



## Our Stories

# Pinnacle Pilot Draws from Personal Experience in CIRP Role

By John Perkinson, Staff Writer

Committee volunteers sometimes bring a wealth of related experience to the roles they perform on behalf of ALPA, and F/O Casey “Bear” Brouhard (Pinnacle) is a prime example. In serving as Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) coordinator for his pilot group, Brouhard has dealt with more than his share of incident and accident victims over the years, drawing from an understanding and familiarity that few airline pilots possess.

In working for 14 years as a paramedic, Brouhard routinely answered calls to assist individuals suffering from physical trauma. Skill and timing were vital to his performance, but these events also exposed him to the mental challenges that can surface after these kinds of episodes occur—conditions that CIRP was specifically created to address.

Born in Valdez, Alaska, Brouhard spent a year working as an emergency medical technician in central Wisconsin before returning to his home state. There he got a job on a “cat train” (a Caterpillar bulldozer pulling a line of train cars) working on the North Slope, a treacherous part of Arctic territory.

“My company would send cat trains out on the frozen tundra to conduct

seismic testing to look for oil deposits,” Brouhard says, adding, “I was the sole medical personnel, performing paramedic duties for the 200 guys who worked on these crews.”

Brouhard says the top tier for paramedics is the flight medic job. So feeling restless, he applied for and became a flight medic flying on a Bell 222 helicopter, back in central Wisconsin, as part of St. Joseph’s Hospital’s air ambulance service. This rescue unit lands on highways, farm fields—wherever help requiring airlift access is needed.

Brouhard recalls on one occasion, “We were dispatched to pick up a gunshot victim from a deer-hunting accident. The guy was shot through a major artery in the arm. The bullet went through the chest cavity and into the abdominal cavity. He was in pretty bad shape.

“We had to land in a cornfield, and corn stalks were flying everywhere from the rotor wash. We quickly performed some field medicine and gave the guy some fluids to keep his blood pressure up. We then moved him onto the helicopter. Blood was everywhere, including in my helmet, so I couldn’t put it on. I had to yell to communicate with the rest of the crew, since I didn’t have my mike.”

The hunter survived, but spent months recuperating in the hospital.

Brouhard visited him frequently to check on his progress. This period was also when Brouhard got the flying bug, earning his private pilot’s license.

After four years and some careful consideration about his future, Brouhard decided to move to Minneapolis for flight training at Academy College. To pay for this instruction, he became an inner-city paramedic. Describing

### CIRP

ALPA’s Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) is available to help pilots and their families cope with the psychological effects of an accident or incident and to assist in the recovery process before stress and other reactions can disrupt job performance, relationships, and health. ALPA’s next CIRP meeting will take place during the Pilot Assistance Forum in May in ALPA’s Herndon, Va., offices. [▶](#)

the difference in working “downtown,” he points out that “you wear a bullet-proof vest and have to carry handcuffs to take care of patients.”

And in performing his duties, he met an ER nurse whose husband flew for Mesaba. Brouhard mentioned his interest in flying, and the husband helped him submit his application. Brouhard now flies for a living. He continued to work on his days off as a paramedic for several years but eventually decided to concentrate on flying.

A CRJ-200 pilot based in Minneapolis, Brouhard began the piloting portion of his career as a Mesaba pilot in 2008, moving on to Pinnacle when the two airlines merged in 2012.

A graduate of Academy College and the University of Iowa, Brouhard points out that his paramedic experience has come in handy on several occasions in helping passengers during his trips. No doubt, this knowledge and his ALPA CIRP training are tangible benefits for the thousands of ALPA pilots and family members he now serves. Brouhard is just one more example of ALPA’s CIRP slogan, “Pilots helping pilots.” [▶](#)



**Paramedic Casey Brouhard (on his stomach) intubates a car-crash survivor, ensuring that he is able to breathe.**