

All five personnel then attend a previously scheduled luncheon at a local pizza parlor, where two of them each consume two glasses of beer. The PO3 and other two Sailors each drink lemonade. When the luncheon is over, all five climb into the LSSV and head to the MWR event, with the PO3 driving—"smart move," you're probably saying, but read on. I promise you'll have second thoughts.

En route to their destination, the group stops for fuel and snacks and to change drivers. The PO3 tells the others he intends to have a beer from the cooler. Some of them see him at the cooler, but none see him actually drink a beer.

When they all climb back into the vehicle, the PO3 sits in the right-rear passenger seat. The group travels about another four hours before one of the Sailors says, "I could go for a beer."

The PO3 responds, "I could do a mission impossible."

The other Sailor shoots back, "Bet you a buck you won't."

At that time, the PO3 rapidly starts exiting the vehicle through his window, while the LSSV is traveling 75 mph. He is reaching for the cooler in the back when he loses his grip and falls, hitting the highway. The driver stops, and two Sailors begin CPR, as another one calls 911. Emergency personnel arrive moments later and call for a life

flight. Before the victim can be taken away, though, he dies at the scene.

What leads people to make errors in judgment and do such dangerous acts? Studies have shown that incorrect decisions are made mainly during a driver's first years on the road. Let's face it—people of all ages occasionally have crazy ideas. The telltale difference lies in how or if we respond to those ideas. It's common knowledge that most youths lack the ability to control their impulses, behind the wheel or otherwise. With experience, though, comes appreciation for the consequences of our uncontrolled actions.

These studies also have found a relationship between risk-taking in driving and one's perception of the risks involved. Individual drivers are apt to rate risk-taking according to the faith they have in their ability to cope safely with different dangers. Thus, a key factor can be a young driver's exaggerated belief in his/her mental skills and ability to control the vehicle.

An important point to consider here is what can happen when people get behind the wheel. If they pursue their baser impulses while in control of a one- or two-ton, gas-powered guided missile with power windows and a CD player, nothing or no one is safe. ■

An Easter Miracle

By Brion Hall,
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On Easter Sunday, my girlfriend and I were coming back to Topsham on Interstate 95 from visiting her parents. It was a dry and sunny afternoon. We were south of Bangor, just past Pittsfield, when a car passed us doing between 90 and 100 mph.

As the car came back into the travel lane, it went onto the shoulder, then off the road. Anyone who ever has traveled that section of I-95 knows that the roadway is elevated about 15 to 20 feet. The car went down the bank into a drainage ditch, where it hit water that sprayed as high as the trees.

The car then hit a piece of exposed granite ledge, causing it to cartwheel end-over-end about 20 feet high in the air. The car must have flipped six times before it touched the ground again, then just disappeared into the woods, still tumbling end-over-end.

My heart was in my throat. I remember thinking, "There's no way anybody could have survived that." It was like the high-speed chase and wrecks you see on the TV show "Cops" or, better yet, a NASCAR crash, with pieces of car going in every direction.



The victim in this story was driving a car similar to this one.

I immediately pulled over, figuring my experience as a search-and-rescue swimmer in the Navy and my extensive first-aid training could help. I told my girlfriend to call 911 as I got out of the car. Another driver (a young girl, maybe 18 years old) and I ran down the bank toward the woods. After we had waded across the drainage ditch and entered the woods, I told her to start looking for people who might have been ejected. At this point, I noticed the young girl was crying, probably because she was so scared.

It took us about three minutes to reach the car because the woods were so thick, and the car was so far in. When we finally reached it, all that remained was a ball of twisted metal, covered with tree branches. Pieces of the car were strewn everywhere. All the glass was gone, and three of the four wheels were missing. The fourth wheel still was attached, but the aluminum rim was shattered.

It took me a second to figure out which was the driver's side because what was left of the car had come to rest upside down. It barely resembled a car any more. I remember pulling away branches so I could get to the opening that once was a window—the opening now measured about 15-by-20 inches. As I knelt down to look inside the car, I said a little prayer, afraid of what I was about to see. I just knew everyone would be dead.

A woman about 50 was hanging upside down in the driver's seat, still buckled up. She wasn't

moving, and her eyes were closed. As I reached in to check her pulse, she moved, and I asked if she was OK. She responded, "Oui" (she was a French Canadian from Quebec). I told her help was on the way to get her out of the car. Just then, though, she unbuckled her seat belt and dropped to the roof. I asked if she was alone, and she said she was. She

then stuck her feet out the opening and climbed out, with only minimal help from me.

The young girl and I helped her to the side of the road, where I put my coat around her and had her lie down. I then elevated her feet to treat for possible shock and asked her what had happened.

The car then hit a piece of exposed granite ledge, causing it to cartwheel end-over-end about 20 feet high in the air.

"I was reaching down for my CD case on the passenger floor," she said.

I kept her talking until the EMTs arrived (about 10 minutes later). Their check revealed only a small nick on her forehead from a piece of flying glass. I gave my statement to a state trooper and left without so much as a thank you.

I believe the only thing that saved that lady was the seat belt she was wearing. The lesson here is always to buckle up when you get in a car. Otherwise, there may not be another miracle on Easter Sunday or any other day. ■

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