



# Truisms Of

By Jack Stewart

The December 2001 issue of *Approach* had an article by Lt. Richard Klauer titled, "(Almost) Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Primary." Lt. Klauer described the many truisms and adages of flying that his instructor had passed along to him.

He shared a story about the time when his instructor once (maybe more than once) asked, "Have you even read your NATOPS?" Years later, Lt. Klauer reflected on his instructor's question and writes, "Despite his criticism of my systems knowledge, I really did read my NATOPS. Now that your fleet aircraft NATOPS is about four times as thick as the T-34s, there is plenty of reading to do."

*Approach* asked our readers to share their truisms, those words of wisdom, they have gathered and incorporated into their flying careers. Here are a few of them with their contributor's comments.

From Lt. Russ Hellstern, USCG:

"Honor the threat." Major John Christensen, USMC, was not only my on-wing in the glorious T-34C, he was the one man responsible (in a way) for saving my life hundreds of times over the past six years. Many instructors may feel their little words of wit and wisdom fall on deaf ears, but here is the one bit of ooh-rah prose that has saved my bacon time and time again: "Honor the threat." That's it. Simple, poignant and the mother of all truisms. Probably taken from his days in basic, his own flight training, or maybe from Norwich, his alma mater. That truism encompasses the spirit behind bringing yourself and your crew back alive. Maybe the threat is the enemy, or the weather, or even your copilot with a head cold. Or maybe it is that feeling you get in the pit of your stomach telling you that something just ain't right. Whatever it is, I have learned to view each potential hazard as a living, breathing threat. Honor each threat with preparation, examination, and the principles of operational risk management. By doing so, I have avoided some situations that, after a beer at the club, have made the hair on the back of my neck stand on end with the thought of losing the SGLI sweepstakes.

Major Christensen had a few other choice phrases not fit for print, but this one (although less colorful) has served me well and may help others who read this bit. Thanks, Hans!

Lt. Hellstern is the flight safety officer at the USCG Air Station, Sitka, Alaska.



# Aviation

Lt. James Zawrotny, USCG, sent this truism:

**“If you can hold 50-feet high and 3-knots fast, you can be on altitude and airspeed.”** During my initial qualification in the C-130, my instructors used this line and other more sarcastic reminders to teach me that error correction and the pursuit of perfection (e.g., flying “by the numbers”) were keys to success as a Coast Guard aviator. Being on altitude and airspeed takes one less thing off an already cluttered mind during and after a long, difficult mission. It sets up you and your crew for an uneventful and safe mission.

Lt. Zawrotny is stationed at the USCG Air Station, Kodiak, Alaska.

LCdr. Jeffrey Barta remembers a classic line as a student and instructor pilot in HT-8:

**“What’s inside this panel?”** Know your aircraft and your preflight cold. Preflight-inspection procedures are listed in every NATOPS PCL—don’t be afraid to use them. Whether you’re a nugget, still learning the aircraft, or a senior aircraft commander who needs to refresh your memory to keep up with that nugget, knowledge is the key. 🦅

LCdr. Barta flew the SH-60B and currently is at the Joint Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Va.