

was working as the flight-deck “scrubbie” driver. I hadn’t seen him in a while, considered him a good friend, and wanted to see how he was doing. I motioned for him to come over. We began to talk, and, without thinking about the fact we still were recovering aircraft, we took a seat on the tow bar that was hooked up to my jet—only a few inches from the foul line!

We had been sitting for only 30 seconds, but that was 30 seconds too long. When it registered how unsafe our action was, we turned to get up, but it was too late. One of the flight-deck coordinators already was en route to fix our mistake. He ordered us to report to flight-deck control.

After a brief one-way conversation with “Dog,” the CAG chief, my maintenance chief escorted me back to

my shop because I had been kicked off the flight deck for the night.

Because of my lack of attention to detail and unsafe action, I had let down my fellow line-team members, my immediate supervisor, my chief, and myself. Everyone else had to pick up my slack because I had dropped my guard. I chose an aircraft carrier’s flight deck as the place for a social call. I had been trained and qualified to work on the flight deck for quite some time, so I had no excuse for my actions.

I hope everyone will learn from my mistake. If you never think that complacency can or will happen to you, think again. It takes just a second to do the wrong thing and face the dog, or, worse, maybe not live to face anyone. ✈️

Airman Hays is a plane captain with VFA-146.

That’s Gonna Leave a Mark

By AM1(AW) Steven Kedzie

Do you know what a left hook from Mike Tyson feels like? I believe I do. I found out one night when least expecting it.

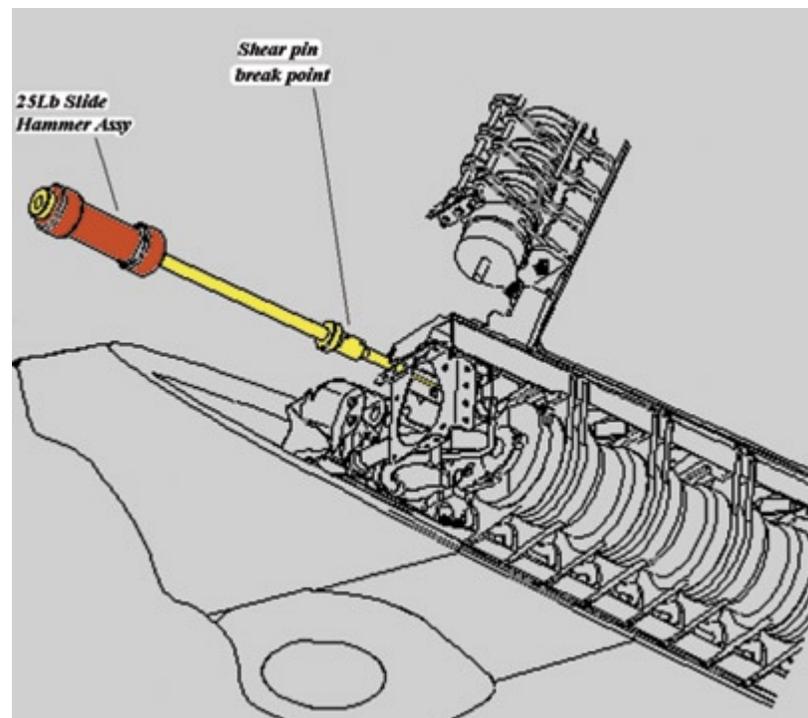
It was a typical mid-week night for the Maintenance Department. For more than a month, we had been removing the outer wings of our Rhinos to repair wing-fold bushing migrations, and, by this time, we were extremely proficient. In fact, we were at a point where night check was able to remove two outer wings and have them repaired by the contractor and ready for reinstallation before knock off. Fortunately, on this night, we only had to remove one: the starboard outer wing on aircraft 115.

After the initial step of removing the various panels and hardware from the wing, large wing pins must be removed before the outer wing is free of the wing-fold transmission. Each of these pins is approximately one meter long and made of solid titanium. Their removal requires the use of a common tool: the slide hammer.

The slide hammer looks exactly as its name implies. It is a sliding handle with stops on either end, and it’s threaded to one end of an extension shaft (see picture). The other end of the extension shaft is threaded to the wing pin being installed or removed. By moving the slide hammer back and forth to the desired stop, the wing pin is driven in or out of its housing. A shear pin resides in the threaded connection between the slide hammer and the extension shaft. The purpose of the shear pin is to

prevent damage to the wing pin by breaking and releasing the slide hammer from the shaft if too much force is imparted on it during hammering.

After removing the panels and hardware, we used a deck crane to support the wing and prepared to remove the first outer wing pin. I was standing about eight feet forward of the starboard leading edge to safely observe



and direct the job. Once the slide hammer was threaded to the forward end of the wing pin, the hammer operator began moving the sliding handle back and forth to remove the pin. After a few good hits on the forward stop, the pin began to move. With the pin a few inches out, I decided to reposition myself to support the pin as it came out.

Unfortunately, as I walked around the hammer operator toward the pin, my face moved through the path of the slide hammer at the precise moment the shear pin gave way. The hammer operator had no chance to arrest the momentum of the slide hammer as it separated from the extension shaft and hit my right cheekbone. I immediately saw a bright flash—one that I imagine would follow a left hook from Mike Tyson. I felt as if I was going to pass out and grabbed onto the deck crane for support. I heard other maintainers asking me if I was OK as I reached up to feel my mouth and survey the damage. To my surprise, there appeared to be no blood; however, I felt a gap in my teeth and looked down to see one of my teeth lying on the hangar deck. I would find out a few hours later at dental sick call that my right

incisor had sheared at the gum line and exposed the nerve. Luckily no bones were broken, and, following a tetanus shot and root canal, I was good to go. Considering the potential injuries I might have suffered had I been a split second earlier or later crossing the slide hammer's path, I was lucky.

Outer wing removal can be a tedious job, but it requires attention to detail and constant situational awareness. From the initial step of removing panels and hardware, to the final step of wing-pin removal, one moment of inattention can be costly. My team was experienced, we were wearing the proper PPE, and we had a sufficient number of personnel, including safety observers. Despite all of that, this accident still occurred.

What could I have done differently? I could have remained at my original position or crossed in front of the hammer operator with more of a buffer zone. That choice would have kept me out of the path of a knock out blow from a slide hammer. Before you act, always take the time to assess your surroundings. You may avoid injury or worse. ✂

Petty Officer Kedzie works with VFA-102.

Motorola and Boeing Do Not Mix

By AZAN Tyler Brackeen

One morning while on detachment at NAS Fallon, Nev., I went to FOD walkdown, which is a function practiced daily here at VFA-25. It was a beautiful sunny day, and, in my rush, I did not realize that my coverall pockets were loaded down with random, loose personal gear.

I was not fully aware of the potential hazards that were in my pockets as I briskly walked to the flight line. The full magnitude of my decision to carry unauthorized items onto the line escaped me because the task was simple: Go to the flight line in time for FOD walkdown. At least that's all I thought about the situation at the time.

This daily ritual is an all-hands evolution, conducted every morning before the flight schedule begins and at every shift change in my command. Every squadron in every CAG and every command that flies aircraft does a FOD walkdown at least once a day. When hard objects are found, they are recorded and placed in a bag. These items are listed in a log with a location where the loose

gear was found. This FOD list is then routed up the chain of command in hopes of finding where it came from and to keep it from happening again.

That day, I was carrying a cellphone, BIC lighter, and three coins. None of them seemed terribly bad or dangerous at the time, but I now realize these items represented potential hazards that could destroy engines, aircraft, aviators, or shipmates. Not one item I was carrying was more or less important than the other, but none of them belonged on the flight line.

All commands use tool control and FOD programs to control the items that can cause mishaps, injuries or deaths. An active inventory on all items used on the flight deck or flight line is essential, including tools and consumables. Any unaccounted object that can damage an engine or aircraft that is found on the flight deck, hangar or flight line is commonly referred to as foreign object damage (or debris) and can consist of many everyday items that Sailors or Marines carry in their pockets.