

THIS IS IT!

Many years ago, while our outfit was flying C-119's at Clinton County AFB, Ohio, a young aircraft mechanic named Mike Snodgrass wanted to fly and aspired to be a Flight Mechanic.

After applying, being accepted, and successfully completing training he was "checked out" as qualified Flight Mechanic.

One day he was scheduled to fly on an Orientation Flight for the local area Civil Air Patrol. As it turned out there was a very attractive young lady acting as chaperone for the cadets. Mike spoke with her about the upcoming flight.



He told her he would put her on an unused intercom headset in order for her to hear all the complicated checklist procedures, and radio transmissions between their aircraft and the control tower.

Then an idea came to him and he said "When we lift off I'll tell you over the intercom, you can look at your watch and note the exact time you first flew". Of course she was very impressed.

Everything went smoothly, until the take-off roll. When reaching Vto the pilot rotated the nose wheel off the runway, it was then Mike keyed the mic and nearly yelled "THIS IS IT".

The pilot, not being made aware of Mike's plan, thinking they were facing sudden death, pulled the throttles from take-off power to full

reverse and stood on the brakes, while frantically asking “What is it? What is it?” much to Mike’s chagrin.

No need to expound on the pilot’s remarks to Mike, suffice it to say the young lady noted the next take-off time on her own, not very impressed, since she too heard the remarks. Poor Mike.

Now we all know that when one “screws up” our loving friends waste no time reminding us of it, at every opportunity, for days, weeks, even years afterwards.

So a couple days after the story got around about the incident, a sign appeared over the break room door that read “THIS IS IT !”.

Years later; on 16 Oct 1980, Thomas Brady, pilot, George Freeland Jr, pilot, Donald Griffin, Navigator, Robert Haas, Loadmaster, and Michael P. Snodgrass, Flight Mechanic, were killed when the C-123 they were flying crashed, while on an Aerial Spray mission at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. God rest their souls.

The next day the sign above the break room door was removed. For now.....it held an entirely different meaning.

A story of the joys..... and sadness, of flight.

By Charlie Mercer