

GRATITUDE FOR CHUTE-PACKERS

One of the paradoxes of life is that the people you most depend on might be complete strangers to you. Yet, ironically, they provide you with support, encouragement, and sometimes more.

Jim Belasco, a college professor and management consultant, tells a story that shows just how far that dependence can go.

On a mission during the war in Vietnam, a U.S. Navy pilot's jet was hit by enemy fire. He ejected himself from the fatally stricken plane, pulled the ripcord on his parachute, and waited those interminable seconds until it opened. It did.

He landed safely, only to be captured and spend five years in a prisoner-of-war camp until the end of the war. He never gave that parachute another thought.

Years later, a man approached him in a hotel lobby, introducing himself as a former sailor who had been on the same carrier as the pilot. The sailor, it turned out, had packed pilots' parachutes. After reminiscing, the men went their separate ways.



Only later did the pilot realize that the man he had just met had probably packed the chute that saved his life. Then he thought about how many other “chute-packers” there had been in his life, both military and civilian: people who had done their jobs, however dull, extremely well and enabled him to do his – and survive.

From that moment, the pilot vowed to know who was “packing his chute” in his work and his life, and to acknowledge and thank them.

It's a great lesson for all of us who know, yet sometimes forget, that we depend on others every day of our lives.

For those of us in Life Care and Century Park, it goes without saying that the performance each of us has is aided and enhanced by others on our team – those we know and trust – as well as others we may never meet who provide the wherewithal – whether money, resources or technology – to help us succeed.

– Beecher Hunter