**A Not Well-Known Seat Shop Flight Line Prank**

In September 1965, upon completing Marine Basic Aviation Training at NAS Jacksonville, it was discovered that I was colorblind. This prevented me from any more formal aviation training and I was sent back to MARDT at NAS,NY for OJT. It was a great experience being trained by very experienced Marines who really knew their stuff. When I reported, I was assigned to the flight line that needed someone from the Seat Shop. The plan was for me to start the day on the line and if no afternoon hops to work in the Seat Shop.

Staff Sgt Barns, who ran the flight line, believed that practice makes perfect. My day started, as the Seat Shop Plane Captain, filling all twenty A4s with liquid Oxygen (LOX) before anyone else went onto the line. One quickly learns, that almost anyone except the Jet Mechs leave the flight line as soon as the aircraft are being started. When working with LOX, I also learned, that no one except another Seat Shop Marine wanted to go onto the line when the LOX cart was in use.

The LOX cart is incredibly simple efficient piece of equipment. It had a double lined tank for holding the liquid oxygen and quick disconnect nozzle used to fill the plane’s oxygen tank. It also had a couple of control valves and monitoring gauges. You would open one valve and release a small amount LOX into the piping that ran around the cart. This LOX turned in to pressurized gas. The gas pressure was then used to pump the LOX into the aircraft’s oxygen tank. After the aircraft were filled, the LOX valve was closed and the vent valve was opened to release the pressured gas. The cart could be rolled from plane to plane.

My mentor in the Seat Shop was a Corporal, who’s name after fifty-six years, I can’t remember. We hit off very well. On second my day of working on the line, he showed up with a pair of kick off safety booths worn by the Seat Shop guys (LOX is -297 degrees). My training progressed quickly even removing and installing a couple of ejection seats under very close supervision.

At the start of my third week of OJT, my seat shop mentor came out early to the flight line to check on me. He told me that he was getting very good reports on my progress from the line sack. I replied that the training was going well but I wasn’t sure if I had been fully accepted yet. He told me **we** **can fix** that tomorrow. Then, he looked at my field jacket and told me to get a little more hydraulic fluid, oil and JP4 on it.

That week. NAS, NY had an early freeze with temperatures around twenty in the mornings. We met as I was finishing the last A4. As I started to vent off the cart pressure, he blocked off the view to the line shack and told me take off my field jacket and it place close to the cart. At this point, I figured out what is about to happen and said something like “this better work!” My Corporal assures me it will and that the older Marines have seen what going to happen before but the newer guys have not. So, into the line shack we go and we start jaw jacking with everyone. It takes about ten to fifteen minutes for my field jacket to warn up and then combustion!. Well, the line shack turns into **pandemonium.** The new guys start yelling and trying to put out the flames. Within a few seconds, laughter takes over. To my relief, Staff Sgt Branes seems to be leading the chorus. This scene plays out for maybe ten minutes.

The prank could not have gone better, especially since it was done by a new still wet behind the ears E1, News of the deed spread around the hanger and thankfully I became just a new addition to my mates on the flight line.

Told by the Plane Captain