

The Navy and Marine Corps Magazine for Afloat and Shore Safety

SEA & SHORE

SPRING 2008

In this issue:

**Shiny-Side-Down...
1st Time in 40 Years**

**Recognizing Aggressive
Driving, Road Rage**

**"LOOK BOTH WAYS..." GOOD
ADVICE, BUT I FORGOT**

Eighth Annual Traffic-Safety Magazine

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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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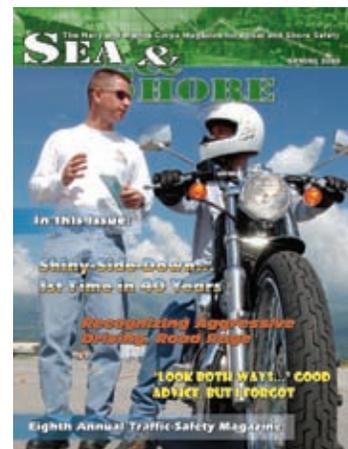
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FRONT COVER



A motorcycle-safety-course instructor talks to one of his students.

Air Force photo by SrA Stephen Schester

“A Good Year, But We All Must Do More”

That was the message from U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters on July 23, 2007, when she announced the latest annual, nationwide, traffic-fatality statistics. As she noted, 42,642 people died on the nation’s roads in 2006, a drop of 868 deaths from 2005 and the largest decline in total deaths in 15 years. This 2-percent reduction in traffic deaths contributed to a fatality rate of 1.42 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT), the lowest ever recorded.

Most significantly, fatalities among occupants of passenger vehicles—cars, SUVs, vans, and pickups—continued a steady decline to 30,521, the lowest annual total since 1993, said Secretary Peters. Injuries also were down in 2006. Passenger-car injuries declined 6.2 percent, and large-truck injuries fell 15 percent.

Secretary Peters cautioned, however, that troubling trends continue in motorcycle and alcohol-related crashes. The former jumped 5.1 percent from 2005 (and now accounts for 11 percent of total fatalities), while the latter rose only slightly more than the previous year. This is the ninth year in a row the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has seen an increase in motorcycle deaths.

“Proper training, clothing, gear, and, above all, helmet use are essential to reversing this deadly trend,” said Secretary Peters.

With no improvement in the number of alcohol-related fatalities last year, NHTSA Administrator Nicole Nason noted that drunk-driving enforcement will continue to be a top priority for the Department of Transportation (DoT). In 2006, 15,121 fatalities involved a driver, motorcycle operator, pedestrian, or cyclist with a blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 or higher, compared to 15,102 in 2005.

“There is a personal story behind these statistics, and for every alcohol-related fatality, the family left behind is shattered forever,” said Administrator Nason. ■

Information for this article was adapted from a DoT press release.

According to a press release from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), “Deaths from motorcycle crashes have more than doubled in the past 10 years—from 2,116 in 1997 to 4,810 in 2006—an alarming trend. Another 88,000 people were injured in motorcycle crashes in 2006. The yearly number of motorcycle deaths is more than double the annual total number of people killed in all aviation, rail, marine, and pipeline accidents combined. Head injuries are a leading cause of death in motorcycle crashes.”

While motorcycle fatalities in the Navy have increased 65 percent in the past 10 years, they declined 31 percent from FY06 to FY07.—Ed.

Description	2005	2006	Change	% Change
Total*	43,510	42,642	-868	-2.0%
<i>Motorists Killed in</i>				
Passenger Vehicles	31,549	30,521	-1,028	-3.3%
Passenger Cars	18,512	17,800	-712	-3.8%
Light Trucks	13,037	12,721	-316	-2.4%
Large Trucks	804	805	+1	+0.1%
Motorcycles	4,576	4,810	+234	+5.1%
<i>Nonmotorists Killed</i>				
Pedestrians	4,892	4,784	-108	-2.2%
Pedalcyclists	786	773	-13	-1.7%
Other/Unknown	186	183	-3	-1.6%

Source: FARS 2005 (Final), 2006 Annual Report File (ARF)
*Total includes other/unknown occupants not shown in table

Measure	2005	2006	Change	% Change
Fatality Rate	1.46	1.42	-0.04	-2.7%
Injury Rate	90	86	-4	-4.4%

Source: FARS, GES and FHWA VMT (March 2007 TVT)

Description	2005	2006	Change	% Change
Total*	2,699,000	2,575,000	-124,000	-4.6%
<i>Motorists Injured in</i>				
Passenger Vehicles	2,446,000	2,331,000	-115,000	-4.7%
Passenger Cars	1,573,000	1,475,000	-98,000	-6.2%
Light Trucks	872,000	857,000	-15,000	-1.7%
Large Trucks	27,000	23,000	-4,000	-15%
Motorcycles	87,000	88,000	+1,000	+1.1%
<i>Nonmotorists Injured</i>				
Pedestrians	64,000	61,000	-3,000	-4.7%
Pedalcyclists	45,000	44,000	-1,000	-2.2%
Other/Unknown	8,000	7,000	-1,000	-13%

Source: NASS GES 2005, 2006 Annual Files
*Total includes other/unknown occupants not shown in table
Numbers in bold are statistically significant.

BAC Level	2005	2006	Change	% Change
BAC .01+	17,590	17,602	+12	+0.1%
BAC .08+	15,102	15,121	+19	+0.1%

Source: FARS 2005 (Final), 2006 Annual Report File [ARF]

Motorcycles: Big Fun... And Big Risks

Ever wonder where that dirt road through the woods leads, or what it feels like to arc into a string of corners, playing along with the rhythm of the road like no ordinary set of wheels can? You'll find out what it's like if you ride a motorcycle.

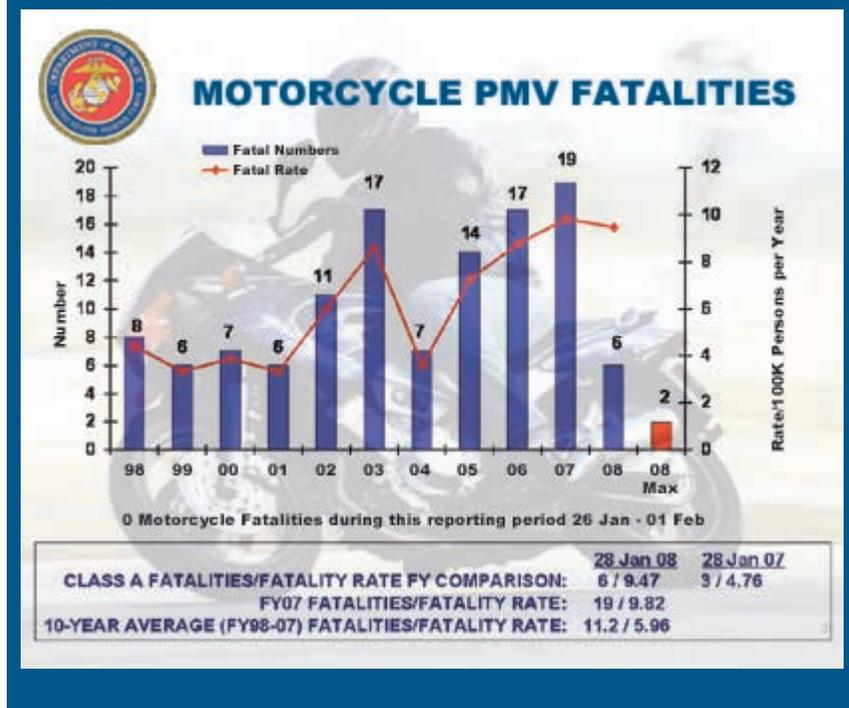
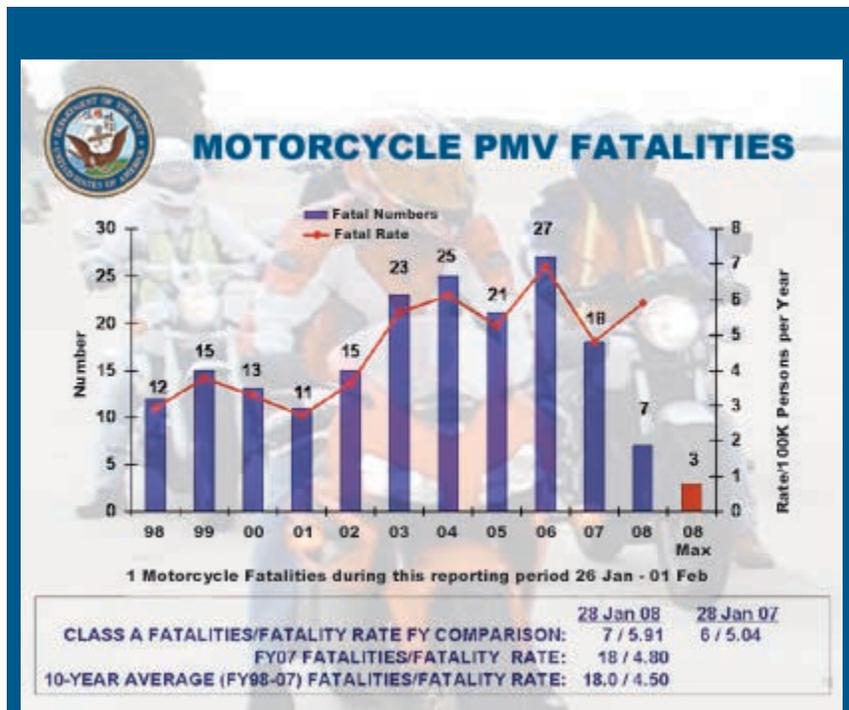
People who decide to ride a motorcycle select a unique and challenging form of transportation. However, riding isn't for everyone, and a motorcycle won't always be your best choice of transportation.

For many, motorcycling is more than a means of transportation; it's an enthusiast's sport. The attraction of motorcycling often comes from the unique mental and physical skills necessary to operate the machine. There are many varieties of motorcycles and motorcyclists, but all motorcyclists have something in common: They face an increased element of risk.

The first step in making a responsible decision to ride is understanding the high level of risk that exists. We can lower that risk through our attitudes, with the protective gear we wear, and by developing sound mental and physical strategies through training. We also must apply the basic principles of risk management. Even so, the motorcyclist is physically vulnerable in a mishap. You're 20 times more likely to be injured on a motorcycle than in a car.

More and more men and women are riding these days—from those just starting out to those who are getting back into riding after a long hiatus. There are miles waiting to be discovered—enjoy the journey... but don't become part of these Navy and Marine Corps statistics. 

For more statistics, go to <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/statistics/ashore/motorvehicle/default.htm> or <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/statistics/ashore/motorvehicle/tables.htm>.



Shiny-Side-Down... 1st Time in 40 Years

By Capt. Ed "Clyde" Langford,
Naval Safety Center

With my left arm in a sling, I look just like I walked out of a commercial for an insurance company. The truth is that I wiped out on my motorcycle while traveling home from work.

I want to use this venue to pass along some lessons learned from this experience... so that the rest of you can learn from what I did wrong and also what I did right. Forgive me for lapsing into SIR (safety-investigation report)-speak, but it's appropriate.

Narrative

Mishap motorcycle operator (MMO) has two motorcycles for family use: One is a touring model, and the other is a sport cruiser. MMO routinely rides touring motorcycle to work but on this day had decided to ride the sport cruiser to charge the battery—spouse doesn't use it much. This motorcycle was configured for a shorter rider (e.g., height of the motorcycle had been lowered to accommodate a lower straddle-high, resulting in less clearance for the foot controls). MMO had had approximately two hours of riding on this motorcycle in the last 30 days.

At approximately 1630 EDT, MMO (sole occupant) departed base work center. He had been riding for 40 years without a mishap. Weather was day VFR (visual flight rules): clear skies, no rain in the past 24 hours. Road conditions were dry, with no loose gravel or sand.

Less than a half-mile from residence, MMO approached a 90-degree, flat turn to the left. He had traveled through this curve on the touring motorcycle hundreds of times in past years and about 20 times in the past week. However, he had not correctly assessed foot-peg clearance on this sport cruiser while in a tight turn. MMO customarily traversed this 90-degree turn at a reduced speed... below the current approximately 20 mph.

Navy photos by Dan Steber



The author and his sling. (Inset) His scraped and gouged helmet.

About a quarter of the way through the turn, MMO increased his lean into the turn to maintain ground track. The motorcycle's left foot peg hit the ground because of the increased angle of bank, and MMO immediately detected a loss of friction between the back wheel and the road. A lateral-directional

departure (aft wheel skidding out to right) followed, during which the motorcycle developed 90 degrees of sideslip and 90 degrees of left-wing-down AOB. Bike went down in approximately one second.

MMO hit left shoulder on asphalt, separated from bike, and proceeded to body-surf approximately 5 to 10 feet, while motorcycle slid approximately 10 feet, coming to rest next to him. It soon shut itself down from fuel starvation brought on by its unusual attitude.

MMO was completely protected from road-rash injury by personal protective equipment: light-colored long-sleeve shirt and pants, boots, leather gloves, DOT-approved helmet, and goggles. Motorcycle had only minor damage.

MMO collected what remained of his wits and fortunately wasn't run over by following traffic, which came along about 15 seconds post-mishap. Passersby called 911 after MMO discovered that his left arm wasn't responding to control inputs. MMO sustained no other apparent injuries but still got to ride in a big red ambulance. Follow-up X-rays revealed MMO had fractured his collarbone and No. 2 rib *[no surgery or physical therapy required, though]*.

Causal Factors

Failure to properly assess risks associated with lowered suspension and controls. Accepted. MMO should have recognized that lower foot controls didn't provide the level of clearance to which he was accustomed.

Contributing Factors

Contributing factors were: (a) psychosocial pressure to get home on time for dinner (get-there-i-tis), (b) complacency because of unusually high number of motorcycle hours in the previous 30 days on differently configured motorcycle, (c) habit pattern developed during previous operations on that 90-turn turn at 20 mph with no problems.

OK, so much for all the Safety Center-ese. Here are the points I'd like to leave with you:

- I got lucky. Had traffic been a factor—following, or worse yet, opposing—I might be pushing up daisies right now. The motorcycle also stayed away from me, instead of catching up and sliding into or over me.

- Experience doesn't always make you better. If it breeds complacency—and it usually does—it actually can work against you. Put another way, just because you get away with something 100 times doesn't mean

you'll get away with it on the 101st time. I was too comfortable with the same road I drove on every day and had developed habit patterns on a different motorcycle. Know and understand what's different today and what your limitations are for the current conditions.

- There's no such thing as a short ride. I wiped out less than a half-mile from my driveway.

- The biggest take-away: PPE works. My shoulder injury is an impact injury. The motorcycle gear I wore was a canvas-like material. My boots worked; my toes and ankles weren't hurt. Afterward, I noticed a slight bump on my left knee, but there was no road rash. My helmet, goggles and leather gloves did the rest. Even at such a low speed, my helmet was gouged and scraped. If not for the PPE, I really don't believe I would be here today writing this article.

There isn't a smidgen of road rash on me—I didn't leave a single skin cell on the asphalt. In the past year or so, I've become religious about not driving 50 feet on my bike without suiting up completely, even on the hottest and most humid summer days. That discipline saved me a lot of pain.

I strongly recommend that all motorcyclists invest in good riding gear. Don't just stop with the helmet and jacket; buy some lower-body protection, too. In other words, skimp on the motorcycle before you skimp on the safety gear.

One last thing: Reread my "causal factors" listed earlier. They apply to a lot more than just motorcycling—flying, for one. Complacency is complacency in any environment.

Pardon the length of this article, but if it helps just one person anytime in the future, it will have been worth all the one-handed typing. **S**

The author is head of the Aviation Safety Programs Directorate.

Resources:

- Motorcycle Safety Resources, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/toolbox/traffic/motorcycles/default.htm>

- Sharing the Roadway—Motorists and Motorcyclists in Traffic, [http://safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/motorvehicle/motorcycle/](http://safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/motorvehicle/motorcycle/SharingTheRoadway8.04revs.pdf)SharingTheRoadway8.04revs.pdf

- Motorcycle Safety Information, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/motorvehicle/motorcycle/default.htm>

A Tale From the

By Carl Bennett,
NAS Jacksonville, Fla.

I was heading home to my wife after spending a week in San Marcos, Texas. I had five hours behind me on this second day of riding and was in the panhandle of Florida on a great piece of road known as I-10, about 200 miles from Jacksonville. My bike just had turned 50,000, and the thought had hit me that I was halfway to getting a new bike. As it turned out, I was closer than I thought.

About 25 miles from my next gas stop (I ride about 75 miles to a rest stop, then 75 more miles to a fuel stop), I approached yet another tractor-trailer. Nothing was new here: head check, change lanes, accelerate, car will be clear when I get there.

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) teaches a simple strategy to manage risk. Instructors

use the acronym “SEE” during training: Search, Evaluate and Execute. I have come to think of it simply as “my plan” (thanks, Dan).

Anyway, I assumed the car would be clear by the time I got there, but I was wrong. And because I always quickly accelerate past these huge giants, I successfully placed myself in the trucker’s “no zone”—otherwise known as a blind spot.

My plan A didn’t account for the overpass we all just had gone over. These are the main elevation changes on I-10. Whether the semi sped up or the car slowed down made little difference. I quickly overtook the car and obviously failed to effectively scan ahead; I now was in this trucker’s blind spot on the left side. It was time for plan “B.”

The crash site.



“No Zone”



The survivor and his bike.

I immediately began to slow down; I knew I was hidden in the trucker's blind spot. Plan A's failure to account for the overpass continued to compound because an onramp usually follows these overpasses. Rarely does a crash involve one factor; more likely, it's a combination of factors. A vehicle entering I-10 East from that onramp probably caused this giant to change lanes quickly.

I saw the truck's front tire moving toward the broken white line. A glance at recently completed construction on the edge of the road to the left told me I had maybe 12 to 18 inches of asphalt left—no help there. I looked back at the truck moving quickly into my lane. Even if I did maximum braking at this point, it was unlikely I would clear the trailer. It was obvious to me that plan B had failed before it began. It was time for plan C: the grass median separating the lanes. The second it took to execute this plan seemed like hours, as I reflect back on the events.

At 70 mph, I steered my bike into the center grassy median without a second thought. My brain spit out the orders: Stay off the brakes, keep your head and eyes up, gradually roll off the throttle, let the bike move underneath you, and don't fight it. I knew my best chance of survival was to ride it as long as possible. A witness said she was amazed how

long I controlled the bike. Except for the brief Aflac moment, when I pondered how much it would hurt and how big the bruises would be, my brain never stopped making adjustments to plan C. Besides, there was no plan D.

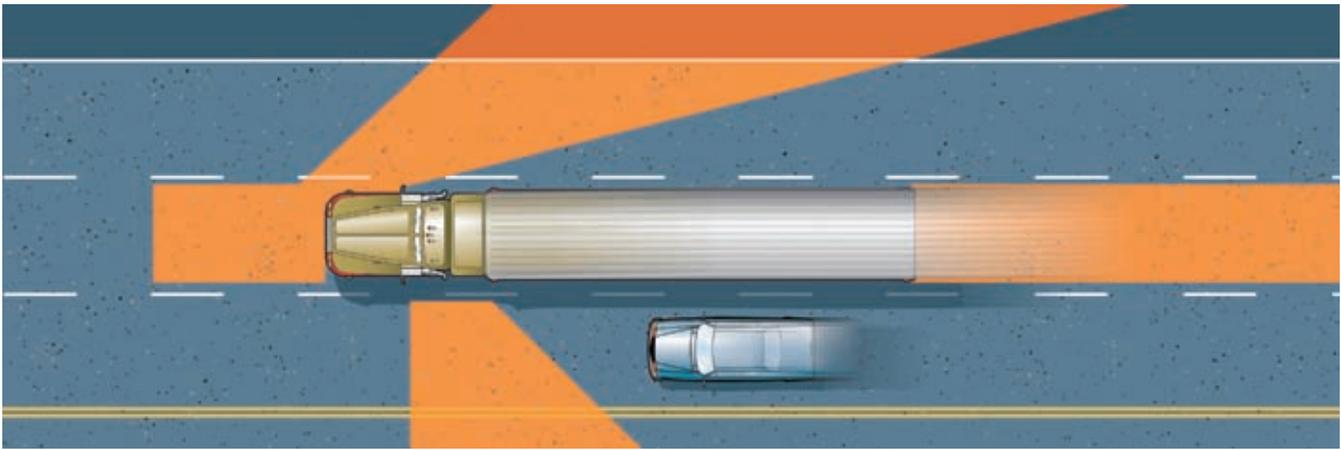
Finally, the lack of traction and my own inertia won out; my assistance on the bike no longer was needed, and I felt myself high-side (get thrown over the top of the bike). Again, my brain adjusted plan C, appendix 2. Advice from my brother about his motorcycle track experience came into my head: “Tuck and roll!” he had said.

I know I tucked in my arms because I had mud only on one forearm pad of my jacket, and my gloves showed no damage from impact. I know I also tried to pull in my legs. From the obvious spectacle I created, though, according to the witness in the vehicle following me (she almost was hysterical), I'd say my legs were not as controlled. I didn't check the speedometer, but I suspect my free flight started somewhere in the 50-to-60-mph range.

While lying on my back in the grass, plan C, appendix 3, went into place. I mentally checked for pain (none noted—good sign); opened my eyes (no blurred vision—another good sign); and started moving one set of fingers, a wrist, elbow, and finally the whole arm from the shoulder down. “Woo, I still can play the guitar,” I thought. I checked each limb in the same fashion and found, to my great relief, I appeared to be injury-free!

By now, I was surrounded by people, and while no one tried to hold me down, they all echoed, “Don't move.” Again, I must have put on a really good show. I finally raised the visor on what had been my favorite helmet (a Shoei X-11) and calmly explained that I wasn't in any pain and didn't think anything was broken.

The crowd allowed me to check my body parts while lying down, and I found they all indeed still were intact and pointed in the direction they've been pointing for the last 45 years—a really good sign. It then was time to stand up and complete appendix 3's required operational check. To everyone's amazement, I not only stood up but walked around, too. However, I finally felt a small bump on my left knee.



Orange-shaded areas represent “blind spots” or areas where a car disappears from a truck driver’s view.

A couple hours later, when I walked into the Jackson County Hospital emergency room, it nearly took a copy of the highway patrol’s crash report to convince the ER check-in nurse I had been run off the road. I guess the lack of an ambulance crew confused her. The doctor equally was amazed. The bump on my left knee (from ground impact) now was accompanied by a sore left ankle. However, the ankle wasn’t swollen, which meant my riding boots had worked, too! Further examination revealed no broken bones, scratches or bruises. It took six days for the only bruise to appear (on my left knee). Had it not been for a few sore muscles, I could have gone back to work the next day.

Riding gear and training truly works for those who wear it and regularly practice their skills. I constantly adjusted my plan C as I recognized each change.

The trucker never stopped—it was my screw up, though, not his. And, besides, he couldn’t see me. Lee Park’s “Total Control” book talks about the importance of controlling one’s fear when riding. Having a plan focused my thoughts and prevented fear from guiding my actions; never once did I think of jumping off my bike or laying it down. It wasn’t until I saw the bike loaded on the tow truck at my home three days later that I fully realized the seriousness of my crash. Frame damage caused the bike to be a total loss. I now have a new helmet (another Shoei X-11) and red jacket (doesn’t match my new bike). Meanwhile, my Joe Rocket mesh pants and Alter Ego jacket, while dirty, are completely intact and will be used again.

I will continue to dispute those who say I just was lucky. Luck only would have been involved if I had closed my eyes and hoped for the best. Without a doubt, I screwed up by putting myself in the trucker’s “no zone.” What saved me were my plan, which I

adjusted continually to each change, and my dedication to always wearing full riding gear. As an educator, I’m sharing this story so others can learn from my experience.

A couple years ago, NHTSA (National Highway Transportation Safety Administration) and AMA (American Motorcyclist Association) came out with a poster campaign, in which motorcyclists were warned, “Never ride faster than your guardian angel can fly.” In my case, though, luck had nothing to do with it.

Within 10 days of my crash, I had a new 2007 Yamaha FJR 1300, helmet and jacket. I highly recommend you use a different process for getting a new bike, however. Other than that one incident, it was just another great day of riding! ■

The author has been a motorcyclist for more than 30 years. As an MSF RiderCoach Trainer, he has been involved in traffic education with both the Navy and the State of Florida for close to 10 years now. He always tells student riders that exposure to risks will provide more opportunities to be involved in a crash, so you have to be prepared. The acronym “ATG, ATT” (all the gear, all the time) is heard a lot in his training classes, and when students see him riding, they see he dresses as he talks and practices what he preaches. That exposure to risks caught up with him on Sunday, March 11, 2007, while riding his 2003 BMW R1150R and prompted him to write this story.

Resources:

- Motorcycle Safety Foundation, <http://www.msf-usa.org/>
- Motorcycle Safety, <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/motorcycle/motosafety.html>
- Motorcycle Tips and Techniques, <http://www.msgroup.org/TIPS.asp>

When You Take the Keys, Take All the Keys

By Cdr. Stu Alexander

It was Columbus Day weekend, which meant a well-deserved three-day weekend for the command. The Florida fall-weather forecast was great, and everyone was excited to have the extra time to spend with family and friends.

I had been on board [*as OinC*] fewer than two weeks and had made it clear in that short period of time that safety was at the top of my list. Through a Captain's Call, a lengthy meeting with the CPO mess, and division meetings, I had put out the word that my primary concern was the well-being of all our Sailors—both on and off duty. I didn't know my biggest leadership challenge would come 11 days after reporting, and I wouldn't be able to catch my breath again until I had briefed this mishap to 800 of my shipmates, my commodore, and a VTC with a two-star present.

About 1600, Oct. 10, after working duty-section weekend, a 33-year-old Sailor was home having a party and drinking with some friends. The get-together lasted until 7 p.m., when the Sailor said he wanted to go to a club. His girlfriend, knowing he had been drinking, had the presence of mind to take his car keys as a preventive measure. This gesture angered the Sailor and led to a heated argument that escalated to the point where the Sailor's roommate checked to see what the commotion was all about. The Sailor and his girlfriend subsequently cooled off, and the roommate said he would drive the Sailor to the club if he just would give him a thumbs-up when he was ready. The Sailor agreed, and the roommate returned to his room.

Unfortunately, the Sailor also owned a motorcycle, and he still had those keys. Later that evening, around 2100, he decided to leave the house without telling anyone. He quietly pushed his motorcycle out of the garage and into the street, closed the garage door, and slipped away unnoticed. Three hours later, he was dead. No one yet knows his whereabouts for those three hours.

The police accident report read that, at approximately 2345, the Sailor was traveling north at a high

rate of speed, apparently on the way home, when he lost control in a turn. He departed the northbound lane and hit the southbound curb. The motorcycle then smacked a guardrail, ejecting the Sailor. A witness said he saw the motorcycle lying on the sidewalk and stopped to investigate. He found the Sailor nearby in the grass and contacted emergency-rescue personnel. They pronounced the Sailor dead at the scene.

When this senseless death occurred, my command was 100 percent ORM complete and 100 percent drive-safe complete. Supervisors also had delivered monthly safety training to all divisions. In July, before my arrival, the command had completed a safety stand-down, covering many topics, including traffic safety and DUI lectures from the local sheriff's office and state highway patrol. The command further just had been complimented on a superlative NavOSH safety inspection. It seemed like all hands were doing everything they could to spread the word. In the days and weeks that followed this fatal wreck, though, many were walking around saying, "If only I had..."

Use our example at your next divisional quarters and ask, "What could you have done?" Note the responses you get. **S**

The author was OinC, NAS Jacksonville AIMD, when he wrote this article.

Resources:

- Rolling Stoned: Experiments in Riding Drunk, http://www.motorcyclecruiser.com/streetsurvival/riding_drunk/index.html
- Alcohol-Impaired Motorcyclists: Communications and Outreach, <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/Countermeasures/pages/Chapt5/3p2AcIImpComm.htm>
- Trends in Motorcycle Fatalities Associated With Alcohol-Impaired Driving—United States, 1983-2003, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5347a2.htm>

Los Angeles

After Dark

By LCdr. Andy “Skirt” Mickley,
VFA-22

I couldn't have been more excited in March 2005—I had a chance to ride my Harley-Davidson Fatboy from Lemoore to San Diego for temporary duty. Here was a chance to get some road experience and to accumulate some miles on my motorcycle. An unexpected lesson awaited me.

At the time, I had seven years of riding experience, and I had attended the Basic Rider Safety course. I was wearing a full-face helmet, my leather flight jacket, leather chaps, my flight boots, and an orange safety vest.

I had checked the weather report for the route: Clear skies but a little chilly. My school started first thing Monday morning, so I decided to leave at 1200 on Sunday for what I thought would be a six-hour trip. At the last minute, I decided to change my route and take a more scenic trip through the Tehachapi Pass—I thought the distance would be about the same (it turned out to be 60 miles farther).

The journey started out great, with beautiful weather and moderate temperatures. A car wreck on Highway 99 slowed me down considerably, and I was forced into an unplanned stop because my left hand was starting to shake from all the clutch work needed at 10 mph. The slow traffic, unplanned stop, and longer route combined to put me about two hours behind schedule; however, I didn't yet realize how significant that would be.

Back on the highway, I started making my way through Los Angeles. I was impressed that I was able to keep a steady speed of 65 mph through the city. I had driven through it several times and always got caught in traffic. I had memorized my route and knew I nearly was out of LA, so I was pretty excited.



By 1730, dusk had taken full effect, and it rapidly was getting dark. Shortly afterward, I noticed I was being tailgated. I was in the left-most lane of three lanes going southbound on “The 5,” with all lanes moving about the same speed. I was really distracted by the car close behind me. I glanced back at him once too often, and when I turned my attention to the traffic ahead, I saw all three lanes were stopped dead about 30 feet distant. I immediately jammed on both brakes while still traveling at 65 mph.

The back tire locked and started to skid, but the motorcycle still was tracking straight and steady. Some quick math told me my current rate of deceleration would not keep me clear of the vehicle in front of me, so I released both brakes. I then jammed them on again, with more pressure on the front brake this time—a big mistake. The front tire locked, and as my bike started falling to the left, I knew I was going down.

My first thought was that my insurance bills were going to go up. Then my instincts kicked in, and I jumped onto the high side of the bike. I hit the left rear bumper of the car in front of me at a 45-degree angle and rolled off the bike like we had learned in elementary-school gymnastics.

About a second later, I sat up and did a quick inventory: Legs, arms and fingers were intact, and I didn’t seem to be bleeding. I jumped to my feet and looked at my bike, thinking, “How am I going to get to San Diego now?” That thought was interrupted by the owner of the car yelling, “Why did you hit me?” I had hit a new Toyota Camry and busted out the left brake and turn-signal light.

He got off easy. My motorcycle had \$3,000 worth of damage, including bent handlebars, but it still was operable. My guess is that I hit the car at between 5 and 10 mph. I remember picking up the bike, using only my arms instead of my legs. I was so full of adrenaline, the 670-pound bike felt like nothing.

Why did this trip turn out to be so expensive? Foremost, I didn’t bring along the principles of off-duty risk management. I thought I had everything planned, but

I never recalculated the trip length after I changed the route. If I had, I would have realized that leaving at 1200 would have me driving through LA traffic at dusk. I should have left earlier in the day or planned a stop to ensure I would be well-rested and mentally fresh for the challenging ride in front of me.

The Swiss-cheese model hit me: poor planning, fatigue from slow traffic, a surprise sunset, and a tailgating driver. If any of those hadn’t occurred, I likely would have avoided my mishap. That’s proof that, for ORM to work, you need to properly assess all the hazards, so you can implement the proper controls.

Another mistake was that I padlocked on the car in front of me and never looked to the sides. I had a six-foot-wide shoulder just to the left of me that I didn’t notice. I also misapplied the brakes. I’ve looked at countless motorcycle-safety pamphlets and documents since the incident, and they all say if the back brake locks, keep holding it. My bike was upright and steady after the back brake locked; I should have held the back brake and steadily increased pressure on the front brake. In retrospect, I only did two things right that night. I jumped on the high side of the bike to avoid crushing my leg, and I was able to roll off the bike and thus dissipate the kinetic energy of the crash.

I was lucky. My only injuries were embarrassment, a big bruise on my inner thigh from hitting the handlebar while jumping to the high side of the bike, and a \$3,000 repair bill. In case you’re wondering, I got to San Diego. I moved my bike to the median and sat there for about 45 minutes, getting my head back together and crying to my wife on a cellphone about how I had crashed my Harley. I then finished the trip, even though the handlebars were bent slightly to the left. The damage mostly was cosmetic, but the lessons I learned are priceless. **S**

The author is the squadron safety officer. The incident he described took place two years ago.

Resources:

- Risk Management Resources, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/toolbox/riskmanagement/default.htm>
- Operational Risk Management Indoctrination Training, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/presentations/orm/sourcefile/ormindoc.ppt>
- Motorcycle Safety Resources, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/toolbox/traffic/motorcycles/default.htm>



SA Saves My “A”

By AT1(AW/SW) Dewitt Townsend,
VFA-15

I've ridden a motorcycle for six years and am dedicated to being aware of my surroundings [*known as SA, or situational awareness*] when I'm out riding. That dedication definitely paid off during a recent ride when a motorist put my life at risk.

As a shop supervisor in a Navy FA-18C squadron, I lead a busy life. When an opportunity came along to kick back one Friday during a command-sponsored beach picnic, I was all too happy to trade my coveralls for a pair of flip-flops and watch the khakis grill lunch. It was a hot day, and some of my squadronmates were enjoying their day off with a couple of frosty adult beverages. Knowing that I later planned to go for a ride on my motorcycle, I opted to stay hydrated with water.

That ride started out like any other. Because the day had been so hot, I didn't start until almost 2130, when much of the heat had dissipated. A light rain just had fallen, and I knew that riding a motorcycle at night obviously carried additional risks. Using ORM analysis, I concluded that those risks were mitigated somewhat by the bike's excellent lighting, my reflective jacket, and the potential for lighter traffic due to the hour.

I donned my usual complement of personal protective equipment (gloves, denim jeans, reflective riding jacket, and helmet) and set out. The night was comfortable, though still a little humid. The cooling effect

of the open air was just what I had been looking for after a hot day at the beach. It's easy to get distracted and complacent when riding in such enjoyable conditions, but I remained alert because we had addressed this topic during the monthly meeting of our squadron's motorcycle-rider club.

Our club maintains training jackets for every rider, with full documentation of all training and group-ride participation. Numerous guest speakers have attended our meetings, including motor-vehicle experts from the Naval Safety Center, as well as local law-enforcement personnel. I feel it's because of this training that I'm still here today to write this account.

No more than six minutes from my front door, I was stopped behind several other cars at a traffic light. The road had two lanes of traffic traveling in each direction, as well as a right turn lane. While standing over my bike in the right-most lane for through traffic, I heard a car approaching from behind. This sound initially only alerted me to the fact a car was pulling up



The car's bumper hit the bike between the tire and frame.

Double “S”



The bike's back-tire swing arm was hyperextended from the impact, and the pipe and mount were torn from the engine and frame.

behind me. The sound of skidding tires that quickly followed, though, grabbed my attention.

Everything seemingly was in slow motion as I turned my head, looked over my shoulder, and was

confronted by the headlights of a car, with the brakes locked up, struggling to maintain control. In a split second, I decided riding the bike clear was out of the question. Instead, I dove

off to the right to avoid being run over. The car hit the rear wheel of the bike just as my left foot cleared the seat. I could feel the air rushing past my leg as I struggled to expedite my dismount. I ran through the right-turn lane and onto the shoulder before turning around to see my bike lying on its side in front of the offending car.

The damage to my bike was close to \$5,000, but the real story for me wasn't the material loss. It's knowing I could have been killed if I hadn't been aware of my surroundings. The lessons I've learned as a graduate of the base motorcycle-safety course and as a member of the command motorcycle club truly made the difference in this life-or-death situation. **S**



The bike's back rim was crushed by the car's bumper.

Resources:

- What Should I Know About City Riding? Knowledge and Skills Are Power, http://www.epinions.com/content_4807958660
- Sierra Alpha Is Life, <http://sierraalpha.net/>
- Rider's Workshop Riding Skills, <http://www.ridersworkshop.com/skills.html>

Talking Myself Out of a **Bad Decision**

By Ens. Steven Howard,
VFA-122

Pensacola drivers are not the best drivers in the world. I always figured they were out there to kill me every day as I headed to the squadron to fly.

As if my daily commute by car wasn't dangerous enough, I recently bought a motorcycle. And although

Navy photo by MC2 Eric J. Rowley



Not having attended a motorcycle-training class like this is one of several reasons the author of this story decided to wait for better conditions before taking his new bike for a spin.

I have only minimal riding experience, I was anxious to break in my new bike.

One Wednesday night, after I had finished studying, I decided to take the bike on its maiden spin. A few days earlier, I had washed and polished my new “toy,” so it was looking good—like it was ready to take to the road. I felt prepared for the next day's flight, so I figured I could afford to kill some time and take the bike around the neighborhood.

While putting on jeans and boots, I applied some ORM to what I was about to do, considering the risks and benefits involved. The new helmet and motorcycle jacket I had ordered the week before weren't supposed to arrive for another day. My thoughts then turned to the kids in my neighborhood, whom I knew ride their skateboards and bikes in the street almost any time of the day or evening. They usually move out of the way of vehicles at their own leisure.

By this time, it already was dusk, and remembering I didn't have a reflective vest and hadn't yet taken the Motorcycle Safety Foundation course, I decided not to ride that night. I would wait until I met all the requirements outlined in the Navy's Traffic Safety Program (OpNavInst 5100.12G). The risks far outweighed the benefits of my going out that night. I hope other novice riders will read my story and do likewise. **S**

The author was assigned to VT-4 when he wrote this story.

Resources:

- Operational Risk Management (ORM), <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/orm/default.htm>
- Operational Risk Management Training, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/orm/articlesormtraining.htm>
- Safety Advice for Novice Motorcycle Riders, <http://www.motorcyclecruiser.com/novices/>.

Warm Night, Dark Highway... What the #*%@ Is That?

By AM2 Robert J. Carrion,
VFA-106

After six months and 4,000 miles of mishap-free motorcycle riding, I felt comfortable I could handle any situation that might arise on the road. I'd been practicing everything I had learned in the motorcycle-safety course. I was wearing long-sleeve attire, full-face helmet, long pants, gloves, and high-top boots, presumably in full compliance with PPE requirements. I also was adhering to the posted speed limits at all times.

One quiet night on a dark highway in early January, though, with the Mid-Atlantic air temperature well above normal, I was enjoying my riding experience more than usual. Suddenly, out of nowhere, everything came to a violent, frightening halt. I lost control of my motorcycle because of what first appeared to be a massive, brown cow trotting into my path on the highway at an amazing speed. After swerving hard and barely missing the obstruction, which turned out to be a deer, I crashed knees-first onto the interstate.

I then found myself skidding on my lower back and forearms for what seemed like a few hundred feet. The experience was something that never could have been predicted or explained. While I was sliding down the highway, at a high rate of speed, my instincts told me to resist rolling. When I finally stopped, I jumped up and ran off to the side of the road to avoid the traffic following closely behind.

An assessment of the damage to the motorcycle made it look safe for me to continue my ride home. With the help of a good Samaritan, who happened to be passing by, I managed to bend back a piece of the motorcycle that had lodged in the steering column. I didn't feel my injuries required a visit to the local emergency room. After all, I was more concerned with my gnarly case of road rash than the minor bruises to my left knee and right wrist, and even the road rash didn't look too bad. The next day, however, I succumbed to the pain of the road rash and visited medical personnel, who carefully scrubbed the remaining skin from my forearms and lower back.

I learned some things from this experience:

- Leathers aren't just a style or a look; they prevent severe burns from road rash.
- The sweater I was wearing, while stylish and trendy, didn't provide much protection for my arms.
- And while I was lucky no other vehicles or people were involved, I learned that liability insurance has its shortcomings. It's useful (and required) but didn't do my trashed motorcycle any good at all.

As I look back on what my options were, instead of slipping and sliding on the highway and getting the scrapes and burns, I could have taken the advice of my mother and just sold the motorcycle. The leather-jacket option, though, is more feasible because I like riding too much. Also, I need to remember the posted speed limit is for the best road conditions; when it's dark out, I need to slow down and give myself more reaction time.

In a few months, I'll be fully recovered, and my motorcycle will be ready to ride again. By the way, the deer that jumped into my path got away unharmed and running like a bandit. It's almost like he had planned the whole thing. **S**

The author was assigned to VFA-136 when he wrote this story.

Resources:

- Down a Different Road, <http://www.931arg.afrc.af.mil/news/storyprint.asp?id=123068576>
- Critter Crashes: How to Avoid Deer and Other Animals on a Motorcycle, http://www.motorcyclecruiser.com/streetsurvival/preventing_fatal_deer_accidents/
- How to Handle Animals on the Road While Riding a Motorcycle, http://www.ehow.com/how_7884_handle-animals-road.html

New Tool Aims To Improve Driver Knowledge

“*Moving Safely Across America: The Interactive Highway Safety Experience*” is a CD-ROM developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to improve the level of highway-safety knowledge for the average driver. Research indicates that driver error is a factor in a significant number of highway crashes. Many of these drivers are unaware of or have underestimated the risks and/or consequences associated with various roadway behaviors.

This CD-ROM has three activity areas:

Road Trip – Take a virtual journey with Joe and his friends and help them make it safely to their vacation spot.

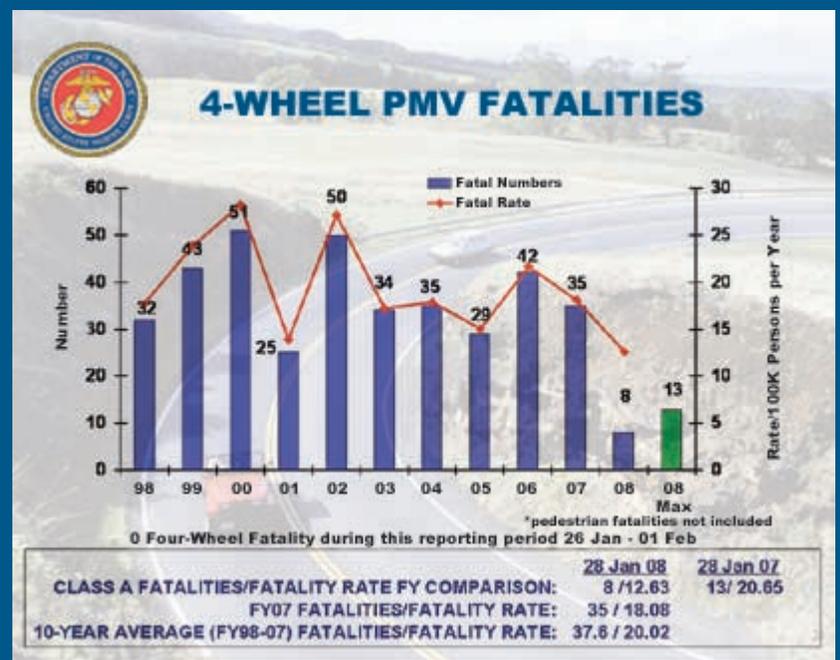
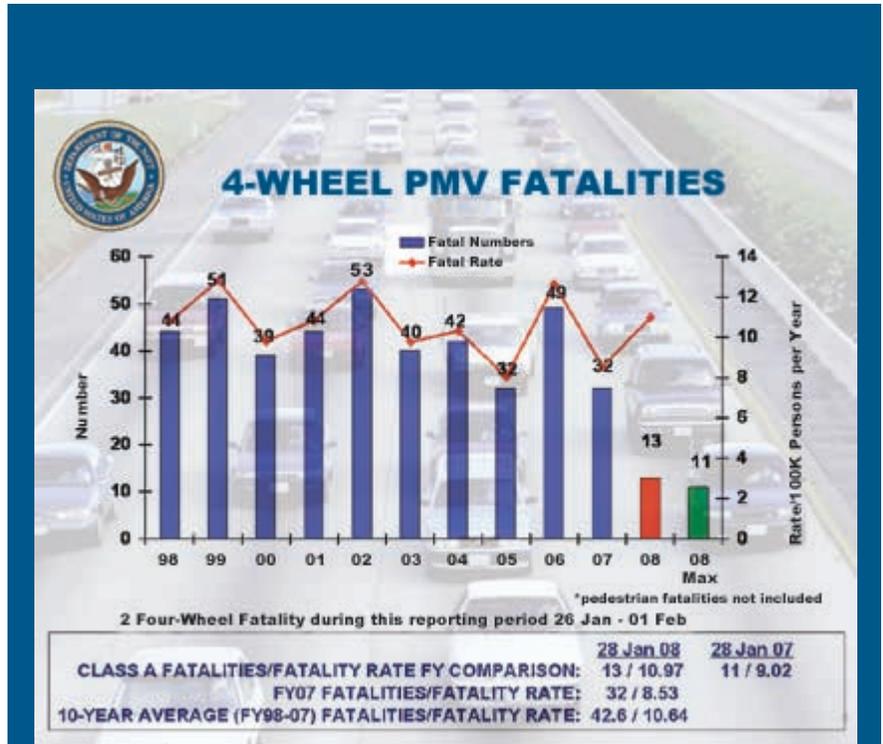
Road Challenge – Are you road savvy? Test your skills and find out.

Safety Stops – Discover more about the technology that is built right into the road and see what is planned for highways of the future.

Copies of the CD are available by contacting Ben Gribbon in FHWA safety training. Call him at 202-366-1809, or e-mail him at Benjamin.gribbon@fhwa.dot.gov.

Safety is a shared responsibility, and all drivers, including Sailors and Marines, need to recognize, understand and take advantage of new tools designed to reduce the number of deaths on our nation’s highways [see *Navy and Marine Corps PMV fatality totals in the accompanying charts*].

As Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter has noted, “We may be better than the national average at large, but I have to tell you that every time I look at the safety-incident reports, I see fatalities and serious injuries that result when Sailors and Marines speed and lose control of their vehicles, drive without seat belts, or drive under the influence. These are preventable accidents, and I will not be satisfied until we’ve done everything possible to eliminate all of them.” **S**



Navy Getting On Board With "Save a Life Tour"



Navy photo by MC2 Leah Stiles

"Save a Life Tour" co-founder Brian Beldyga (left) shows that tunnel vision is the most dangerous part of driving while drunk.

Beldyga said about 70 percent of drunk-driving fatalities are the result of tunnel vision, a narrowing of the eye's focus as blood-alcohol levels rise. The result is less concentration on what is happening outside the peripheral area of the driver's lane. "Save a Life Tour" simulates this tunnel vision to give a startling wake-up of how impaired a driver can become while under the influence.

"It really feels like you're operating something impaired," said a ship's executive officer. "The simulator not only reminds us that driving drunk is dangerous, but that you really need to be checking the mirrors and looking around."

According to a PO3, "It was hard... it was not a joke. Here [*behind the wheel of the simulator*], we can all laugh, but out there, crashing into a building isn't funny."

Not that the Sailors are left to crash and burn, so to speak. Beldyga stands by their sides and shows them how to beat the machine. "I give them every opportunity to beat it," he says, "but they can't, and if you can't do it sober, with my help, then don't tell me you can go out and do it in real life."

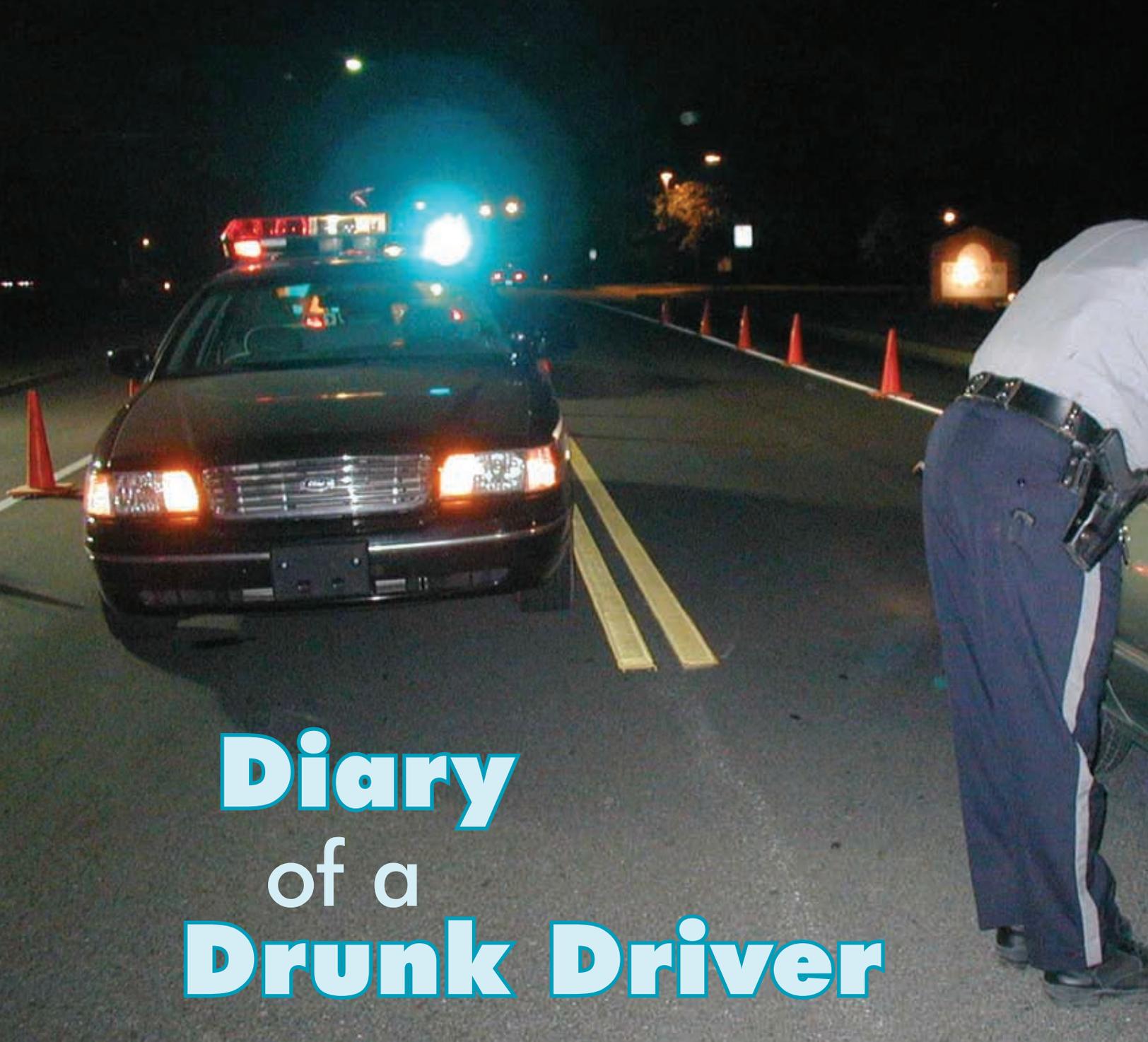
One ship's safety officer was enthusiastic about the impact "Save a Life Tour" makes, especially two graphic videos in the program that show drunk-driving victims—some while they're in the operating room of a hospital's emergency ward. "We want to show our Sailors, graphically, the risk of drinking and driving," the safety officer explained.

Beldyga sums up the "Save a Life Tour" message like this: "Be there for your friends. Take their keys, and don't let them drive. It's as simple as that." ■

With 17,000 Americans reportedly killed and more than 700,000 injured annually in alcohol-related traffic crashes, it's understandable why the Navy is stepping up their efforts to educate Sailors on the hazards of drunken driving. The newest tool in this effort is a \$2.5-million drunk-driving simulator and display called "Save a Life Tour," which travels to military installations, as well as schools and colleges, year-round.

The "Save a Life Tour" senior manager, Brian Beldyga, lost his fiancée in a drunk-driving incident. He hits people hard with an in-your-face attitude as he instructs Sailors during a 30-minute demonstration on the effects of drinking and driving. After a brief introduction, Beldyga lets Sailors take the wheel of the simulator for three minutes. During that time, their control of the car becomes delayed and peripheral vision becomes fuzzy as they simulate going from sober to drunk (with a blood-alcohol content of 0.34, more than three times the legal limit in most states).

"I couldn't focus at all," said one young, seagoing seaman recruit. "Nothing I could do corrected what the simulator was doing."



Diary of a Drunk Driver

Author's name withheld

I am a retired 46-year-old naval officer, who spent 27 years on active duty, including 16 years as an enlisted man. The following is a chronological chain of events that completely changed my life between Halloween 2005 and Halloween 2006.

Before my arrest for driving under the influence of alcohol, I didn't consume alcohol on a consistent basis. As a matter of fact, I only drank occasionally at home or during social gatherings. I'm an avid long-distance runner and have completed three marathons. I

have two almost grown children and have very strong religious and moral beliefs.

I'm not telling anyone not to drink; I'm just saying don't drink and drive. Instead, take a taxi, call a friend, or walk home.

I was arrested the night of Oct. 29, 2005, at about 2045. I just had left a social gathering where alcohol was served. While driving home, I was stopped by a member of the San Diego Sheriff's office because he observed me crossing the white line that separated



I'm not telling anyone not to drink; I'm just saying **don't drink and drive.**

the lanes. I failed a field sobriety test and was arrested at the scene and taken to the San Diego County Jail.

Don't believe what you see on TV, where a high-priced lawyer comes and gets you out 15 minutes later—it doesn't happen that way in real life. You'll spend a minimum of eight to 10 hours there, being searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and placed in a 20-by-20-foot cell with a bunch of people you'll never want to see again. The only thing in this room is a toilet in the corner.

After the processing was complete, I was released. I walked out of the jail onto the streets of San Diego about 0800.

Now is when all my "fun" began. I had to attend a three-month first-conviction program at San Diego State

University that included a one-hour class each week for 12 weeks and a two-hour lecture each week for six weeks. I also had to attend a mandatory Mothers Against Drunk Driving lecture, in which three moms told the story of how they had lost their children to drunk drivers—a very emotional and guilt-ridden experience, indeed. I further had to complete 10 days of community service, picking up trash and cleaning parks for the city. Finally, I had to hire an attorney. Here's what all of this cost me:

First-conviction program.....	\$445
MADD lectures.....	\$25
Attorney fees.....	\$1,700
Fine and court costs.....	\$1,950
Total.....	\$4,120

None of those figures address the insurance problems I had to face. The company cancelled my policy, forcing me to obtain insurance from a much less reputable carrier at a much higher price. Over the years, these higher premiums will amount to many thousands of dollars.

There also was the matter of dealing with DMV and learning the hard way that driving is a privilege, not a right. I lost my driver's license for 30 days and had a restricted license for five more months—all before I ever went to court. The DMV will revoke and suspend your license without a conviction; just being cited is justification. And, then you have to pay to get it back—\$195, to be exact.

I had been selected for promotion to lieutenant commander, effective Feb. 1, 2006, but the Navy withdrew that promotion and removed my name from the promotion listing. Instead, I was processed for administrative separation and involuntarily retired. If I hadn't been arrested, I would have continued on active duty for four more years and reached a 30-year retirement. If I live only 20 more years, which is very reasonable, having to retire on a lieutenant's pay at 26 years, instead of lieutenant-commander's pay at 30 years, will end up costing me about \$600,000 over those 20 years.

This monetary loss, however, pales quickly in comparison to the shame, emotional pain, grief, and guilt I feel around family, friends and former co-workers. The stigma can destroy your life as you knew it. Every facet of your life is affected adversely. I'm just grateful I didn't kill someone while driving under the influence.

Many more, smaller, painful points follow such an incident, but I trust you grasp what I've been trying to tell you. Please think twice before you drink and drive. **S**

One Bad Choice Changed My Life

By a retired chief warrant officer

For 30 years, I was proud to serve my Navy and my country. Then, one night not very long ago, after a normal day at my command, I was in good spirits. I just had been selected for CWO5 and would continue in a job I really enjoyed for a few more years.

I decided to drop by a local club, which was close to the base and where I would find retired and active-duty shipmates having a good time discussing life's events. Of course, there were alcoholic beverages to order, as well as food items.

After a few hours of conversation, enjoyable food, and some beverages, I decided to drive my truck the 15 miles home. I felt at ease and no different than I had when I walked into the club. I drove the familiar road as I had done countless times before, but this time was destined to be different.

About one mile from home, I was traveling 35 mph—the posted speed limit. It had been roughly 18 hours since I had gotten out of bed that Friday morning. I failed to notice a familiar stop sign. I slammed on the brakes and then lost control of my vehicle. It caught the gravel on the shoulder of the roadway, causing me to go off the road and into a security fence.

Everything happened so fast before coming to a deafening halt. I immediately was aware of who I was, where I was, and very happy to know that, as required by all those safety messages, I had buckled up. This “good judgment” decision undoubtedly had saved me from serious injury. I also was immediately relieved to know my mishap had been a single-vehicle crash, with no impact on others.

Upon exiting my truck, I quickly became aware of the severe damage to the vehicle and understood it doesn't take a lot of speed to send a vehicle to the junkyard. The military police soon arrived and questioned me about the events leading to my crash. I then had to go to the station for a breathalyzer test and was charged with driving while intoxicated. I also

had to call my commanding officer—one of the most difficult calls of my career. And, of course, he was disappointed I had placed myself in this position.

Months of hearings then passed, including trips to the legal office and sizable fees before the case was settled. That settlement ended my career on a very sour note, but as one of my shipmates observed, “You have an opportunity to reach out and touch others who may find themselves in a similar situation. Perhaps you'll save their life or career by causing them to consider the real cost of your one bad choice.”

In my case, the financial costs were significant, but the personal and career costs were much greater.

So, my reason for sharing this most personal and embarrassing event with you is in hopes it will impress on you the fact that bad things can happen to good people... successful people... career-oriented people. In many of these life-changing events, utilizing risk management and simply making the right choice can make a difference.

I wish all of you fair winds and following seas as you continue your Navy careers. **S**

A slightly different version of this story appeared in an earlier issue of Hawaii Navy News.

Resources:

- Penalties for Driving Drunk, <http://alcoholism.about.com/cs/drive/a/aa082797.htm>
- The Cost of Drunk Driving, <http://www.ncpa.org/pd/social/pd082201f.html>
- Stop Drinking and Driving, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/toolbox/stopdrinking.htm>
- Impaired Driving, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/driving.htm>
- 2006 Traffic Safety Annual Assessment—Alcohol-Related Fatalities, www.nhtsa.dot.gov/portal/nhtsa_static_file_downloader.jsp?file=/staticfiles/DOT/NHTSA/NCSA/Content/RNotes/2007/810821.pdf

Puerto Rican on Ice

By Lt. Michael Llenza,
VAQ-209

It started innocently enough: Two other junior officers and I were en route to the galley at zero dark 30, intent on filling our bellies before a full day of briefs and flying. Our squadron was participating in Cope Thunder exercises, flying out of Eielson AFB just south of Fairbanks, Alaska. It was our third day on

control of the van, and it headed straight for a curb.

After the loud bang that followed and a complaint from one of the passengers that he had jammed his knee into the dash, I parked the van. I was thankful no one had been injured seriously but dreaded the fact I had become the guy who wrecked the van on day three of a three-week det. Further inspection of the vehicle revealed the wheel was canted inward, and it had to be towed back to the rental agency.

As funny as the “who let the Puerto Rican drive on ice” comments from my squadronmates were, they rang true. There were three of us in the van that morning, and the chances are good that both passengers had more experience in driving on ice than I did. One is from New York, and the other is from Cleveland. Even if the three of us shared the same level of experience, I should have made a conscious effort to slow down as I entered the parking lot.

Thinking back to what turned out to be a minor crash, I realize that, with a little more speed or less attention, the results could have been a lot worse. One of us could have been hurt seriously. **S**

The author was assigned to VAQ-138 when he wrote this story.

Resources:

- November Accident Narrative, http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/seasonal/sdh/presentations/Pictures_from_WI_Nov07_Mishap.ppt
- Winter Holiday Hazards, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/safetips/a-m/holidayhazards-p.htm>
- Checklist & Tips for Safe Winter Driving, www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/Seasonal_Advisories/WinterDriving2005/
- Tips for Safe Winter Driving, www.osha.gov/Publications/SafeDriving.pdf

detachment. Flights had been suspended the previous day because of freezing rain and heavy snowfall, which made for unfavorable flying conditions, even in Alaska.

None of us was thinking about the weather when we jumped in our rental van and set off for breakfast. Born and reared in the Caribbean, based out of Whidbey Island, and having spent the last winter on deployment, I hadn't driven in winter conditions for more than a year. I had very little experience driving on icy roads.

You undoubtedly can see where this story is headed. We always discuss ORM, and I've always said ORM is just a new way of pronouncing “common sense,” but I failed to follow through with either this dreary morning. So, there we were, heading to the galley, driving at what I mistakenly considered a “safe speed.” As I turned into the galley's parking lot, I lost



Recognizing Aggressive Driving, Road Rage

By Lt. James "Cheeze" Presler,
VFA-106

While many cities encourage workers to use buses, trains and HOV lanes, millions of Americans still commute along crowded city streets. This increased traffic, coupled with commuters' desires to reach their destinations sooner, rather than later, has made many Americans more aggressive behind the wheel. In some cases, drivers have resorted to road rage.

I'm writing this article and the sidebar that follows because the leading cause of death among our Sailors and Marines is traffic crashes—not in combat with

the enemy. Understanding what you can do to reduce your own aggressiveness on the road or to avoid someone else with the same mindset may prevent you and/or the other driver from becoming a statistic.

Three categories of problematic motorists typically exist: assertive drivers, aggressive drivers, and those who let their emotions take over and exhibit road rage. Although not formally defined, an assertive driver would be one who practices defensive driving but is willing to bend the rules to go with the flow of traffic. Conversely, there are many definitions of an



aggressive driver. One of the most stringent definitions is “an angry motorist, attempting to intentionally injure or kill another driver because of a traffic dispute” [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety]. Road rage, on the other hand, is a criminal offense.

According to drivers.com, road rage occurs when a traffic incident escalates into a far more serious situation. For example, a person may become so angry over an aggressive-driving incident that he or she overreacts and retaliates with some type of violence. These acts may range from physical confrontation to assault with a motor vehicle or possibly a weapon.

Are You an Aggressive Driver?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration defines aggressive driving as “the operation of a motor vehicle in a manner which endangers or is likely to endanger persons or property.” Have you ever found yourself doing any of these things?

- Running traffic lights or stop signs.
- Driving through a crosswalk occupied by a pedestrian.
- Knocking over traffic signs.
- Cutting off drivers when passing or not allowing someone to pass safely. Passing in no-passing zones.
- Tailgating.
- Driving across highway dividers.
- Not yielding at intersections to the driver on the right when both arrived simultaneously. Not yielding when making left turns. Not stopping or yielding according to signs. Incorrectly yielding when entering traffic.
- Not taking care to avoid hitting pedestrians.
- Turning incorrectly at intersections. Making unsafe U-turns. Not signaling before slowing for a turn.

- Not stopping at railroad tracks when directed to do so.
- Passing stopped school buses when warning lights are flashing.
- Breaking the speed limit. Driving too slowly when unwarranted. Exceeding 20-mph speed limit in school zones when kids are present. Speeding in marked construction areas.
- Illegally parking in roadways. Illegally parking on bridges, in crosswalks, close to fire hydrants and driveways.
- Opening vehicle doors unsafely and leaving them open too long.
- Throwing bottles, nails, wire, and other dangerous items from vehicles.
- Driving with one or more wheels off the road.

Get Out of My Way!

Most aggressive drivers have a “get out of my way” mindset when behind the wheel. They feel a need to punish other drivers for impeding their progress. The traffic we all encounter may make you feel claustrophobic, and the need to break free from that environment may lead to aggressive-driving habits.

Also, some people often view their vehicles as an extension of their home. We set standards for ourselves that may be fine in the privacy of our homes but would not be acceptable in public. The car straddles the boundary between private space and public domain, so many drivers behave much differently than they would in a public place. Do you ever do any of the following?

- Tailgate to pressure a driver to go faster or get out of the way, or flash your lights to signal a person to move to another lane.
- Make obscene gestures.
- Change lanes without signaling, blast the horn, or frequently change lanes by weaving back and forth.
- Race to beat a yellow light that’s about to turn red.
- Travel in the passing or left lane at a slower speed, making it impossible for others to pass.
- Drive with the high beams on behind another vehicle or toward oncoming traffic.
- Cut off people, slow down after passing someone, or fail to turn right in the right-hand turn lane.

If you said yes to any of these items, it may mean you’re letting your daily commute get the best of you. **S**

The author was assigned to VFA-87 when he wrote this story and the sidebar that follows.



Let Common Court

By Lt. James "Cheeze" Presler,
VFA-106

Many unsafe driving habits can be eliminated simply by practicing common courtesy. Avoid these offensive behaviors, which are likely to provoke aggression:

Gestures. Obscene or offensive gestures irritate other drivers. Be aware any gesture may be misinterpreted by another driver.

Car phones. Don't let your phone become a distraction. Car-phone users are perceived as being poor drivers and a traffic hazard. Data shows that aggressive drivers are particularly irritated by fender-benders with motorists who were talking on the phone. Using a hands-free device with a cellphone is required while driving on DoD property, as well as in many states. If you need to use the phone, pull over first.

Displays. Refrain from displaying a bumper sticker, slogan or vanity license plate that may be considered offensive.

Eye contact. If a motorist tries to pick a fight, don't make eye contact. Get out of the way without acknowledging the other motorist. If the driver follows you, don't go home; instead, go to a police station or location where you can get help and where there are witnesses.

Aggressive tailgating. Riding the bumper of the vehicle in front of you is both annoying and unsafe. Instead, maintain a safe distance. In most rear-end accidents, the rearmost vehicle is the one at fault.

Aggressive horn use. Leaning on the horn to express anger is aggravating. Use your horn sparingly.

Aggressive headlight use. Flashing headlights to denote irritation is rude and unsafe.

Lane blocking. Don't block the passing lane on multiple-lane highways. Allow vehicles to pass you. If cars are piling up behind you, it's not your job to keep them from speeding.

Signal use. Don't change lanes without using your signal, and make sure you can change lanes without cutting off another driver. After changing lanes or turning, turn off your signal.

Failure to turn. In many areas, right turns are allowed after a complete stop for a red light, unless an intersection is marked otherwise. Avoid the right lane if you are not turning right.



Keeping Peace

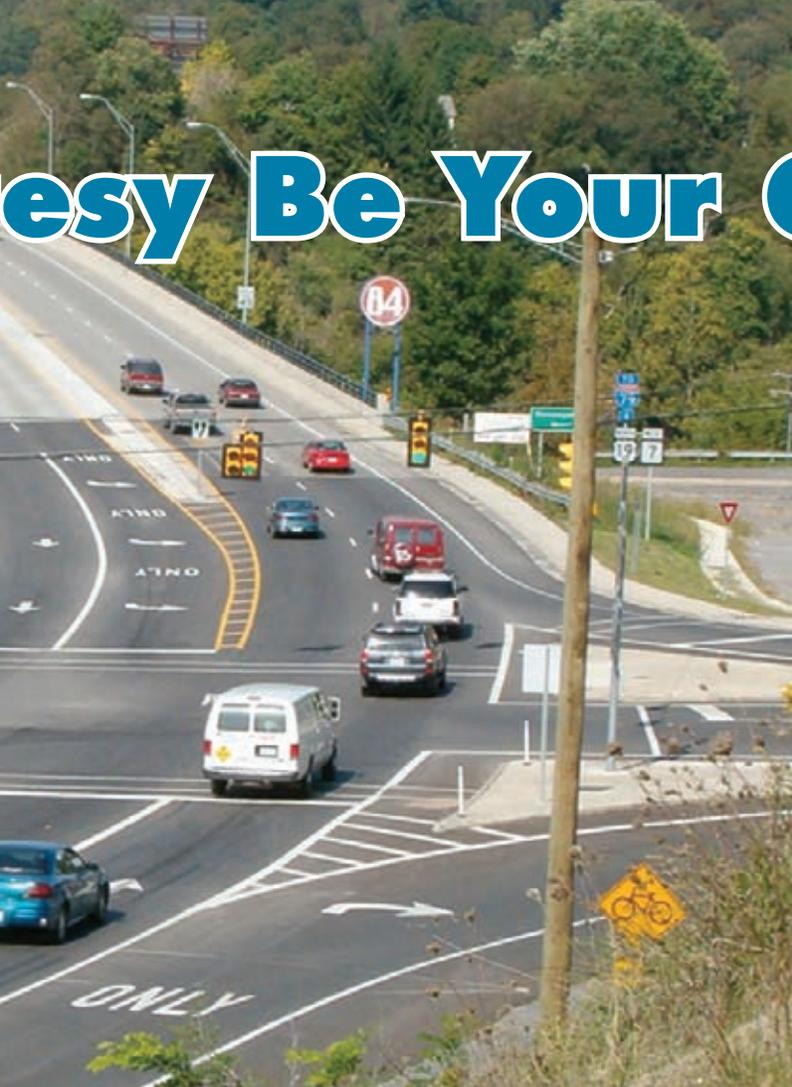
Using common courtesy is the single best way not to provoke an aggressive driver. Here are some common things you can do to keep peace on our roadways:

Parking. Don't take up more than one parking space. Don't park in a space reserved for people with disabilities, unless you are disabled. Don't open your door into the car next to you. When parallel parking, don't tap the vehicles in front of or in back of you. Always look carefully before backing out of a parking space.

Headlight use. Keep headlights on low beam, except where lighting conditions are poor. Dim your high beams for oncoming traffic, when approaching a vehicle from the rear, or when another vehicle is passing you. Also, if you are using your windshield wipers, your lights should be (and may be required) on to allow others to see you during the inclement conditions.

Merging. When traffic permits, move out of the right-hand lane of a freeway to allow vehicles easier access from onramps. Use the acceleration lane to do

Easy Be Your Guide



just that—accelerate. When possible, reach the speed at which traffic is flowing in the acceleration lane before merging onto the highway, so you don't impede movement.

Blocking traffic. If you're driving a cumbersome or slow-moving vehicle, pull over when possible to allow traffic to pass you. Don't block the road by stopping to have a conversation with another driver or a pedestrian.

Alarms. Be sure you know how to turn off the anti-theft alarm on any vehicle you're driving. If you are buying an alarm, buy one that turns off automatically after a short time.

Reducing Stress

Many times, it's our daily stressors that increase our aggressive-driving habits. Being able to compartmentalize behind the wheel is vital to the safety of you and other drivers. The commute to work is a part of life we all must accept. Here are some tips that may make your commute easier:

- Allow plenty of time for the trip.

- Listen to soothing music.
- Realize that it uses more fuel to drive aggressively.
- Understand that you can't control the traffic, only your reaction to it.
- Ask yourself, "If a cop pulled up behind me right now, would I drive any different?" Nothing will put an aggressive driver in his/her place faster than seeing a police car in the rearview mirror.

If you're an aggressive driver and your car had your name, address and phone number on it, would you still drive the same way? We willingly act aggressive and rude behind the wheel because we know such behavior usually goes without punishment. "Other drivers never will know who I am, so I can be as rude as I want, right?" probably is a common thought. But have you ever been a discourteous driver and then realized it was your neighbor you just cut off? How did you feel afterward? You never know who the driver of the other vehicle is, so try to consider everyone your neighbor.

Keep your cool. Consider the details of who else is on the road. The person you hate might be someone's grandmother who has to drive herself and has less ability to keep up with the heavy traffic. Finally, if you're tempted to drive irrationally, ask yourself, "Is it worth being killed? Is it worth going to jail?"

Adjust Your Attitude

Give the other driver the benefit of the doubt. We all make mistakes. Don't assume that all unsafe driving actions are intentional or personal. Be polite and courteous, even if the other driver isn't. Keep your cool; think before you react. **S**

Resources:

- Road Rage Is More Common Than You Think, <http://roadragers.com/>
- Automobile Driving, <http://www.drivers.com/topic/31/>
- Congressional Testimony on Aggressive Driving, <http://www.drdriving.org/articles/testimony.htm>
- Distracted Driving/Road Rage Resources, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/toolbox/traffic/distractions/default.htm>



A Deadly Thing Happened on the Way To Visiting Family

By AZC(AW/SW) Donald C. Mahaffey,
NAS Meridian

One Friday in September, my family and I were on our way to see my parents in Braxton, Miss., about a two-hour drive from where we lived. Our plan was to stay the weekend, so I could take my son bow hunting on the first day of deer season. Everything was going great; we had packed the night before and were looking forward to a peaceful weekend in the woods.

What had been a quiet drive along the interstate continued for a ways after we turned onto a two-lane country road three or four miles south of Brandon, Miss. About 1650, though, with the sun shining and the road dry, I dropped my caution guard. I had traveled this road many times while growing up and had been over it several times in the last few months, too. I was in my comfort zone—this was my old stomping grounds.

Upon entering a long, shallow, left-hand curve, we were startled by a small car turned sideways in the road and moving directly toward us at a fast pace. I first thought the car was going to flip and roll into the ditch, but I was wrong. The driver somehow spun the car 180 degrees, which meant it still was coming right at us sideways.

I now got on the brakes harder and instinctively moved my full-sized '94 Ford Bronco to the right, toward a deep ditch. I knew if we went into it, the Bronco would flip, and I was afraid how my family would fare after bouncing through the ditch, trees, fence, and concrete culvert ahead. All I could do was hope for the best. “Maybe the driver of the other car will have time to regain control or be able to stop before we hit,” I thought.

As it turned out, we weren't that lucky. The



A state trooper reminds a motorist to buckle up.

other car again spun 180 degrees and now was right in front of me, completely blocking my lane. “Hold on,” I yelled to everyone, at the same time thinking, “Thank God, we’re all buckled up.” Just moments earlier, I had had to tell my daughter to sit back; she had been leaning between the front seats to talk to her mom. I had reminded her that the seat belt wouldn’t do her any good in that position.

In less than a second, it was all over. The size and weight of the Bronco had kept us from being knocked into the gully; it seemed like the other car just had bounced off us. I instinctively had braced myself against the brake pedal and steering wheel before being thrown straight up, instead of forward, as I had expected.

No one in the Bronco that afternoon—not even the dog—was hurt. However, the driver and passengers in the other car didn’t fare as well.

I climbed out my side window to find three people lying in the middle of the road, unconscious and bleeding. Meanwhile, the driver just was climbing from the car, and I could see she, too, was bleeding from over her left eye. The last person to crawl from the car was the front-seat passenger, who appeared unharmed—just shaken.

I told the driver and front-seat passenger to go sit down alongside the road, while I went back to check on the three people who looked like they perhaps hadn’t survived. I assured the driver and front-seat passenger they would be fine—just to stay put along-

side the road until the EMTs arrived.

At this point, I suddenly realized I was surrounded by what seemed like the whole community, ripping up shirts and towels and trying to stop all the bleeding. Then, from somewhere, came a nurse or EMT, who took charge of the victims in the road.

“Where are my wife and kids?” I suddenly wondered. I remembered helping them out of the truck and telling them to take the dog and go down the road because I didn’t want them to see all the carnage. They had done just what I had asked and were about 150 yards down the road, behind several cars and trucks that had stopped to help. They luckily hadn’t seen what will be burned in my memory for the rest of my life.

My family indeed had dodged a bullet that September afternoon and had walked away from what could have been a much greater tragedy. We’ve all heard, “Expect the unexpected.” Nobody expects to see a car heading straight for them on a familiar curve. Never get too relaxed when you’re driving. As with my family wearing our seat belts, you can control much of your destiny. **S**

Resources:

- A Matter of Stayin’ Alive, <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/MEDIA/seashore/issues/spring04/stayinalive.htm>
- Survey of the Attitudes of the American People on Highway and Auto Safety, www.saferoads.org/press/press2004/Roadmap2005/12HarrisPoll.pdf
- Stay Alive From Education Photos/Videos, <http://www.safeprogram.com/photosvids.htm>
- Seat-Belt Injuries in Medical and Statistical Perspectives, www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-01/Esv/esv16/98S6W25.PDF.

"LOOK BOTH WAYS...!" GOOD

By AO2 Ross K. Jordan, Jr.,
VFA-34

Nearly everyone has heard that piece of advice because most parents teach it to their children, and I was no exception. One Sunday afternoon, though, I forgot that lesson.

It was the start of a workweek for night check, and in keeping with the usual Sunday practice, we had PT before going to work. I actually was excited about this particular PT session because I knew I would get to play basketball, which I hadn't been able to do for a while. I just had come off light duty from an injury.

I woke up early that morning to prepare for the day ahead. I got everything I would need ready, slipped into my shoes, grabbed my bag, and headed for my car to make the 20-minute drive to the base gym at NAS Oceana. I was a little upset when I left the house because the weather was looking nasty.

When I arrived at Oceana, I parked my car in the lot and reached for my bag. It was then I noticed I had on running shoes that soak up water easily for some reason. I then reached into the back seat for my basketball shoes and put them in my bag.

By now, it was raining. I knew if I didn't want to get too wet, I would have to hustle. I hopped out of the car with my bag on my shoulder and dashed toward the gym. I didn't stop to consider that, on the way, I would have to cross two driving lanes, one of which was in between two rows of parked cars. I lowered my head to shield my eyes from the rain and made it across the first lane safely. Racing between the parked cars, I caught only a glimpse from the corner of my eye of a vehicle heading toward me as I came out the other side.

The driver hit me, and I sailed over the front of the hood before landing on the ground. The lady motorist opened her car door and asked if I was OK; I said no but added that I was going to try and get up. I pushed myself up but fell back to the ground.

A couple guys who had seen what happened from the doors of the gym ran outside and helped me inside. A gym employee called an ambulance, and after a little trouble with the stretcher, I was whisked away to Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, where doctors took X-rays and gave me some medication for the pain. I wasn't injured seriously—just had some deep bruising and hurt pride, knowing that the entire night shift had seen what happened.

Now, I can look back and laugh at the incident, but I didn't see anything funny about it at the time it happened. I'm not the only person who crosses a street without looking, but I am one who got caught in the act and paid a price. I spent three days sick in quarters, followed by 10 days of light duty. Not using my head cost my command, me, and the poor woman who hit me that day. I assure you I won't be crossing any more streets without remembering what my parents told me a long time ago. ■



ADVICE, BUT I FORGOT



Pedestrians: An “At

By Ken Testorff,
Naval Safety Center

According to the National Safety Council, automobiles kill approximately 5,000 pedestrians every year and injure 84,000 others.

Naval Safety Center statistics, meanwhile, show 39 pedestrian Sailors have died and another 139 have been injured in the last 10 years. Here are summaries of seven mishap reports for just one five-month period:

- A 31-year-old E-4 and some liberty buddies were crossing a street in a foreign country when they heard engines revving. Before they could react, a car had hit the E-4, somersaulting him into the air. He landed on the street. Local police and shore patrol quickly arrived on the scene and cared for the victim until an ambulance came. Doctors at a local hospital diagnosed the Sailor with multiple contusions and released him back to his ship for care. He spent two days under observation in the ship’s sick bay for injuries to his left thigh, right knee, and ribs. He then spent four days sick in quarters, followed by seven days of light duty.
- A 33-year-old E-4 was crossing with a green light when the driver of a PMV failed to yield. After being hit, the victim flew up and over the vehicle’s right front end. The driver stopped to help and still was on the scene when local police and an ambulance crew arrived. The ambulance crew checked the victim, then let him



Risk" Community

Navy photo by J03 Devin Wright



return to his ship by public transportation. Ship's medical took the Sailor to a local Navy clinic, where X-rays revealed he had a broken leg. He subsequently flew to a Navy medical center for treatment and also learned he had a cervical strain.

- A 35-year-old E-7 and his date were walking to their vehicle after attending a live concert. They had crossed at a crosswalk and were on the other side of the street when two cars rapidly accelerated from a stoplight—apparently in a drag race. One of the cars veered onto the sidewalk and grass, hitting the E-7 and sending him to the hospital for three days. He lost 30 workdays and spent an estimated four months on light duty. At last report, the police still were looking for the hit-and-run driver.

- A 23-year-old E-4 was crossing a street at an intersection on base. Meanwhile, another Sailor was approaching the same intersection in his PMV. Instead of watching what he was doing, this driver turned his head to look at a ship berthed nearby and didn't stop completely, hitting the E-4. The victim lost three workdays, including one in a hospital. Base police cited the driver for failure to stop at a stop sign, failure to stop for a pedestrian in the crosswalk, and playing loud music on his car radio.

- An E-5 also was crossing a street on base when two Sailors in a speeding PMV hit her. The driver stopped and remained on the scene to give his statement

to base police while his passenger went back to their command to report the incident. A shipmate traveling with the two Sailors in another car also stopped at the scene before going to the victim's command to call for assistance. She was admitted to a hospital in critical but stable condition. Meanwhile, the driver and his passenger who hit her were cited for reckless driving, with additional charges pending.

- A 24-year-old O-2 had attended a college-football game and was leaving an all-night restaurant with a group of friends. He and another person stayed behind while the rest crossed a street near campus. When the O-2 started to cross, a 19-year-old female civilian hit him, and he died hours later at a local hospital. Police cited the driver for underage transportation and consumption of alcohol.

- A 19-year-old E-3 and two shipmates were walking back to the liberty-bus pick-up point in a foreign port when they found themselves on an unfamiliar street. The sidewalk they were on came to an abrupt end, so they tried crossing to the sidewalk on the other side of the street. The spot they were at was located at a downhill curve in the roadway. One shipmate safely had reached the other side when the E-3 started across and was hit at the street's centerline. He lost an estimated 37 workdays, including 12 in a hospital (five days in an unconscious state). The driver didn't stop at first but eventually turned himself into local authorities. He was charged with reckless driving and speeding. The police report also cited a lack of lighting and the victim's dark clothing as contributing factors.

Because of incidents like these, some commands have launched campaigns to educate and remind motorists and pedestrians alike of crosswalk safety. One such command is Naval Station, Pearl Harbor, which took up the banner in December 2003. As noted by Cdr. Richard Verbeke, the NavSta XO at the time, "Our base is loaded with pedestrians, and when you mix a lot of foot traffic with heavy vehicle traffic, people can get hurt."

One part of the December 2003 campaign at Naval Station, Pearl Harbor, involved installing 12-foot-wide speed bumps in crosswalk-problem areas. "Speed bumps not only are cost efficient," said a base

safety specialist, “but they probably are the most effective way to slow people down.”

Another part of the campaign was to make drivers on base more aware of people on foot. Officials produced a video clip and showed it on local Navy television. They also put up signs to remind drivers entering the base of their requirement to give pedestrians the right of way in crosswalks. Personnel going through the pass and ID office on base saw the same signs.

As one occupational and health specialist cautioned, however, “Although pedestrians do have the right of way, they need to make sure they make eye contact with the driver in the front car in each lane of traffic they are crossing in the crosswalk. Don’t assume that all traffic will follow the lead of the *[driver in the]* first lane and stop for you.”

One Naval Station, Pearl Harbor, Sailor made this observation, “The roadway is like a marriage. It works both ways. Pedestrians and drivers need to respect each other.”

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) says it’s not acceptable that nearly 5,000 pedestrians are killed every year in traffic crashes. Their goal is to reduce pedestrian crashes, fatalities and injuries by 10 percent by the year 2008, thus saving 465 lives.

Here are 10 tips the FHWA offers for driving and walking safely:

- It’s your responsibility to drive and walk safely, so always be alert and attentive to the motorists and pedestrians around you.
- Never drink and drive, and don’t let friends drive drunk.
- Always buckle up; the life you save could be your own.
- Obey traffic signals and signs; they are there to keep you and others safe.
- Make sure you have plenty of time to get to your destination so you don’t feel pressured to speed or disobey traffic signals.
- Don’t give into road rage. Your life and the lives of your passengers are more important than angrily reacting to an irresponsible driver.
- Pedestrians always should wear light-colored or reflective clothing at night to be more visible to drivers.
- Before you make a left turn at an intersection, make sure it’s safe to do so. More than one-third of all deaths to vehicle occupants occur in side-impact crashes. Most of these occur at intersections.
- Obey the speed limits, and make sure you drive carefully through intersections and work zones.
- Don’t drive when you’re drowsy. If you’re drowsy, pull over at a rest area, and take a nap before proceeding. **S**

Walking in Traffic

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration urges pedestrians to follow these precautions to protect themselves and their families:

Stay on the sidewalk and crosswalks. Avoid walking in traffic where none exist. If you have to walk on a road with no sidewalk, walk facing traffic.

Cross at intersections. Most people are hit by cars when they cross the road at places other than intersections.

Look left, right and left for traffic. Stop at the curb and look left, right and left again for traffic. Stopping at the curb signals drivers that you intend to cross. Cross in marked crosswalks and obey the signal.

See and be seen. Drivers need to see you to avoid you; stay out of their blind spot. Make eye contact with drivers when crossing busy streets. Wear bright colors or reflective clothing if you’re

walking near traffic at night; carry a flashlight when walking in the dark. Don’t let kids play near traffic or cross the street by themselves; because they’re small, drivers may not see them if they run into the street. **S**

Resources:

- Hit-Run Deaths See 20% Increase, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-10-17-hit-and-run-deaths_x.htm
- Pedestrian Safety, <http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/pedstrns.htm>
- Pedestrian Safety Through Vehicle Design, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedestrian_safety_through_vehicle_design
- Best Practices: Pedestrian Safety (Avoiding Near-Misses in Crosswalks), <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/ashore/crosswalks.htm>

What I Learned From a Blowout

By 2ndLt. Stephen McMath, USMC,
TrAWing 6

As aviators, we play it safe around our aircraft. We routinely inspect it, check for FOD, and run through checklists because we know the hazards of flight. Then, when we're done for the day, we run out, hop in our cars, and go home, rarely thinking twice about the hazards we face in that environment.

Oh, we check the oil periodically, and we look at the other fluids once in a while, but that's about the

Navy photo by PHAN Mark Gleason



You keep a close check on aircraft tires...

extent of it. This lack of attention came home to me, when one of the tires on my car blew out. An inspection quickly revealed I had cord showing in both of my front tires.

I remembered it had been more than a month since I last had taken a careful look at the tires on my car, even though I check the tires on the aircraft every time I get ready to go flying. Furthermore, I'm often guilty of not noticing the fuel level in my car until the red warning light starts flashing, whereas I always monitor the fuel level in my aircraft.



...So why not these, too?

I don't handle other off-duty risks very well, either. For example, I was helping a friend replace his siding and wasn't watching for nails on the ground. I suddenly stepped on one and had to make a trip to medical to make sure my tetanus shot was up to date.

We need to take what we learn on the flight line and apply it to all the other parts of our lives. We constantly must do informal ORM—considering the possible risks we face and finding ways to minimize them while still getting the job done. In the end, this process won't slow us down; rather, it'll help us avoid mishaps—thereby saving time. **S**

The author was assigned to VT-4 when he wrote this story.

Resources:

- Operational Risk Management (ORM), <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/orm/default.htm>
- Liberty Incident Reduction Program, <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/checklists/motorvehicle/liberty.doc>
- Truman Encourages ORM Off Duty, http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=26504



According to Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) policy, driver use of a hand-held cellular phone *[as depicted in this photo]* in a moving vehicle on a Navy installation is prohibited. Also prohibited are portable, personal listening devices worn inside the aural canal, around or covering the driver's ear while operating a motor vehicle on base. The only authorized devices are those hands-free, console- or dash-mounted cellular phones with integrated features, such as voice-activation, speed dial, speakerphone, or other similar technology *[as depicted in the inset photo]*, for sending and receiving calls.