



COVID-19 is almost all you hear about these days and the news is mostly bad. Our industry is one of the hardest hit and for some, the unknown future causes tremendous stress. Stress was discussed in Article 22, DOM April 2016, but more than stress can come into play when your life has become a vast unknown. Many of the Dirty Dozen can combine to contribute to that unintentional human error. There is good reason to be concerned, as over 10 airlines have declared bankruptcy and the

survivors are not far from it. This leaves 1,000s of AMT/AME's out of work with a grim future. It will take the industry years to get back to profitability. Add to this the very real threat of catching COVID-19, and worse yet, bringing it home to your family and friends. Depending on one's resiliency, Article 25, DOM July 2017, there will be many candidates for the ultimate level of stress PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) Article 47, DOM Dec/Jan 2019/20. The following is a letter I received that illustrates just how one's life can be changed forever as the stress builds up to unbearable levels. He has kindly given me permission to print his story.

January 29, 2020

Dear Gordon.

The December 2019 DOM magazine article you wrote on PTSD hit home with me. You see I suffer from PTSD, not from aviation but from a tragic accident at home. I will explain after some background that lead up to my diagnoses.

I had a long career in aviation both in maintenance and as a pilot. I hold an A & P Certificate and also held an IA Certificate for 30 years. My aviation career spanned more than 40 years. I also hold an ATP Certificate with over 14,000 safe flight hours. In 2010 I lost a corporate flight position held for 36 years due to downsizing. Nine months was spent in liquidating all the flight department assets after a 65-year history that had accumulated 74,000 hours of safe flight without an accident. At the time I was the department manager. Two weeks after I was told of the flight department closure my father passed away, I was the executor of his estate in Florida. Nine months of extreme stress got me started on the insidious path to PSTD.

For two years I tried to win an aviation job with no avail. I ended up taking a sales manager position at one forth the pay just to help my daughter through college. Than in 2013 while on a two-day trip to New York State, on the first day away my wife of thirty-eight years was killed in an accident on our property. She went down a steep embankment with the tractor. The tractor ended up squarely on top of her at the bottom. She laid in 100 degree July heat for two days until I found her upon my return. As you can imagine her body was rather decomposed at that point. At first the police investigated me for her wrongful death, but was cleared. This event sent me over the edge.

For 2 years I was barely able to function, my children live out west, so it was very lonely. Fortunately, I have wonderful neighbors whom were there for me. In 2016 my doctor had a very frank talk with me, and told me if I did not do something about my stress that I would not live more than a year. I took deep stock in my life and retired. The day after my retirement I started a volunteer position at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania. My life took a very dramatic change going forward. It now is a passion and I love every moment there with the interaction with the patrons' and staff.

Yes, I have flash backs of that life changing day, each and every day, but now have something else that is wonderful in my life to focus on. My advice to any one suffering from PTSD, is to seek counseling and find something else to focus on. No it does not go away, but you gain the tools and distraction to soften the blow. It is also my mission to do and participate in things to honor my wife, she was the true love of my life. She gave me two incredible children and now my first grandchild. We had 38 years of a wonderful marriage, I am thankful and honored to have had her for 40 years of my life.

Thank you for the article, maybe it can help someone with PTSD to find themselves, but better yet, instill a thought process to prevent some else from entering the this dark and dismal world of PTSD.

Sincerely

I thank him for taking the time to write to me and giving me permission to reprint it in this article. With the drastic changes occurring in our industry, there is little doubt that, for many, their life will never be the same. If there was ever a time for positive thinking, Article 27, Dom Oct 2018, this is it. I recall a young student when I was principal of an aviation maintenance training school who graduated right in the middle of an industry downturn and unlicensed maintenance jobs were virtually nonexistent. While he wasn't at the top of his class he had the right attitude and was always cheerful. A few of his top scoring classmates managed to land jobs up North where the mosquito reigns supreme but he was not so fortunate. One day he dropped into my office and placed a small bag on my desk. It contained candy and he explained that he now looked after candy making machines. I remarked that that was such a waste of all of the training he had received. He quickly corrected me and informed me that he got the job thanks to his training here. He went on to explain that we had taught him the importance of "preventative" maintenance and they are thrilled with the increase in reliability of their machines thanks to what he had learned. Our industry lost a person who would have made a very dedicated hardworking AME/AMT, but the candy making company gained a person with the rare knowledge of how machinery functions and the attitude to set up a routine maintenance system to keep it working. And I got a bag of candy and the knowledge that any training can be of value in an unknown future.

In closing I've attached the first article I put on our website

READ THIS. LET IT REALLY SINK IN. . .

THEN CHOOSE HOW YOU INTEND TO FACE TOMORROW AND THE FUTURE. . .

Michael is the kind of guy you love to hate. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, *"If I were any better, I'd be twins!"*

He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Michael was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation. Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Michael and asked him, *"I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all the time. How do you do it?"*

Michael replied, *"Each morning I wake up and say to myself, Mike, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood."*

Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life.

"Yeah right, it's not that easy," I protested. *"Yes, it is,"* Michael said. Life is about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will effect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or a bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live life.

I reflected on what Michael said. Soon thereafter, I left the Tower Industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it.

Several years later, I heard that Michael was involved in a serious accident, falling some 60 feet from a communications tower. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Michael was released from hospital with rods placed in his back.

I saw Michael about 6 months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied *"If I were any better, I'd be twins. Want to see my scars?"* I declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place. *"The first thing that went through my mind was the wellbeing of my soon to be born daughter,"* Michael replied. *"Then, as I lay on the ground, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or I could choose to die. I chose to live."* *"Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?"* I asked. Michael continued. *"The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the ER, and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read 'he's a dead man.' I knew I needed to take action."* *"What did you do?"* I asked. *"Well, there was a big burly nurse shouting questions at me,"* said Michael. *"She asked if I was allergic to anything."* *"Yes,"* I replied. *"The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, 'GRAVITY.'"* Over their laughter, I told them, *I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead."*

Michael lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully.

Attitude, after all, is everything. You have two choices now:

- 1. Forget about what you just read.**
- 2. Decide to be more positive in your choices.**