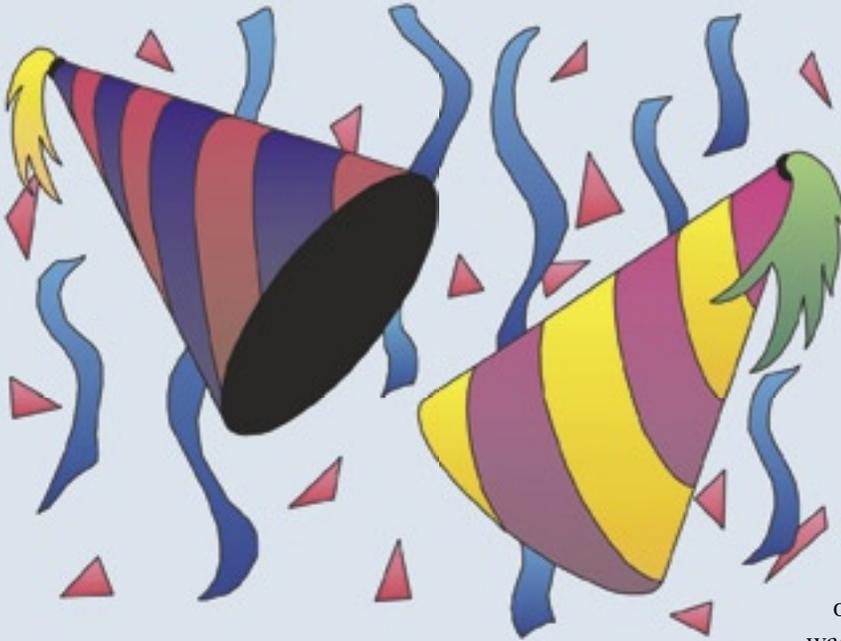


# Traffic Safety Spotlight On Fatigue

## Never Too Tired to Drive?



By SK1 (AW/SW) Don Lebow, VAQ-139 Material Control LPO

I was 23 years old, a new AK3 and had just returned to Jacksonville, Fla. from my first cruise with HS-9 the Sea Griffons. My wife and I had missed Thanksgiving with her family, and I had duty during Christmas. In an effort to please my young wife, I promised we would make it to the big New Year's party her family threw every year.

The day of the party was drawing near, and I had the mid-watch from the night prior to New Year's Eve. After shift change, I rushed home to take a shower, clean up, and help my wife pack. We were on the road by 0930 that morning and drove 112 miles to her parent's house in Umatilla, Fla. By noon, we were at the lake, swimming and enjoying the beach and the beautiful weather all afternoon. As everyone prepared for the

party, I helped my father-in-law set up the bonfire on the beach and get the grill ready for the night.

The party was great, and everyone had a good time. It was wonderful for me to be back with family and friends. We all had a drink with dinner to toast the New Year and sat around the fire talking and having a good time. After a little while I looked at my watch and realized it was already 0130. I was supposed to be back to work by 0700 the next morning, so my wife and I packed everything up to drive home. Everyone asked if I was okay to drive, but I kept insisting that I was fine.

We got on the road and made it most of the way home. All of a sudden, I noticed those dreaded flashing lights in my rear view mirror just outside of Green Cove Springs. My first thought was "Great, just what I need, a speeding ticket." Looking around, I realized what had really happened: I had fallen asleep at the wheel with my pregnant wife asleep in the passenger seat! My heart felt like it was going to explode out of my chest, and I knew I could have killed my family and myself. Fortunately, the only "injury" suffered was to my wallet in the form of a \$150 speeding ticket.

I got out of the car and the state trooper told me that I had been speeding and weaving. I thanked him for stopping me and giving me the ticket. I explained that I had fallen asleep at the wheel, and his siren had awakened me.

Since those early morning hours of January 1, 1993, I think about it every time I get ready to go on the road. Since then, I make sure I get enough sleep and adjust my travel plans so this doesn't happen again. ✈