

# For Want of a **Designated Driver**



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**O**n the night of Nov. 30 and into the wee hours of Dec. 1, a young fleet Sailor had the world by the tail as he partied with friends in Virginia Beach. Now, he's just a name etched on a piece of granite in a local cemetery.

What happened? He, like many who have gone before him, tried to prove that drinking and driving do mix. He took that fatal gamble, even though just six months earlier, he had sat through a post-deployment stand-down in which one of the topics was—you guessed it—drinking and driving.

With a BAC of 0.09, the 25-year-old seaman **left his friends at the establishment where they all had been drinking and climbed behind the wheel** of his 1998 Mitsubishi Eclipse [*see accompanying photo*]. According to the friends, he left the establishment about 0120. He then headed west on Ferrell Parkway in Virginia Beach at a speed

investigators concluded had to be faster than 90 mph.

The “joy ride” ended when he encountered a curve that caused his vehicle to drift off the left side of the road. The victim over-corrected, which sent the car flying off the road to the right. It crashed through two fences and two yards before smacking a tree, but the ride wasn't over yet. The car then sailed through a third fence, flipped over, and ultimately landed on its roof, leaving behind a debris field reminiscent of a war zone.

The victim was wearing lap and shoulder restraints, and the driver and passenger air bags deployed, but these safety devices weren't enough to save the young seaman from such a horrific crash. A coroner pronounced him dead on scene from a major head trauma and major internal injuries. ■