

# Confession Corner

***I swear, It's the truth!***

*We at AAHS have the privilege of being part of an industry that produces history full of near misses, amazing technological breakthroughs, tough determination and the display of human inventiveness and foolishness in equal measure. As common as tie downs on the ramp are, the anecdotes and stories told by hangar neighbors, visiting pilots and old codgers guarding the water cooler, recounting impossible tales of ground loops, belly landings, near misses and ornery passengers, bad radios and inclement weather.*

*These campfire stories, short and terse, long-winded, hilarious, absolute truths or something in between, are the yarns, as aviation kids we'd listen to with round eyes, awed and inspired, scared straight or incredulous ("that's not possible ... is it?") and, fervently hoping to never find ourselves in that position.*

*Documenting these "histories" will make up our new Confession Corner column in the Journal, and we sincerely hope you find these entertaining. We encourage you, too, to submit your stories for this column!*

## Airborne Problem

By Richard Miles

**I**n the early 1960s I was serving with SAC as a B-52 electronic warfare officer. On this particular mission we were flying a 24-hour nuclear airborne alert mission in a B-52D. It was night, high over Spain when we had a rapid cabin decompression and were forced to make a rapid descent to 10,000 feet.

I went to the lower deck and opened the small door behind the navigators that opened into an unpressurized compartment. In this compartment I noticed a fairly large piece of tubing that disconnected from the pressurization unit. With a screwdriver and clamps, I reconnected the tubing. I asked the copilot to engage the pressurization system. When he did, it blew apart again.

Shortly thereafter, the copilot announced that all the fuel tank gauges were going to zero. The pilot determined that the fuel pumps were working so they could monitor fuel transfer from various tanks and keep track of the center of gravity by checking stall speed periodically.

Our ground contact at Moron Air Base, Seville, Spain, said they were sending up a KC-135 to give us fuel and wanted us to land in daylight. We air refueled and landed in the daytime. It was only after landing that we discovered our problem had been

caused by an inflight fire.

The B-52 has 10 hydraulic packs with turbos that are run off hot engine bleed air. One engine bleed air tube to a hydraulic pack in the unpressurized equipment compartment aft of the bomb bay had blown apart and burned a very large wire bundle. This precipitated the problems we had experienced.

No warning was indicated on the copilot's fire warning panel as those wires were in the bundle destroyed. Because the incident occurred at night, the tail gunner did not see any smoke coming from the aircraft. Also, he did not smell any fumes as his cabin was pressurized.

If he had, we surely would not have not refueled and landed earlier.

A tanker was flown in from our home base in Florida with a maintenance crew and equipment to make the repairs. The tanker then returned to Florida. Unknown to us or the tanker crew, our wives had packed our civilian clothes, which were placed on the KC-135 – so our clothes returned to Florida.

Maintenance advised it would take some time to make the repairs. For the two weeks extension to our mission, we had to purchase civilian shoes and clothes. →

---

*You do not have to be an AAHS member to submit a story, anyone can. Do not get impatient if your story does not appear in the next issue of the AAHS Journal. Only a few will appear in each issue of Confession Corner. I will be looking forward to reading and enjoying your stories.*

*Send your submissions to:*

Hayden Hamilton  
Managing Editor  
email: [editor@aahs-online.org](mailto:editor@aahs-online.org).

*Do not be deterred if you are like many of us old computer illiterate types, just have one of your children, grandchildren or a friend type and e-mail your story.*