

Who's "That Guy"?

By SSgt. Edw. S. Heyward, USMC

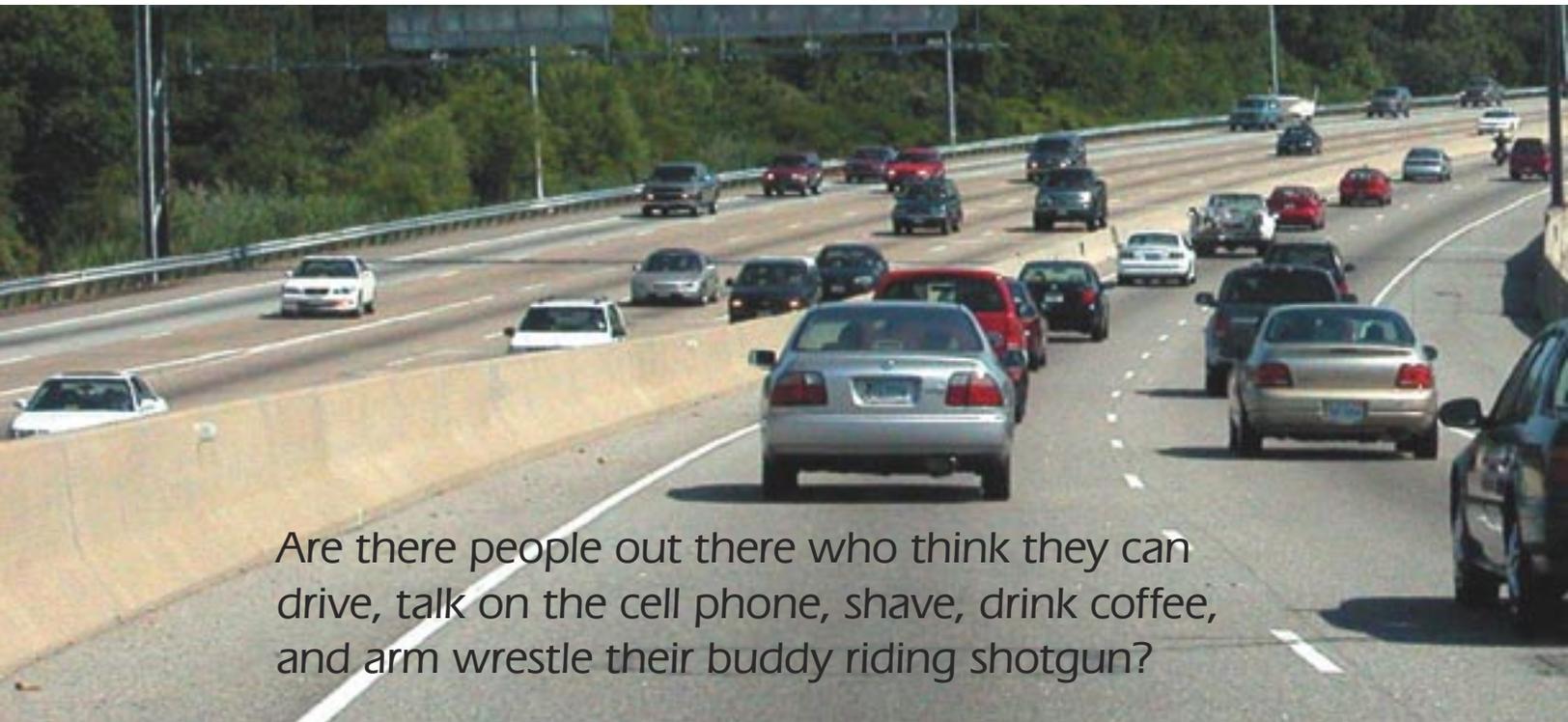
If you're reading this article, chances are you're a lieutenant stuck on duty in a ready room, so I'll do my best to make this entertaining. It's late afternoon, another week has passed, and we're all much closer to that great green pasture in the sky some of us call retirement.

My commute to and from work has enlightened me that the ratio of idiots to normal people on the road has gone up significantly. Funny thing is, most people I see driving like idiots all have really short hair—hmmmm.

Because driving is something we do about every day, most of us take it for granted. The truth is, driving can be just as deadly as a pistol duel (or being Saddam Hussein's body double). Can most of us drink coffee and drive? Yes. Can most of us drive and listen to music? Absolutely.

Are there people out there who think they can drive, talk on the cell phone, shave, drink coffee, and arm wrestle their buddy riding shotgun? You bet. Their driver's licenses all read "That Guy." He's the one who always seems to be doing something stupid, and you wonder how Darwin's Theory hasn't removed him from this planet yet.

So, thanks to him, guess what, we have to talk about driver safety, starting with speed. As I was driving to work one morning, I had a vision. It was yellow and neon green, and it passed my driver's window at the speed of holy cow. It sounded like a weed-eater and a top fuel dragster. This little bugger was running wide open. Anyhow, this thing passed me so fast that, when it got back into my lane, even though it was only five feet off my front bumper, I couldn't read its license plate. If bad things can



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happen at 55 mph, imagine how bad and how fast things can happen at the speed of holy cow. Case in point, slow down!

I looked at this young Marine, and the first thought in my mind was, “His sergeant must be a real hard case for him to risk his life doing something so foolish, rather than be a few minutes late for work.” Here’s a preventive measure for our speed demon: Wake up 15 minutes earlier so you don’t have to rush. I mean, proper prior planning prevents poor performance, right? That’s day-one stuff.

Next, for all you people still satisfied with driving to work below the speed of light but above the speed of smell, the biggest thing you should worry about is what we in aviation call “task saturation.” If you’re trying to do a hundred things at once, plus trying to drive, you are quite possibly the biggest hazard on the road. In the Marine Corps, we have a big thing called “attention to detail,” which, contrary to popular belief, applies to everything you do, even driving to work. You cannot pay full attention to the road and the things going on around you if you have 10 other things going on—no matter how small they individually seem. So, for all “those guys” who drive like this, keep in mind what you lack in pure idiocy and speed, you

make up for in lack of attention to what you are doing. Here’s another preventive measure: Stay focused on driving, and take care of everything else when you get to your destination.

Now, for the other end of the spectrum. If you are driving at the speed of smell and slamming on your brakes every time a raindrop hits the road, your life is in danger. You are risking your life in two ways. The first risk is from other traffic. There is a lot to be said for going with the flow, and you can cause more problems than you will solve by driving too slow and braking excessively. The second risk is when you push someone like me right over the proverbial edge we all call sanity—then, I’m coming for you. The preventive measure here is to stop this madness. If driving makes you that nervous, catch a ride with a buddy; it’s safer for everyone.

A serious thought to keep in mind—we have lost more people to driving accidents in the last five years than in combat operations. Imagine going to war, doing your duty, getting home, and then dying in a car wreck because you just couldn’t wait to make that phone call. You have accomplished too much in life and are too important to your country and the Corps to die foolishly. 🦅

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