



ALLEN SILVER
COLUMNS / ASK ALLEN



The Year in Review

FIRST LET ME WISH everyone a happy new year. On a more sobering note, I need to reflect back on flying this past year.

Most of you do not see the full gamut of the flying industry as I do. You take your airplane out of the hangar every week or so, go upside down a few times, and then put it away for the week. Your adrenaline rush has been satisfied.

But, I pretty much see the entire picture. I've been involved in the air show industry in some form or fashion and as a sky diver for more than 50 years. For three or four of those years I performed as a wing-walker, and I still announce an occasional air show. I also hold a private pilot certificate with an instrument rating. I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the industry. Most of you are aware that I service parachutes from all facets of the aviation world. My customers include air show performers, glider pilots, competition pilots, and recreational pilots of all types. This past year has not been kind to pilots and for some who were just spectating. This past year I lost friends. Some close and some just good customers. For those of you keeping count, 2011 was not a good year. Even one accident is one too many.

I'm one of only about 40 designated parachute rigger examiners for the FAA. I sometimes get involved personally with the aftermaths of such accidents when they involve a parachute. I often wonder if there is more I can do to help. Am I doing enough to prevent such tragedies? I try my best to make sure my customers and those I give safety seminars to don't become one of those statistics that are written and talked about. We have all heard someone say, "I hope we can learn from this tragedy." Unfortunately many people read about an accident and think, "This could never happen to me." You need to wake up and smell the coffee.

Most, if not all, of last year's accidents involved people who had an enormous amount of experience compared to most of us. I'm not here to explain what went wrong, but I can assure you that taking a few steps prior to each flight will help reduce the risks of you becoming a statistic. Most of you don't have to be told to fasten your seat belt when you get into a car or airplane, and everyone should know by now smoking is bad for you. You also know that an improper preflight inspection can be quite costly.

It's never too late to make New Year's resolutions. Some resolutions like going to the gym seven days a week and lose 25 unwanted pounds are probably not realistic for the vast majority of us. But attending an FAA Safety Team (FAAST) program or a local presentation is. How about this resolution: Don't be afraid to ask for support and advice from your flying mentors, and don't be afraid to step up to the plate to give support and suggestions to your friends and fellow pilots, even if they're more experienced than you. Peer pressure can be intimidating. Sometimes, even if the batting count is three balls and two strikes, you have to take a swing at the plate and speak out. Especially if you see something that you think is dangerous or life-threatening. The day you stop learning is the day you need to hang it up. Taking a couple of hours out of your life now to learn something new or to reinforce what you already know may someday save your life.

Remember, it's never too late to teach an old dog a new trick. Just a couple of months ago I was a giving a customer an

oral and practical parachute rigger exam, and he showed me how to do something a little easier. Why hadn't I thought of that before? Keeping an open mind can be rewarding. My resolution is to keep out of the doughnut shop at least six days of the week. If I can train my car not to drive by the doughnut shop, I'll have it made.

I'm writing this column from the December 2011 ICAS (International Council of Air Shows) convention in Las Vegas. This is the world's largest gathering of air show performers and possibly egos. But those egos have a lot of experience, and I always leave with something new and important learned. I was having a conversation with a doctor after we had left one of the many seminars, and I'm going to quote a couple of things he said. Where he got the quotes from he can't remember, but I would like to share them with you. "The oldest pilots know when not to fly." What a simple statement, but how true.

As we were exchanging information, we got on the subject of how we make decisions. He'd attended a convention of

doctors, and one presenter had a question for his audience. What percentage of your decision-making is based on emotion and how much on fact? He asked his audience to write down their answers. Most came up with a higher percentage based on fact than emotion. When he unveiled his chart he said that research done by doctors of psychology came to the conclusion that almost 90 percent of our decision-making was based on emotion and only 10 percent on fact. That's something to think about. If that's a true statement, then each of us needs to step back, slow down, and rethink some of those decisions that could possibly lead to disastrous results.

I've given you enough to think about for now. Remember to let your emotions run wild and actually make the bold decision to e-mail or call me with that question you have on your mind. Operators are standing by Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (PST) at allen@silver-parachutes.com or 510-785-7070.

Blue skies! **IAC**



Enjoy Unusual Attitudes?

Become a member of the world's largest aerobatic organization: **EAA's International Aerobatic Club.**

We promote the safety and enjoyment of aerobatic flight. Join us today and begin enjoying exclusive member benefits, including a subscription to *Sport Aerobatics* magazine.

Call 800.564.6322 or visit www.IAC.org