

# Gotta Get There... There's a Party Waiting

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**T**hanksgiving weekend was approaching, and our squadron was going to have four days off. All of us were making our holiday plans. Most of the squadron personnel were looking forward to hosting or visiting friends and family members who lived around the area. I planned a Thanksgiving weekend with friends who lived more than 500 miles away.

Forget the airline ticket; I had just bought a new high-speed, low-drag, expensive automobile that yearned to be driven at every available opportunity. This particular weekend seemed like a great chance to evaluate the car's performance.

Being a type-A naval aviator, I left after work on Wednesday evening with the intent of arriving at my destination early Thursday morning. Even after a full day of work, I was so pumped by the anticipation of my trip that I didn't realize I was already tired before I even left. I quickly became drowsy as the trip wore on. I cannot count the number of times I almost drove off the road or swerved into an oncoming vehicle. I was not only a danger to myself, but also a danger to others traveling on the highway. A cautious person would have cried "uncle," spent the night in a motel, and continued the journey rested. But not I.

I arrived at my friend's house Thanksgiving morning and grabbed some sleep before the festivities. After a short nap, I awoke to a loud, party atmosphere with a crowd of guests. Never wanting to miss a party, I joined in. I partied well into the night and disregarded any physical need for rest. Friday was a little more restful, but still I had time to party with my friends.

On Saturday, I decided to start home early and stop for the night if I felt tired. However, my press-on attitude led me astray. History repeated itself, and fatigue almost caused me to swerve into other cars, drive off the road, and in my opinion, created hazards matched only by drunk driving. I did get home O.K., but when I started thinking about the many close calls I had, I decided that I had to change my attitude about driving long distances. No more long trips without rest stops for me.

Most Navy people have a strong desire to accomplish missions. On the job, we sometimes are forced to push beyond our physical and emotional threshold. However, we don't have to do this during our off-duty time. No activity is worth putting you or another person at risk. 