

# Maybe Not **9** Lives, But At Least **2**

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**I**t was a day like any other. I awakened to find myself looking out the window at a sun-filled day and thinking about what would happen the next day. I was to take the Navywide examination for PO1 for the first time, and, later the same day, I would leave for cruise on board USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72). Tomorrow indeed promised to be a busy day but one that would pale quickly in comparison to something that was going to happen today.

I planned to knock out all my last-minute tasks and make sure there were no loose ends—it would be a day filled with errands. I originally had planned to use my car because I had quite a few things to pick up, but the weather was just too tempting—my motorcycle was my last-minute choice of transportation.

I love motorcycles, and, because I wouldn't see mine for the next six months, I didn't want to miss an opportunity to get in one last ride. I grabbed my backpack, figuring I could carry everything to be picked up in it. Then, I gathered all my riding gear and made sure it was in good condition.

I pulled my bike out of the garage and began my pre-ride inspection. I made sure the tires were in good shape, the chain wasn't too tight or too loose, and the brake-fluid and oil levels were OK—things all riders should do, regardless of experience level. I then started my bike to let it warm up while I put on my riding gear, with the same feeling of anticipation and excitement I get every time before a ride. My father

came out to tell me goodbye before departing and said he would see me later. He just didn't know how much later.

As I pulled out of the driveway, my thoughts were on where I needed to go to accomplish all my tasks. I realized this might not be the best day to ride, since so many things were racing through my head and would distract me from paying full attention to the environment. These reservations all but disappeared, though, when I hit the open road and the rush of riding kicked in. I like to think of myself as a safe rider, but safety only goes as far as the next driver's recklessness.

I hit the freeway and made my way southbound on Highway 99. As it turned out, I completed all my errands with no problems, but then came the trip back home. It was a smooth ride northbound, with a low volume of traffic and the company of a couple other riders I had caught up to while on the freeway. If you ride, you know it's always a plus to meet up with other riders and ride together.

As we rode along, the traffic began to build, so the other riders and I started looking for the reason behind the increase. We soon saw a vehicle had collided with another and had run into a guardrail. Paramedics and local authorities already were on the scene. I could see the traffic was clearing ahead.

As it cleared, I started seeing some openings, but enough congestion still existed that I decided to keep

riding a safe distance behind the driver (of an SUV) I had been following. My only worry was that the driver ahead of me seemed a little too indecisive and unpredictable. The traffic soon began slowing again, and that's when I noticed the driver ahead of me turning her car's blinker on and off, braking erratically, and weaving back and forth, as if she didn't know whether to change lanes. I decided I had to get away from her at the first opportunity.

Looking over my right shoulder, I saw an opening, put on my blinker, and threw my hand out to signal I was changing lanes. I simultaneously started speeding up enough to get around the erratic driver and was beside her when she suddenly changed lanes and

and the paramedics began straightening me out. They thought I had shattered my entire pelvic bone, along with a few other bones. Doctors at the local hospital, however, couldn't find a broken bone in my whole body—just a few abrasions and bruises.

I left the hospital eight hours later with a sprained knee and thumb and minor back-muscle stiffness. People from other departments at the hospital came to see me while I was there because they said it was a miracle I was alive. I couldn't agree more. There's no other way to explain being run over at the waist by an 18-wheeler and still being able to walk and talk and carry on with your duties aboard a Navy aircraft carrier just weeks later.



The victim's windbreaker

collided with me. I was thrown across two lanes of traffic.

I remember seeing first the sky and then the ground, as I tumbled over and over again, until I finally looked up and found myself under an 18-wheeler, with the rear tires heading directly at me. I was powerless to do anything but watch them come closer. What seemed like a couple of minutes but actually was only a matter of seconds passed. At the moment of impact, I did nothing but close my eyes, thinking I surely would be killed. I was certain if I survived the initial impact I would be staring at part of my insides lying beside me. I felt the tires roll over me; then, I was thrown violently at high speed.

The next thing I remember was looking up at the paramedics with my elbow and knee stuck under the curb while they assessed my injuries. I couldn't feel my arms or feet at first, which caused me to fear the worst. Shortly, though, I could feel and move my toes,

At the time of my crash, I was wearing a full-face helmet, a light windbreaker, some jeans, a pair of boots, and leather gloves. This PPE had to have played a huge role in my survival [see accompanying photos]. The entire right and front sides of my helmet were ground down deep into the Styrofoam, and my gloves were completely worn through, along with my pants and jacket. You even could see the tire marks over the midsection of my jacket.

Not a day passes now that I don't think about how lucky I am to be here or what kind of effect my passing would have had on family and friends. Despite what happened, though, I still can't wait to get home and ride my motorcycle again—with new PPE, of course. 🚘

For more info, go to: [http://www/motorcyclecruiser.com/streetsurvival/traffic\\_threats/](http://www/motorcyclecruiser.com/streetsurvival/traffic_threats/).