

## **Fresh Air Matters... with Capt. Yaw**

Whilst driving to Accra, upon making an observation from seeing the poor reaction and anticipation of drivers and pedestrians, I was taken aback by the comment from one of our young engineers. She said, in response to a harsh-toned expression of discontentment about the behaviour of a road user, 'we all too often believe that things happen for happening's sake'. OK, I will admit that I really had no idea what this meant. It took about twenty minutes of explanation, with examples, before I could really appreciate the comment.

For those who, like me, lack the immediate insight of such a statement, let me share my new-found 'wisdom'. If there is a football match, people watch the football match; the majority do not wonder why the football match is taking place, nor how it is funded, where it really is, and what the reasons behind the telecast at that time are. It is what I learned as 'people take things for granted'.

So, when an accident happens on the road, there is a general acceptance of the fact that the accident 'happened for happening's sake'. No reason, no purpose, no shaking. It landed on my understanding centre of grey cells like a bolt of lightning, illuminating the entire mind whilst burning its message into the depths of my perception of humankind in a new way.

I remember giving a lecture to my University students about a concept of consequences. In this lecture, I postulated that - if all people were aware of the consequences of their actions - we would not need a Police Force. My premise was, and still is, that - if everyone considered the consequences of their actions - then nobody would exceed the speed limits; in fact, they would probably drive more slowly. There would be no theft. There would be a lot more harmony in the world.

You see, by driving too fast, you risk killing a child that may run out in front of you. The five minutes you tried to save by increased velocity, would cost a life, and you some time at 'Hotel Jamestown' or 'Health-Spa Nsawam'. You would consider the effect on the victims family, the relatives, the community and your own family.

If everyone really considered the effects of theft, it would stop in an instant. Theft destroys trust; trust is the basis of all relationships. If those who considered stealing considered how they would feel if something were stolen from them, they would stop in their tracks. Simplistic, but if you consider it well, it is a fact.

If we just took a minute to consider the effect on the outcomes of tomorrow, of what we do today, we would quickly realise that nothing 'happens for happening's sake': there are always consequences – some good, some bad, some with economic advantages, some with economic disadvantages. Whichever way you look at Life, it is clear that those who take things for granted are not supporting the efforts of those who are working towards a successful and fruitful journey through this challenge called Life.

Having registered this realisation that the vast majority of people are not going to think the way I do, I left the whole thing to one side of my mind (the dusty side with lots of cobwebs). Then it came time to move the fuselage of one of our aircraft by road, from one site to another for painting.

Imagine the scene: one truck, loaded with one beautifully shiny, brand new aluminium aircraft fuselage. At each wheel two young Ghanaian ladies, involved in the aircraft build, holding the main gear. The truck moves slowly along a stretch of the Akosombo-Tema highway, near Akuse junction. Everybody has to overtake this long vehicle. Bicycles, motorbikes, cars, trucks, tro-tro's and buses. Every time a vehicle passes, the driver turns his head (or 'stretches his neck', as we say here), twisting it around and backwards to see what on earth is being transported here in Ghana.

The passengers do the same thing, only for much longer. The children climb on their knees and peer out of the back of the car to extend their glimpse of the spectacle.

This is not the first time we have done this, nor will it be the last. But I remember that, the first time we did it, nobody had any idea what was being transported. This week, around half of the people passing could be seen to form the word 'airplane' or 'jet', as they absorbed the image of the perambulating aircraft with maidens at its feet. As the load went over the rumble strips, a small girl started to race the truck on her way to school. I am sure that she won, because her little legs were moving very fast. As she caught up with her friends at the junction, the word 'ello-prane' could be discerned in the morning air.

Now my mind had a new set of challenges. Did the drivers consider the consequences of 'stretching their necks' so far and not paying attention to the road? Now that so many more people are able to recognise an aircraft fuselage when it passes in our neck of the woods, what do they think we build aircraft for?

It was fantastic that so many people did actually recognise the machine. Now we have to help them to understand the purpose of building and flying aircraft.

Do people really think that aircraft fly from Accra to London just because they do, and so it is reasonable to join those that do this thing? Do they think that small aircraft do the same routes? It is a bigger conundrum than I had ever imagined.

How do we instil into the veins of our youth the concepts of Aviation as a tool in all of its forms? A tool with a fantastic range of abilities and consequences. The flying doctor and nurses programme that launches next month will encounter new mind-twisting puzzles too. Will people want an airborne clinic because it is available, or because they need it? Will they understand the purpose and aims? Probably not, but they will benefit from it happening.

My head is bursting now with all of these questions. It is time for a strong drink of lime and soda. Now I ask myself, 'why am I drinking lime and soda?' Is it for drinking's sake? No, no, no. I know why. I drink lime and soda because I fly almost every day and I have a strict 'no alcohol for 24 hours before flight' policy; hence, I don't drink alcohol. So why do I have that policy? Because I know that alcohol affects reaction times and, regardless of the laws, I know of the consequences of drinking and flying, and so I do not touch the stuff.

A pilot is perhaps more interested in the reasons, understandings and cause-and-effect type thoughts than 'Kwame-Public'. Perhaps there is a lot of merit in thinking that things 'happen for happening's sake' because it excuses one from any thought about the consequences, short- and long-term.

I just hope that I am not writing this article for writing's sake!!

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