



Volume 4, Number 12, September 21, 2011

THE DANGERS OF YOUR HOMETOWN SHOW

Among air show veterans, it is a truism that hometown air shows can be among the biggest hazards in the air show business. The lessons of this particular safety problem have been written in blood over the years, with many performers succumbing to the human factors-related stresses of performing at an air show in their hometown.

A few tips to avoid the dangers of performing in your hometown air show:

- * Before you ever get into the cockpit, recognize that you will want to dial it up a notch for your friends, family and colleagues. Then work very hard to suppress that urge. If your standard show is good enough for the people in Peoria, then it will be good enough for the people in your hometown. Absolutely no good will come of changing your normal sequence or doing something that you don't normally do.
- * Recognize distractions. More than the normal number of people will be asking for your attention. You must exercise unusually strong and sustained discipline to accommodate them to a point, but then put those people and their interests in a box as you prepare to perform. Taking those people and their issues or problems into the cockpit with you is a recipe for disaster...and have actually been a contributing cause to fatal accidents on many occasions in the past.
- * Designate a problem solver to work with you at that show. Whether it's getting tickets for a high school buddy or making post-show plans for dinner with your family, make arrangements well ahead of time to have somebody close to you provide concierge-type services so that you can focus on the very important business of preparing to perform and performing.
- * Turn the "sacred 30 minutes" into the "sacred 90 minutes." As a performer, you know that you need some uninterrupted time to put your game face on and prepare for the rigors of performing low level aerobatics in front of thousands of people. At your hometown show, give yourself much more time than usual to get mentally and physically prepared. The distractions will be greater and more personal, so anticipate that and build even more time into your schedule to get ready to perform.
- * Be aware. Simply knowing ahead of time that your hometown show will have different dynamics than all of your other shows will often be all that you need to eliminate the danger of those differences and distractions. If you think about the potential problems ahead of time, you will recognize them when they come up and be in a much better position to deal with them proactively, efficiently and safely.