

Engineer Bashing, Support Organizations That Don't, and Six Other Things I Think Are Outrageous at the AFFTC

My Retirement Speech (Dr. John Walkington, Flight Test Engineer)
Daedalian Ballroom Hall, Club Muroc, AFFTC, Edwards AFB
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My wife, who is in education, tells me that people learn in different ways, and since this is, hopefully, a learning situation, I'll take her advice and present the big picture first, for all you holistic learners, then the details, for all you sequential learners.

So here's the big picture, the theme that will run throughout my talk today: Listen carefully.

THE FLIGHT TEST CENTER'S BASIC CORE VALUES AND PRIORITIES ARE ALL SCREWED UP!

THEY ARE BACKWARDS!
THEY ARE UPSIDE DOWN!
THEY ARE IN SHAMBLES!

THE FLIGHT TEST CENTER DOESN'T KNOW WHO THEY ARE, WHAT THEY DO, OR WHO DOES IT! AND BECAUSE OF THAT, THEY ARE GOING TO HELL IN A HANDBASKET!

That's the big picture. And now, the details.

1. Engineering-Bashing

In the 1800's Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem about a British soldier and the fact that the general public scorned Redcoats, as they were known then. It went something like this:

*I went into a public-'ouse to get a pint o' beer,
The publican 'e up an' sez, "We serve no red-coats here."
The girls be'ind the bar they laughed an' giggled fit to die,
I outs into the street again an' to myself sez I:
For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Chuck him out, the brute!"
But it's "Saviour of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot
When the guns begin to shoot, m' boys, the guns begin to shoot
But it's "Saviour of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot.*

And just as they had Redcoat-bashing in England in the 1800's, it seems that we have Engineer-bashing at the AFFTC in 2004. Right? You've all heard it. Something like, "Engineers are all weird. They have no social graces. We'd be better off if all the engineers went away." Stuff like that. But have you ever noticed, the engineers don't seem to mind? Why is that? Well, first of all, engineers think they are normal, and

everyone else is a little screwed up, so they ignore the jibes. And second, they probably don't hear them, because they are too busy and having fun performing the core work of the AFFTC.

The core work of the AFFTC? What's that all about?

Let's talk about that for a moment as I cover my second topic.

2. Support Organizations that Don't.

A wise management consultant once proposed that every large organization has three categories of workers. The first category is the people who do the Core work of the organization, that is, the work for which the organization is in existence. The XYZ Ditch Digging Company's core business is digging ditches. The ABC Tombstone Company makes tombstones. So we can follow that logic and say the Air Force Flight Test Center... does what? You know the answer. I know you know. Just shout it right out, don't be shy. YES! The Air Force Flight Test Center flight tests aircraft. Good guess. You win the Dick Hildebrand Award for guessing what the Flight Test Center does. Dick was in the running for my top two famous FTC engineers. I'll announce the winners later.

So next, we need to figure out who, no kidding, honest engine, does that CORE work at the Flight Test Center?

First, let's find out what the product of the Flight Test Center is. I'll cut through all the business seminar crap about defining the customer and what the customer pays us for, etc., etc., etc., and tell you, our one and only product at the AFFTC is the Flight Test Report. We give our customers a REPORT in some form or other at the end of flight testing, and that's the only tangible product we sell.

Cool! Now let's pinpoint who the most critical person is for getting the report to the customer.

Is it the **business office**, which makes everyone jump through hoops before they can spend money or travel? **No**... they don't write flight test reports.

Is it the **Project Management Division** who thinks they run all the projects on base? Let's see what they really do: Handle paperwork, schedule, budget, smooze with the customers, make and break promises. Uh, oh! **No** flight test reports there, Mr. Bill!

How about **Contracts**? No...

Procurement? Nada.

Supply? Zip.

Maintenance? Zilch.

I know, it must be **Operations!**? They fly the aircraft. Surely the Golden Arms, with egos the size of their libidos are the most important people at Edwards. Yes, it must be operations! But wait, we said we are looking for the organization that writes reports. When was the last time you saw a pilot write a Technical Report. Hey, it happens once every decade or so. But not often. So Ops is out.

Write reports... Does **Tech Editing** write reports? No, they edit reports, but they don't write reports.

Well, by now, you guessed it. The most important person at the AFFTC, the one who writes technical reports, the one who does the core work of the **AFFTC is the engineer.**

So the most important organization at Edwards **IS NOT:**

DR,
It's not PK,
It's not FM,
Not Supply,
Not LG,
Not OG, the Ops Group,
IT'S EN. ENGINEERING!

Engineering is the most important organization at Edwards.

Because they do the CORE WORK OF THE AFFTC.

They produce the one and only product, that our customers demand.

The other organizations, my friends, are SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS!

Who do they support? Well, they should be supporting EN. But do they? You know the answer to that. NO!

Let me give you an example.

In the Spring of 2002 we wanted to buy a SATCOM antenna for the CV-22 Project to perform ground testing of our Communication equipment. To make a long story short, with the help of our crack Support organizations, Procurement and Supply, the purchase got so wound up with red tape, procedures, and regulations that after six months we were never able to purchase the antenna.

So I gave up and admitted to the CV-22 contractor I'd failed, and the contractor, Lockheed, purchased one in a few days. A typical example of a Support Organizations Who Don't.

Have you ever called a support organization on a Friday and had someone tell you that the person you want isn't there because, "This is his scheduled day off?" It seems that some people work 9 hours a day and get every other Friday off. GUESS WHAT PEOPLE? Engineers work nine hours a day every day and we don't have enough time to finish our work! If you work for an organization that gives you every other Friday off, your organization isn't really needed. Fear for your job when cutbacks come!

And you've all seen the base-wide Emails: "Such and Such Organization will be closed Friday for an official function." HELLO!

As Rudyard Kipping said in his poem, "Tommy",

*An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please;
An' Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool -- you bet that Tommy sees!*

You bet that we know what those emails mean. They mean that the Such and Such organization will be closed for..... a PARTY!

Why can they close for an entire afternoon? Because no one will miss them! They aren't doing the Core Work of the AFFTC, so they can close anytime they want! If I were the Emperor of the Universe and I saw that an office closed 4 hour a week, I'd cut their budget 10%, figuring that if they could afford to be closed 10% of the time, they were over funded. But that will never happen. Why not? Well, that brings us to the third topic:

3. Why Inertia is Killing the Flight Test Center.

When I worked with then-Lt Col- Rich Engle at the TPS, he hated the Financial organization, FM. He thought Finance was arrogant and inflated and he said if he ever got to run the FTC, he'd slash FM by half.

Years later, he ended up as Major General Engle and I asked him what he'd done about FM. He just shook his head sadly and said, "John, I never realized what inertia was until I tried to tackle FM."

- And that's why most support organizations at Edwards are doing nothing to support anyone, let alone EN. Inertia.
- We can't pare them back to a manageable size because of... INERTIA.
- They add millions of dollars of overhead to our testing and make AFFTC incredibly expensive. Because ofINERTIA.

Let me tell you an interesting story. My wife has an old high school friend who's a drug pusher. But a legal one. She is a pharmaceutical representative for Burroughs-Wellcome. Her job is to visit doctor's offices; show-and-tell her company's latest drugs, and try to convince the Doctors to prescribe her drugs for the patients. Once a year, all the field

reps, as they are called, gather at the main headquarters in North Carolina for training, to learn about the latest drugs, etc. But she told me the greatest impact the home office had on her was their grasp of who was important in the company.

The field reps are very important in that company, because they push the drugs, without which, Doctors wouldn't prescribe them, and no profit will be made. And she said that in the hallways of the headquarters, there were big posters that said, "What have you done today to support your field reps?"

Unbelievable! In the Headquarters Building! "What have you done today to support your field reps?"

Do you ever think we'd see signs in the headquarters building here that said, "What have you done today to support your Engineer?" NEVER.

We'd be afraid "*we'd hurt someone's feelings.*" That someone "*might feel... left out.*"

So we'd have to have "equal-opportunity" posters on the wall that said, "What have you done today to support your support person?"

So what signs do we have at the FTC? Here are some of the signs I see for engineers: We shuttle the engineering division from one building to the next, like Gypsies.

The Engineering Division was originally in the Wing Headquarters building, which was originally called the FTEMF. Flight Test Engineering and Management Facility. Did you know that? The Wing Headquarters building was originally called the Flight Test Engineering and Management Facility!

But the support people got too big and powerful and kicked out the engineers! Kicked them out of the Flight Test Engineering and Management Facility! So now no one calls it the FTEMF any more. Too embarrassed, I guess.

Okay, what else do I see? I see support people getting the latest computers, while engineers beg for computers powerful enough to analyze data (THE CORE WORK OF THE AFFTC.)

We build new tech support buildings, while engineers occupy old facilities on the border of condemnation for health reasons.

In other words, we treat engineers like **shit** while taking good care of the support people.

Those are the signs that engineers see.

Oh, well... So the AFFTC priorities are screwed up. Just remember when the lay-offs come (and it's just a matter of time, brothers and sisters), you're still in better shape being a Core Person.

How can you tell if you are a Core Person?

If you are writing flight test plans, analyzing flight test data, or writing test reports, you are doing the core work of the AFFTC. We'll call you a Category 1 employee.

If you are directly supporting the actual core people, we'll call you a Category 2 employee.

If you support the direct support people, we'll say you're a Category 3 employee.

So when layoffs come, whom do you think will be the last to be laid off? The next to last? So my advice is to work your way up the org chart as high as you can, and either become a category 1 employee or directly support them. And don't kid yourself. The fact that you once handled a TDY request for an engineer doesn't mean you're direct support and thus Cat. 2.

Let me illustrate:

EN- Cat 1

MX-Cat 2

Ops- Cat 2

Range- Cat 2

FM, PK, Personnel, Supply, HRD, IT – Cat. 3

And where is DR? I'm not sure. We'll discuss them later. A good idea that didn't work. They turned out to be just MDO (More Damned Overhead) that operates in the parallel universe.

THE PARALLEL UNIVERSE? What's that? We'll talk about that later also.

So riddle me this: If there are 10,000 employees on base, how many are engineers (the ones doing the Core Work of the AFFTC?) Two thirds? Half? **How about 4%**. The rest are incredibly expensive overhead.

FOUR PER CENT of the workforce! And yet we're in chronic need of engineers. Why? Since you asked, that brings us to topic 4:

4. What's wrong with Engineering at the AFFTC

What's wrong is what I call Tom Peter's Law of Keeping Good Employees. Tom Peters, the famous Management Guru, once said, "If your organization is having trouble hiring and keeping good employees, it's because....."

LISTEN CAREFULLY to the ANSWER NOW. "If your organization is having trouble hiring and keeping good employees... it's because your organization sucks."

What did he mean by that? And how does the AFFTC engineering organization suck? Well, the AFFTC sucks in several ways. For discussion, let's define influences on employees into the two classic management categories, hygiene factors and motivation factors.

Hygiene factors are external working conditions that can serve only to de-motivate employees, and motivation factors as factors that make employees happy and want to work at AFFTC.

So boys and girls, let's see what some of these factors might be. Hygiene factors are things like driving 30 miles each way with the sun in your eyes, to go to and from work.

Hygiene factors are things such as waiting in a 2-mile line at the gate, and then showing 2 IDs to an armed guard to get on base.

Stop Right There! Don't give me any crap about "that comes with the job," and, "Corporate employment has its drawbacks, too." Bull! You can shit the fans, but you can't shit the players. Those things wear daily on our young engineers and you know it!

Okay, hygiene factors even include real hygiene, like having the rest rooms cleaned and the trash emptied once a week whether they need it or stink.

You poor rascals in the headquarters buildings don't EVEN know what I'm talking about, because you get pampered treatment.

I'm talking about unsanitary bathrooms at the Combined Test Forces (CTFs) because you aren't taking good care of your troops!

I'm talking about not having paper towels to dry your hands, or dirty paper towels spilling out of the trash cans onto the floor.

I'M TALKING ABOUT LETTING YOUR PRIMARY WORKERS TOIL IN FILTH AND SQUALOR!

Folks, IT'S BAD! One booster club contemplated selling towels in the restrooms to make money.

**SHAME ON YOU IN UPPER MANAGEMENT FOR LETTING THIS HAPPEN.
SHAME ON YOU!**

Okay, our hygiene factors at Edwards are poor. Just coming to work de-motivates employees.

What about motivation factors? Those are the factors that make employees say, “I feel included, I feel needed, I have a piece of the pie that is all mine, and my management makes me feel needed and appreciated”. Let’s look at what we have at AFFTC.

Let me illustrate what we have. I was sitting in an annual mandatory briefing on suicide prevention and the speaker told us that signs of a suicidal employee were: **feelings of helplessness, feelings of worthlessness, no hope for the future**. I turned to the Major next to me and said, “Oh, my God! I think I have suicidal signs.” “No,” he replied, “You have to ask yourself the second question, do you feel that way all the time, or just at work?” “Well, just at work,” I said. “Okay,” he responded, “Then that’s not signs of suicide. It’s signs that the AFFTC management is doing a good job on you.”

Yes, I’m afraid we have mean managers and mean policies, lack of any career management for engineers, and a total absence of personnel management in EN that are driving away good employees.

I know, because I left the AFFTC once in my career. Twice if you count my retiring. And I count it because I could have stayed if I had still enjoyed what I was doing. But the mean managers, the mean policies, and the CCAS rating system were more than I could take.

To quote my dear departed father, “The shit got so deep, I couldn’t wade through it any longer.” All you engineers know what I’m talking about. The mean manager don’t have a clue, and the good managers only kind of suspect.

So just a word of advice here. A CCAS-TYPE OF RATING SYSTEM IS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. A good plan that didn’t work. Nowadays it’s only used by mean manager to hit their employees over the head with; to threaten their employees. The way it’s being used borders on being illegal. Job slots are pegged with target CCAS scores. An individual can’t get more than one point higher than last year. The objective is to get everyone’s scores between the rails. The system sucks. It just isn’t what was pitched to us 5 years ago.

Let me give you an example. In Feb 2003, **two-thirds** of the employees in the FAA, working under a similar CCAS system, felt that their system was unfair. Do you know how many Edwards engineers think the system is unfair? Neither do I??

Because WE HAVE NEVER BEEN ASKED!!! The only time we’ve been asked about the CCAS system was to give our opinions before it was implemented, and I responded with my opinion on why it sucked. And I was told my opinion was WRONG!

And now the new proposed Department of Defense Pay System looks even worse. So a word to all you engineers; FLEE! GET AWAY BEFORE IT’S TOO LATE! RUN!

And to you managers: Don’t be a mean manager. Some of you have climbed over the backs of others to get your promotions.

But I like what Michael Josephson says, “A life devoted to accomplishing personal goals can be worthy and satisfying, but it can be enormously enriched when we consciously use our talents and time to improve the lives of others.”

So don't think that your rank lets you lord it over other human beings. It's OK to be strict on safety procedures, but don't be mean to your people. Did you hear what I just said? Don't be mean to people. Because, brothers and sisters, people are all that stand between you and having to do real work yourself.

But the real problem with Engineering starts at the top management. They are managers, not leaders. Managers do things right, leaders do the right thing.

- It wasn't the right thing to let Ops take the Flight Test Engineers away from Engineering.
- It wasn't the right thing to let DR take Project Management away from Engineering.

Those were two areas that were fun growth areas for engineers. Now all we have left is writing reports and analyzing data. BOOOORING! And no real career progression.

Maybe we need New Engineering Leaders... With Backbones who can stand up and say “NO!” to stupid ideas that hurt the engineering career field.

Maybe we need New Engineering Leaders who are visionaries and can think of totally awesome ideas such as engineering career paths and career progression that is more meaningful than the sink or swim variety I've seen for 29 years.

Do you know how engineers are selected for open vacancies at test forces? NOT by any meaningful career progression forethought! Not even by opening up the positions to engineers who are interested! No, the vacancies are kept secret, and our engineering leaders hope some program is winding down just as another program needs an engineer.

That's how engineers' careers are managed. LUCK OF THE DRAW! SHAMEFUL!

Guys, no one is in charge here!

I've heard a lot of good words lately, but with the exception of the New Engineering Training, I haven't seen any **action**.

What do you need in EN, a DR person to lead you? And again, I say to you engineers, FLEE! GET AWAY BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE! RUN!

But in all honesty, there are some outstanding engineers at the AFFTC. Some are technically outstanding. They are world-class flight testers, in fact. Others were fighters for engineers' rights, duties, responsibilities and career progression.

So I'd like to recognize two remarkable engineers as the first and last annual **Walkington's Engineering Heroes Award**.

First would naturally be **Charlie Van Norman**, that arrogant twit who always treated me personally with disdain and disrespect.

But he did more for engineers (and support people too; we have to always drag them along for the ride) than any other person in the history of Edwards AFB.

Charlie was responsible almost single-handedly for bringing locality pay to Edwards.

Without that, friends, we **could not hope** to hire engineers with the dismal salaries that Civil Service pays. My hat's off to Charlie.

The other is **Reggie Cyrus**. Reggie was responsible for assuring that mean managers don't take away all your pay just for spite.

When they tried that with Reggie, he sued in Federal Court to recover the **Congressionally mandated** portion of his CCAS salary increase. So we have Reggie to thank for keeping the mean managers somewhat honest with your paycheck. Hats off to Reggie.

5. Awards Programs That Don't

So let's talk about awards. **Most awards programs don't work!** If we want to train our dog, we reward him immediately when he does good, so he'll want to do good again. But to reward our AFFTC people, we have a quarterly or annual formal awards program that doesn't necessarily happen in the same calendar year as when the person did good.

I've received awards for things that I didn't even remember doing! The time gap was years! Come on, management! A small reward right away beats the Paducah out of a formal award months later.

And what's this thing about calling some of the awards names like "TESTER of Distinction?" Some airman saved an aircraft because he noticed a missing bolt? Fantastic. He's a bloody HERO. Call the award "AFFTC Heroes." He's a hero! No doubt. But he's not a tester.

We already agreed that only engineers are testers. And if you don't think that the name matters, try to give the airman an award and calling it "Flight Test Pilot of Distinction," and see what happens.

Once again we're just demeaning and degrading engineers. The only people who are doing the core work of the FTC.

6. So what's wrong with DR?

Program Management was an excellent idea that was implemented poorly, so it turned out to be just more damned overhead. Just another financial and emotional burden for the poor engineers to carry on their aching backs. At last count, there are 179 people in the DR organization, and few are engineers who have ever flight-tested an aircraft.

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINE! That alone is over \$20 Million in overhead that we pass along to our customers.

But what a good idea it was! An excellent idea! Take an experienced, mature engineer who has proven abilities to lead flight testing and put that person in charge of the planning, scheduling, and the budget of a flight test project from cradle to grave.

Excellent idea! A career step up! A Positive Incentive for engineers to learn more of the flight test business and take on more responsibility.

Why didn't it work? Because the mean managers in charge of DR had a personal grudge against engineering and swore that engineers would never work in DR.

So DR Management recruited a bunch of inexperienced folks (that the engineers had to train), and turned them loose on the poor customer to manage the budget and schedule of the projects, which set up the poor DR rookies for failure because none of them had ever run a flight test project before.

So... if the original plan for DR was to take some of the administrative burdens off the backs of the poor overworked engineers, let's see how that has worked out. **IT HASN'T!!** Now DR has conned engineering into this cockamamie Concerto crap.

What a crock of shit. Instead of DR taking administrative burden off engineers, we have engineers doing admin work for DR!

Col. Davis, what is wrong with this picture? It's backwards! It's Bullshit!

Don't Forget, boys and girls: Project management used to be something the Lead Engineers did in their spare time. Now it requires a NEW full time person???

MDO More damned overhead. And that overhead will never, never go away. NEVER! Because of?INERTIA!

One SPO Director I worked with came out to Edwards and as I introduced him to all the people he was paying for on the project, he kept muttering, "CRM, CRM."

Well, to me CRM meant Crew Resource Management, the name of a training class we give to flight test teams at Edwards.

After he left, I asked his assistant if he were concerned about our training, since he kept muttering, “CRM.” “No,” he answered, “To him CRM means, ‘Christ, redundant manpower.’”

So for the rest of my talk, CRM will be synonymous with worthless overhead.

7. And what’s the Story about the (CRM) IT Organization?

Let me ask two questions.

1. How many times have you read an accident report that said the airplane crashed because the computer that controlled the left aileron quit and thus the aircraft went out of control? I never have.

How many of you have read a report like that?

No one? Never? Me either.

No one would Ever, EVER, EVER be so stupid as to design an aircraft that way. There’s always a backup computer or backup safety method to keep the aircraft flying. You would never let one little computer crash an airplane!

2. Now how many of you have received an email that said the base’s M-O server went down and all the people with last names of M-O can’t receive email until it’s repaired?

Let’s see a show of hands. Almost everyone.

Now write me a 25-word essay on why IT system designers at Edwards will never become aircraft designers.

Once I owned a ditch-digging business. Being old-fashioned, I made all my workers dig ditches manually. But being a control freak, I wouldn’t let my workers bring their own shovels to work, they had to use the shovels I provided. But the ones I provided were very, very fragile and tended to break several times a day. But, being a control freak, I wouldn’t let the workers repair their own shovels, or even let someone on their crew repair their shovels, but made them sit idly but the side of the ditch until my shovel-repair department came along and fixed their shovel. So what happened? I was out of business in less than a year.

Now what I just described is the AFFTC workers’ view of our Information Technology Department, known as IT – “it” sounds like something from a Stephen King horror novel, and you’re not far from wrong.

The only difference between the AFFTC IT Department and my ditch-digging company is the fact that I went out of business because I couldn’t dig ditches in an efficient manner, so I couldn’t make a profit. IT doesn’t do their job in an efficient manner either, but they don’t go out of business because they don’t need to make a profit, they just add CRM to the overhead.

The IT organization is infused with people from the old Range organization who needed jobs when they phased out central computing and they brought with them their monopoly-oriented, Customer-Be-Damned attitude.

What do you suppose would happen if I locked MY door and put a sign on it, "If you need an aircraft Flight-Tested, fill out the attached form and we'll get back to you?" I'd get my ass kicked, that's what would happen. But that's what our IT SUPPORT people get away with.

Furthermore, the IT security procedures are so cumbersome that they are hamstringing operations. Just to read my email in the morning, I have to enter a password three times, a user name twice, a domain name and choose three separate icons. Over 100 keystrokes to get to my email. And since I only have one good typing finger, it takes forever. And one mistake, and it's back to the start!

This SUPPORT organization just adds to the burden of the core people they are supposed to be supporting... Which sounds a lot like ...

8. The Parallel Universe.

There's a science-fiction concept that says there's a parallel universe to ours, but we can't see it because everything is negatively polarized, or some such poppycock. But it's useful to explain certain scientific phenomena that don't seem to have a logical explanation. I don't know much about science fiction, but I do know there is a parallel universe at the AFFTC, and it's sucking out all our energy to the point that we are grinding to a halt.

As you might guess by now, that parallel universe consists of the Support Organizations That Don't, and the other organizations that have lost track of the fact that they are supposed to be supporting flight test, but think they are DOING flight test.

The parallel universe includes all the staff functions, the procurement and supply offices, the financial and business people, the Range people, the Personnel offices, the maintenance people, and especially the Project Management Division. All the folks who that think they are doing flight test instead of supporting flight test.

Long ago, they were very important organizations. Who would beat their brains out to support flight test. But somewhere along the line, they morphed into egotists and slipped into the Parallel Universe and think that their job is the reason Edwards AFB is still open when in fact, they add minimal worth... but always, always suck the dollars out of the projects until no one can afford to test at Edwards any more.

Folks, as many of you know, I'm a minor prophet and I can predict the future upon occasion, and I predict that in the next round of Base Closures, there will be a report to Congress that says, "Close Edwards AFB.

They used to do important flight testing, but our committee interviewed 9,600 people at Edwards and we couldn't find anyone who does actual flight testing."

9. So what's the cure for the AFFTC?

Well, if I were the Supreme Commander of the Real Universe, I'd do what Robert Townsend, the CEO of Avis Rent-a-Car in the 1960's advocated... A Vice President in Charge of Killing Things.

The VP-ICOKT would review the organization every two years and if he found a new department that was not essential to the core product, POW, it would be gone. Not scaled back, not cut 10%, but Whammo! Right between the eyes, dead! **If** there were a few grains of worth in the dead department, the tasks would be performed informally by whatever core organization needed the work done and life would go on. Yes, I'd kill the DR organization, the Environmental organization, and the IT organization and the FM organization. Each CTF, where the only real work gets done, could pick up the small duties that are really essential to the mission of testing aircraft.

But alas, a VP-ICOKT would never, ever happen at Edwards. Why? WHY? Yes, because of... INERTIA. We all know Newton's 4th law, "an organization will continue to grow until it collapses under its own weight." So there's no hope. There's no hope. Because of? INERTIA!

And the only hope for you poor engineers have is to log onto your computers and go to AFGE.ORG and join a Government employees' union.

That's why Wright-Patt and Eglin didn't have CCAS.

The engineers belong to a union that said, "No thank you. We don't want to give mean managers 100% control of our paychecks. We don't want to be bullied, browbeaten and threatened with a phony rating system. We don't believe it will be fair and impartial and we believe it will succumb to favoritism and crony-ism."

But how do you tell the difference between a mean manager, and a real leader? I have a present for you all in the form of 10 questions and I'll pass them out after this talk. And if engineers could get organized, you would all fill out the questionnaires on different managers and publish them all in booklet format and share them and refuse to work for mean managers. But, alas, you won't, because you're engineers, and it takes a DR person to get you organized.

Oh, this questionnaire was written in the 1960's, so it refers to the boss as "he." If that offends you, TOUGH! Get over it.

10. The EW Directorate.

And I couldn't rest until I said a word or two about the EW Directorate. The EW Directorate is very similar to my garbage service.

My garbage service says, "We'll only pick up once a week, on Tuesdays. You must use only our containers. You must separate recyclables. We won't pick up large items." And do you know what I say? "Yes, sir (grovel, grovel)." WHY? Because they are a monopoly! I have no alternative! It's my only choice for garbage service. They have a Customer-Be-Damned attitude and they can get away with it!

And that's how the EW Directorate is, folks. They are a monopoly! They report to no one! Rumor has it that they have the goods on the General, so they don't even have to take orders from the General! They just do what they want. They bully and berate customers, they are arrogant and inflated. They have a Customer-Be-Damned attitude, and I what do I say? "Yes, sir (grovel, grovel)." Because they are a monopoly.

Like AT&T was a monopoly. But wasn't it amazing how service improved and innovations flourished when the monopoly was broken up? Maybe it's time, folks. Maybe it's time.

11. What are my plans for the future?

I have an 8-step program for the future.

1. Retire.
2. Move to Mojave.
3. Start a rival Flight Test Center.
4. Hire the best Test Engineers.
5. Hire support people in the ratio of one support person to 10 engineers.
6. Train the support people to know **whom they support**.
7. Drive AFFTC out of business because of my low overhead.
8. Laugh all the way to the bank.

But seriously, I've had it with working for a living. I'm tired of mean managers and directionless leadership. I'm retiring to San Diego, and playing golf the rest of my life. My plan is to die on the golf course and have them sprinkle my ashes on the 4th tee box at the Camp Pendleton Golf Course.

12. Parting Shots.

I feel sorry for all the mean managers at the AFFTC. All the people who felt they absolutely had to impose their wills on others, flex their egos and be assholes.

Is it true that Type A personality stands for Asshole? I was interviewed 27 times for GS-14 positions and I was turned down 29 times.

Yes, I was turned down twice for two positions. They must have wanted to make sure I got the word! So to those mean managers who turned me down 29 times, **Thank you. Thank you!** Because I've seen what you do for a living, and I'm glad I didn't have any part of it. I hate to expose **the emperor's new clothes**, but GS-14s (aka NH-IVs) **don't do flight testing**. They do admin work. And worst of all, they think what they are doing IS IMPORTANT!!

So by being turned down 29 times for promotion, I got to stay an engineer. I got to test aircraft for 29 years at Edwards, and ladies and gentlemen, for 29 years, **I ...HAD.... FUN!**

Thank you.

RATE YOUR BOSS AS A LEADER

Score each characteristic from 1 to 10, 10 being best.

He is

1.....available. If I have a problem I can't solve, he is there. But he is forceful in making me do my level best to bring him solutions, not problems.	_____
2.....inclusive. Quick to let me in on information or people who might be useful to me or stimulating or of long-term professional interest.	_____
3.....humorous. Has a full measure of the Comic Spirit in his make-up. Laughs even harder when the joke's on him.	_____
4.....fair. And concerned about me and how I'm doing. Gives credit where credit is due, but holds me to my promise.	_____
5.....decisive. Determined to get at those little unimportant (how they are decided) decisions which can tie up organizations for days.	_____
6.....humble. Admits his own mistakes openly – learns from them and expects his people to do the same.	_____
7.....objective. Knows the apparently important (like a visiting director) from the truly important (a meeting of his own people) and goes where he is needed.	_____
8.....tough. Won't let top management or important outsiders waste his time or his people's time. Is more jealous of his people's time than he is of his own.	_____
9.....effective. Teaches me to bring him my mistakes with what I've learned (if anything) and done about them (if anything). Teaches me not to interrupt him with possible good news on which no action is needed.	_____
10.....patient. Knows when to bite the bullet until I solve my own problems.	_____
Total*	_____

*** This is your boss's rating as a leader on a scale of 0 to 100. If it's below 50 look for another job.**

RATE YOUR BOSS AS A LEADER

Score each characteristic from 1 to 10, 10 being best.

He is

1.....available. If I have a problem I can't solve, he is there. But he is forceful in making me do my level best to bring him solutions, not problems.	_____
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Total*	_____

*** This is your boss's rating as a leader on a scale of 0 to 100. If it's below 50 look for another job.**

[Body of Email message circulated two weeks before Retirement Speech.]

John Walkington will give a presentation entitled, **“Engineer Bashing, Support Organizations That Don’t, and Six Other Things I Think Are Outrageous at the AFFTC,”** on Friday, 4 June 2004, at 11:30 at the Ballroom at Club Muroc. Topics he will cover include,

“Engineer Bashing,”
“Support Organizations That Don’t,”
“Awards Programs That Don’t,”
“Why Inertia is Killing the Flight Test Center,”
“What’s Wrong with Engineering at the AFFTC,”
“So What’s Wrong with DR?”
“And What’s the Story about the IT Organization?”
“The Parallel Universe,”
“The EW Directorate,”
and
“The Cure For the AFFTC”

The presentation will start promptly on time, so if you’re late, you will be thoroughly ridiculed and demeaned. I’m tired of always waiting on late-comers.

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Post speech Note:

Rock'em Sock'em!

The Muroc Ballroom was near capacity for John's retirement speech. In attendance was one Major General, one Brigadier General, the new Chief Engineer and almost every Senior Officer on the Base. In addition to the Flight Test Pilots and Engineers and others who were there.

In between John's words, You could hear a pin drop after the first minute. When finished the only applause was from the CTF zoomies.

Hate to admit it but he is correct. The AFFTC does less flight testing today with 9,600 personnel (400 Flight Test Engineers) than we did when we had 4,200 personnel (450 Flight Test Engineers). More paperwork, more delays, more crap and more well-educated half-wits with low experience on their meter. Then the Officers with no-spine, no experience and no goal other than their next promotion or duty station. God forbid that a Flight Test would push the envelope or actually be risky. God forbid that flaming aircraft wreckage might kill some unlucky tortoise! Grrrrr!

I will be retiring early next year. I could stay but I will not.

I will work for a few more years with a Defense or NASA Contractor. Maybe even suck the \$life out of clueless AF program managers back here at AFFTC.