

My Trip to the Headbanger's Ball

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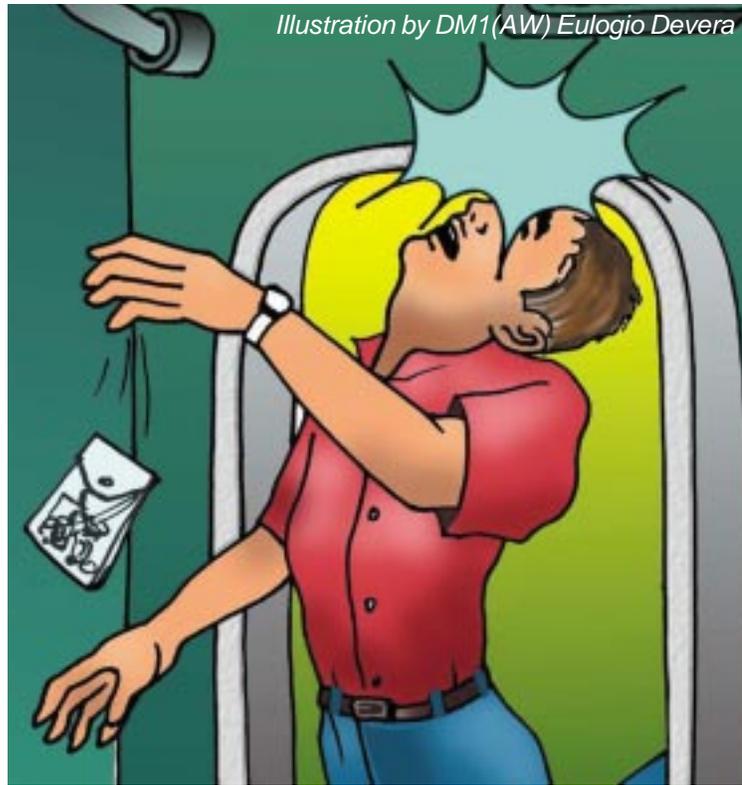
Returning to our ship one night, I got word from the OOD that uniform requirements for the next morning's personnel inspection had changed. Because I wasn't prepared, I frantically grabbed a sewing kit from my locker and rushed off to my work center to do some fast touch-up work on my uniform.

Unfortunately, I never got to the work center. The last thing I remember was running down a passageway, then waking up on the deck with blood dripping down the side of my face. I soon realized I had hit my head on the upper portion of a knee-knocker. I woozily staggered off to medical.

Within minutes, a duty corpsman had bandaged my head and sent me to a nearby naval hospital. I was there having X-rays taken of my neck when I told a medical technician I was feeling funny. I promptly passed out and fell face-down on the deck, cutting a new gash across my eyebrow. When I awoke, a half-dozen corpsmen had surrounded me.

Six hours later, after spending a sleepless night at the hospital, I finally returned to the ship. Thanks to my carelessness, I had six staples in the top of my head, five stitches along my eyebrow, a throbbing headache, and an SIQ chit. The pain lasted for days.

What did I learn from this trip down misery lane? The safety training you receive seldom crosses your mind until it's too late. It had been 18 months since I joined the Navy and first learned about the hazards of shipboard duty. Even with all the operational-risk-management training I've received, I didn't stop to consider myself as a potential mishap victim until my day of reckoning occurred.



Now, I'm more careful, and I don't blow off those safety lectures. It takes caution to do a job right. I hope my tale helps others to stop and think about what they're doing before disaster strikes. Whatever you do, watch out for those knee-knockers. ☺

According to USS Saipan's safety officer, the author lives aboard ship and is a non-designated seaman who hopes to become a Navy journalist. He wrote this article as part of a training assignment and wants to help others better understand the hazards of shipboard life. As a retired Navy chief journalist, I salute you, Seth, and wish you well in your Navy pursuits.—Ed.