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# Instructor pilot earns Broken Wing Award

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By **Nathan Pfau**, Army Flier Staff Writer



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**Story Highlights**

- The Broken Wing is awarded for superior knowledge, skill and judgment when reacting to an in-flight failure or malfunction requiring an emergency landing.



*Brig. Gen. Timothy J. Edens, director of Army safety and U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center commanding general, pins the Broken Wing Award onto Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jason Starr, a UH-60M Black Hawk instructor pilot with C Company, 1st Battalion, 212th Aviation Regiment, during a ceremony at Lowe Army Heliport, at Fort Rucker, Ala., Jan. 31, 2014.*

FORT RUCKER, Ala. (Feb. 6, 2014) -- As a flight crew flew a routine mission overseas, a loud bang was heard and the Black Hawk flown by one of Fort Rucker's own began to shake violently as it started to drop out of the sky, but an extraordinary Aviator's actions saved the lives of himself and three others, earning him an award that's rarity is matched only by his heroic actions.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jason Starr, a UH-60M Black Hawk instructor pilot with C Company, 1st Battalion, 212th Aviation Regiment, was awarded the Broken Wing Award, Jan. 31, during a ceremony at Lowe Army Heliport here.

During his mission Aug. 22, 2012, Starr was shuttling passengers from South Camp in Sharm el Sheik, Egypt, to North Camp in El Gorah, Egypt, and while on the return trip, with only his flight crew and a single passenger, an Australian major, a loud bang was heard from outside the aircraft that shredded one of the Black Hawk's rotor blades. Before he knew it, he said they were falling out of the sky from an altitude of 6,500 feet.

"I had no idea what was wrong with the helicopter," said the Black Hawk instructor pilot. "When you're in that situation, you sort of take inventory of what you have available and use what you have to get back on the ground safely. We were going down whether we liked it or not.

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"This is obviously not an award that you plan to seek out, but it's a real honor to receive it," he added. "It was really just the will to survive that got me through it."

Starr's ability to stay calm, cool and collected is what Brig. Gen. Timothy J. Edens, director of Army safety and U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center commanding general, said kept the flight crew and passenger alive.

"(The Broken Wing) is awarded for superior knowledge, skill and judgment when reacting to an in-flight failure or malfunction requiring an emergency landing," said the general. "That reads really easy and simple, but it's a lot more involved in the process and it makes this award that much richer.

"I can't even imagine what that must have felt like to ride that bumpy bronco all the way to the ground, all the while making emergency radio calls and going through the crew coordination drills," said Edens during the ceremony. "He thought through all of that and got the aircraft on the ground safely, and had everyone walk away from it."

This was Edens' first time presenting the award and only his second time seeing the award given out in his 33-year career. That alone shows how rare the award is, he said.

Although Starr said receiving the Broken Wing award was a great honor, the real reward came when he was able to see his family again.

"Now I'm able to watch my children grow up with my wife," he said. "That's a lot to take on by herself, and I just want to thank (her) for picking up the reins and doing everything (during) my deployment."

Even though the ceremony was to honor Starr and his achievements, it was also an opportunity for other pilots to learn from someone else's experience, and Starr offered advice to those that might face adverse situations like the one he encountered.






"In order to get through it, you've got to have a will to survive," he said. "You have to have the knowledge and the calmness of spirit to employ it in order to survive whatever situation it is.




"This was a fluke accident and there are a lot of safety measures that are put in place to ensure that this never happens, but it does happen," he continued. "Continue to study, continue to stay in the books, continue to do your job, and hopefully you'll never have to use it, but if you ever do, it'll be available to you in your tool bin."

Starr's achievement is a validation of Fort Rucker's training and focus on safety, said Lt. Col. Raymond J. Herrera, 1st Battalion, 212th Aviation Regiment commander.

"We talk about supporting the ground commander and the troops on the ground, and we hold the responsibility of flight students to carry on that tradition when you get out to the flight line," he said. "We have the best professionals here on Fort Rucker and we have one sitting right before you today -- he is a testament to that."

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