

Good

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME!

By ATC Robert Benton, VP-47, MCBH Kaneohe

I love those safety magazines, all of them: *Mech*, *Approach*, the *Air Force's Flying Safety*. Heck, I even used to like that black-shoe rag *Fathom*. I have been using their stories to train Sailors for 17 years now, and if a more practical training tool exists, I am not aware of it. However, I have never been moved enough to contribute my own experience to these noble tomes until now.

It was a beautiful pre-dawn morning in Hawaii, and I was enjoying my morning ride into work on my motorcycle. It was my 36th birthday and it couldn't have gotten off to a better start. The typical early morning showers had tapered off, although some water was still on the roadway. I was approaching MCBH Kaneohe on a freeway that ends at the front gate. Cresting the last rise, I was surprised to see the flashing lights of a police car and two vehicles that appeared to have been in a mishap.

I assume that this sight also surprised the driver of a new Dodge Ram super cab in the lane next to me, because he quickly moved into my lane in front of me and applied his brakes, hard! Since my attention (what exists before 0600) had been drawn to the pretty flashing lights and cool flares, I was a little behind the power curve when my friend in the pickup was braking. As a result, my initial reaction was not good: A snappy application of both brakes on the wet pavement, a predictably

locked rear wheel and an uncontrolled skid toward the big truck. My day had just gotten bad, fading to worse. Then something strange happened.

In the years I have spent reading the Navy's safety magazines, I had read about the phenomenon of time compression. I have also read about training so ingrained that it took over in a time of crisis. Only now I was actually experiencing both of those things.

The Department of Defense and the Navy provide motorcycle operators with strict guidelines regarding training and equipment [see OPNAVINST 5100.12G for more info]. Marine Corps Base Hawaii goes one step further by making the motorcycle safety course an annual requirement, allowing me to have attended both the basic and experienced rider courses in the last 15 months.



Photo by PHAN Kevin Beauchamp

Flash back to me skidding toward the Dodge, which by now was as big as a house. A calm, detached part of my brain quickly went through the procedures to save my sorry can:

✓ Keep a locked rear wheel locked on a bike that isn't straight to avoid the highly acrobatic but painful "high side."

✓ Lay off the front brake to keep the front wheel in front and the back wheel in back to avoid the less spectacular but abrasive "low side."

✓ Release the rear brake and unlock the rear wheel on the now straight bike and get on the front brake, hard!

✓ Check mirror and prepare to move out of the way of the car behind you whose driver also likes pretty lights.

All this happened in less than a second and I had survived unscathed in spite of myself.

So, what would I like you to learn from my experience? First, training is good! An airman who works for me encountered an almost identical situation a week prior. He donated some skin to the road and is bankrolling a very Merry Christmas for his mechanic's family. The difference? He was scheduled for—but had not attended—a motorcycle safety course. I had been twice very recently.

Next, PPE is good! I was prepared for the worst: full-face helmet, steel-toed boots, motorcycle jacket, gloves, and heavy denim pants; all would have helped to minimize any injury incurred while logging some solo flight time.

And last, complacency is bad! I was riding on the same road, at the same time of day, thinking about my cake and presents, the pretty lights, etc., and I almost paid dearly for it.

Motorcycle safety training saved my life and my 36th birthday! 🍀

Bad

Quick Fix, Quick Wound

By PR2 (AW) J. Martinez, VFA-146

We were three months into our current deployment. My day started like any other: tending to the aircrew-survival gear and occasionally making FOD and tool pouches. One of our ordnancemen walked into the workcenter and asked me to make some minor adjustments to his tool pouches.

The task seemed simple enough: Modify the tool pouch so he could fit the strap over the cone of the flashlight and secure it. I wasn't very busy, so I proceeded with what I considered a quick fix. "There's nothing to it," I thought, "just cut a slit along the middle section of a four-inch-wide webbing, and it will slip right over the cone of the flashlight." The tool of choice for this job was my trusty pocketknife.

I started by laying the tool pouch on the deck, held the knife with my right hand, and held the loose end



of the webbing with my left hand. I placed the knife at the center of the material and applied enough pressure to cut through the webbing. In a split second, the knife burst through the material, slid up the webbing, and sliced into my left index finger. I immediately felt the cut but didn't know how bad it was. When I inspected my injury, I realized I had sliced off some skin and flesh.

I went to ship's medical, where corpsmen spent two hours treating my cut. Later, I was released and put on seven days of light duty. Lesson learned: As simple as a task seems, some risk always will exist, especially when there's a sharp blade involved. Use operational risk management in all that you do. 🍀