



# SEA & SHORE

SPRING 2006

The Navy and Marine Corps Magazine for Afloat and Shore Safety

**Mentor a child  
in the way he should go...**

Sixth Annual Traffic-Safety Magazine

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**RADM George Mayer, Commander, Naval Safety Center**  
**Col. James F. Jamison, USMC, Deputy Commander**  
**John Mahoney, Head, Communications and Marketing Department**

Naval Safety Center (757) 444-3520 (DSN 564)  
 Dial the following extensions any time during the greeting.

**Sea&Shore Staff**

**Ken Testorff, Editor/Editor in Chief** 7251  
 kenneth.testorff@navy.mil

**Patricia Eaton, Graphic Artist** 7254  
 patricia.eaton@navy.mil

**Ginger Rives, Distribution** 7256  
 virginia.rives@navy.mil

**Points of Contact**

**Publications FAX** (757) 444-6791

**Shore Safety Programs Director** 7166  
 Capt. William Glenn

**Installation/Industrial Safety Director** 7156  
 Nancy McWilliams

**Explosives & Weapons Safety Division** 7164  
 Cdr. Marcus Culver, Head

**Fire Data Analysis Division** 7169  
 Vince Lisa, Head

**Traffic & Off-Duty Safety Division** 7165  
 Charles Roberts, Head

**Tactical Operations & Safety Investigation Division** 7147  
 Jim Wilder, Head

**Training Safety Programs Division** 7175  
 CWO4 David Tomlinson, Head

**Shore Safety Programs FAX** (757) 444-6044

**Shore Safety General E-mail**  
 safe-shore@navy.mil

**Afloat Safety Programs Director** 7127  
 Cdr. Richard McClellan

**Surface Division** 7133  
 Cdr. Clinton Vollono, Head

**Diving & Salvage Division** 7086  
 LCdr. Robert Crouch, Head

**Submarine Division** 7089  
 Lt. Victor Romano, Head

**Data Analysis and Media & Education Division** 7115  
 Steve Scudder, Head

**Afloat Mishap Line** DSN 564-1562

**Afloat Safety General E-mail**  
 safe-afloat@navy.mil

Mishaps waste our time and resources. They take our Sailors, Marines and civilian employees away from their units and workplaces and put them in hospitals, wheelchairs and coffins. Mishaps ruin equipment and weapons. They diminish our readiness. This magazine's goal is to help make sure that personnel can devote their time and energy to the mission, and that any losses are due to enemy action, not to our own errors, shortcuts or failure to manage risk. We believe there is only one way to do any task: the way that follows the rules and takes precautions against hazards. Combat is dangerous and demanding enough; the time to learn to do a job right is before combat starts.

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A reprint from *Hog Tales* magazine points out the importance of wearing all the prescribed motorcycle-riding gear.



The helmet of a speeding motorcyclist was left lodged in the grill of this truck [see arrow] after he hit it head-on. Meanwhile, officials had to collect body parts belonging to both the biker and his female companion along a stretch of the roadway. None of us can be sure there will be a tomorrow, but why spend today living like there won't be?—Ed.

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Photo originally published with the story "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Mentoring" in June 2004 *Airman* magazine. *Air Force* photo by MSgt. Scott Wagers. Used with permission.

Cover graphics by Jeff Hobrath of KR Systems, Inc. ([krsystems.com](http://krsystems.com))

## BACK COVER

A reported 75-car pileup that occurred in Atlanta, Ga.



## WESS Update

The WESS Barrier Removal Team (BRT) is working to improve the program. Help us make WESS better; use the on-screen feedback form, or call the WESS help desk at (757) 444-7048.



# Admiral's CORNER

FROM COMMANDER, NAVAL SAFETY CENTER



## Great New Technology, But You Still Have To Use It

The auto industry is doing its part to make driving safer. For example, one popular new SUV features a sensor that estimates the driver's size by his distance from the steering wheel. Another sensor detects if the passenger seat is empty, or is occupied by a child or a small, medium or large adult.

How about an air bag that deploys in one of two sizes? That's what you get with the purchase of a well-known American luxury car today. The severity of a crash, seat-belt use, and occupant-seat position determine what size bag inflates.

Granted, not everyone can afford—or, for that matter, even wants—a car like the ones that have these new safety devices. At least, these innovations work automatically—unlike the seat belts in most cars. Look at the efforts still being invested just to get people to take the two or three seconds necessary to buckle up each time they get in a car.

In September 2005, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta announced we're making progress in that area. The national safety-belt-use rate stood at 82 percent in September. That's a rise of 21 percentage points since the first national law-enforcement mobilization in 1997.

The unfortunate reality, however, is that the job still isn't done. We keep losing Sailors and Marines on our nation's highways. Consider a 20-year-old PO3, who, on the same day his ship returned to port, went on liberty, illegally acquired beer or liquor, and consumed an unknown quantity. He then got behind the wheel of his car and, according to witnesses, was driving an estimated 100 mph when he missed a curve in the road. The vehicle flipped several times, ejecting the PO3, who died at a trauma center.

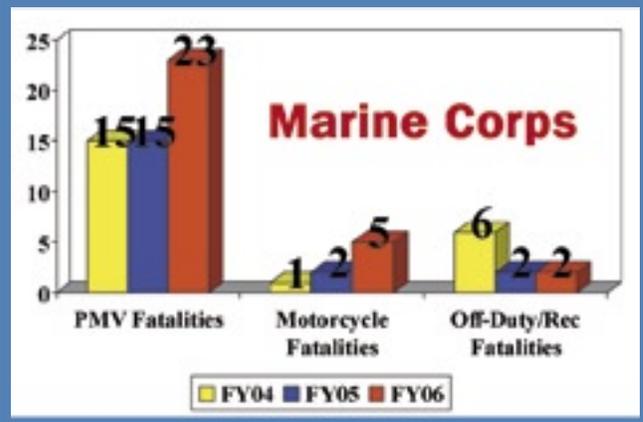
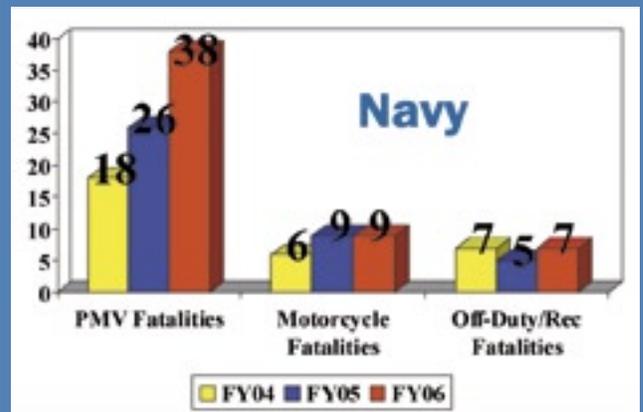
It wasn't like the ship's leadership didn't try to prevent this tragedy. There was ongoing shipwide emphasis on drinking and driving responsibly, and, just the day before arrival in port, the CO, XO and CMC had addressed all hands on this topic. Nevertheless, the PO3 chose to acquire alcohol illegally, to drink excessively, to ignore his seat belt, and to drive his car at twice the posted speed limit.

Safety features are nice, but, as we see from this story, they can't make up for people who simply make the wrong choices. Our current challenge is to teach all hands to make the right ones.

RADM George Mayer

### Where We Stand

Year-to-Date Comparison Through Jan. 30



# BRAVO Zulu

## Marines Rescue Man From Burning Truck

By Sgt. Pamela Shelly, USMC,  
First Marine Corps District

Marines helped save a man's life by pulling him from a burning tractor-trailer cab. The four, including PFC William Patnode, PFC Charles Meskunas, Pvt. James Stewart, and PFC Gregory Lafountain, just had graduated from recruit training in Parris Island, S.C. They were driving Interstate 87 to attend a Permissive Recruiters Assistance Program class in New York.

Minutes after passing Exit 31, the group spotted flames through the fog on the North Country Road. As the accident grew closer, and the Marines could view the full wreckage, they saw that a fuel tanker

had rammed into the rear of a tractor-trailer in the southbound lane. They pulled their vehicle to the side of the road and instinctively leaped into action to help.

"As we approached the vehicles, we noticed two females standing there. We asked them if anybody was inside the vehicles, and they said they didn't know. With the heat, the flames, and the tires blowing, we looked at the fuel truck, wondering if it was empty [*they later learned it nearly was—Ed.*]," said Lafountain. Because there was no cellphone service, he and Patnode drove about a half-mile to call 911 but still couldn't get through. At that point, Lafountain



Navy photo by Assemblyman Chris Ortloff

called his dad, a captain with the State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigations, who was able to get the necessary aid.

Meanwhile, Meskunas and Stewart, with the help of an unidentified truck driver [*who cut away the victim's seat belt—Ed.*], pulled the man from the burning tractor-trailer. They used a sleeping bag to carry the man to a spot about a quarter-mile away and applied basic first aid, while waiting for emergency assistance.

When help arrived, the Marines continued doing their part at the scene by directing traffic and assisting the emergency personnel. "They were working on the victim when we arrived," said the fire chief. "They grabbed gear from the ambulance and kept working; they were incredible."

The four Marines reported in for their class two hours late. When they told SgtMaj. Andrew L. Yagle about their ordeal, he recognized their adherence to

the Marine Corps' ethos. "They definitely displayed their honor, courage and commitment," he said. "The purpose of my class here is to remind Marines of the positive image and roles they need to portray here on the home front. They did just that: They set a good example, and we're proud of them."

"Lafountain came here with all the tools, especially maturity," said SSgt. Robert L. Lytle, senior drill instructor of Platoon 3110, India Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, MCRD Parris Island. "We just chipped away the rough edges and transformed him. He was an outstanding recruit who obviously has turned into an outstanding Marine."

All four Marines credited their lifesaving action to the training they received from senior drill instructors at Parris Island. They said that training gave them the ability to handle such a critical situation. ■

*Adapted from a Marine Corps press release.*

## Aircrewmen Put Training Into Action

With CVW-2 in Fallon, Nev., for a training period, five aircrewmen from HSL-47 and one from the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center (NSAWC) had decided to take a ski trip to Lake Tahoe. The five HSL-47 aircrewmen included AW3 Christopher Hlynka, AW2 Zack Dotson, AW3 Matthew Gardner, AW2 Eric Starr, and AW1 Brennan Zwak. Their friend from NSAWC was AW2 Michael Adomeit.

As this group was driving a winding road over the mountain into Lake Tahoe, they came upon a cloud of blue smoke and slowed to investigate. The source of the smoke turned out to be a car in the ditch. The six aircrewmen immediately pulled over to help.

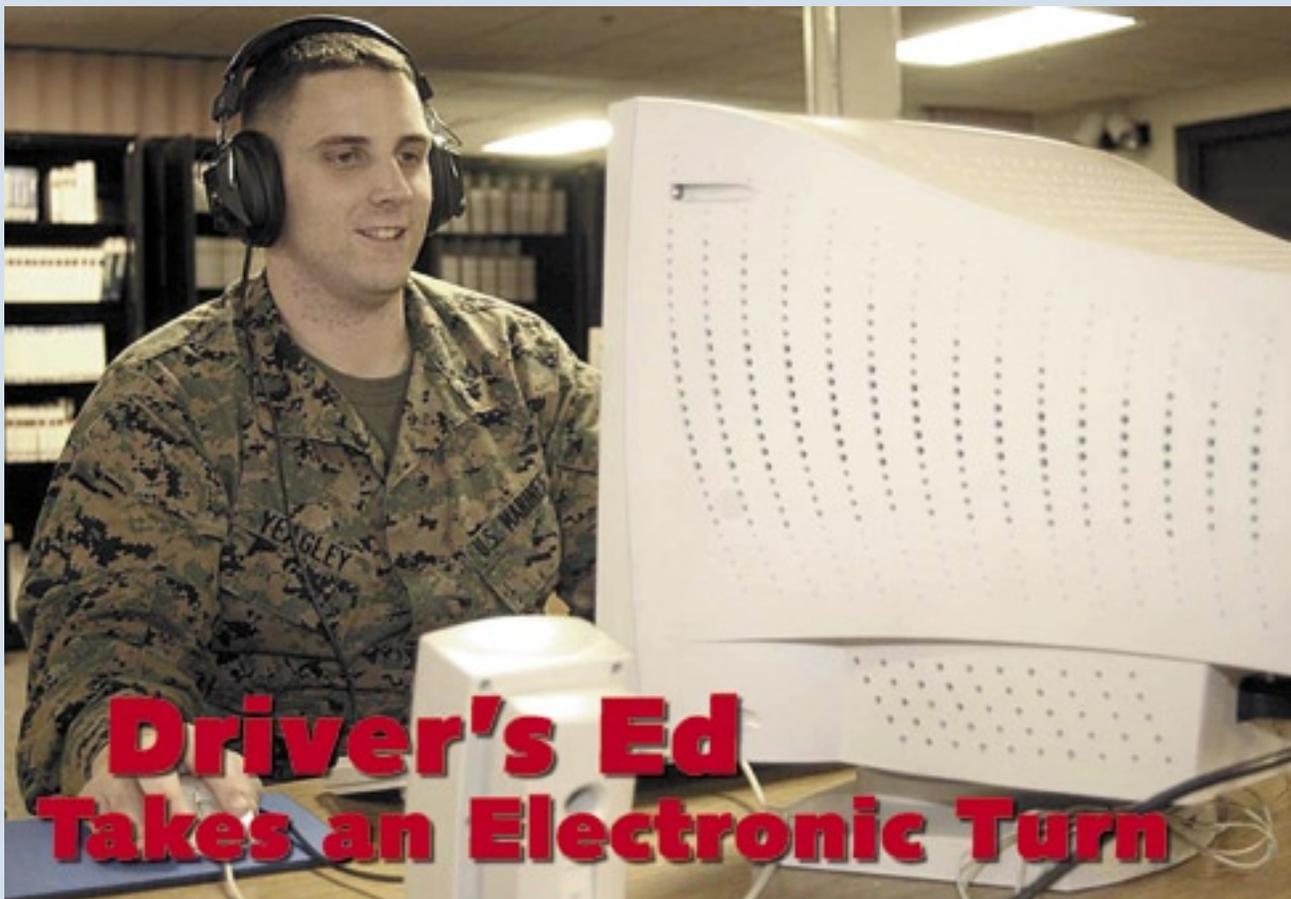
Two people were injured, one of whom was a woman who had been ejected about 30 feet from the vehicle. Petty Officer Dotson ran to survey the scene and started giving first aid to the victims. Meanwhile, Petty Officer Hlynka called 911 and relayed the situation, along with his personal assessment, to the



(L-R) HSL-47 aircrewmen AW3 Hlynka, AW2 Dotson, AW3 Gardner, AW2 Starr, and AW1 Zwak

emergency operator. Within minutes, paramedics were on the scene and coordinated a helicopter life-flight evacuation to a local trauma center.

All six petty officers received a BZ for putting their training and expertise into action. ■



Navy photo by Cpl. J. Agg, USMC

By JO1 Jd Walter,  
Naval Personnel Development Command

Sailors and Marines have a new tool available to help them stay safe behind the wheel: an interactive, multimedia eLearning course called “Driving for Life: Avoiding the Fatal Four.” [The “fatal four” refers to speeding, driving tired, driving drunk, and not wearing a seat belt.—Ed.] Co-developed by the Navy’s Center for Personnel Development (CPD) and the Marine Corps, the course is designed to fulfill both services’ traffic-safety program requirement.

Available on Navy eLearning and accessed through Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) My Education, “Driving for Life” complies with Department of Defense and Department of Navy requirements (DoD Instruction 6055.4 and OpNavInst 5100.12G). Those requirements are that every Sailor and Marine under 26 years of age complete a driver-training course.

“Driving for Life,” however, isn’t designed to take the place of the eight-hour, instructor-led AAA program for individuals involved in an at-fault crash of a GMV on or off government property, or those who have been convicted of a serious moving violation in a PMV or GMV while on government property.

This eLearning course covers proactive driving, reactive driving, and imminent collisions. “The revolution in Navy training has shown us we have to be more creative with course development and delivery,” said Capt. William Marlowe, CPD commanding officer. “So, eLearning was a natural choice. Given the nature of our subject matter, though, we had to be sure we weren’t just throwing something together to satisfy a requirement. We want our Sailors and Marines to come away with a greater appreciation of the responsibilities they have as drivers, as well as teaching them tactics to be safer on the road.”

The eLearning format allows Sailors and Marines to return to the web-based training to refresh their skills after initial completion. Successful completion of this course (e.g., scoring 80 percent or better) is documented in the Navy Training and Management Planning System (NTMPS). It also is reflected in Electronic Training Jacket, accessible through NKO.

To learn more about “Driving for Life” or to enroll in the course, log on to Navy Knowledge Online at [www.nko.navy.mil](http://www.nko.navy.mil) and proceed to Navy eLearning found on the My Education page. ■

# A Father's Worry

By Ken Testorff,  
Naval Safety Center

I received the following e-mail from Lyle Beck, a civilian employee at Naval Air Depot, Jacksonville, Fla.:

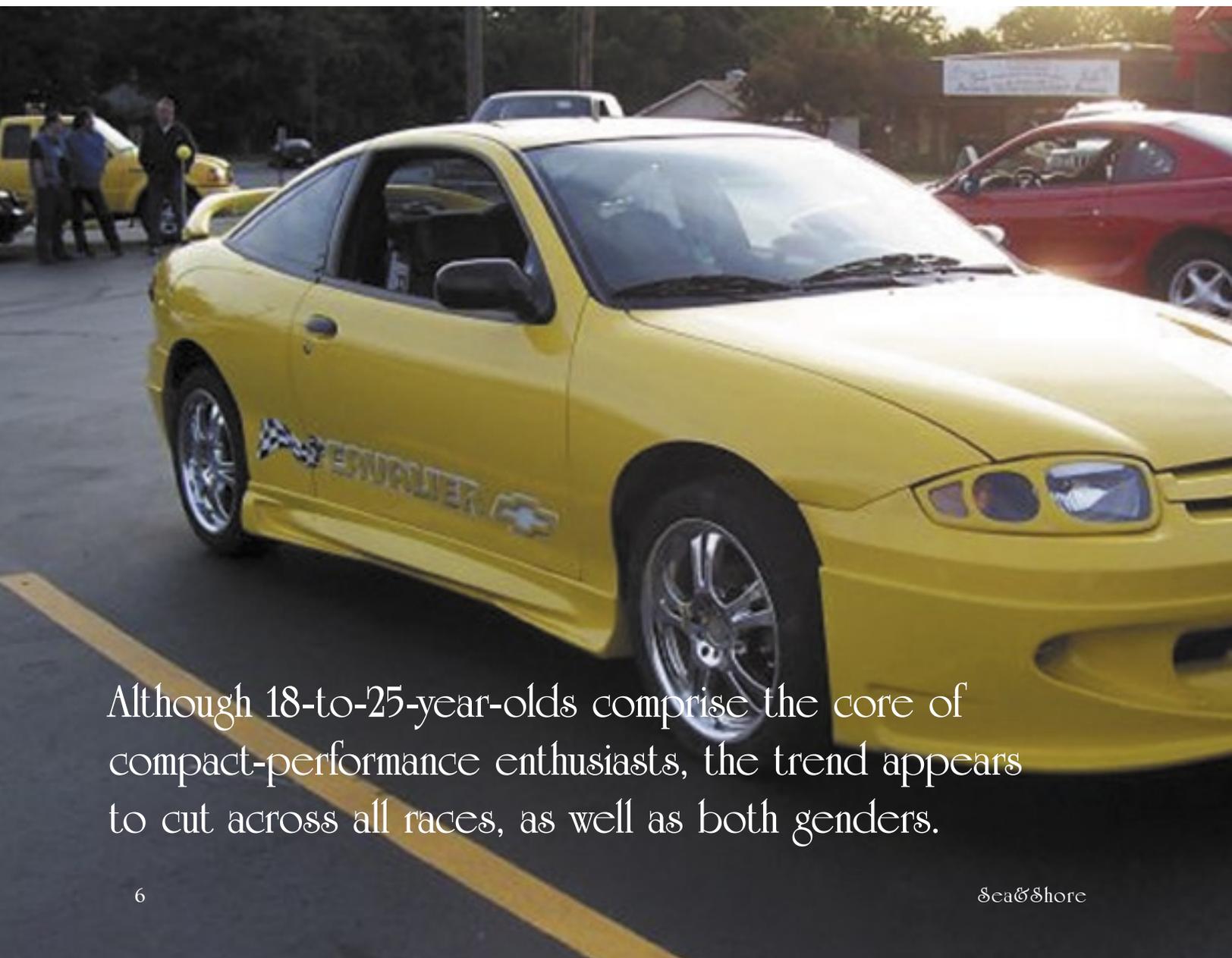
*As more young people living on bases around the world turn their four-cylinder cars into racing machines, the need arises for some sort of command focus on real vs. imaginary driving skills.*

*My son, a Marine lance corporal, took a perfectly good '96 Chevy Cavalier with a top speed of 85 mph and added a turbo, racing seat with four-point harness, bigger brakes, a braaap-braaap muffler, and a thump-thump stereo system.*

*Now he has a car that can do 100-plus mph.*

*Unfortunately, he's convinced his driving skills somehow have evolved along with the modifications to his car. Of course, no one can change the mind of this 21-year-old Marine, especially anyone from home. He ignores warnings that insurance companies don't pay off if the insured is racing. Likewise, he blows off reminders that insurance companies expect a complete car after a "totaled" settlement (you can't keep your special racing parts after a crash).*

*I work on board NAS Jacksonville, Fla., and travel to many bases nationwide. I see these modified cars at each*



Although 18-to-25-year-olds comprise the core of compact-performance enthusiasts, the trend appears to cut across all races, as well as both genders.

site—some even have nitrous cylinders visible in the rear windows! Out in San Diego, the Coronado Bridge looks like a miniature Indy 500 every afternoon as the “rice rockets” braaap their way through traffic at extremely high rates of speed. Jacksonville’s Buckman Bridge looks like a game of automotive dodge ball. I get a good view—I drive a VW bug.

“Souped up” or “tricked out”—I guess the preferred terminology depends on when you were born—imports are the current vehicle of choice for a multicultural audience of speed-loving, style-conscious teenagers and young adults alike. You find these cars everywhere—from suburban high-school parking lots to small-town drive-through restaurants. Modified imports were so popular at the University of California, Irvine campus in 2002 that some were nicknaming the college the “University of Civics and Integras.”

Although 18-to-25-year-olds comprise the core of compact-performance enthusiasts, the trend appears to cut across all races, as well as both genders. One

study showed that, nationally, whites make up 42 percent of the so-called “import tuners,” with Asians accounting for 29 percent, Latinos 16 percent, and African Americans 8 percent. The study showed 17 percent are females.

This diversity has transformed a \$295-million market in 1997 into a multibillion-dollar market today for exotic-looking spoilers, side panels, fenders, fancy gear knobs, Indiglo-lit gauges, and the latest DVD systems. When you consider the average “import tuner” spends about \$5,000 annually to customize his compact car, it’s easy to see why such growth has occurred. Meanwhile, performance-enhancing engine parts allow these humble four-cylinders to take on V-8s at stoplights—and win.

Anyone who doubts that imports are the “in” thing needs only to visit one of the spots where young car buffs gather regularly for cruise nights. The sounds of revving engines and squealing tires fill the air, as the youths bend over open hoods and rear hatches. It’s a scene straight out of “American Graffiti,” with one distinct exception: Japanese-designed imports

outnumber domestic vehicles by at least a 2-to-1 ratio.

What draws youths to imports? “Affordability, reliability and potential for creative expression,” said one compact tuner. “I like the fact we are using a small-displacement engine and can beat a Camaro V-8 with a little time and money. You get all that, plus the girls are looking for the imports, too. They know it’s the thing to do now.”

As with any cultural phenomenon that has gone from cult status to mass appeal in a short time, “rice rocket” styles keep evolving at warp speed as trendsetters try to stay on the cutting edge. Imports tricked out with big rear wings, black wheel rims, and neon-lighted underbodies—the type of things that appeared in the movie “The Fast and the Furious”—already are considered passe. The favored current look, fashioned after the latest models domestically produced in Japan, is cleaner, with fewer exterior frills.

Does the fad’s popularity signal its ultimate demise? Its pioneers insist it doesn’t. They argue that, as Generation Y ages, today’s Civic and Integra owners will continue to funnel their energy and disposable income into more expensive imports and higher-end parts. Only time will tell.

In the meantime, parents worried about the driving skills of their adolescents certainly can’t be encouraged by the results of an ongoing National Institutes of Health (NIH) study. Led by Jay Giedd, a pediatric psychiatrist, the researchers have found that the highest levels of physical and brain maturity aren’t reached at age 18, as they had thought. One instead usually doesn’t reach maturity until about age 25, a finding with implications for a host of policies, including the nation’s driving laws.

The findings, according to Giedd, imply that many life choices—college and career, marriage, and military service—often are made before the brain’s decision-making center comes fully online. But for young adults, “dying on a highway is the biggest risk out there,” he said. ■

*Modifying smaller cars with turbo kits or dual turbo kits is very popular right now—you see a lot of it when you visit auto hobby shops on military bases. From a traffic-safety perspective, this is bad news because speed is a leading factor in many of our fatal crashes. And, smaller cars—many of the ones being modified—don’t offer the crash protection provided by larger vehicles. Couple this problem with the thrill-seeking mindset noted in this article and you have a recipe for disaster.—Chuck Roberts, traffic & off-duty recreation safety division head*



# D2D Takes Driver Sa



Sandy Rose Bauler talks to a group of the Marines who were on hand for the Driven2Dare presentation at MCAS Yuma.

representing Driven2Dare (D2D), Inc., a team of race-car drivers and car experts who are on a “military tribute tour,” giving classes on driving safety and telling how to get the most out of your car. They are visiting various military installations around the country.

The two-hour class includes an electronic slide-show presentation, personal anecdotes and experi-

By LCpl. Robert L. Botkin, USMC,  
MCAS Yuma

Every so often, you meet an extraordinary person—one who personifies honesty and hard work, embraces the community and family spirit in everything she does, and sees the potential in herself, as well as others. National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) driver (late-model sportsman division) Sandy Rose Bauler is such a person.

She has faced adversity head on and persevered. A serious racing accident in 2000 nearly cost her family, business and life. Doctors said she never would walk again, but she proved them wrong; she’s back in the sport she loves.

Marines at MCAS Yuma recently had the privilege of meeting Sandy, as well as 30-year car-industry professional Dave Stall (“the Car Guy”) and stock-car driver (elite division) Eddie Bryans. The three were

ences, and a display of two teams’ cars used in races across the nation. “Some of the things we learned in racing—things that nobody ever taught us—are very valuable,” said Sandy. “They’re the same things that cause wrecks on the freeway.”

Some of the lessons learned go beyond driving techniques...into the technical aspects of car maintenance. Tire pressure, for example, is an important part of car maintenance that often gets overlooked or handled wrong, noted “the Car Guy,” who incidentally has a radio program, TV segment, and newspaper column in California.

“You should check the tire pressure of a vehicle at least every week, especially before long trips or if the car has been sitting idle for an extended period of time,” he said. “Temperature changes also can affect the tire pressure, so seasonal maintenance is a must for cars and motorcycles.”

“The Car Guy” explained that the tire pressure listed in the owner’s manual usually is lower than the

# fety to the Marines

Marine Corps photo by LCpl. Robert L. Botkin



Cpl. William Drake, a Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 13 aviation supply clerk and native of Hogansville, Ga., sits in one of the Driven2Dare race cars.

safe level prescribed by tire manufacturers to give a smoother ride. He encouraged drivers to follow the pressure listed on the tires themselves.

The Driven2Dare trio stressed the importance of motorcyclists wearing all the proper personal protective equipment and replacing it once it is damaged. They also offered money-saving tips for automobile owners (e.g., the importance of factory and after-market service contracts, finding the value of your vehicle once it comes time to sell it, how to get the best price for your vehicle, and common misconceptions about maintenance performed by service technicians).

“There is no such thing as a tune-up on cars built later than 1985,” said Dave Stall. “Taking such a car in for a tune-up is just an expensive way to get a new air filter installed.”

Establishing these classes was a challenge, according to Sandy Rose Bauler. “Because of our background in racing, there was preliminary apprehension about having us teach driver safety, but now that we’re established, things are going well. The classes are met with enthusiasm, and we enjoy giving them.”

When asked his thoughts about the class, LCpl. Bret Bronken, travel clerk with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and native of Concord, Calif., said, “I liked it. Some of the stuff, I already knew, but some of it was new to me.”

“I love the interaction with the troops,” said Eddie Bryans, “especially when we start talking about the things that really upset them on the road. Many of their pet peeves are what we warn them against, such as trying to do multiple things while driving.”

The most important piece of advice the Driven2Dare team hopes to convey is awareness of one’s surroundings while driving. As noted by Sandy, “A simple thing like looking 15 to 20 cars ahead on the freeway can mean the difference between a safe trip and disaster.” ■

*A similar version of this story first appeared in the Sept. 1, 2005, issue of Desert Warrior, base newspaper for MCAS Yuma, where the author is a combat correspondent.*

*To find out more about Driven2Dare—who they are and what they do—go online at [www.d2dracing.com](http://www.d2dracing.com).*

# RIDE TO IBR Stops S



*In August 2005, Surgeon General of the Navy and Chief of the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, VADM Don Arthur, was riding a motorcycle to the 2005 Iron Butt Rally (the "big show" of long-distance motorcycle riding), which began in Denver, Colo. Unfortunately, he got only as far as Missouri, when the unthinkable happened. A woman made a U-turn, using a rutted dirt path across the median, and entered the left lane just ahead of him.*

*The subsequent crash sent VADM Arthur first to the Heartlands Medical Center in St. Joseph, Mo., then to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.*

*As you may remember from the article "No Grass Growing Under These Wheels," which appeared in the fall 2005 issue, VADM Arthur is a strong advocate of motorcycle safety. He credits a healthy regard of PPE for saving his life in this incident, just like it did in a major crash in 1973.*

*Here's the story of what happened in Missouri, in the Admiral's own words.—Ed.*

# Short in “Show Me” State

## The Accident

I allowed myself plenty of time to get to Denver for the IBR start—enough that I could enjoy some non-interstate roads. I chose to ride west on U.S. 36, a nice four-lane, divided highway through the heartland of America’s corn and soy crops. At about 2 o’clock on a clear and sunny Wednesday afternoon, a woman driving east in a 1990 Dodge Dynasty made a U-turn, using a rutted dirt path across the median. She entered the left lane in my direction only 200 feet from the crest of a hill, just as I and the pickup truck I was passing crested the hill. The pickup driver told the highway patrol that my speed was 65 mph. At that speed, the 200 feet between the stationary vehicle and me took just two seconds.

My only memory of the accident is a brief feeling of incredulity that I was about to hit a car—where had it come from? I recall the bike striking the car’s trunk

and a sensation of pitching forward. My next memory is awakening strapped to a litter just before being put in the ambulance. I must have made a noise because the paramedic leaned over to me and said, “Are you with us?” I told him I was and, after glancing sideways at my mangled bike, said, “Do you think that’ll buff out?” Since the accident was 20 miles from where the ambulance was dispatched, I estimate I was unconscious for about 30 minutes, which is just as well, because my injuries were plenty painful.

The trooper called me a few days after the accident to tell me the details. He seemed very apologetic that he “could not” write a citation. Apparently, crossing a highway median is perfectly legal in Missouri, no matter whether it’s safe or not. He told me the “locals” don’t use that path to turn around because there have been so many accidents there. But, he added, the driver of the Dynasty “wasn’t from around here—she’s from the next town, 10 miles away.” If she’d only driven two-tenths of a mile farther, there is a designated turnaround area.

## Hospitalization

I carry all my emergency personal and medical information in the left chest pocket of my Aerostich and have written “Emergency Info This Pocket” on the flap. The paramedics and hospital emergency staff said this helped them a lot, especially before I regained consciousness.

The Heartlands Medical Center in St. Joseph, Mo., performed flawlessly. As many of you know, I am an emergency-medicine specialist and have worked in many trauma hospitals. The care at HMC was fabulous from the instant I was wheeled in the emergency entrance to when I was medevaced [to the *National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md., a facility VADM Arthur commanded until a year ago*]. The staff was very professional, compassionate, thorough, and coordinated. The intensive-care unit staffs also were superb. It’s nice to know that we have such an excellent health system and that it’s there when you need it.

When the staff learned I am in the military, many former and reserve military folks dropped in to wish



me well. The nursing staff had to cut off the phone calls and visitors after a while because I was becoming exhausted.

The staff also offered to help my wife (Bean) with housing, transportation, or anything else she needed when she arrived on Thursday.

## The Injuries

I am incredibly grateful to be alive. Hitting a stationary object at 65 mph could have been fatal. I feel the BMW Telelever front end [*a design that provides a natural anti-dive capability, which allows all the force of maximum braking to be routed to the chassis, instead of to the rider*] figured prominently in my being here today. I also was wearing a full Aerostich Roadcrafter suit [*like many of his long-distance-riding friends wear*], an advanced-concept carbon-fiber helmet, good boots, and gloves.

Thanks to the 'stich, I have no road rash—I'm just sorry they had to cut it off. Thanks to the helmet, I suffered no brain injury. My injuries are a pelvis fractured in four places, a separated right shoulder, and fracture/separations of two ribs at the sternum, which

caused a pneumothorax (partly collapsed lung).

I feel incredibly blessed these are injuries that will heal without serious long-term consequences, no surgery is required, and there was no serious internal injury.

## The Bike

It was a 2000 K1200LT. I can safely say it's a total loss—too bad, it was running so well, and everything worked. It was the perfect bike. It's a shame to lose it with only 306,000 miles on the odometer.

Coni Fitch is my hero! She and I were supposed to begin the IBR together. When she heard of my accident, she flew to St. Joseph and immediately took charge of getting all my gear—including some of the “hard wired” add-ons, like fuel cell, GPS, etc.—off the bike. She and Bean also went to the accident scene and took photographs of the area from all angles. When I saw the photo she took from where the woman crossed the median, looking east, I gasped. I couldn't believe how little of the roadway she could see before pulling out into my lane...200 feet, where the posted speed limit is 65 mph!

Photo by Mrs. Arthur

**This view of the accident scene shows how little of the roadway the lady in the Dynasty could see before pulling into the lane where VADM Arthur was riding.**



## “Will You Ride Again?”

I don't know why, but this has been a common question asked of me—but usually by non-riders. I have been riding for 38 years for a total of somewhere around a million lifetime miles. I'm an MSF instructor (now “RiderCoach”) and have had one other serious accident (while working as a mechanic for Harley-Davidson in the early 70s), which put me on crutches for four years. If I were to try to eliminate all “danger” from my life, I would be left with a lot of very hollow free time. Thus, I already have tried to control those factors I can control, mitigate those I can't, and accept (or reject) activities I feel are too dangerous. I like to feel I'm a safe rider—by training and experience and

through a general sense of caution and risk avoidance. However, there always will be factors in our lives over which we have no control—this Dodge Dynasty was one of those. There was no way to anticipate, prevent or mitigate this crash... except to stay home.

I don't believe I would appreciate a life shaped by fearful avoidance of risk, rather than recognition of risk so that it may be diminished as much as possible—with the realization that the risk never will be zero. ■

*At the time this story went to press, VADM Arthur was back on the job, working part days. When asked what advice he has for riders and potential riders as a result of this incident, he said, “Always wear the right equipment. My helmet saved my life.”*

## Letter to the Editor

*In response to the VADM Arthur article in the fall 2005 issue, we received this letter:*

During one of my tours as a CO, I had to bury a motorcycle victim. He had a very young wife and newborn. Additionally, we dealt with various injuries, pain and lost man-hours of other shipmates involved in “murdercycle” events; most were not their fault. The article in *Sea&Shore* about the surgeon general was meant to accomplish what?

For the SG to advocate or justify this as a lifestyle choice and to compare it to the risks of military service reflects the lawyer side of his background. Personally, I think it goes beyond the pale of a person in his position and background.

More courses and parking spaces??? Where does he think the mayhem takes place...on base or ashore? When everyone rides a motorcycle, it may be a better choice; until then, though, it's an inherently dangerous lifestyle, and to play it up otherwise with smooth language is a disservice to our young and extremely impressionable shipmates. How many can afford the Beamer in the picture with all the bells and whistles that I guess makes him safer on the road?

The example set by the SG, as viewed by me, is an item best evaluated and addressed by the CNO, if necessary.

*In his e-mail, Capt. Draude also challenged me to show the “other side of the story,” e.g., the risk-versus-reward standpoint. Here's an example of what I think he was talking about, as taken from an early November 2005 incident report:*

A 27-year-old Navy O-2 died from injuries he sustained in a controlled motorcycle race. The victim, a licensed motorcyclist who was wearing all the required safety gear, suffered severe head injuries, including a subdural hematoma and possible herniated brain. He also suffered some fractured vertebrae and a broken rib (with pneumothorax).

Doctors kept the victim on life support while they tried to stop the bleeding in his brain. Their efforts, however, were unsuccessful, and the young O-2 died early the next day, with his wife, mother and a Navy chaplain at his bedside.

At the time of this incident, the O-2 was TAD ashore, attending a school. He was assigned to a DDG.

There have been 14 Navy and Marine Corps motorcycle fatalities in FY 06 (through Jan. 30), excluding this O-2, whose death is reflected in the off-duty/recreational statistics. In comparison, Navy and Marine Corps motorcycle fatalities through the same date in FY04 and FY05 stood at seven and 11, respectively. ■

Capt. Joseph A. Draude, DC  
VP-30  
E-mail: joseph.draude@navy.mil

# Picking Up the Pieces

By Ken Testorff,  
Naval Safety Center

Life was good for Petty Officer Second Class Laura Chmielewski when 2002 arrived. The 22-year-old, three-and-a-half-year Navy veteran liked her signalman job aboard USS *Howard* (DDG-83). She also liked a certain guy, PO1 Matthew Cowen, whom she had met in Jacksonville, Fla.; they had started dating in 2000. Their budding relationship had Laura entertaining thoughts about reenlisting—she wanted to be able to stay close to her boyfriend, on sea or shore duty.

That “good life,” however, changed dramatically the afternoon of Jan. 31, 2002, as Laura was riding her motorcycle through the streets of sunny Coronado, Calif., en route to the beach. A car driven by an 89-year-old Coronado man suddenly pulled in front of her bike at an intersection. She saw the car crossing the three-lane thoroughfare and tried to stop but lost control and skidded. “I went one way, and the cycle went another [*hitting a rear wheel of the car*],” she explained. “The rest is hazy. I awoke and my body felt hot. I didn’t feel like I was bleeding, but I knew I was badly hurt—I couldn’t move at all.”

A motorist who witnessed the crash gave police a description of the car, which, according to him, hesitated only briefly before the driver sped through the intersection without checking to see what he had done. The driver later would acknowledge having heard a “cracking noise” behind him when he went through the intersection but said he checked and determined nothing was wrong, so he just drove off. The witness followed the car long enough to get the license number, which he passed to the police, who

quickly traced the license plate to the 89-year-old. He lived only a few blocks away.

A week after Laura’s crash, police interviewed more witnesses to the accident scene, including a woman who told them she had seen the driver stop for a few seconds. According to her, he looked toward Laura sprawled in the roadway, and then drove off. She had no doubt the driver knew he had been involved in a crash.

Police arrested the 89-year-old on suspicion of felony hit-and-run but subsequently released him while submitting the case to the district attorney’s office. He was ordered to be in court March 25 but didn’t appear.

Meanwhile, the investigation determined the accused was an incompetent motorist—the state revoked his driver’s license July 2. A six-member sheriff’s unit simultaneously began searching for the missing 89-year-old but admitted their chances of finding him weren’t very good. As they explained, he was one of 17,000 fugitives wanted on felony warrants.

Navy photo by PHAN Richard Waite

Laura’s former ship, USS *Howard* (DDG-83), prepares to come alongside another ship for replenishment.





Laura on the slopes at Snowmass, Colo., during the 19th National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.

These developments were discouraging for Laura who, by now, had received a medical discharge [*in October 2002*] from the Navy and was at a VA medical facility undergoing four hours of physical therapy each day. Did I mention the crash had left her paralyzed from the chest down?

After performing two spinal surgeries, doctors still couldn't offer any concrete hope for Laura's recovery. "They wouldn't tell me whether I ever would be able to walk again," she said, "so I decided on my own to do something about it. My injuries are a little different from what other people experience: I still can wiggle my toes, and I have about 70 percent sensation. I can stand and do some walking with the help of braces and a walker."

When Laura had completed the four months of rehabilitation at the VA medical facility, she went to a gym and started doing stretching and strengthening exercises. "I did really well there," she noted, "and

decided to increase my rehabilitation regimen. For an hour and a half a day, four days each week, I went to physical therapy. I also had acupuncture treatments twice a week, went to aqua therapy once a week, and started riding horses. All these efforts improved my condition to the point where I could walk about 20 feet with the walker and braces when I left California."

Laura subsequently got involved in skiing and, in April 2005, traveled to Snowmass, Colo., where she participated in the 19th National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. Co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Disabled American Veterans, this clinic is the largest annual rehabilitation event of its kind in the world. Laura was one of more than 300 U.S. military veterans from 47 states who gathered to learn or to improve their skills in adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing and snowboarding.

"I just started skiing a few months before coming to the Winter Sports Clinic," said Laura, once she arrived at the five-day event. "This is my first time, and I look forward to a whole new experience on the mountain." She hadn't always felt that way, though. "I was so stuck on learning how to walk again that I didn't want to do anything adaptive at first," she explained. "But, now that I know how much fun it is, I'm going to continue skiing. I also plan to try archery at the summer games."

What else is in Laura's future? Marriage. She and Matthew, who is out of the Navy now and working as a service technician, plan to "tie the knot" Oct. 14, 2006. They will continue residing in upstate New York, where both currently live.

Whatever happened to the motorist who left Laura and her motorcycle in the middle of the road that day in January 2002? He reportedly moved to Mexico "to be with a sick female friend" but returned to San Diego when he learned he was a wanted fugitive. He entered a no-contest plea, which is the equivalent of a guilty plea.

According to Laura, the motorist didn't serve any time in state prison because of his age. Instead, he had to pay some restitution and did some community service. He was allowed to go back to Mexico but had to report for probation for five years.

What lessons did Laura learn from her crash? It pays to wear the required personal protective equipment—she had it all. She also had attended the required training course. And, although she can't prove it, Laura feels the backpack she was wearing the day of her incident may have contributed to the severity of her injuries. The backpack contained her uniform, a pair of sneakers, and an aerosol can. ■

# Confessions

By Capt. Stan Dunlap

Frankly, I feel like hell. For the past few minutes, I've been sitting here with my thoughts, and I don't seem to like any of them.

You see, when I woke up this morning, I thought right away that it was going to be a fine day. It was Friday, the weekend was ahead, my name was on the flight schedule, and I'd left my "in" basket in good shape the night before. All in all, it was going to be the kind of day that all of us look forward to.

The trip down the interstate wasn't too bad, and the weather looked great for my low level. I should have known it couldn't last.

I'd just finished getting suited up when the XO stuck his head in the door and gave me the news; we'd lost one of our men in a traffic accident. Without being told, I instinctively knew who it must be; yet, I still asked the question. What I was told only confirmed my initial thoughts, and my guilt attack really began.

I'd better back up a bit. I was the XO when this petty officer first checked aboard, and I'd studied his record before I ever met him. Based on performance evaluations and prior duty assignments, I felt we were lucky to get such a talented individual. He had come to us after a rather brief tour as a FRAMP (fleet replacement aviation maintenance program) instructor, and I guess I should have taken the time to ask a few questions, but I didn't. I was so happy to see a man with the skills we so desperately needed that I gave him my stock speech, told him about the upcoming (and overtasked) schedule, then pointed him toward maintenance.

The next few months went by at a gallop, with all the quickie deployments, day-night bounces, carrier quals, buildups, schools, leave, packup, unpack, move off, move aboard, and the ever-present schedule changes. It seemed there never was enough time for all the necessary evolutions, much less those things I had kept putting off until the pace slacked off just a bit. Through it all, this "new" petty officer seemed to fit right in. Always where he was needed the most, he soon became indispensable.

I guess it was right before we went on cruise that I first noticed a change, but even that statement prob-



Navy photo by PH3 Mark J. Rebilas

ably is wrong. Now that I think about it, he was in deep trouble long before I ever knew it. The changes were subtle; he was a real pro at hiding the truth, and he'd been at it a long time. In retrospect, I guess what makes me feel the worst is the fact that numerous other people in many other commands had known the truth about this "exceptional" Sailor but never said or did a thing. They just transferred the problem out the door and out of their lives. In any event, his performance began to take a turn for the worse.

At first, I attributed the change to his failure to make E-7. All of us were shocked when the results came in, but I chalked it up to a momentary problem with a test, sympathized with him about the results, then went back to work—all of us did.

Cruise was just around the corner, and we were behind the curve in several critical areas. If I'd been a little smarter, I could have asked questions about prior civil convictions. We just had received word on the first of several recent citations he had received, and finally the maintenance officer told me that his maintenance-control officer had been covering for this "superior petty officer."

It seems he was habitually late for muster—nothing major, just a few minutes here and there, punctuated by an occasional "alarm clock failure." He never did make any close friends in the squadron, and he

# of a Skipper



lived alone. He'd been married at one time, but no one seemed to know why the marriage had broken up. When he volunteered to stand duty during an all-hands party, we all thought the action was just one more part of a petty officer who truly was superior in all respects. I can add up all these things now, but I never saw them in the proper context at a time when I might have done something.

Cruise was especially eventful for me. I took over as CO, and we brought back the same number of planes and people that we started with. Other than that, it was pretty much the same as always. Oh yes, our exceptional petty officer got loaded a few times in port, but who didn't? We all joked about posting a watch on him, but let's face facts: TacAir types work hard, and they play the same way. We sure can't fault a really hard charger for tying one on every once in a while... or can we?

You can guess the rest. During the post-deployment stand-down, his troubles really began to surface. I even ran into several old acquaintances who not only knew this man but knew all about his "problem." I even began to get used to seeing his name in the same old places: muster reports, civil-conviction lists, indebtedness letters, and then, where I should have placed it almost a year earlier, on a set of orders to the ARC (Alcohol Rehabilitation Center) [*now known as*

*SARP, or Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program*].

By that time, everyone knew that we probably had a full-blown alcoholic on our hands, but we also had the schedule to contend with. There always were more tasks than time, and, on most occasions, it was a lot easier to work around what we felt was "just another personnel problem."

He came back to us from the ARC, and nearly everyone in the squadron avoided him. I guess we all were just embarrassed to discuss alcoholism with him, and, perhaps as a result of this, he withdrew even further. No one ever will know exactly how long he stayed "dry," or if he ever really did at all. I found out for myself that he was drinking again when I was invited to the Acey Deucey Club [*now known as Enlisted Club*] by the squadron POs. I saw him at the bar with a beer—apart from the rest of us. It was right then and there I confronted him about falling off the wagon. His answer was easy—too easy. It seems the beer was OK; he just had to avoid the hard stuff. I was dubious, but I watched him nurse that beer for more than an hour. After all, the rest of us were laughing and scratching, so why shouldn't he have a good time?

He died that night. The police said he died with enough alcohol in him to make two men legally drunk. In a way, I'm not really sorry he's dead. If a car hadn't done it, the liquor eventually would have, so I can rationalize his loss pretty well. The only thing I'm really having a lot of trouble with is the family of four in the other car. They might have had a future, but not any more. No one could have survived an impact like that one.

Could I have done anything to change all of this? I'll keep telling myself "no," but that won't really help. Frankly, I feel like hell. 🚫

*I'll bet most readers will think this article is a relatively new submission, unless you happen to be familiar with the author (who was assigned to ComNavAirLant safety when he wrote this story), but, friends, you're mistaken. This story first ran in the September 1984 Approach. Although more than 20 years have passed, the potential for repeating the events in this story is very much alive yet today.—Ed.*

# Navy Mom Grieves Loss of Only Child

By Dan Steber,  
Naval Safety Center

Although her son died two years ago, Patricia Layne still grieves his loss. FC3 Nicholas Bockrath was a young Sailor with a bright smile—one that his mom said “would light up a room.” That light stopped shining when Petty Officer Bockrath ran off the edge of the pavement, overcorrected, crossed a median, and died on the other side of a divided road. He was the victim of his own fatigued driving.

In an interview for this story, Patty, as she prefers to be called, shared a few memories of her son. She talked about his constant smile, activities, friends, decision to join the Navy, and his miraculous entry into this world. Her courage to tell this story is commendable, and I hope it will make every Sailor and Marine think a little bit about decisions that affect their personal safety. You’ll see it’s not just the victim who suffers in a mishap.

“Nick always was smiling, laughing, giving hugs, and almost never failed to end his conversations with ‘I love you,’” said Patty. “The only time he ever got upset was when he couldn’t figure something out. He’d fall and jump right back up without ever shedding a tear,



**Patricia Layne is left with photos of her son and a tribute that some Sailors did on the back window of her SUV.**

but, if he got a new video game and couldn't figure it out, then he'd get upset."

She recalled his fascination with video games. "He started playing Nintendo when he was 3 years old by looking at the pictures in video instructions," Patty said. "I always was amazed at his ability. He always was special because I had been told I wouldn't be able to conceive. It was three months into a "sickness" that specialists discovered my pregnancy.

"When I was five months pregnant," she added, "the doctors put me on complete bed rest, so I never

really expected Nick to make it. But Nick was a fighter and did survive. In fact, he was the first grandchild in my family and the first boy among my friends. As he grew, Nick's choice of friends varied wildly. I never knew whom he'd bring home: boy or girl, rich or poor, and from a full spectrum of ethnic backgrounds. I just never knew, but I did know if Nick liked them, I'd like them. He was a very good judge of character."

His decision to join the Navy was a troubling period. "I was devastated," Patty said. "I had joined a savings program at work, so I wouldn't have to worry about money for his college years. I never dreamed he'd join a branch of service, especially since my family had spoiled him so much."

Nick had asked his mother several times in his senior year what she thought he might do with his life. "I'd laugh and say 'enjoy it' and then tell him to take a few months off after school to think about his future plans," she added. "He continued to work for his cousin, which he had done since 14 years old (when the price of tennis shoes went over \$100—one of his favorite items to wear). In fact, he worked there until about three or four weeks before he left for the Navy."

Recalling the accident and its aftermath, Patty wondered about Nick's incessant activity and constant bouncing around. "I sometimes wonder if somehow he knew he only had a short time left," she answered. "At his 18th birthday party, he told me he had enlisted and wanted to know if I was upset. I explained that I was a bit but only for selfish reasons and because I loved him so much. Little did I know he had such a short time left."

Patty spoke of the last call she received from Nick. He had left her house in Richmond and had stopped to shop for a new pair of sneakers before heading for a class at Dahlgren. "Nick just had received orders to Japan eight days earlier and was so excited," she said. "He called me about 1 p.m. that day to tell me about his shopping adventure and the new tennis shoes he wanted to take to Japan but said he couldn't find them. I told him that we would look on the Internet when he returned the following day but then remembered he had to stand duty."

She reminded Nick that they'd have to do it on Saturday because of his duty, and she recalled him

Nick and fiancée, Holly, share a tender moment before his tragic mishap. Nick Jr. would be born after his father's death. (Inset) "Grandma" Layne with Nick Jr.



laughing out loud and saying, “Oh, yeah, that’s right. I can’t believe you remembered and I forgot.”

“We’ll do it Saturday,” she responded.

Nick’s last words to his mother were, “Well, I gotta go. I love you, and I’ll talk to you soon.”

And she answered, “When Nick? When will I talk to you?”

Patty remembered that he started laughing again and said, “Soon, Mama, soon.”

Patty went on with the story, mentioning that she had been at the mall to buy a couple pair of jeans for Nick, even though he had told her not to do it. “I returned home and checked the answering machine,” she said. “There were a lot of hang-up calls, and I thought someone was dialing the wrong number. I didn’t give it any more thought because my friends knew I had a cellphone and they would call me that way.”

It was only about 15 minutes later that the phone rang again. “When I answered it, I looked outside and saw a big SUV in the driveway, with two guys getting out,” she said. “The person on the phone told me his name. He was a lieutenant commander and said they needed to come in to speak with me. He also wanted me to put away the dogs.

“I remember asking myself why they were there because I never had heard of military officers coming to your house simply because your loved one had orders to an overseas command,” she added. “He again asked me to put away the dogs, and it suddenly dawned on me that the only time a service rep knocks on your door is to deliver bad news.”

Deeply worried, Patty kept thinking this wasn’t happening, and she didn’t want to let the CACO [*casualty assistance calls officer*] in. “God wouldn’t do this to me when I had put all my trust in Him to watch over Nick when I couldn’t,” she said, while putting on a robe. “They asked me to sit down and proceeded to tell me that Nick had been in an accident. I still didn’t believe it and told them that God never would do this to me because He knew how much I loved Nick and that my life revolved around him.”

Patty went on to describe that moment and remembered the two Navy representatives kept talking, but she didn’t comprehend anything. “I was in a daze until they mentioned his yellow truck,” she said. “At that moment, I knew they were right but still didn’t want to believe the news.”

Suddenly, Steven—one of Nick’s friends—pulled into the driveway, and one of the Navy guys went outside to tell him. “I remember seeing Steven cross his arms and put his head on the fence, as his body shook



Nick liked the Navy and had accepted orders to a new ship based in Japan.

with tremendous sobs,” she said. “I sat there watching but not believing. The lieutenant commander then asked me if there was anyone else I needed to call. I remember telling him that no one else lived with me. Steven then reminded me to call my ex-husband.”

The Navy representatives stayed with Patty until another person arrived.

“I remember very little about Nick’s [*funeral*] service,” she said. “I didn’t have to do anything because the Navy and my ex-husband took care of everything. Nick’s Navy classmates were there, and the funeral-home officials said they never had seen that many people at a service. I remember sitting by Nick’s bedroom door for weeks afterward, waiting for him to come out. The past few years have been a blur, and I occasionally still sit beside Nick’s door, waiting for him to appear.”

A favorite hat and a mirror from his beloved truck bear solemn witness to a life lost too soon.

For what would have been Nick's 21st birthday, Patty and her mother went to Yokosuka, Japan, to visit a couple of his friends and to visit USS *John S. McCain*, which would have been Nick's next assignment. I was allowed to go on board the ship and got a great tour. I didn't get to see where Nick would have worked, but I got a good idea."

Some of his shipmates went out for dinner with Patty and her mother after the visit, and they had a beer in Nick's memory. "We sat and reminisced about him, trying our hardest to hold our composure," Patty went on. "One of his friends, the one who took his position on the ship, mentioned that he had told his shipmates all about Nick and how they would've really liked him. Another friend, who had spoken at Nick's service, told the group about their antics together, including a few things that I hadn't even heard about. It really warmed my heart to hear that they hadn't forgotten Nick."

Rather than bury herself in sorrow, which most people would understand, Patty took an active role in trying to prevent similar incidents from taking the lives of other Sailors or Marines. "I don't want other families to go through the pain that my family and Nick's friends have had to endure," she said. "I want to do what I can to help."

Her story came to light when she signed up for the Good Samaritan pilot program being tested in the Norfolk area (Mid-Atlantic Region). She signed up on the Naval Safety Center website ([www.safetycenter.navy.mil/samaritan](http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/samaritan)) and shared her story and that of her son. Patty was so adamant about the dangers of driving while tired that she wanted the Navy to publish her home phone number and address. "I'd rather have a Sailor or Marine stay at my house in Richmond than risk driving back to the Tidewater area," she said. "If they are too tired to drive and are in the area, they can call me, and I'll pick them up."

Her courage and conviction was not lost on the Naval Safety Center. The Navy lost 73 people in FY04; 10 of those deaths were fatigued-driving related, and that number could be higher because



numerous "unknown" reasons were cited in mishap reports. In comparison, 20 of the 73 deaths were attributable to alcohol.

"Ms. Layne's story is the type of tragedy that we are working to prevent," said then-Commander, Naval Safety Center, RADM Dick Brooks. "Too often, our people think they are 'bulletproof' and that an incident like this won't happen to them. Ms. Layne reminds us that behind every number on a chart or a line on a graph sits a family, and they hurt beyond belief when they lose a loved one."

To help the traffic-safety cause, Patty has done a video testimonial about the loss of her son and the impact that loss has had on her and her family. "He was going to be a 20-year career Sailor, and then he planned to do 20 years in the FBI. Nick had his life planned," she said, "but all those hopes and dreams ended that tragic day two years ago, and my life has not been the same since."

Patty has offered to speak to Navy or Marine Corps commands about her son's mishap, the impact his death has had on everyone who knew him, and the grieving process—how she has carried on since the accident. Her contact information is available in the "Speaker's Bureau" section of the Naval Safety Center's website ([www.safetycenter.navy.mil](http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil)). She offered one last thought, "If you're tired, don't drive; do yourself and your family a favor because your life is on the line, and your loved ones' lives could be affected forever." ■

*For more information about FC3 Nicholas Bockrath and to see the website dedicated to his life, visit [www.nickbockrath.com](http://www.nickbockrath.com). For more information about traffic-safety efforts, visit [www.safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/motorvehicle/default.htm](http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/motorvehicle/default.htm).*

# Are Older Motorcyclists a Problem?



Compiled from staff reports.

**T**ake a look at the statistics, and then decide for yourself.

Nationally, more than 3,900 motorcyclists died in 2004, up 7.3 percent from the year before, according to numbers released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. That's the seventh straight year of increases in motorcycle deaths on U.S. roadways—an 85 percent overall rise since 1997. Most (60 percent) of the increases involved riders over the age of 40, said the NHTSA.

While not as dramatic as these national figures, Navy numbers also are climbing upward. In FY05, motorcycle fatalities totaled 21, compared to 25 in FY04, both of which far exceed the FY01-03 average of 16.3. The average age of Sailors killed in motorcycle crashes simultaneously rose from 25 in FY90 to 29 in FY03. And, although motorcycle deaths made up just 24 percent of all Navy motor-vehicle fatalities during one recent five-year period, they comprised 34 percent in FY04 and 39.6 percent in FY05.

Why have motorcycle deaths been going up disproportionately among older riders? Part of the reason is the changing demographics of bike buyers and riders. Surveys show motorcycle owners increasingly are older, affluent professionals. *[Some attribute this change to baby boomers wanting to go back to motorcycling after a long time away from it. With the mortgage close to being paid off and the kids grown, what better way to treat a mid-life crisis than by spending some of that extra cash on a final youthful fling?—Ed.]* According to the Motorcycle Industry Council, the typical U.S. bike owner today is about 38 years old, married, earning \$44,250 at a professional, managerial or technical job. In 1980, the typical owner was a 24-year-old, earning \$17,500.

The mistake many people make is assuming that older motorcyclists are safer than younger riders. The growing number of cyclists 40 and over who get killed in crashes shows that mature riders aren't immune from the obvious hazards of cycling.

According to Joe Perfetto, a motorcycle-safety specialist at the Naval Safety Center, "These older 'new' riders sometimes don't wear protective gear, or they wear the wrong kind. *[Mandatory protective gear, according to OpNavInst 5100.12G, includes a DoT-approved helmet, long trousers, long-sleeved shirt, full-fingered leather gloves, hard-soled shoes with heels that protect the ankle, protective eyewear, and a reflective vest.—Ed.]* As a result, just like with the young riders, when older riders lose control and crash into something, or when a motorist rams into them, the resulting injuries invariably are much worse, if not fatal." Data from FY99 through June 2004 shows that 29 percent of the Navy motorcyclists killed in wrecks lost control of their bikes. Twenty-eight percent were speeding, and 21 percent had been drinking.

After 27 years of riding motorcycles, Perfetto's own record is excellent. "I've fallen once—before I took the motorcycle-safety class," he recalled. "When I fell, I didn't know what I had done wrong. Now I do," he added.

Perfetto has avoided mishaps since then, but not without having his share of close calls. "I rode motorcycles in Naples for five years," he said with a smile.



"I had a close call every single day." He attributes his success to recognizing and managing the risks of riding and to never being in a hurry.

A major part of Perfetto's job at the Safety Center is training motorcycle-safety instructors (now called RiderCoaches). The Navy is scrambling to provide instructors to meet the growing demand. "There are more riders wanting to take the class than there are instructors available," Perfetto pointed out. And, although taking the class is extremely important, he said that "continuing education is the key," not just a one-time class. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation continually creates new sorts of classes to help keep everyone's skills fresh and up to date.

Motorcyclists need to take advantage of everything they can to avoid becoming another negative statistic—like the Sailor who was going 115 mph when he went to pass an SUV. He misjudged his speed and the distance to the SUV and subsequently hit the vehicle, killing himself. Nationwide, the risk per mile of dying in a motorcycle crash is 21 times higher than that of dying in a car wreck. Even if the motorcyclist isn't killed during an accident, he and/or any passenger usually will be injured seriously.

With all the inherent dangers, why do so many people *[reportedly 8.8 million nationwide in 2003, up*

from 6.57 million just six years earlier] ride motorcycles?

There are many valid reasons:

- Motorcycles are fun.

The feeling of oneness with the machine can be compared to flying in an open environment—freedom.

- Motorcycles need less gas and oil and generally cost less to maintain.

- They're easier to find parking spaces for and take up less space in a garage.

- Motorcycles usually have a lower purchase price.

- Certain models convey an automatic image of “coolness” or “badness,” which appeals to some types of riders.

- Motorcycling often is an enthusiast's sport, and the challenge comes from the unique mental and coordinated physical skills necessary to operate the machine.

- There are many types to choose from to suit the individual needs and desires.

- Motorcycle touring, with a group or solo, may be a recreational or social activity.

- Motorcycling makes commuting fun, and coming to work may become the highlight of the day.

The most important differences between four-wheeled vehicles and motorcycles are stability, visibility and vulnerability. Given these inequities, why is the automobile driver responsible for the safety of a motorcyclist who willingly chooses to accept the high element of risk? Because statistics generally concur that about 75 percent of all motorcycle accidents involve another vehicle (usually a passenger automobile).

Of these accidents, a passenger vehicle violating a motorcycle's right-of-way causes 66 percent. Translated, this means approximately half of all motorcycle accidents are the fault of a four-wheeled vehicle's driver. Three major factors seem to predominate in these accidents:

- It's difficult to “see” a motorcycle in traffic or when it's hidden in a vehicle's blind spot. The frontal profile of a motorcycle is fairly narrow, which contributes to the difficulty of seeing it.



Photo used with permission of *The Alabama Baptist*

- A motorcycle's speed is difficult to judge as it approaches a passenger vehicle. Many auto drivers claim a motorcycle looks way back when they check, only to suddenly find it next to them when they change lanes.

- Car drivers tend to be inattentive with regard to motorcyclists and only expect collisions with other cars or trucks. In this age of cellular phones and passenger-car gadgetry, it's smart to expect auto drivers to be more distracted, with a subsequent loss of focus on road conditions ahead.

Being aware of the basic factors that cause auto drivers to violate a motorcyclist's right-of-way should help these offending auto drivers to lower the high risk of motorcycling.

There are many crashes in which motorcyclists are using the road responsibly and minimizing their own risks but still are put at risk because car drivers fail to recognize potential hazards. Auto drivers, as well as motorcyclists, share in the responsibility of driving defensively, given the extreme vulnerability of motorcyclists.

Think “motorcycle,” even if you don't see one or drive one. ■

# What You Don't Know...



By Ltjg. John Herman,  
NMITC Dam Neck

Photo courtesy AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

**S**ome may believe that what they don't know can't hurt them, but I take exception to that theory. Here's why I feel this way.

I had decided it was time for an upgrade. I couldn't afford a new truck, but I wanted a bigger one. I spent countless hours searching the Web and eventually found the "perfect" used truck for me. It was being sold below "blue book" value.

The dealership was more than cooperative when I asked if I could drive the truck for a few days, allowing me enough time to find a mechanic to give the truck a once-over. The mechanic pointed out a few things that needed to be repaired. I took his estimates and was able to get the asking price lowered under the terms of an "as is" purchase with no warranty. It was such a good deal I couldn't resist.

Looking over the list of repairs, I prioritized what needed to be done immediately and what could wait. One of the things that didn't work right was the cruise control. When it was engaged and I applied the brakes, the truck would surge because the cruise control wouldn't disengage. I decided this problem

wasn't a high-priority item since I was the only one who would be driving the vehicle.

I had owned the truck a month before I finally decided to get the low-priority items repaired. When I went to get my truck from the mechanic, he had a surprise for me. He explained that I had been driving the truck without brake lights for the entire month. The cruise control works off the same switch as the brake lights.

Thinking back, I remember checking most of the lights. I had neglected the brake lights, though, because it took two people to check them. For a month, I had been endangering everyone I met on the roads. I also had been risking the welfare of my family because we had taken the truck on some road trips during the month.

What did I learn from this experience? I'm thorough every time I inspect a vehicle now. When it comes time to check the lights, my spouse helps me. She presses on the brake pedal while I walk around and ensure the lights are working. ■

*The author was assigned to VAQ-134 when he wrote this article.*

# Wear Your Seat Belt Because



By Cdr. Brad Kidwell  
VT-22

**W**ith 14 years in the Navy and 4,000 hours of flying E-2 Hawkeyes, I've been around the block a few times and have learned a few things about surviving in what seems like a dangerous environment. But I won't bore you with flight-related sea stories here—I'll save that for another time and place.

Instead, this story is about survival in the most dangerous environment and how a simple habit can

save your life. It's about driving down the highway and wearing a seat belt. On Easter Sunday 2000, I may have gotten a second chance at life because I was wearing my seat belt.

The day started out pleasant enough: My girlfriend (Lizann) and I got up early and drove to her aunt's house in the Oakland Hills, overlooking San Francisco Bay. We enjoyed a large, Italian-style brunch with her extended family (lots of people). It was a

# at Belt

## You Never Know

sunny, spring day, and everyone was having a good time—definitely the stuff that conjures up fond memories.

Late in the afternoon, we said goodbye, got in Lizann's car, fastened our seat belts, and set off on the three-hour drive back to Monterey. We were hoping to beat the Northern-to-Southern California weekend-commute traffic—but didn't.

South of San Jose on U.S. Highway 101 lies a treacherous spot where four lanes narrow down to two. What makes it so treacherous is that a bottleneck occurs where the highway curves around some foothills, and approaching, high-speed drivers can't see the traffic jams until they come around the bend. Lizann and I got caught in such a situation.

As I came around the curve, traffic had slowed down because of the bottleneck and a fender bender that had occurred. I slowed down to the same rate as the traffic around me while stealing a glance at Lizann, who was asleep but safely buckled in. We nearly were stopped when the SUV driver behind me suddenly gunned his engine and darted into the lane on our right. His action drew my attention to our right rear quarter just in time to see what had prompted such a drastic move. Another car was coming, and he simply was getting out of the way.

Lizann and I took the full impact. In the next millisecond, I heard the deafening crunch of metal and screeching tires and felt my head hitting the roof of Lizann's Toyota Corolla, even though I was wearing my seat belt. We sailed, spun and careened off three other cars before slamming into the center median—none of which I remember. I read it in the CHiP accident report. A Lincoln Continental traveling 80 mph had rammed unimpeded into the back of our Toyota going 20 mph. The driver was just some guy not paying attention as he came around the curve.

Later, after our car had stopped against the median, I remember having a ringing in my ears. I also had

tunnel vision (yes, it's real), and I vaguely was aware of what just had happened to us. People already had surrounded our car, had turned off the ignition and set the brake, and were asking if we were OK. It took a long time for paramedics and the CHiP to get through the traffic.

Meanwhile, broken windshield glass covered us, and we had minor cuts and scrapes. Debris was scattered everywhere, including Lizann's high-heeled shoes with torn leather straps, which attests to the violence of the impact. Looking around, though, I realized we both were whole, we still were strapped in, and we didn't appear to have any broken bones. I had a headache that a 10-pound Excedrin couldn't cure, and Lizann's back was hurting, but that was the worst of our problems. Once the shock and adrenaline subsided, we both realized how lucky we had been.

As the CHiP, fire crew, and EMS personnel arrived on the scene, they took turns looking us over and checking out our 25 percent shorter Toyota Corolla—the trunk now was in the back seat. They echoed our thoughts about how lucky we were to be in such good shape.

The car ended up a total loss. I had a mild concussion, and Lizann had a sore back for about a week. Neither of us had any permanent injuries. The other guy was OK, too—he had the physical advantage of mass (the bigger car wins), plus his airbag deployed as it should in front-end collisions.

The only lasting effect for me was that I'm no longer just disciplined about wearing my seat belt when I'm in a car—I'm religious about it. I preach it to everyone I know who needs to hear it. If you're one who thinks you don't need to wear a seat belt because you're a good driver, I urge you to think again. I think I'm a good driver, too, but I met a bad one. ■

*Cdr. Kidwell was a student at the Navy Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., at the time of this crash.*

# A Day I'll Never



By Lt. Brian Williams  
VP-45

**W**hen I kissed my wife and baby boy goodbye on the morning of Aug. 31, 2004, I never could have imagined what the day had in store. It was a dark and rainy afternoon, and I was bringing some family members to visit my squadron's spaces and to see the mighty P-3C Orion for the first time at NAS Jacksonville.

A few miles off base, I merged onto I-295, headed south, when the traffic suddenly slowed ahead. A few seconds later, I saw what looked like a mannequin lying

next to the road. No one in my car could figure out what a mannequin would be doing on the interstate. Unfortunately, we soon realized we were mistaken.

As we got closer, I noticed a car in the middle lane with the front end smashed and the horn blaring continuously. Far to my left, in the median of the interstate, was a car with its rear axle up on the railing. The next thing I realized was that no police or emergency vehicles were at the scene yet. For that matter, no motorists were getting out to assist.

# Forget

As I got closer, I realized the man's leg had been amputated just below the hip.

It quickly became apparent that we just had missed being part of a very serious car crash. At the same time, the unthinkable became a reality—what had appeared to be a mannequin at the side of the road actually was a human body.

I can't really explain why, but my first instinct was that I needed to help. It would have been much easier to continue on our way and to tell everyone what we had seen, but that idea didn't seem right. I pulled over to the side of the road and crossed the interstate

to check on the people in the mishap vehicles. They were conscious and, despite having minor injuries, assured me they were OK. After verifying someone already had called 911, I ran over to the man we had seen lying on the side of the road.

As I got closer, I realized the man's leg had been amputated just below the hip. A woman already had reached him, and, as I approached, she told me he still was breathing but had lost a lot of blood. I knew the most important thing I needed to do was to stop the bleeding, but how?

For a couple of seconds, my mind drew a blank. I didn't think I had any way to stop so much blood from a main artery, but then I remembered I was wearing a T-shirt. I unzipped my flight suit, took off my T-shirt, and used my pocketknife to cut it in half. I then tied my T-shirt around his leg as high on his hip as possible to create a tourniquet. This effort seemed to stop some of the blood, but I couldn't get the T-shirt tight enough. About this time, another man approached, and I noticed he was wearing a belt. I asked him to take it off so I could make a much tighter tourniquet.

While waiting for an ambulance to arrive, we kept telling the victim to breathe. We also kept checking his pulse and trying to assure him everything would be OK. He still was alive when the ambulance came a short time later. As I learned the next day, though, he died at the hospital shortly after arrival. The report said he was a 32-year-old tow-truck driver. He had been trying to rig a disabled car on the side of the highway in the pouring rain when another car lost control on the slippery road and crushed him between the two vehicles.

I must admit that witnessing such a tragedy changes something inside you. Even though the tow-truck driver didn't survive, I know it was extremely important for me to have stopped and rendered aid. Much of what I did was pure instinct, but the first aid and survival training I've had during my Navy years prepared me for what I had to do that day. Because of that training, the victim at least had a chance.

I often think that, just like me, he probably kissed his family goodbye that morning before heading off to what he undoubtedly thought would be another normal workday. The events of that Aug. 31, however, are a sad reminder of how special each day is that we spend with our families and friends. ■



# Between the Lines

*Reprinted courtesy of Hog Tales, a bi-monthly publication of the Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.), a division of Harley-Davidson Motor Company. The article appeared in the May/June 2005 issue.—Ed.*

*Gearing up—it's not just about style; it's also about comfort and protection.*

**I**t was not like Pete Crowley, a H.O.G. member from Coral Springs, Fla., to head out without his riding gear, but this was a “special occasion.” ...

*I had just gotten the 30,000-mile service done on my Wide Glide—new tires, new brakes, and while I was at it, a new billet headlamp. I was very excited to get to the dealership, pick up my jewel, and go for a ride. “Go, go, go,” I said to the bus driver under my breath. “Don’t you know I’m in a hurry?”*

Then it occurred to him: In his excitement to get out of the house and on the bus to the dealership, he had neglected to grab even his basic riding gear: gloves, boots and helmet. ...

*“No problem,” I thought. “I’ll just ride straight home and get them before I set out on the ‘real’ ride. It won’t be the first time I’ve ridden without my helmet.”*

But it was nearly the last. As he was cruising home, “at peace with the world” on his shiny, new Harley, a driver made a sudden left turn into Pete’s path. There was no time to react and ... Bang! ...

*In a second, it was over, and I found myself face down on the pavement, with blood flowing down my face. I did a quick inventory and found I had movement in my arms and legs. But my ankles were scraped and swollen—my sneakers had provided no protection at all. My bare knuckles were scraped up pretty good, and two of my fingernails were partly torn off. My T-shirt was ripped, and I had road rash on my back and shoulder. Did I already mention how lucky I feel to be alive to write this?*

Pete’s story is not meant to be a scare tactic. It’s simply a reminder of how easy it is to take for granted the protection our riding gear provides and how the lack of it can turn what otherwise might be a relatively minor crash into something you’ll wake up feeling for weeks—or worse. (And Pete’s bike? Didn’t make it.)

## Covering Up

There's nothing like flying down the open road with the wind in your hair, the sun on your skin, and the world at your feet ... until something unexpected happens. That's why it pays to wear the proper protective gear.

Protective gear doesn't simply reduce your risk of injury in an accident; it also enhances your riding comfort by reducing your exposure to wind, rain, cold, road debris, flying insects, and more. How much riding gear to wear is a personal choice (with certain choices mandated by state or local law), but Harley-Davidson strongly recommends wearing a proper amount of gear every time you ride, including a DoT-approved helmet, a long-sleeve jacket or shirt, sturdy long pants or chaps, full-finger gloves, and over-the-ankle boots.

By properly gearing up for your ride, you reduce your risk of injury, increase your comfort, and help make sure you get the most out of every ride.

**Helmet.** Your most important piece of protective gear, a good helmet provides more than vital protection in case of an accident. It also deflects bugs and road debris, lessens the impact of the elements, and cuts fatigue by reducing wind noise and blast. Three different basic styles are available to meet individual rider preferences, but always select a DoT- or Snell-approved helmet. [*OpNavInst 5100.12G requires "a properly fastened (under the chin) protective helmet certified to meet U.S. DoT standards. If the host nation does*

*not have an equivalent helmet standard, the helmet will meet the U.S. DoT standard. Fake or novelty helmets are prohibited.*"]

**Full-face helmet.** It offers the most protection—covering the ears, sides of the face, and chin. Most models feature airflow venting to enhance comfort in warm weather. The face shield can be worn in the raised position to further enhance airflow [*not true for Sailors*].

**Three-quarter (open-face) helmet.** It covers your ears and sides of your face. Most can be fitted with a face shield and/or a visor for extra protection. This helmet reduces wind noise more than a half-helmet.

**Half-helmet.** It sits on top of the head, while leaving your chin and the sides of your face exposed. Most can be fitted with a face shield for extra protection. This helmet is light and cool in warm weather. Making sure your helmet [*regardless of style*] fits properly is essential.

**Eye protection.** Even if your motorcycle has a windshield, additional eye protection is highly recommended—and sometimes required by law. Depending on what type of helmet you wear, an impact-resistant face shield may be just the ticket. Just make sure it's clean and free of scratches that can blur your vision.

If you prefer not to wear a face shield, look for goggles that meet the ANSI Z87.1 standard or impact-resistant sunglasses that meet ANSI Z80.3. Just





remember that goggles and sunglasses do not protect your face and chin from debris or insects you may encounter on the road. *[OpNavInst 5100.12G requires “properly worn eye-protective devices (impact or shatter-resistant goggles, or full-face shield properly attached to the helmet). A windshield, fairing or eyeglasses alone are not proper eye protection.”]*

**Jacket.** Talk about an icon! Perhaps nothing says “motorcycling” like the classic leather jacket. But it’s more than a fashion statement; it’s an important piece of gear. A sturdy riding jacket protects your upper body and arms against perpetual road demands, whether it’s wind, sun, bugs, or debris.

Riding jackets are available in a wide range of weights, styles and prices—in leather, all-weather nylon brands, or a variety of other abrasion-resistant materials. Many offer special features for rider comfort, protection or convenience, such as body armor, vents, removable linings, or extra pockets for storing cellphones or other important accessories.

Visibility is another important consideration. Black is certainly stylish but is not the best choice for being seen. When riding at night or in inclement weather,

consider wearing a retro-reflective vest to improve your “conspicuity.”

**Pants.** For comfort and protection in the saddle, long pants are a must. Avoid loose-fitting styles that flap or tangle in the wind, and steer clear of tight-fitting pants that restrict movement. Instead, choose comfortably fitting bottoms made from an abrasion-resistant material like leather or denim. For an extra layer of protection and warmth, add leather chaps over your jeans.

**Gloves.** Motorcycle gloves protect against wind, sun, rain, cold, pavement, and blisters while aiding your grip on the hand controls. Gloves should fit snugly but comfortably. Fingerless, full-finger, and gauntlet styles provide a range of coverage. They are available in a variety of materials, weights and thicknesses, with functional features for any weather condition. *[OpNavInst 5100.12G requires full-finger gloves/mittens designed for use on a motorcycle.]*

**Boots.** Proper footwear should be over-the-ankle boots, with sturdy heels and non-slip soles. This not only provides ankle support and firm footing but protects you from hot exhaust. *[OpNavInst 5100.12G says, “Sturdy footwear is mandatory. Leather boots or over-the-ankle shoes are strongly encouraged.”]*

**Raingear.** A change in the weather doesn’t have to mean a change in riding plans—not if you pack a reliable set of raingear. Staying dry keeps you more comfortable so you can focus on your travel itinerary—and riding according to the conditions. Components include jacket, pants, gloves, and waterproof boots or rain gaiters. Also, because raingear is usually reflective, consider slipping it on for added visibility when the skies darken, whether rain is in the forecast or not.

**Cold-weather gear.** Riding in colder temperatures simply means layering gear for warmth or hooking up to electrically heated clothing to keep you toasty along the route. Serious cold-weather gear includes heavyweight jackets with quilted liners, full-face helmets, heavyweight full-finger or gauntlet gloves, and heated clothing—all designed to keep you warm, regardless of what the thermometer says.

Here’s another tip: Once again, your trusty raingear can come in handy in the cold. Slipping it on in cold conditions can go a long way toward blocking the wind and reducing the chill factor.

## Epilogue

In August 2003, H.O.G. members Mike and Marcia Reich of La Verne, Calif., were riding with friends when it started to rain. After stopping for gas, they put on their rainsuits (over their leather jackets and chaps) and continued on. Marcia, from her vantage point on the passenger seat, describes what happened next: ...

*I was admiring a rainbow when I felt a hard shake, and the next thing I knew I was sliding down the wet pavement on my right side. I could see the bike sliding several yards ahead of me, but I couldn't see Mike. Then I started rolling.*

When she finally stopped, Marcia realized she was in the middle of the road. Seeing two 18-wheelers behind her, she jumped up and ran to the side of the road, only to realize the trucks had stopped and were blocking traffic. Then she saw Mike running toward her. ...

*Mike was OK, too! We had been going 55 to 60 mph when we hit a very slick spot on the road. As far as we could tell, I had been thrown off the bike, while Mike stayed with it until he lost his grip. Mike, the bike, and I separately bounced, slid and rolled.*

It was a scary moment for them both, but neither Mike nor Marcia was hurt seriously. ...

*Mike got a pretty good-sized strawberry on his hip where his chaps didn't cover and an abrasion on his arm where his leather jacket wore all the way through. His helmet had a chunk out of it, but he had no head injuries. I needed stitches in my elbow but had no broken bones.*

And the bike? Again, not so lucky. It sustained about \$15,000 worth of damages—only the engine was salvageable. However, given what might have been, Mike and Marcia consider themselves very fortunate. ...

*We were lucky, but we also were prepared. If we had not been wearing all the right gear—helmets, leather chaps and jackets, boots, goggles, and gloves—things would have turned out very differently. 🍓*



An aerial photograph of a multi-vehicle accident on a multi-lane highway. The scene is chaotic, with several large white semi-trucks and numerous cars involved in collisions. Debris is scattered across the road and shoulders. Emergency vehicles, including police cars and ambulances, are present at the scene. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, red font with a black outline. The words "I just saved" are crossed out with a large black 'X'.

**spent**  
~~**I just saved**~~  
**a bunch**  
**on car insurance**