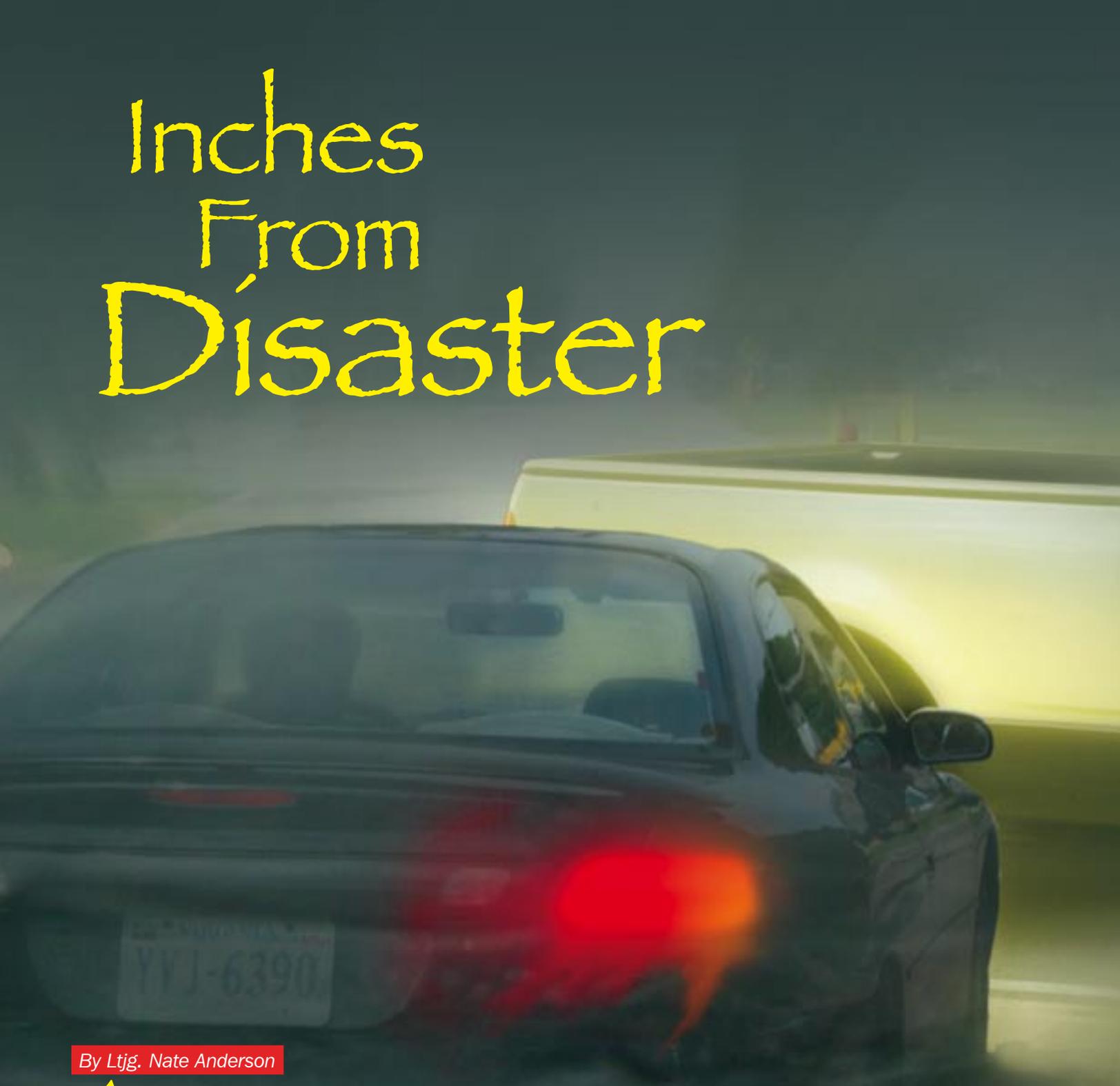


# Inches From Disaster



By Ltjg. Nate Anderson

**A**s an aviator, I've been taught ways to avoid a near-miss while flying. Thankfully, I have yet to experience anything close to a near-miss in my short career, and, if I'm careful and smart enough, I never will.

When it comes to near-misses while in my car, I haven't been so lucky. Even with 14 years of experience under my belt, I've had two razor-thin close calls in the last few years.

The first such incident occurred while my family and I were driving to Orlando, Fla. We were south-bound on a major interstate, completely oblivious to the fact that, within a matter of seconds, another vehicle nearly would broadside us. Other than having several of my family members in the car, I recall no other major distractions that particular day. I wasn't using my cell phone, wasn't fumbling with the radio, and wasn't trying to eat or drink like so many other

people on the roads today. Instead, I was minding my own business, obeying the speed limit, and staying in my own lane when, out of the blue, I caught a glimpse of a car careening across the grassy median.

This wildly out-of-control vehicle passed in front of our car, missing it by mere feet. If I had been traveling

was poor. By sounding the horn, I hoped the other driver would realize the imminent collision and speed up to avoid it. Most likely, though, it just scared the crap out of him.

As my car continued its uncontrollable slide toward the rear of the turning pickup, I quickly calculated my



Photos by John Williams. Composite.

just a smidgen faster, or if the ruts in the median had affected the other driver's course of travel even slightly, I may not have been here today to tell this story.

The out-of-control vehicle wound up in the thick Florida foliage, with its rear wheels still spinning at max speed. I never did learn the root cause of this near-miss, and I'm sure I never will.

My most recent near-miss happened while I was attached to VT-27 in Corpus Christi, Texas. The roads that evening were wet from rain. I recall driving at or maybe a little faster than the posted speed limit—definitely unsafe for the environmental conditions. I was on my way home after a hard day's work as a flight student.

While approaching an intersection, where there was a green light, I sped up to ensure I made the light. At the same time, I noticed a pickup truck in the intersection start forward, turning directly across my path. I immediately slammed on my brakes and laid on my horn. Because of the wet pavement, the braking action

options. I couldn't swerve to the right because I then would T-bone the truck. If I swerved to the left, I would have a head-on collision with oncoming traffic. Option three looked better than anything else: Brace for the pending collision.

At the instant the two vehicles should have collided, there was nothing! Somehow, I had avoided hitting the rear of the turning pickup. The distance between our vehicles couldn't have been more than an inch.

I learned several lessons from these near-misses:

- Always wear your seat belt because you never know when a random driver will appear just to ruin your day.
- Always maintain a safe speed, especially on wet surfaces. Being able to stop in a timely manner can be a priceless commodity when you least expect it.
- Last but not least, I'd rather be in the air than on the roads any day of the week. 🦅

Ltjg Anderson flies with HSL-47.