow safety guidelines like

wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), according to Capt Noah Marquardt, director of safety and standardization, VMFA (AW)-533. “A lot of times, flight-equipment Marines and Sailors from all communities are reluctant to wear the required PPE while using the sewing machine,” Marquardt said. “They’re banking on the principle that the one-in-a-millionth chance of a needle breaking won’t happen to them.” Bunting was known for always wearing his PPE while at his sewing machine, and, simply by doing the right thing, he prevented a mishap from occurring and losing sight in his right eye.

Bunting deserves recognition for his professional actions and for following established safety guidelines, according to Marquardt. However, Bunting attributes his actions to his leadership in the Hawk’s flight-equipment shop. **GW**

Corporal Thompson originally wrote this article for the MCAS Beaufort newspaper, *Jet Stream*.

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