  
The yellow unit is a portable air conditioner

**INTRODUCTION**

My name is Ray Scalise (that's me in the picture) and I was a flight test enginer for Hughes Aircraft Company (HAC). One of my duties (some say privileges) was to fly as a Fire Control Officer (FCO). This meant I flight tested radar systems designed and built by HAC. Prior to flying in the YF-12A we used a B-58 Hustler as our test vehicle.

There were three BLACKBIRD model aircraft built by Lockheed Aircraft Company. The first was the "A" model built for the CIA as a spy plane. The second model was the YF-12A, which was designed as an interceptor. The concept being that at 2000+ miles per hour the plane could intercept Russian bombers before they even got close to our borders. It was in this model HAC installed the ASG-18 missile fire control radar system.

The third and most famous was the SR-71 built for the Air Force as a Recon (spy) plane. It was in the active Air Force inventory until the mid 1990s.

The stories contained herein are some of my recollections of "interesting" happenings during the flight test program of the YF-12A.

**FUN! I DON'T THINK SO**

One of the first things people say to me when they find out I flew in the BLACKBIRD is "Boy, that must have been FUN"!

FUN?......let me quantify FUN. Every flight began with the pressure suit, so lets start there. My pressure suit was custom built at a cost of $30,000 (1960 dollars). It weighed thirty five pounds, with seven of that in the helmet alone. Try putting a seven pound brick on your head and moving your head around!

The pressure suit and I had to be tested for compatability, both psychologically and physically. There are three different environments associated with the suit. The first is the body and helmet of the suit, the second is the face mask and the third is external. The body of the suit inflates in accordance with the outside pressures depending on altitude. The face mask is a pure oxygen environment. The third is dependent on the cockpit pressurization.The testing took place at a facility with a large, walk-in pressure chamber which could be taken up to 125,000 feet of altitude. Naturally, I had to be "instrumented" to monitor my vital signs during testing. Just getting into the suit was a chore. You first have to don it like a pair of pants, then you have to bend way over and insert your arms and head and wriggle into the suit. The suit was then zipped closed with the helmet and gloves put on and locked into place. It is at this point some people get claustrophobic. You can see people moving their mouths but you cannot hear any sounds until they hook up your headphones. It's really a wierd feeling.

Please bear in mind that the suit is very cumbersome and any movement, even depressurized, is with effort. The suit is put through a series of tests to make sure it won't leak and all systems within the suit, including the instrumentation, are operational .I have now been in the suit for two hours and we haven't even been close to the altitude chamber! I have this temperature probe inserted into my rectum (which is quite uncomfortable to sit on) to monitor my internal temperature when I am in the "hot seat" (you'll hear about this later).

OK, it's now time to enter the altitude chamber. I am seated in an aircraft type seat and hooked up for the testing. The chamber is closed up and the evacuation of air starts to bring you up to altitude which takes several hours. As the suit became inflated I found myself hanging from the helmet and remembered the cinch down strap to pull the helmet down to relieve this discomfort. There are magazines to read to help overcome the boredom but with the suit fully inflated this is an impossible task. The maximum altitude was reached and both the suit and I survived.

The second day of testing starts out the same except today I will be in the "hot seat". The seat is in the center of what looks like a large flower with the petals opened up. Each petal contains heat lamps. After I am seated the petals are closed up. I am now in a heat chamber within the altitude chamber. When we get to altitude the heat lamps are turned on and my suit air conditioning is turned off. The temperature reaches about 500 degrees farenheit. This test will determine how long I can stand this high temperature without my suit being air conditioned. I lasted for about twenty five minutes.

Now you may ask "why is this test necessary"? The skin temperature of the airplane can reach temperatures of 1000 degrees farenheit while cockpit temperatures can go as high as the oven in your kitchen. If you should lose suit air conditioning it will be some minutes before the airplane could get to lower altitude and somewhat cool off. IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT YOU SHOULDN'T BE IN THE KITCHEN! The suit and I passed the test with flying colors.

Now lets leap forward to the operational phase, which still requires the testing of the suit prior to getting into the cockpit(one to two hours). You are strapped into the seat, hooked up to the aircraft air conditioner, headphones and microphone. The aircraft flies at a seventeen degree nose up attitude when at altitude (you are working uphill). The parachute weighs seventy pounds.The pressure suit is partially inflated. You have to lean forward to operate system switches which means you are working against the pressure suit and parachute. You are constantly regulating the air conditioning to the suit, trying to keep a comfortable temperature in the suit and adjusting the cinchdown strap for the helmet to keep from hanging yourself.

EXCITING, YES! HARD WORK, YES! REWARDING, YES!

**BUT........FUN! I DON'T THINK SO**

**F111?**

Tony Byland , one of the other FCOs, and I were known as pranksters (I told you I was wild). Prior to the YF-12A flight test program we were testing the radar system using a B-58 Hustler as the test aircraft. The mechanics who supported that aircraft were also a bunch of pranksters, so Tony and I fit in quite well.

One of the pranks we were involved in started out by drilling a hole through the bathroom wall into one of the stalls. We inserted a length of plastic tubing into the back of the stall behind the camode. We knew one of the mechanics used that stall every morning for his "constitutional". He would go into the bathroom with a magazine and stay a while.

We waited for him to make his grand entrance and settle into his routine. A couple of the mechanics then blew smoke through the tubing while the rest of us stood outside the bathroom yelling "FIRE".

He came out of the bathroom like he had been shot out of a cannon, with the magazine in one hand and holding his pants up with the other hand. When he saw us all just standing there laughing, he realized he had been had! GOOD CLEAN FUN.

Anyway, lets get back to the gist of this story. When the first of the YF-12As arrived at Groom Lake (Area51) it was still regaled in its slate grey titanium color. It had the preliminary designation of FX11 painted in black on its side. This was before it was changed to YF-12A. There was another pre-production aircraft, soon to be inducted into the Air Force, with the designation of TFX11 which later became the F111.

We were told to clean things up around the aircraft and make things look presentable because the following day we were going to get some VIP visitors. That night Tony and I cut out a large "T" from some cardboard, painted it black and taped it to the aircraft so it read "TFX11". The next day when management and the VIPs came into the hangar there were gasps of surprise from everyone and looks of disbelief on the faces of management. When everyone realized what had happened there was a lot of laughing and funny comments from the VIPs.

Later on that day after the VIPs had left Tony and I were called "on the carpet". We both received a good a## reaming for this stunt and promised not to do anything like that again (right). ALL IN ALL, IT WAS WORTH IT!

A strange twist to this story is that Tony was killed in a crash of an F111 during a different flight test program.

**WHO'S FLYING THIS DAMN THING!**

The Blackbird was designed with four hydraulic systems to be able to handle all of the tasks required by the aircraft. If one system should fail the others took over its tasks. We were on a mission some distance from the base when one of the systems started to fluxuate. The pilot informed the base of what was happening and was told to abort the flight and return to base since this was very early on in the program. They were not sure what would happen and didn't want to take any chances. As the pilot throttled back and began the descent this system failed and the others took over as designed.

"Murphys Law" entered into the equation and a second system started to fluxuate from the extra load. It subsequently failed. We were getting close to base so everyone was confident we would make it with no further problems . However, the load was a bit much for the two remaining systems and one of them started to fluxuate.

"Murphy" was hard at work because this system failed also. We were on our crosswind approach to the runway when the last system began to fluxuate. The pilot turned on final and just as he flaired the aircraft for landing the last system gave up the ghost! The only thing the pilot had control of was the throttles.The pilot had absolutely no control of the plane. The plane seemed to say "I'LL DO IT MYSELF". The main landing gear touched down and as the speed bled off the nose wheel came in contact with the runway. Since the pilot had no hydraulics he could not apply brakes or steering control to the aircraft. The plane slowly steered off the runway and went its own merry way across the dry lake bed, coming to rest some miles from the hangars and base.The temperature was over 100 degrees and it took the ground crews some time to get to us. In the meantime we just sat in the aircraft in our pressure suits, which now were our personal saunas, even though we had removed our helmets and gloves! When we got back to the hangar and out of our suits the techs turned them upside down and poured water out of them. We both lost quite a few pounds.

**WE LANDED WHERE!!**

WIND SHEAR....Not an uncommon phrase in todays world of flying. We constantly hear of "wind shear" happenings with reference to airplanes. It can occur at any time or altitude and usually happens during the heat of summer. The result is that the aircraft loses all lift and just begins to drop out of the sky or it can get extra lift and zoom higher in altitude. It can happen to the best of pilots.

Returning from a flight on a hot, summer day, we were on final approach when the aircraft just dropped out of the sky. Now, this is what landing is all about, dropping out of the sky on to the end of the runway. However, we were not on the end of the runway....we were 500 feet short! It just so happens that this was where the runway approach lights are...or should I say used to be, because we destroyed them when we rolled through them. Shrapnel from the lights flew up and punctured the fuel tanks. THIS WAS BAD! All of a sudden we were flying again! THIS WAS GOOD!

Now this happened so fast, that by the time I became aware of something happening we were flying again so I thought we must have hit some rough air. We landed rather roughly and I couldn't understand all of the arm waving from the the ground crew when we stopped. They rushed us out of the aircraft and away from it. I saw that the back of the airplane was soaked in fuel and leaking like a sieve as well as the tires being flat. I still did not put two and two together until I was told later what had happened. Ignorance is bliss. Had I known, I might have bailed out, fearing the plane would cartwheel or something on landing.

**RAIN ON WHOSE PARADE?**

President Johnson's worldwide image was taking a beating because of his continued involvement of US troops in the Viet Nham conflict. He decided to tell the world he had a MACH 3 super spy plane called the SR-71 to bloster his image. Now that the lid was off, there were no more reasons to keep the YF-12A at Groom Lake but the existence of the A model was still kept secret and it remained at Groom..

The decision was made to take the test program to Edwards Air Force Base in California. Secrecy, to an extent, was still being exercised. So, to prevent too much exposure to prying eyes, it was decided that when the airplanes arrived at Edwards they would be taxiied into the hangar with immediate closure of the doors.

Everything was going to plan. The first aircraft arrived and the pilot taxied right into the hangar. Thats when all the fun began! The heat from the engines set off the hangar sprinkler system.

Everyone was running around looking for the turn off valves. It was some minutes (seemed like hours) before the sprinkler system was turned off. Everything was soaked. Later everyone had a good laugh about it but at the time.....THE PARADE WAS BEING RAINED ON!

**IT'S ALIVE!**

Do you remember in the movie "Frankenstein" when the monster received the bolt of lightning and moved? The mad scientist exclaimed" ITS ALIVE! ITS ALIVE!". Well, I'm no mad scientist BUT....

Shortly after the YF-12As were transfered to Edwards Air Force Base a dual fly-by was planned. The main purpose was to give the base personnel and their families a "look see" at the aircraft to quell curiosity. The plan was to fly in formation with one bird slightly below and trailing the lead plane. This was to be a joy ride and one I could really enjoy because I did not have to do any work and we were not wearing pressure suits.

I was in the trail aircraft and had a good view of the lead aircraft off to my left. At the end of the fly-by, both planes did a typical "air show" steep pull up in full afterburners.

The pilot and I both saw the following: The lead plane seemed to "bend" in the middle (just like cartoon planes do in cartoons) and the skin rippled like the skin of some large shark. "IT WAS ONE EERIE FEELING", as though the aircraft was "ALIVE". Every time I flew after that I could not shake the feeling that the airplane was a living, breathing thing!

**CONNING!**

The powers to be (another name for management) decided it would be nice to "visually" see the aircraft as it flew over Edwards Air Force Base on its test runs. Well, the aircraft is painted black (remember, it was secret so we did not want it to be seen against a black sky). WHAT!.....you say, the sky is not black...it's blue. Only as seen through the atmosphere. Up where the aircraft flew it was black. It was decided to paint a white cross on the underside of the airplane. Even with this it took an observer sitting on the roof of the hangar with binoculars to spot the aircraft.

The flight was going as planned. The observer was in radio contact with the flight test engineers stationed in the instrumentation room. On this particular flight, as we approached the base overhead, the observer stated he did not even need the binoculars to see the aircraft because we were leaving a "CON" trail. Airplanes leave a "CON" trail at 35,000 feet, not 80,000. At about the same time the pilot noted we were losing fuel at a very high rate. He guessed we had blown a large fuel line leading into the left engine and were feeding raw fuel into it causing what appeared as a "CON" trail.

The pilot informed the ground of what was happening and immediately declared an emergency. He throttled back on the engines and began a spiraling descent to the base. I kept my hand on the eject handle in case the airplane decided to explode.

The base was a beehive of activity. Fire trucks and emergency equipment lined the runway. Luckily, we landed without incident and came to a stop on the runway. The emergency vehicles surrounded the aircraft, and the base commander, in his car, was there also. The trucks towing the stands for us to get out of the aircraft had not yet arrived SO...The base commander drove his car up alongside the aircraft by the cockpits so we could egress the aircraft by jumping on the roof and then onto the hood (gutsy move since the aiircraft could possibly explode at any moment).

Both the pilot and I accomodated the base commander by doing just that and made tracks running away from the airplane as he got his car out of danger. The plane looked like it had just come out of a car wash and was leaking fuel all over the runway.

I still don't know why the plane didn't blow! YEAH, the fuel had a low volitility rating, but COME ON! Anyway, I weighed 120 pounds at the time. The pressure suit weighed 35 pounds and was real clumsy to move about in, with the parachute adding another 80 pounds. I was almost double my normal weight. I envisioned myself slipping on the curve of the chine(the sloping side of the aircraft) and breaking my neck when I hit the ground.

Now the boots to the pressure suit had what we called "spurs" attached to them. The spurs hooked into seat cables to pull your legs back into the seat so you wouldn't lose a leg on the console during bailout. SO...I walked down the chine on the spurs for stability. Unfortunately they punched holes in the thin titanium skin as I did so. Thus, I have always contended I signed my "SIGNATURE" to the airplane.

If you are ever in Dayton,Ohio at the air museum, look on the right side of the upper chine by the back cockpit and you can see the patches where they repaired my "SIGNATURE".

**BARF! NOT IN MY HELMET**

One of the configuration features of the rear cockpit was blackout curtains. This allowed the cockpit to be in total darkness which allowed me to see targets on the radar scope much better. I closed the curtains on our way to altitude to allow my eyes to get conditioned to the dark. Naturally, my only frame of reference was the radar scope. In the past I never had any problem with this configuration.

We started our run.Now, fighter pilots have a strange habit of rolling a plane to the right or left or inverted to better see ground reference points known as IPs (initial point). They would then let the ground observers know we were over the IP and starting our run. This maneuver had not been used on any previous flights.

I was concentrating on the radar scope, looking for the target, when the pilot did a half roll to the right. My inner ear sensed this movement, but since my only reference point, the radar scope, rolled also, I became disoriented. I immediately tore open the right blackout curtain to pick up the ground for an outside reference point.

Unfortunately, the pilot chose that very moment to roll the aircraft to the left and all I saw was sky. I frantically tore open the left blackout curtain but the pilot had leveled out the plane and all I saw was sky. Between my inner ear and I, we didn't know which way was up, down, or otherwise. The vertigo made me REALLY airsick. If I barfed into my helmet, I stood a good chance of drowning in my own barf. If I opened my helmet fish bowl to barf in the cockpit, I was fearful the pure oxygen might ignite......I'll let your imagination play with that one! Remember when we lost astronauts because they burned to death during testing of one of the capsules?

I closed my eyes, turned up the suit air conditioning full blast and concentrated on not barfing. During these events we were in the pass. The pilot kept on asking me if I had aquired the target yet. All I could do was click the intercom button to let him know I was (I think) still alive. Also, the ground crew wanted to know what was happening because they were not receiving any instrumentation signals.

I answered them with clicks on the mike button. Finally I recovered enough to tell everyone what had happened. The ground engineers were not very happy because the mission had been blown. I told the pilot NEVER to do that again. Lets face it.......How good was his visual reference from 80,000 feet!

**RAT-A-TAT TAT ON MY HAT**

The engines on the Blackbird were very unique. They were a hybrid turbo-jet / ram-jet design. Turbo-jet at speeds below 400 kts and ram-jet at speeds above 400 kts. The ram-jet came into play during high altitudes (above 50 thousand feet).

One of the critical aspects of high altitude flight was finite control of the engine spikes. They would be moved forward or backward to control the flow of air to the engine compressor chamber. If a spike was not positioned just right it could starve the engine of air causing a compression stall.[[](file:///C:\Users\dynas\AppData\Local\Temp\e\86662-030421-160101-53.a2k\stall1.html)](file:///C:\Users\dynas\AppData\Local\Temp\e\86662-030421-160101-53.a2k\stall1.html) The engine would lose thrust and build up with fuel. When the engine restarted the excess fuel in the engine would cause an explosion. The spikes were controlled by a computer but could also be controlled manually by the pilot.

On one flight over the northern Sierra mountain range we experienced this problem. The stalled engine would lose thrust, yawing the aircraft, which would cause the other engine to stall. These stalls and restarts occured about ten times a second.[[](file:///C:\Users\dynas\AppData\Local\Temp\e\86662-030421-160101-53.a2k\stall2.html)](file:///C:\Users\dynas\AppData\Local\Temp\e\86662-030421-160101-53.a2k\stall2.html) The radar scope no longer looked round but elyptical. My helmet beat a steady RAT-A-TAT TAT on the sides of the canopy. It sounded like a snare drum.

Since we had lost our forward thrust, the plane was falling out of the sky like a rock. We were losing altitude so fast the altimeter was unreadable. The pilot had taken manual control of the spikes and was feverishly trying to position them to stop the stalls. The pilot had turned on my BAIL OUT warning light. I was tightly clutching the bail out handle. The pilot had previously warned me that if we ever had to bail out I had better be gone on BAIL because he was leaving on OUT.

Fortunately the pilot regained control and we didn't have to leave the plane. I was really glad because all I could see out the window was snow capped mountain peaks. Not the most desireable habitat to be lost in. I could almost read the minds of the ground test engineers "Another mission shot to hell". Frankly, I would have traded places with any one of them at this moment.

**MISSILE AWAYYYY!**

While we were still stationed at Groom Lake we had a "missile eject test facility" constructed. It consisted of a six foot deep pit dug into the lake bed which was lined with foam to prevent damage to the missile. The missile was not just dropped from the missile bay but ejected using two powerful powder charges, one at the front and one at the back of the missile. We essentially "shot" the misslle out of the bay.

When we tested the eject system we had high speed cameras set up to monitor the missile ejection because the ejection could not be followed with the naked eye. The missile came out of the missile bay perfectly BUT with such force it bounced up and almost hit the aircraft. In physics there is a saying "for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction". When shooting a projectile out of a gun barrel, it is called "recoil".

There was no evidence of "recoil" during the test because of the weight of the aircraft and the "opposite and equal reaction" was absorbed by the aircraft. No missiles were scheduled to be fired in the near future and by the time one was scheduled , we had moved the test program to Edwards Air Force Base.

The first missile ejection was scheduled, and of course, it was to be done at MACH 3. The ejection was to occur over the Pacific Missile Range, located just off the Point Mugu Naval Air Station. Point Mugu is located about sixty miles north of Los Angeles, California. I was not overly excited about doing the test over water, just in case something happened, and we had to bail out. Since this ejection ws being done quite some time after the ground ejection test, I am not sure anyone took into consideration our old friend "recoil". If they were thinking about it, they sure were keeping it to themselves.

I had all of the cockpit switches in their proper positions and the ejection system was "hot". At the appropriate time I lifted up the eject buttons protective covering and started the countdown from five to one for ejection. I punched the ejection button and the misssile left the aircrcraft just like it was supposed to BUT.... our old friend "recoil" caused the aircraft to litterally STAND on its tail. It was like riding a bucking bronco and the pilot was fighting to regain control of the plane, all the time saying "whoa, baby, whoa". I don't think anyone was prepaired for this violent a reaction, especially the pilot and me.

It was subsequently decided to modify the ejection system to tone down the "recoil". However, the decision was made to just test the modification without ejecting a missile since the ejection test facility was at Groom Lake. Engineering seemed satisfied with the modification so the next launch was scheduled. This time the missile would have a short burn rocket engine installed.

One of the other FCOs(Fire Control Officer) was scheduled for this launch. Everything went along as scheduled. When the FCO hit the eject button the missile was ejected without the tremendous "recoil". However, the rear powder charge ignited before the front charge and the missile came out of the missile bay tail down. The rocket engine ignited and the missile took off heading up. The pilot said the missile barely missed the aircraft. They had almost shot themselves down. Subsequent modifications and testing cured this problem and all subsequent missile fireings went OK.

**FOUR WHEELIN'**

The taxi run to the end of the runway was uneventful. I did my usual sightseeing because this was one of the only times I had for some "relaxation". While we were waiting on the taxi strip for control tower OK to access the runway, I set all system switches. The "G" forces experienced after the pilot advanced the throttles into afterburner were so great that all I could do was to sit and wait until we reached our refueling altitude. I would think the "G" forces and acceleration would be equivalent to those experienced by a super unlimited dragster.

The control tower gave the OK to access the runway and the pilot positioned the plane for take-off. He ran up the engines and informed me he was going into afterburners. The right engine afterburner lit but the left one did not. The thrust was so great the aircraft veered to the left and ran off the runway. Then the left afterburner lit off and we began to accelerate very rapidly across the desert. It was a very bumpy ride and I was thankful for the "0" speed / "0" altitude ejection system, which meant if I chose to eject, I would be thrust up with enough altitude to safely deploy my 'chute (AND...I had my hands on the eject ring the whole time). The pilot, through sheer skill, was able to get the aircraft back on the runway for a "proper" takeoff run. I will have to admit it was a very exciting ride for a while.

**GROOM LAKE(AREA 51)**

FIRST...Let me tell you what we did not have at Groom Lake! I was at Groom Lake, off and on, from 1962 to 1970. During that time we did not have little men with big eyes in silver suits running around or in a morgue. We did not have flying saucers. We did not have an underground laboratory. Sorry to dissapoint you die-hard believers of what has been portrayed on television.

Groom Lake was like any other military base, except for the fact it was fully self-contained and did not rely on any external resources. It had two separate sets of hangars, one set at the East end of the base and the other set at the West end. The YF12A program occupied hangars at the East end, as well as a couple of Russian MIGs. The A model occupied the hangars at the West end.

There were many other support buildings dispersed all over the base. There was a Minimart which housed pool tables, ping pong tables, ice cream parlor and bar.

There was a movie theater (25 cents to get in and 10 cents for popcorn). There was a four lane bowling alley with an attached exercise gym. You could check out shotguns and shoot skeet or bow and arrows for archery. We even had a nine hole golf course! Of course the greens were very small and the fairways and ruff was all sand hazards (raw desert). Hole nine was located next to a natural spring and offered the only water hazard. If you were so inclined, they even had a small laundry facility.

People indulged themselves in many hobby activites. I built fishing rods. Several of us would check out a stake bed truck, rig it with spot lights, stand in the bed while one of us would drive across the desert. We had pistols of every caliber you could think of, which we used to shoot at jack rabbits. We never hit anything but we had a lot of fun. You could find a card game to suit your fancy in most any bungalow. There were no women on the base nor were there any within fifty miles. So, most of the activities were GUY things.

Each bungalow had a refrigerator, a TV, two bathrooms, and housed eight men. There were some construction workers, with limited government clearances, so they were confined to the housing area and driven to their work sites in buses with the windows all blacked out (except the drivers, of course). They did not have to work in "blinders", so I am sure they saw activities that were forbidden.

Base security was very tightly controlled. One evening, a business man with his "girl friend" was flying in his private plane to Las Vegas. He got lost and saw the runway light so decided he would land and get directions to Las Vegas. Both he and the girl were hustled to the CIA security building and subjected to long and intensive interrogation. The CIA security put the fear of God into them and sent them on their way to Las Vegas. The FBI kept both of them under observation for about six months and let them know they were being watched. Talking about the FBI, they would come into my neighborhood about every four months and ask my neighbors about me and my activities, while at home. The neighbors just knew I was some sort of HOOD, being of Italian descent.

Another incident involved a Canadian pilot on assignment to the Air Base in Las Vegas. He had heard stories about this "secret base" and decided he would see for himself. He landed his plane at the base and was also hustled to security. He said they had no jurisdiction over him since he was a Canadian national. One hour later he received a personal call from the Prime Minister of Canada. From what I heard, he was immediately ordered back to Canada and subjected to stringent security measures, and I am sure his career was put on hold. The CIA has a "long arm" and tremendous power.

This anecdote did not happen at Groom Lake but is put here to illustrate the power of the CIA.

Several of us associated with the program lived in Lancaster, CA and traveled down to Burbank, CA, where the Lockheed Skunk Works was located. The Skunk Works was where the planes were built. We were furnished a station wagon by the CIA to use for commuting.

One morning, at about 4 AM, we were headed to Burbank and were pulled over by a Highway Patroman. We gave him the registration information and he dutifully radioed it and the license plate number in to the station. They radioed him back that the vehicle and the license plate did not exist. He approached the vehicle with his gun drawn and told us to get out and put our hands on the roof. He informed us of the discrepancy. We gave him a phone number to call and all would be explained. He radioed this information back to the station and after a while he came back and said "I don't know who the hell you are and I don't want to know! Just get in the car and get out of my sight."

I didn't know where to include this excellent speech given by Brian Shul, so I put it here. I am sure Brian would want this message to reach all of America. Brians speech expresses the feelings of millions of Americans across this great nation in light of what happened on September 11th, 2001.

### Chico Rally Address

Thank you for the opportunity to address this rally today. It is not often that a fighter pilot is asked to be the keynote speaker. There is a rumor that they are unable to put two sentences together coherently. I'd like to dispel that rumor today by saying that I can do that, and in fact that I have written several books. I always wanted to be an author, and I ARE one now.

I'm a pretty lucky person really. I'm like the little boy who tells his father that when he grows up he wants to be a jet pilot, and his father replies, "Sorry son, you can't do both". I made that choice a long time ago and flew the jets. I was fortunate to live my dream, and then some. I survived something I shouldn't have, and today, tell people that I am 28 years old, as it has been that long since I was released from the hospital. It was like I received a second life, and in the past 28 years, I have gotten to see and do much, so much that I would not have thought possible.

Returning to fly jets in the Air Force, flying the SR-71 on spy missions, spending a year with the Blue Angels, running my own photo studio.. and so much more. And now, seeing our country attacked in such a heinous way. Some of you here today have heard me speak before, and know that I enjoy sharing my aviation slide show. I have brought no slides to show you, as I feel compelled today, to address different issues concerning this very difficult time in our nation's history. I stand before you today, not as some famous person, or war hero. I am far from that. You know, they say a good landing is one you can walk away from, and a really great one is when you can use the airplane again. Well, I did neither...and I speak to you to today as simply a fellow American citizen.

Like you, I was horrified at the events of September 11th. But I was not totally surprised that such a thing could happen, or that there were people in the world who would perpetrate such deeds, willingly, against us. Having sat through many classified briefings while in the Air Force, I was all too aware of the threat, and I can assure you, it has always been there in one form or another. And those of you who have served in the defense of this nation, know all too well the response that is needed. In every fighter squadron I was in, there was a saying that we knew to be true, that said, when there was a true enemy, you negotiate with that enemy with your knee in his chest and your knife at his throat. Many people are unfamiliar with this way of thinking, and shrink from its ramifications. War is such a messy business, and there are many who want no part of it, but rush to bask in the security blanket of its victory.

I spent an entire military career fighting Communism, and was very proud to do so. We won that war, we beat one of the worst scourges to humankind the world has known. But it took a great effort, over many years of sustained vigilance and much sacrifice by so many whose names you will never know. And perhaps our nation, so weary from so long a cold war, relaxed too much and felt the world was a safer place with the demise of the Soviet Union. We indulged ourselves in our own lives, and gave little thought to the threats to our national security.

You know, normally my talks are laced with numerous jokes as I share my stories, but I have very few jokes to tell this afternoon. These murdering fanatics came into our land, lived amongst our people, flew on our planes, crashed them into our buildings, and killed thousands of our citizens. And nowhere along their gruesome path were they questioned or stopped. The joke is on us.

We allowed this country to become soft. We shouldn't really be too surprised that this could happen. Did we really think that we could keep electing officials who put self above nation and this would make us stronger? Did we really think that a strong economy adequately replaced a strong intelligence community? Did we imagine that a President who practically gave away the store on his watch, was insuring national security? While our country was mired in the wasted excess of a White House sex scandal, the drums of war beat loudly in foreign lands, and we were deaf. Our response was to give the man two terms in office, and even then barely half the American public exercised their right to vote. We have only ourselves to blame. Our elected officials are merely a reflection of our own values and what we deem important. Did we not realize that America had become a laughing stock around the world? We had lost credibility, even amongst our allies. To our enemies we had no resolve. We made a lot of money, watched a lot of TV, and understood little about what was happening beyond our shores. We were, simply, an easy target.

But we are a country awakened now. We have been attacked in our homeland. We have now felt the reality of what an unstable and dangerous world it truly is. And still, in the face of this unprecedented carnage in our most prominent city, there are those who choose to take this opportunity to protest, and even burn the flag. If I were the regents or alumni of certain large universities in this county, I would be embarrassed to be producing students of such ignorance and naive notions. Like mindless sheep, they march with painted faces and trite sayings on signs, blissfully ignorant of the world they live in, and the system that protects them, hoping maybe to make the evening news.

Perhaps if they had spent more time in class they would have learned that those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it. They might have learned that all it takes for evil to succeed in the world, is for good people to stand by and do nothing. If they had simply gone back in history as recently as the Viet Nam War, they would have learned that an enemy that knows it can never defeat us militarily, will persist as long as there is dissention and disruption in our land. Their ignorance can be understood, as their young empty minds have been filled with the re-written history tripe that tenured leftist professors can spew out with no fear of removal. But the unwitting aid they provide the enemy, in disrupting the national resolve, is unforgivable.

I think this is wonderful country, though, that gives everyone their voice of dissention. I am all for people expressing their views publicly because it makes it much easier for us to identify the truly foolish, and to know who cannot be counted on in times of crisis. These are the weak and cowardly who, when the enemy is crashing through the front door, will cower in the back room, counting on better men than themselves to make and keep them free. Well, the enemy is at our front door, and isn't it interesting those who cry loudest and most often for their rights, are usually those least willing to defend it.

I heard a student on TV the other day say that this war just wasn't in his plans and he would simply head to Canada if a draft occurred. Just wasn't in his plans. I wonder what plans the young men at the beaches of Normandy had that they never got to live. I wonder if it was in the plans of 19-year-old boys in Viet Nam to lie dying in a jungle far from home. I guess the men and women at Pearl Harbor one morning had their plans slightly rearranged too. Gee, I hope we haven't inconvenienced this student. Those people in the World Trade Center have no more plans.

It is up to us to have a plan now. And it isn't going to be easy. Who ever said it would? Just what part of our history spoke of how easy it was to form a free nation? It has never been easy and has always required vigilance and sacrifice, and sometimes war, to preserved this union. If it were easy, everyone would have done it. But no one else has, and we stand alone as the most unique country on earth.

And isn't it amazing that we have spent a generation stamping God out of our schools and government, and now as a nation, have collectively turned to God in memorial services, prayer vigils and churches around this country. I am also very disturbed to hear that there are people in this country, at this particular time, who feel it inappropriate to wear the flag on their lapel because they are on the news or in a public job, and school officials who want to remove pro-American stickers so as not to offend foreign students. Well I am offended that these people call themselves Americans. I am offended that innocent people were killed in a mass attack of unthinkable proportions. And I am offended at listening to TV broadcasters speak to me condescendingly, with a bias that screams of their drowning in a cesspool of political correctness. I pity the person who thinks they are going to remove this flag from my lapel.

This flag of ours is the symbol of all that is good about this country. America is an idea. It is an idea lived, and fought for, by a people. We are America, and this is our symbol. We are imperfect in many ways, but we continue to strive toward the ideal our forefathers laid down for us over 225 years ago. I could never imagine desecrating that symbol. Perhaps there are many people in this nation who have never been abroad, or in harms way, and seen the flag upon their return. Those poor souls can never know the deep pride and honor one feels to see it wave, to know that there is still a good ol' USA. With all our warts we are still the greatest nation on earth, and the flag is the most powerful symbol of that greatness. When I was in grade school, we used to say the Pledge of Allegiance every morning. It is something I never forgot. I wonder how many children even know that pledge today.

This flag is our history, our dreams, our accomplishments, indelibly expressed in bright red, white, and blue. This flag was carried in our Revolutionary War, although it had many less stars. But it persevered and evolved throughout a war we had no right to believe we could win. But we did, and built a country around it. This flag, tattered and battle worn, waved proudly from the mast, as John Paul Jones showed the enemy was true resolve was. This banner was raised by the hands of brave men on a godforsaken island called Iwo Jima, and became a part of the most famous photo of the 20th Century. Those men are all dead now, but their legacy lives on in the Marine Memorial in Washington, DC. Those of you who have seen it will recall that inscribed within the stone monument are the words-When Uncommon Valor, Was A Common Virtue- I don't believe you'll see the words, "it was easy", anywhere on it. This flag has even been to the moon, planted there for all time by men with a vision, and the courage to see it through.

I personally know what it is to see the flag, and feel something deep inside that makes you feel you are a part of something much bigger than yourself. Laying in a hospital bed, I can vividly recall looking out the only window in the room and on Sundays, seeing that big garrison flag flying proudly in the breeze. It filled the entire window, and filled my heart with a motivation that helped me leave that bed, and enabled me to be standing here today.

And many years later, while fighting another terrorist over Libya, my backseater and I outraced Khaddafi's missiles in our SR-71 as we headed for the Mediterranean, and I can still clearly see that American flag patch on the shoulder of my space suit, staring at me in the rear view mirror as we headed west, and it was a good feeling.

Now don't ask me why we had rear view mirrors in the world's fastest jet, I can assure you, no one was gaining on us that day.

I am so happy to see so many flags out here today. Long may it wave. History will judge us. How we confront this chapter of American history will be important for the future of this great nation. This will be a war like none other we have endured. The combatants will not just be the soldier on the battlefront, but will be fought by us the citizens. We are on the battlefield now; the war has been brought to us. We will determine the outcome of this war by how well we remain vigilant, how patient we are with tightened security, how well we support the economy, and most importantly, in the resolve we show the enemy. There are some things worth fighting for, and this country is one of them.

I pray for our leaders at this time. In the Pacific, during WW II, Admiral Bull Halsey said, "There are no great men, just great circumstances, and how they handle those circumstances will determine the outcome of history". Our future and the future of coming generations are in our hands. Wars are not won just on military fronts, but by the resolve of the people. We must remain tenaciously strong in the pursuit of this enemy that threatens free people everywhere.

I am encouraged that we will win this war. Even before the first shot was finished being fired, there were brave Americans on Flight 93, fighting back. These people were the first true heroes of this conflict, and gave their lives to save their fellow countrymen. This nation, this melting pot of humanity, this free republic, must be preserved. This idea that is America is important enough to be defended. Fought for. Even die for. The enemy fears what you have, for if their people ever become liberated into a free society, tyrannical dictatorships will cease and he will lose power.

How can they ever understand this country of ours, so self-indulgent and diverse, yet when attacked, so united in the defense of its principals. This is the greatest country in the world because brave people sacrificed to make it that way. We are a collective mix of greatness and greed, hi-tech and heartland. We are the country of Mickey Mouse and Mickey Mantle; from John Smith and Pocahontas to John Glen and an Atlas booster; from Charles Lindbergh to Charley Brown; from Moby Dick to Microsoft; we are a nation that went from Kitty Hawk to Tranquility Base in less than 70 years; we are rock and roll, and the Bill of Rights; we are where everyone else wants to be, the greatest nation in the world.

The enemy does not understand the dichotomy of our society, but they should understand this; we will bandage our wounds, we will bury our dead; and then we will come for you...and we will destroy you and all you stand for. I read this quote recently and would like to share it with you:

We are pressed on every side, but not crushed, Perplexed, but not in despair, Persecuted, but not abandoned, Struck down, but not destroyed. That is from II Corinthians. Not too long ago it would have been politically incorrect to quote from the Bible. I am so happy to be politically INCORRECT. And I am so proud to be an American.

Thank you all for coming out today and showing your support for your government, and your nation. You are the true patriots, you are the soldiers of this war, you are the strength of America.

Brian Shul  
Chico, CA

October 3, 2001