

The Day I Learned the

By AMEAN Jeremy Brend-Kirchmeier

Everyone has been young once—in mind, spirit, or age. That feeling of invincibility is great, until you figure out you're not made of steel.

I remember the day I received my ORM lesson. It was in the middle of winter, a simple case of human error, and an event that broke my finger. But the story begins the night before, and it shows why you should get a good night's sleep.

I had gone out with a shipmate to his hometown. He didn't live very far away, so I thought, "What the heck!" We had a good night driving around and visiting his friends and family. Few things compare with that feeling. At 2100, it was time to get back to the base to get some sleep before for next day's schedule, which promised to be hectic.

On the way home, I decided to get some sleep. My friend was driving, so I had full advantage to nap. How was I to know that we were to have car trouble that night? We were only 30 miles away from home when the car dropped its transmission. So much for getting some needed rest!

We finally got some help at 0300. Thirty miles later and after 40 minutes in a cramped tow truck, we finally got home. I went back to my room in the barracks and got a little sleep, but it was far too little.

The next day started as usual, except I was tired. We had our work cut out for us. One of our jets was ripped apart for an inspection, and another one needed usual work that's done on a daily basis. Later in the day, we had to take the ECMO-1 ejection seat out of a jet for our ATs. Any Prowler AME should know the procedure for removing and replacing the ejection seats. However, putting my index finger where it doesn't belong wasn't one of the steps.

First, we attached a crane to the canopy and lifted it to a point where we could remove the bolt that holds it in place. We then disconnected the electrical and pneumatic connections and removed the canopy, lowering the actuator so it wasn't in the way. We now could remove the ejection seat, and the ATs were able to do their maintenance. Once they were done, we replaced the seat and had the AME QAR verify that part of the job. Everything looked fine, and we were on schedule.

The last task was to re-attach the forward canopy, and we then could go home for the day. Little did I know that plan wasn't going to work. My shipmate, the one with whom I had gone out the night before, was operating the crane that carried the canopy. Another AME from my shop helped to rig the canopy.

We lowered it into position and connected the pneumatic lines. We then lowered the canopy to a point where we could put the bolt through the frame and the lollipop on the canopy actuator.



Real Meaning of ORM

For those who don't know, a "lollipop" is a piece of metal at the end of the actuator, with a hole in the center for the bolt to go through. To do this step, I had to put the actuator back up and guide it into a slot in the canopy frame. I lifted the canopy lever to make the actuator move up and then guided the lollipop toward the slot. I never will forget, for years to come, what happened next.

While guiding the actuator toward the slot in the canopy, I had a feeling that something was wrong. When I noticed the problem, it already was too late. I had my index finger next to the lollipop, which sits on a ledge, and it was crushed between the ledge and the frame of the canopy. I heard a crunch and then my voice screaming, "Get it off, get it off!"

I remember jumping off the boarding ladder, going to maintenance control, and having someone take me to medical. After 12 mg of morphine, lots of fluids through an IV, and the benefit of three hours' rest, I almost felt normal again. Our skipper stopped in to check on my condition and to hear about how I had gotten myself into this situation. The doctor told me to relax, get some bed rest, and take 30 days of light and limited duty.

It is ironic that I didn't get enough rest the night before, and I now ended up on bed rest. Sleep is one thing that some

people don't get enough of. Rest is vital to do your job safely and dictates how you handle yourself during the day. I know I'm not the only Sailor who doesn't take sleeping habits seriously enough, and that fact scares me.

Lessons learned? I never will put my hand in the way of a canopy actuator when installing a canopy. I also now know how to use the ORM process, just as the Navy has taught us. I learned to listen to our supervisors because they often have good information to pass on. This is because they have seen similar problems before or have read stories like this one in *Mech*. I'm not the only person to have learned a lesson the hard way, but I should be the last one. Follow the rules, use ORM, and listen to your supervisors to avoid being injured or killed.

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Sleep and fatigue issues are important. They often are cited in mishaps and are preventable. Read "I Was Zoned Out" and "A Lack of Sleep Equals a Lack of Good Judgment" in the summer 2003 issue. Also visit our Aeromedical Department's website at www.safetycenter.navy.mil/aviation/aeromedical/default.htm to read more about sleep and fatigue in a study of performance during continual flight ops.—Ed.

As shown in this sequence, reinstalling a canopy is a relatively safe process; however, you must be alert at all times.

