

Flight Test Safety Fact



Published for the Flight Test Safety Committee

FTSC Announces Flight Test Safety Podcast..... MJ

In December, we launched the Flight Test Safety podcast. By “podcast,” we mean “audio recording,” which is the popular meaning of the term. You can find it wherever you subscribe to podcasts, whether that is on the [Apple podcast app](#) or [Google podcast app](#), and even second tier apps like Overcast, etc. You can also navigate directly to the recording in a web browser: <https://ftscchannel.podbean.com/>. Unfortunately this site doesn’t seem to work on some government networks. Art “Turbo” Tomassetti, a member of the [Flight Test Safety Committee \(FTSC\) Board of Directors](#), is the host and the first guest. He does an excellent job explaining why the podcasts exists and what the content will be. Each month, we intend to use the podcast to supplement and complement this newsletter. We will also use it to point listeners to the resources and workshops that the FTSC provides. If you have suggestions for topics, interviews, or even excerpts of past symposium talks, please [reach out](#). We also ask that you tell people about the podcast and subscribe using your cell phone or ipod. I want to publically say thank you to FTSC’s Susan Bennett who worked furiously to get the podcast approved and hosted in all the right places just before the holiday.

In This Issue

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- Chairman’s Comments** – A former TPS skipper shares reflections for the new grads
- Contact FTSC** – Email us feedback on the new format and suggestions for the podcast

Life's a Beach.....

Mark Jones Jr.

It's January 2, and when I opened my email this morning, I saw this from Pete Donath, "retired" FTE and Flight Test Safety Committee Board of Directors member:

"I had a nightmare (or two) last night..."

That will get your attention. Before I explain, let me back up a little bit. Happy New Year to you, and congratulations to a host of new TPS grads entering the workforce. Just yesterday, I was hiking along the beaches of the beautiful Emerald Coast, a location some of our new graduates will find themselves overflying soon (maybe even by the time you get this newsletter). The extended holiday is a great time for that kind of recreation, and, I hope, the time off is a great opportunity *for all of us* to think about our profession and the tempo of life. As I set out before sunrise, the only thing I could hear was the sound of the waves and the crunch of sand under my feet. The wind was silent, and the ocean was unusually calm. Even the birds had not yet begun to sing. That kind of silence left me alone with my thoughts: Life ebbs and flows, just like the tide. Things happen in cycles. We grow personally and professionally, and sometimes, if we don't take time to pause, we begin to erode, like the sandy beach at my feet. Some things happening here at sea level are slow to develop, and so you won't see them if you only ever fly over the beach. That's true about life too. When life slows down, because you make it (or because you retire), your perspective changes, like it did for Pete (and sometimes that's scary). *(continued next page)*



Let me get back to Pete and his cryptic email. He was one of many people who responded to my solicitation for input and actually provided more than would fit in these pages. The New Year brought with it a few nightmares, literally, about the importance of some of the lessons he learned. Fortunately, fear hides when you turn the light of introspection on, so here are reflections from your FTSC, for the New Year, for us all.

Pete Donath says: In your career, buildings you've worked in will be demolished, companies will be gone/merged/changed. The entire industry will probably change. Be sure to put your loyalty in a few things. Your program, your leader, your company...but before those, put your loyalty towards your team – utmost to yourself; put your oxygen mask on first! If you don't take care of yourself and get impaired/incapacitated, how will you be able to take care of them? This can apply to family and friends (and enemies, too!).

It may be impossible to prepare “perfectly” for a test (especially a hazardous test). Get used to guessing when “enough is enough.” Experience may help (personal experience or leaning on a mentor/coworker). Admit when you're not sure and when you THINK you ARE sure...it'll help with Team Situational Awareness...

Almost 20 years ago, I was in an “upset” test condition, and the aftermath taught me a great deal (and it earned me some street cred, too). You'll probably learn a lot more from your “mistakes” (or when things just “didn't go well”); learn to be honest and capitalize (learn, advance the project) on those events. They may be “opportunities...”

There will be people in life/work that you will have to “tolerate” no matter how much you would like to _____ (fill in the blank). Try to keep in mind that they may think they are doing the right thing, the “best thing.” Even though your life is miserable because of them or their actions, there may come a day when you are going to willingly work alongside them. Yes, this is a detailed example of “don't burn your bridges...” Count on it happening in your career – more than once. Be sure to carefully examine your role in these interactions (watch for patterns...).

Have a Career Plan B (C, D, E...X, Y, Z, AA, ...) – just in case. Keep that matchbook with the number to TruckMasters.

Al Lawless: Find someone approaching retirement and adopt him/her as your mentor. Hang on as they enter retirement. Everybody wins. Almost everyone wants their life's work and knowledge to expand. Dave Gibbins is a good example. He continues contributing and trying to stay relevant.

Panos Vitsas: My humble, short advice to new TPS grads: Maintain the TPS mentality throughout the rest of your lives. In other words maintain the same willingness to learn, the appreciation that no one knows everything, the dedication towards your goals and the hard work ethic. The TPS graduation is not an end but the beginning of an exciting career, so aim high. Now you are aware that you are capable of much more than you

think. Last piece of advice is to both TPS grads and all flight test professionals is to share the FTSF and attend the FTS Workshop as often as possible.

@LeucaTorcos: My personal motto: “Ignorance is oblivion.” It means, in our work, we must to continue to improve, in self-knowledge and knowledge of our work. This attitude will mitigate risk during the tests.

Art Tomassetti: Know when to say “No.” I know that saying no is not easy, and I think it was harder when I was younger. I didn’t want to be seen as someone not up to the challenge, the complexity, or the risk. That personal pressure to perform combined now and again with peer-pressure or program pressure made saying no hard. It took a long time for me to 1) Accept that I actually had limits, and 2) Know where they were. Once I began to understand and accept that, knowing when to say no was a little easier. Peer pressure and program pressure will always be there, but I think they are slightly easier to deal with than that personal pressure to perform. In my flight test career, I remember a distinct moment when I said no to continuing a test event, a hugely unpopular decision. I would be lying if I told you I didn’t second guess that decision a lot, and at that time, I suspected that the event would probably garner some publicity. After the debrief of that event a senior engineer friend and mentor came up to me and told me that what I did was one of the most courageous things he had seen in his test career. So my advice to my younger self would be, to “Know when to say ‘No’.” Sometimes the act of courage is to not do something.

Jim Fawcett: Be patient. “Good things come to those who wait.” It’s easy to imagine that with a TPS qualification in hand, you know everything, whereas in fact your journey in flight testing is really only just beginning. The theoretical knowledge is one thing: the hours spent on board, which end up giving you a seat-of-the-pants feel about whether something feels right or wrong, are quite another. Of course that can lead to some early frustration, but the rewards in the long term are worth it. P.S. Always have a spare pen in your flight case.

Seth Shaw: Flight testing is a team effort, always. No one person can possibly contain all the knowledge, experiences, or perspectives required to safely and efficiently execute a flight test. We must actively seek out others to build and support the flight test team for each and every project, make effective use of their strengths, and identify together where we still have gaps to fill through research, training, and preparation. This holds true for Flight Test Safety as much as it does for Flight Test Execution. Each new team member, each new project, and each and every flight needs to bring a renewed dedication to proper preparation, vigilance, and passing lessons learned on to others.

I thought it was appropriate to give Pete Donath the last word: “The people and the relationships in your career will one day be more important to you than achievements or money; treat them like investments – better yet, treat them like treasure.”

Chairmans Corner

Tom Huff

Fellow testers, welcome to the New Year! I hope you had a safe and enjoyable holiday and are ready to embark on an exciting year. In closing 2019, our editor noted that we celebrated and “welcomed aboard” a new batch of TPS graduates. A far cry and long journey from *my* [USNTPS] “You’ll Be Sorry” party marking the very early stages of the learning journey to “wear the patch.” With that, we thought it might be appropriate in the New Year to share some thoughts from our veterans, for all of us, but also for those joining the test force. Looking back, I wholly underappreciated the dedication and commitment of the instructors. When I became headmaster, that view changed completely. So, let me tip a hat to all former and current TPS IP’s out there. You made/make the difference in shaping our flight testers and setting their course for continuous learning and testing excellence. As a fresh graduate, I think I was, like many, obsessed with a set of ideas: fly the latest-and-greatest, the most dangerous profiles, and the most variety of projects. Collect those SETP points! Perhaps I’m a little slow on the uptake (likely!), but what I failed to immediately recognize is that the life-changing TPS experience is about becoming a master risk manager. Sure, the theory and technique of FQ&P and systems testing is honed, but most importantly, we learned how to test efficiently and safely. Of course, those unique skills are transferable to other activities and I always remember a wise TPS instructor saying that “you’ll never drive a rental car the same.” He was right.

So, as we kick-off 2020, perhaps it prudent to reflect on the awesome responsibility we have as testers. Yes, there are many fingers in the product safety life-cycle, but none more important than those that test – lives depend on it. In closing, I’ll leave you with the bumper sticker from the Bombardier Safety Sandown – “Learn, Apply, Share.” A great mantra and one that the Flight Test Safety Committee embraces – with this newsletter, the launch of our new podcast, and our ongoing, annual Flight Test Safety Workshops. So here are the perspectives from some our seasoned veterans offering congratulations to new TPS grads and thoughtful reflections for all of us.

Let us know what you think. Launch an air mail to chairman@flighttestsafety.org.

In your service,

Tom Huff



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