

ARMY GROUND RISK-MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Countermeasure

VOL 25 NO 11

<https://safety.army.mil>

NOVEMBER 2004

Warriors on Wheels



CONTENTS

- 3** **DASAF's Corner**
So What's the Biggest Risk
When You Get Home?
- 4** **Warrior Stories:**
Hell on an Iraqi Highway
- 7** **Explosives Safety DVD**
Available
- 8** **Skidding Your Way to Safe**
Driving
- 10** **An Unexpected Encounter**
- 13** **The Flying Convoy Potty Break**
- 14** **Complacency or Conditioning?**
- 16** **A Close Call on a Slick Road**
- 17** **Red Light Roulette**
- 18** **Beside the Green**
Car Speak
- 20** **No Curb Too Steep**
It's A Rental!
- 21** **Accident Briefs**
- 22** **Chillin' Out on the Slopes**
- 24** **Warrior Stories**

Hot features



on the web

<http://safety.army.mil>

BG Joseph A. Smith
Commander/Director of
Army Safety

COL John Frketic
Deputy Commander

Dennis Keplinger
Publishing Supervisor

Bob Van Elsberg
Managing
Editor

Julie Shelley
Staff Editor

Blake Grantham
Graphic Design

Countermeasure is published monthly by the U.S. Army Safety Center, Bldg 4905, 5th Avenue, Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363. Information is for accident prevention purposes only and is specifically prohibited for use for punitive purposes or matters of liability, litigation, or competition. Address questions about content to DSN 558-2688 (334-255-2688). To submit information for publication, use FAX 334-255-3003 (Mr. Bob Van Elsberg) or e-mail countermeasure@safetycenter.army.mil. Address questions about distribution to DSN 558-2062 (334-255-2062). Visit our Web site at <https://safety.army.mil/>.

So What's the Biggest Risk When You Get Home?



In the August issues of *Countermeasure* and *Flightfax*, we showed a picture that was worth a thousand words. The unnamed faces represented 216 Soldiers who had lost their lives in accidents. This was a powerful message that highlighted the personal impact of each Soldier's death and the cost to families and organizations. At the time, the accident rate was clearly unacceptable because we were losing a Soldier nearly every day. That trend continued through the remainder of FY04 and the charts below show where we lost 266 Soldiers to accidents. For those not deployed, a whopping 79 percent died while behind the wheel of a vehicle, and in-theater driving accounted for 60 percent of our accidental deaths. Clearly, our focus for FY05 must be continued emphasis on driving as an "Army Life Skill."

Our Army is finalizing a three-pronged attack on POV fatalities with distance learning, ASMIS 2.0 for risk mitigation, and Advanced Skills Driver Training for a hands-on course of instruction. We've listened carefully to the ASMIS comments and feedback, so pay special attention to the upgrades coming your way. To date our troops have conducted over 115,000 assessments with only one recorded fatality. Keeping safety in Soldiers' faces works! However, ASMIS only works IF you use it.

According to our mobile training teams, focus groups, and surveys, only 20 percent of the Army's population is engaged and actively mitigating POV risks. I ask you to take a moment to consider if you and your organization are part of the 80 percent not aggressively attacking our number one accidental killer of Soldiers. Come on ... let's "buck up" and get after this. We are still in the mode of "lessons noted" rather than "lessons learned." We are still killing ourselves by not wearing seatbelts, speeding, and driving irresponsibly.

Just before writing this article, I sat down to review the fatalities from 15 to 18 October when four Soldiers died on their motorcycles over the weekend. Reckless driving, failure to wear helmets, alcohol, and behaving irresponsibly are the suspected culprits. There's no way to classify these deaths other than tragic and needless. Soldiers returning from war are combat-proven heroes and deserve nothing less than involved leadership and battle buddies who will speak up. Our Army is at war and transforming to meet tomorrow's challenges. We need each and every Soldier to support our Nation's fight.

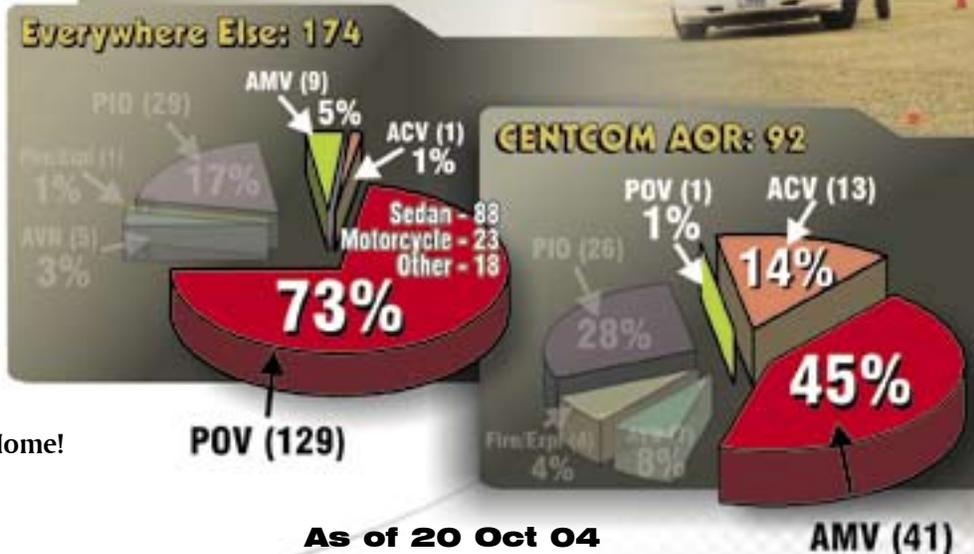
Over the last four months we've lost a Soldier every 32 hours to an accident. Most of these deaths have occurred on the road. Our daily missions are tough and inherently dangerous, regardless of location. We are doing better with tactical risk management, so let's take the skill set one step further. Don't allow your subordinates or battle buddies to be our next fatal statistic from behind the wheel. We need a "leadership push" in off-duty activities to stop this trend. Winter driving and the holiday travel season are on their way—let's beat the odds and stop POV losses! ★

Our Army at War: Be Safe and Make It Home!

Joe Smith
BG Joe Smith

Driving: An Army Life Skill

- Defensive Driving Course
- ASMIS1 Risk Assessment Tool
-59,711 registered users
-117,770 POV assessments
- Advanced Skills Driver Training



As of 20 Oct 04

Warrior Stories: He

The explosion rocked our M1114 up-armored HMMWV as shrapnel from an improvised explosive device (IED) shredded the right-rear tire and tore into the quarter panel above it. The powerful concussion slammed into the HMMWV and spun it to the right as the passenger-side tires grabbed the road and the vehicle began to roll over. The earth and sky changed positions three times before the damaged and now-burning HMMWV finally landed on its wheels. The driver was unconscious. The gunner had been blown back inside the vehicle and tumbled around as the HMMWV rolled over. But at least he was alive.

We'd been driving down Main Supply Route (MSR) Sword south of CP45 in Baghdad on Sept. 8 when we were attacked. Fortunately, help came quickly. Soldiers from our brigade judge advocate general, camp liaison detachment, protective services detail (PSD), 21st Military Police Company MSR patrol, and 1st Cavalry Quick Reaction Force quickly helped us. They got my driver and gunner stabilized and evacuated for medical treatment, controlled the scene, recovered sensitive items and personal equipment, and maintained security so the convoy elements could return to base and reconsolidate.

Although we all had suffered minor injuries during the attack, the major loss was the vehicle,

which burned to a shell. As I reflected on this, I was thankful for the safety measures that were in place that greatly contributed to our surviving this incident. We repeatedly put out safety messages and guidance, hoping Soldiers will understand the importance of them. If you're out on a mission and nothing happens to you, then these safety requirements might seem unnecessary. However, I'm here to testify to their effectiveness when it counts. I want to list and discuss some of these safety factors along with tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs).

Route position

Vehicles should travel in the middle of the lane as



All on an Iraqi Highway

CSM JEFF BUTLER
16th Military Police Brigade (ABN)
Protector 7
Victory Camp, Iraq

much as possible. As we drove we were straddling the line between the left and center lanes. We had adopted this technique so the rear vehicle blocked traffic from passing on the left side. This is in response to recent vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). The blast came from the median, and our location on the road created some distance between us and the device. Ideally, we would have been fully in the center lane, but we had to weigh all the potential risks.

Movement techniques

Maintaining proper distance while traveling, based on road conditions, is very important. As our three-vehicle convoy was moving down the open highway we had approximately 75 to 100 meters between vehicles. This made it impossible for more than one vehicle to be attacked (by a single IED).

Gunner position

The gunner was at nametag defilade—a standard that brigade and corps has repeatedly reinforced. After all, you must survive the IED or the enemy's first attack if you're to fight back. I still see gunners throughout Iraq standing above nametag defilade, creating a large profile for the enemy to strike. In our case the concussion from the IED blew our gunner down inside the vehicle, where he remained as we rolled. Had he not been at nametag defilade he would have been killed.

Gunner orientation

Front and rear gunners must orient themselves at the 3 or 9 o'clock position to protect themselves from IED attacks. Because these attacks come primarily from the shoulder or median, a gunner turned to the 12 or 6 o'clock position has exposed

Warrior Stories: Hell on an Iraqi Highway

his sides to the threat. A gunner at the 3 or 9 o'clock position has the gunner's shield to protect his front and the hatch to protect his back. My gunner had his back to the blast and his hatch took shrapnel, some of which punched a hole through the upper section of the hatch. That shrapnel would have struck a gunner standing above nametag defilade.

AT4 location

Brigade has put out that the M136 AT4 Rocket Launcher will not be placed on the hatch atop the vehicle, but rather kept inside the passenger compartment. Ours was in the vehicle as required and was recovered after the incident. Soldiers think it looks cool atop the hatch; however, it can't be fired any quicker than if kept in the compartment. What storing the AT4 on the hatch does is create another hazard for the crew when attacked. Storing an explosive next to the gunner's head is not smart, and hatch-stored AT4s are routinely lost or damaged during IED attacks.

Seatbelts

All seated occupants must wear seatbelts. I and the passenger in the right-rear seat were belted in. This was critical as it kept us secure as we rolled over. I know I would have been seriously injured or possibly killed were I not belted in. Unfortunately, my driver was not wearing his seatbelt. He routinely does, but I didn't ensure that he did so this time when we moved out on the mission. Supervisors must correct their crews on this issue to protect them. Fortunately, the driver did manage to stabilize himself by holding the steering wheel as we rolled over.

Goggles and glasses

All occupants need to wear protective eyewear. Flying debris, shrapnel, and, later on, exploding

ammunition all were hazards that threatened our eyesight. Each Soldier in my crew was wearing his Wiley Xs or gunner's goggles.

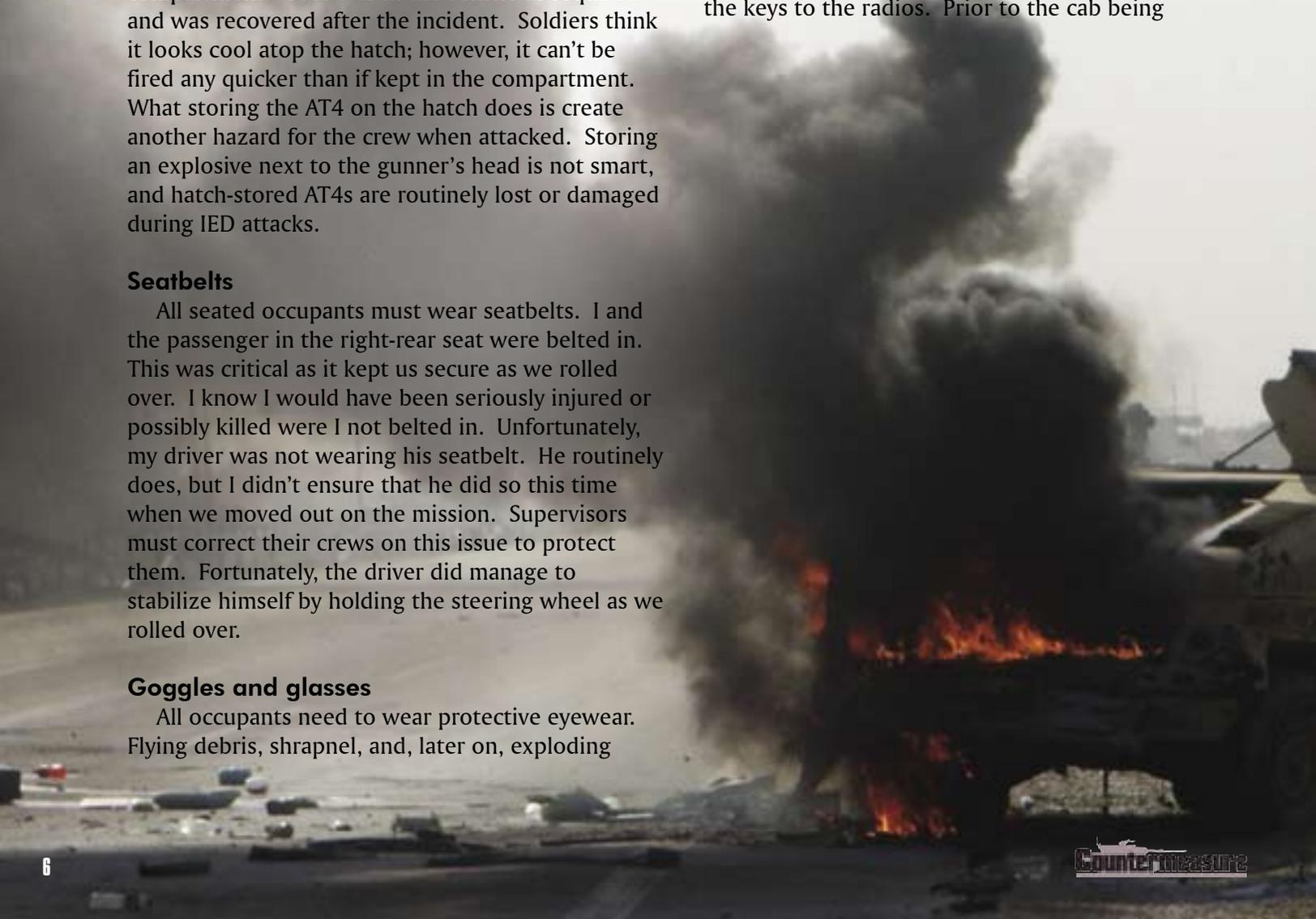
Sensitive item list and load plan

Strict accountability of the crew's sensitive items must be submitted and tracked prior to departing base camp. It's important to maintain this list back at base, not inside the vehicle itself. This makes reporting and accounting for damaged and destroyed sensitive items a smooth process. Because my vehicle burned, it was impossible to recover the radios and other items.

Comments

We didn't do everything possible correctly and we weren't perfect. In hindsight I would recommend all doors be battle locked whenever traveling in an up-armored HMMWV. My driver's door and the left-rear door were opened by either the blast or the rolling. Also, it's vital that drivers and passengers wear their seatbelts. Without them you could be thrown from the vehicle or tossed around inside like a rag doll.

We also needed to know where the driver kept the keys to the radios. Prior to the cab being



overwhelmed by flames we possibly, although at great risk, could have removed the radios. However, the driver was unconscious and couldn't tell us where the keys were. It's important to develop a standard operating procedure so all the occupants know where the driver keeps those keys; for example, if he keeps them in the left-front pocket of his BDU top.

Vehicle compartment loads should be secured and strapped down as much as possible. Ammo cans and other items can hurt when they become projectiles inside a vehicle during a rollover.

Final message

The photo of my burning vehicle was taken about 10 minutes after the incident. The other picture, which was taken by an Iraqi newsman and which I got off the Internet, shows my burned-out vehicle a bit later on. I and my crew are very fortunate to be alive and hope others can learn from our example.

Editor's Note: This story amply demonstrates "composite risk," a concept which blends accidental risks with tactical risks during wartime. Wearing seatbelts, staying at nametag defilade, wearing goggles or safety glasses, and using proper load plans are traditional safety procedures. However, combat has added emphasis to these, as well as leading to the development of tactical safety procedures such as gunner orientation, vehicle placement on the road and vehicle spacing, as mentioned above. From the cauldron of combat, Soldiers are refining the lessons they've learned—identifying the composite risk, assessing it, and controlling it so they can live to fight another day. 🚗

Contact the author via e-mail at jeffrey.butler@vcmain.hq.c5.army.mil.



Explosives Safety DVD Available

The U.S. Army Safety Center (USASC) is releasing a DVD dedicated to protecting Soldiers from explosives hazards. The DVD, part of USASC's "Letters From War" series, is targeted toward Soldiers deploying to combat areas. The DVD provides lessons learned and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) from combat-experienced Soldiers, EOD personnel and the IED Task Force Field Team. In addition, Field Manual 21-16, Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Procedures and USASC's Munitions Handling 101 Booklet also will be available on the DVD.

The DVD first will be made available to deploying units as well as the combat readiness centers, and then Army-wide. Units wanting to order the DVD should go to the USASC Web site at <https://safety.army.mil>, click on the "Media" button and then click on the DOD Audio/Visual Library link. Type in "Explosives safety" for a key word search, select the DVD and add to your shopping cart. It will be shipped free to units.

"Letters from War: Explosives Safety" is only the first installment. Future DVDs in the "Letters from War" series will cover topics which include tactical movement, weapons handling, fort to port, medical issues and aviation operations. In each there will be a combination of videos and additional resources, like field manuals and pamphlets. 🚗

For more information contact Rebecca Nolin at (334) 255-2067, DSN 558-2067, or e-mail video@safetycenter.army.mil.

They've endured skids, abrupt braking and avoiding obstacles at high speeds. Now they're back and ready to help the Army's Soldiers and families hone their driving skills.

Skidding Your Way to Safe Driving



JULIE SHELLEY
Staff Editor

A team from the U.S. Army Safety Center (USASC) recently returned from Fort Story, Va., where the Army and General Motors partnered to implement the first Advanced Skills Driver Training Course. Statistically, this training couldn't come at a better time: The Army currently is experiencing its worst accident rate in recent years. Together, Army Motor Vehicle, Army Combat Vehicle, and privately owned vehicle (POV) accidents account for nearly 75 percent of all Army accidental fatalities. Speeding, fatigue and improper reactions all are cited as contributing factors to these accidents.

General Motors recognized these same causal factors more than 10 years ago and developed the training course for company employees and their family members. The

course—suitable for any type of POV—is designed to improve drivers' reactions to unexpected driving conditions. The training is both academic and hands-on, and requires a 1,000' by 1,000' blacktop area where permanent skid pads can be installed. The Army Safety Center's goal is to establish at least one course in each state at willing installations.

The USASC Traffic Section is developing and coordinating plans to implement the program throughout the Army and train Soldiers, family members, and civilian employees in several basic areas. Trainees will go through exercises in controlled braking, evasive maneuvering, straight-line backing, serpentine weaving, off-road recovery and the "Skid Monster."

The Skid Monster (a dolly type device



"I didn't think 'training wheels' on the back of a car would teach me to be a safer driver, but the training really did work."

that replaces a vehicle's back wheels) allows instructors to push a button and simulate a skid in a variety of environmental conditions, including rain and ice. Then, the instructor tells the student the proper procedures for steering, braking, acceleration and also "targeting."

In targeting, the driver selects a stationary object, such as a billboard or signpost, in the distance and in their path of travel. Since the driver is looking in that direction, logic dictates that the car will travel the same path. Thus, when a vehicle skids or swerves abruptly, the target serves as the driver's reference point for correcting the vehicle.

One Soldier who went through the Fort Story training had nothing but positive remarks. 1LT Matthew Nowlin, B Troop, 1/158th Cavalry, Maryland Army National Guard, totaled his POV after skidding on an interstate during heavy rain.

"I wish I'd had this training years ago," 1LT Nowlin said. "It might have made a difference in that accident. I didn't think 'training wheels' on the back of a car would teach me to be a safer driver, but the training really did work."

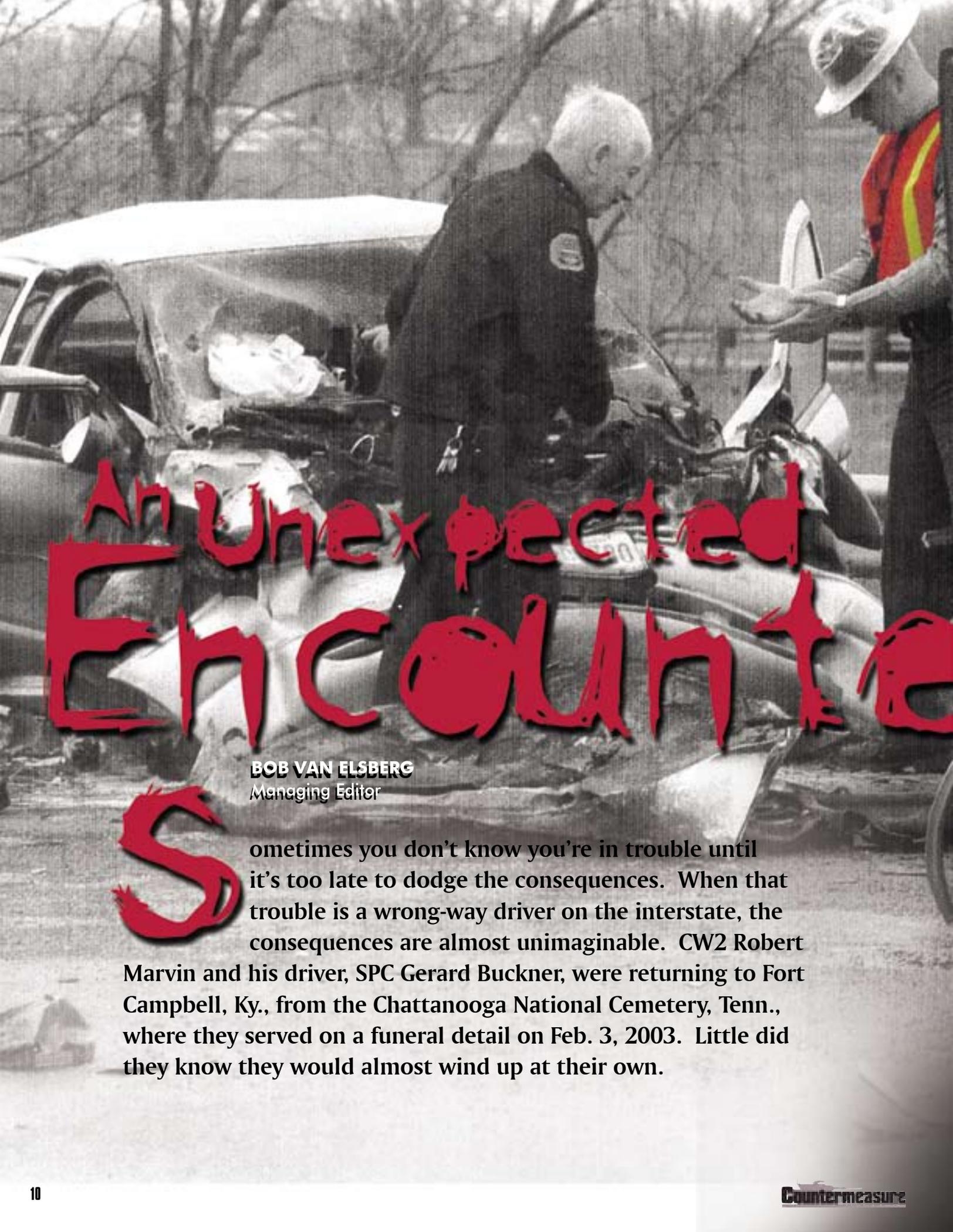
Although the training is conducted in

standard POVs, Soldiers who drive tactical vehicles should take note of what they learn and transfer those skills to the battlefield. Akio Miyamoto, president and senior instructor for Vehicle Dynamics, Inc., explained that the same principles apply in any type of vehicle. With many of the Army's in-theater accidents occurring because of skids and drivers swerving to avoid an obstacle, this training would prove invaluable to Soldiers deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan.

"This training will have a great impact on them (deploying Soldiers)," Mr. Miyamoto said. "You're dealing with the physics—the handling of a vehicle. Vehicles handle the same, so their movements are predictable. You just have to be able to control it, and this training helps with control of the vehicle."

For more information or to schedule a training visit at your installation, contact Mike Evans at (334) 255-2643, DSN 558-2643, or e-mail mike.evans@us.army.mil. 

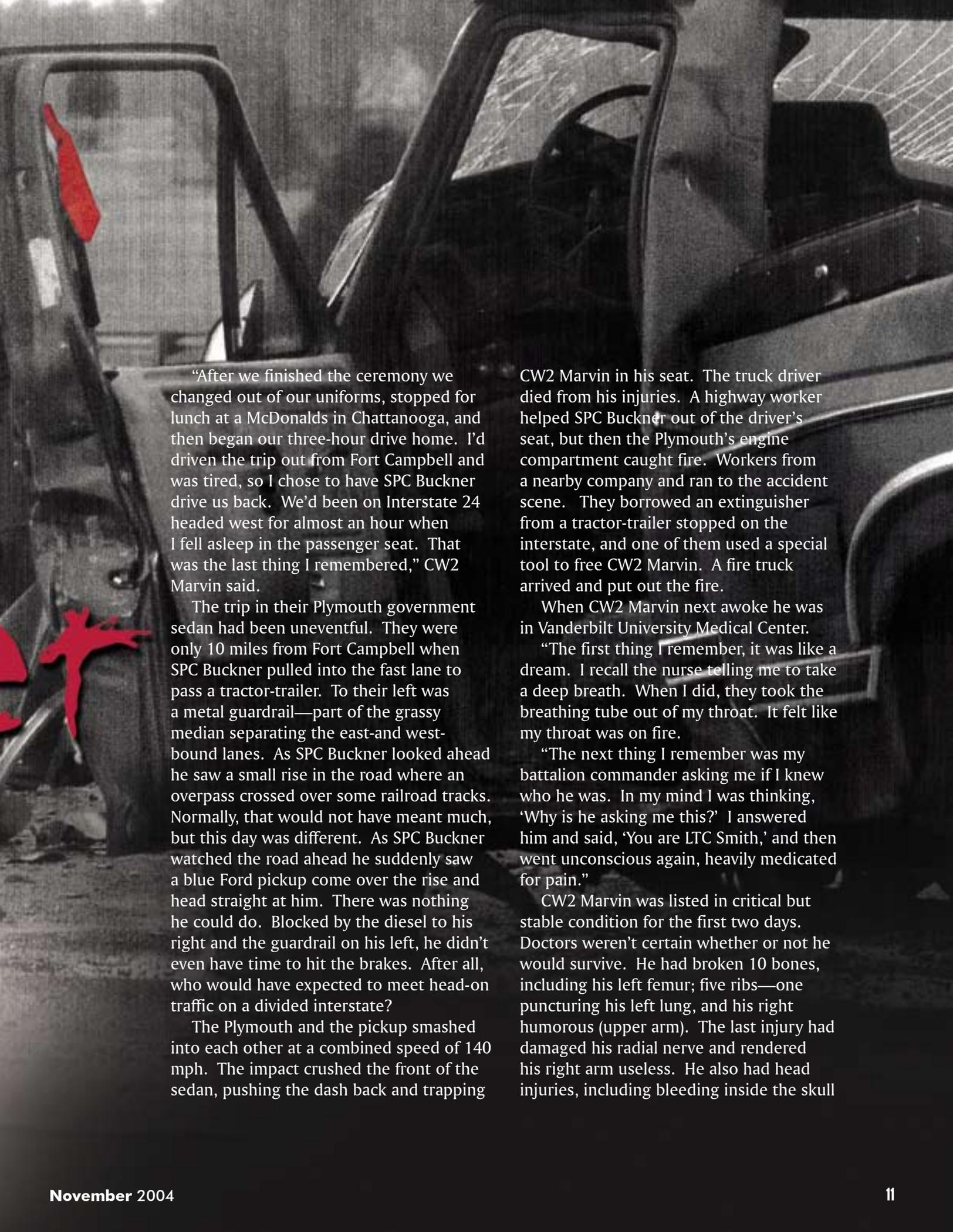
Contact the author at (334) 255-1218, DSN 558-1218, or e-mail julie.shelley@safetycenter.army.mil.



An Unexpected Encounter

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Managing Editor

Sometimes you don't know you're in trouble until it's too late to dodge the consequences. When that trouble is a wrong-way driver on the interstate, the consequences are almost unimaginable. CW2 Robert Marvin and his driver, SPC Gerard Buckner, were returning to Fort Campbell, Ky., from the Chattanooga National Cemetery, Tenn., where they served on a funeral detail on Feb. 3, 2003. Little did they know they would almost wind up at their own.



“After we finished the ceremony we changed out of our uniforms, stopped for lunch at a McDonalds in Chattanooga, and then began our three-hour drive home. I’d driven the trip out from Fort Campbell and was tired, so I chose to have SPC Buckner drive us back. We’d been on Interstate 24 headed west for almost an hour when I fell asleep in the passenger seat. That was the last thing I remembered,” CW2 Marvin said.

The trip in their Plymouth government sedan had been uneventful. They were only 10 miles from Fort Campbell when SPC Buckner pulled into the fast lane to pass a tractor-trailer. To their left was a metal guardrail—part of the grassy median separating the east-and west-bound lanes. As SPC Buckner looked ahead he saw a small rise in the road where an overpass crossed over some railroad tracks. Normally, that would not have meant much, but this day was different. As SPC Buckner watched the road ahead he suddenly saw a blue Ford pickup come over the rise and head straight at him. There was nothing he could do. Blocked by the diesel to his right and the guardrail on his left, he didn’t even have time to hit the brakes. After all, who would have expected to meet head-on traffic on a divided interstate?

The Plymouth and the pickup smashed into each other at a combined speed of 140 mph. The impact crushed the front of the sedan, pushing the dash back and trapping

CW2 Marvin in his seat. The truck driver died from his injuries. A highway worker helped SPC Buckner out of the driver’s seat, but then the Plymouth’s engine compartment caught fire. Workers from a nearby company and ran to the accident scene. They borrowed an extinguisher from a tractor-trailer stopped on the interstate, and one of them used a special tool to free CW2 Marvin. A fire truck arrived and put out the fire.

When CW2 Marvin next awoke he was in Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

“The first thing I remember, it was like a dream. I recall the nurse telling me to take a deep breath. When I did, they took the breathing tube out of my throat. It felt like my throat was on fire.

“The next thing I remember was my battalion commander asking me if I knew who he was. In my mind I was thinking, ‘Why is he asking me this?’ I answered him and said, ‘You are LTC Smith,’ and then went unconscious again, heavily medicated for pain.”

CW2 Marvin was listed in critical but stable condition for the first two days. Doctors weren’t certain whether or not he would survive. He had broken 10 bones, including his left femur; five ribs—one puncturing his left lung, and his right humerus (upper arm). The last injury had damaged his radial nerve and rendered his right arm useless. He also had head injuries, including bleeding inside the skull



“Accidents do happen, and you have to prepare for them”

and a cranial tear. On top of all that, he had a torn aorta. He was lucky to be alive.

For a week, CW2 Marvin was in and out of consciousness. Doctors performed several operations to repair his broken bones and inserted a tube into his chest because of his lung injury. He was transferred to Fort Campbell's Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, where he remained for nearly four months going through physical therapy. He'd been there two months before his legs could carry his weight and he could walk. He recalled, "My greatest accomplishment in life at that point was being able to go to the restroom on my own."

CW2 Marvin left the hospital in June and took two weeks' convalescent leave. His unit had deployed to Iraq while he was still in the hospital, so he reported to their rear detachment and ultimately became its

commander. When his unit returned from Iraq, he was proud he could stand again as he welcomed his friends home. However, his accident left him with some clear thoughts on driving safety.

"Accidents do happen, and you have to prepare for them," he said. "I wore my seatbelt—that's a habit for me when I get into a car—and made sure my driver did too. I chose to have SPC Buckner, who was in better shape for the long drive, take the wheel. While being asleep and relaxed may have helped me survive, I also know it was my job as the vehicle commander to ensure SPC Buckner stayed awake. That's a lesson I will never forget.

"I couldn't have prevented the pickup driver from being on the wrong side of the road. He was 83 years old, had recently suffered a stroke, and was driving with an expired license. In retrospect, I realize that you must prepare for the unexpected—even

the bizarre—on the highway. Sure, there shouldn't have been an oncoming pickup in our lane, but that's what accidents are all about: things that shouldn't have happened. In the future, I'll stay alert and make sure we pass ONLY when we can see the road ahead. I don't need any more unexpected encounters."

CW3 Marvin currently serves as the Company A, 2nd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment safety officer. He recently completed the Aviation Warrant Officer Advanced Course at Fort Rucker, Ala. His goals are to return to flight status and become an instructor pilot for the AH-64D Apache Longbow. He can be contacted at (270) 798-0245 or by e-mail at robert.marvin@us.army.mil.

Contact the author at (334) 255-2688, DSN 558-2688, or e-mail robert.vanelsberg@safetycenter.army.mil.

The Flying Convoy Potty Break

I was a private first class assigned to a maintenance company at the beginning of the first Gulf War. I worked in the motor pool as a heavy wheeled vehicle mechanic. My company was preparing for movement immediately following the start of the air campaign. The motor pool section was short on drivers, so the motor sergeant asked me about my previous driving experience. It wasn't much—I had four years' experience driving a POV, but I'd once driven an M35A1 2 1/2-ton truck while I was in the Army Reserve. Since we were in "combat," that meager experience was enough to satisfy my leadership. I was put in a 5-ton tractor with my squad leader, SGT Biggs, who was supposed to train me while we convoyed north.

We started our movement shortly after dark, and all was uneventful for the first hour. SGT Biggs was training me on the "finer points" of driving the tractor while towing the tool van. For example, he told me I could greatly reduce my driving workload by pulling the throttle cable and locking it into position at my current speed setting. I tried it and, sure enough, my right foot was free and I could stretch my legs. What SGT Biggs didn't tell me, however, was that using the throttle cable as a cruise control is extremely dangerous because the cable doesn't disengage when you hit the brakes. This was the first of many dangerous practices he would teach me.

We had been told in the convoy briefing that we would stop every three hours for a short rest break. The second and third hour came and went, but we never stopped. I'd been drinking a lot of caffeinated beverages, so after the fourth hour I really needed a break. I told SGT Biggs this, but he responded that we couldn't stop or signal the lead vehicle because we were under radio silence. Instead, he "instructed" me on "how we do things in combat."

To my amazement, SGT Biggs opened his door and stepped on the running board. He then climbed onto the right fuel tank and straddled his leg over the protruding spare tire. Next, he crossed between the fifth-wheel deck and cab and climbed down on the left running board. Then he opened my door—remember, I was driving—and grabbed the steering wheel while I slid over into the passenger seat. I couldn't believe what I'd just witnessed, but nature's call still had to be answered. This wasn't a problem

for SGT Biggs. He told me to climb up on the fifth-wheel platform, take my long-overdue "relief

break," and while I was there, get him a soda.

Traveling at 49 mph in a convoy on a narrow desert two-lane highway, I stepped onto the running board and onto the right fuel tank. I threw my leg over the spare tire. I had my right hand on the handhold by the door and my left hand on the spare tire's rim. I froze for a moment because my left hand couldn't touch any part of the truck's frame. The only thing I could grab hold of to pull my weight around the spare tire was the tire itself, and it was loose and rattling in its carrier. I finally overcame my fear and pulled myself onto the fifth-wheel deck, where I got some much-needed relief. I then reached into the left-side tool storage compartment and passed SGT Biggs a soda through the cab window. I got into the truck and we continued on our way. About an hour later, we finally stopped to refuel.

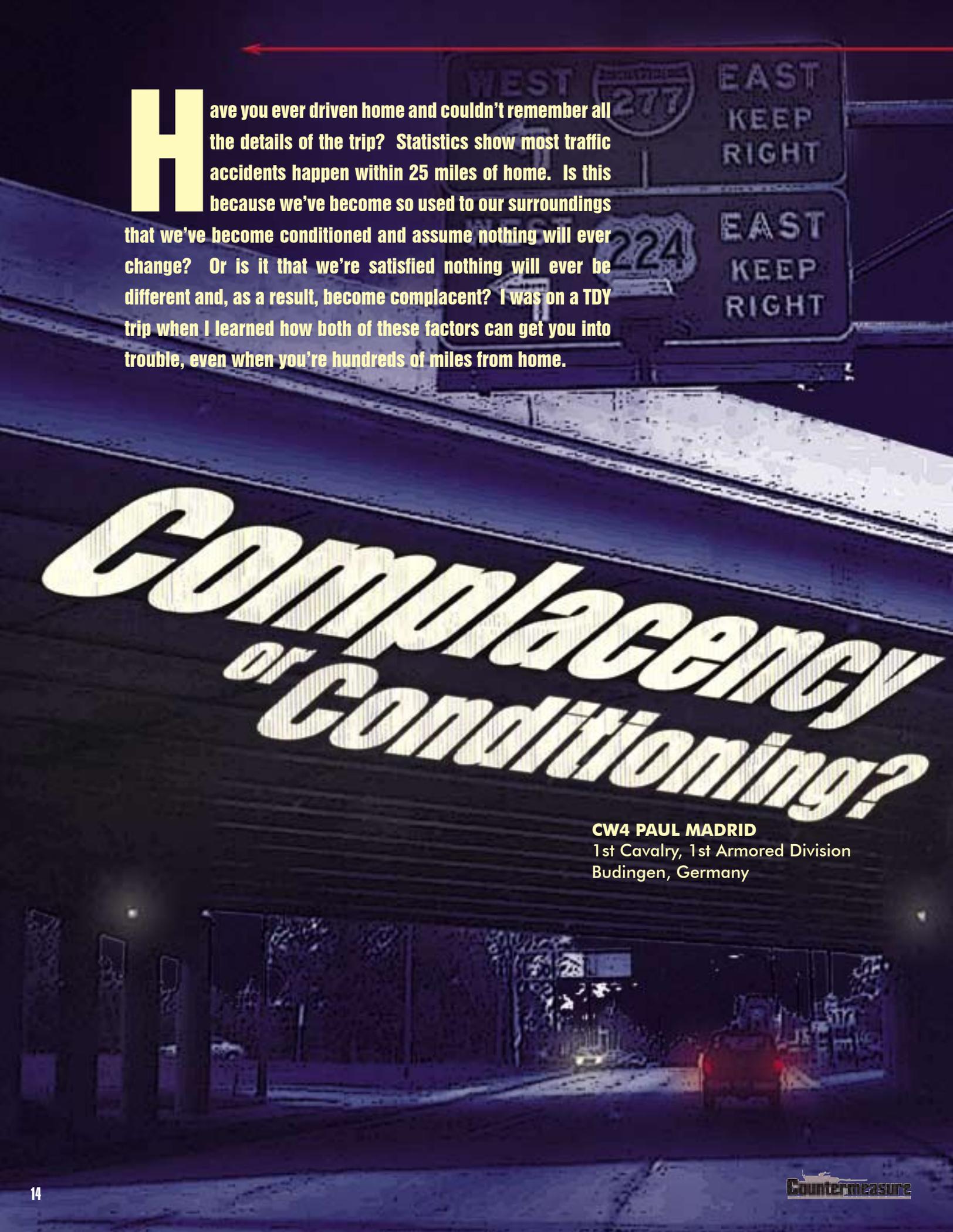
Since I was relatively new to the Army and vehicle operations, I assumed this unsafe behavior exhibited by my squad leader was perfectly normal. After all, we were in combat. It wasn't until later that I found out how wrong he really was.

The lesson learned in this is that safety isn't something we just discard when hostilities start. There's no such thing as "peacetime" safety and "wartime" safety. There is only safety, which is a state of being. The only way to achieve this state is to actively manage risk. How well you do that is directly proportional to how well you mitigate risks. In my case, we didn't even attempt risk management—in fact, we did the opposite. My squad leader ignored rules, regulations, and policies normally followed during peacetime because he thought doing so was more "efficient." I don't think he was intentionally trying to do things unsafely—his behavior was just the byproduct of taking shortcuts.

Don't get caught in the same trap of ignoring safety in the name of combat efficiency. Use the risk management process wisely so you can make it home to tell your war stories! 🍷

Contact the author at larry.kylman@us.army.mil.

CW2 LARRY KYLMAN
Aviation Safety Officer
Company B, 2nd Battalion,
1st Aviation Regiment
Tikrit, Iraq



Have you ever driven home and couldn't remember all the details of the trip? Statistics show most traffic accidents happen within 25 miles of home. Is this because we've become so used to our surroundings that we've become conditioned and assume nothing will ever change? Or is it that we're satisfied nothing will ever be different and, as a result, become complacent? I was on a TDY trip when I learned how both of these factors can get you into trouble, even when you're hundreds of miles from home.

Complacency or Conditioning?

CW4 PAUL MADRID
1st Cavalry, 1st Armored Division
Budingen, Germany



I was on a week-long TDY to Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md., to inspect a National Guard drug interdiction program. It started off like all the other TDY trips I'd taken in the past—I packed, got the plane tickets, and launched. As always, I got a rental car. Not everyone treats these vehicles with a lot of respect. I, for one, don't like to deal with all the paperwork should something happen, so I tend to be over cautious.

After checking into the hotel I decided to visit the unit, which was about 15 miles away. Along the drive was a four-mile-long straight stretch of highway that went up a gradual slope. On the return trip there were 11 red lights along the road, and another one by the overpass at the bottom of the slope. I'd driven the road enough during the first three days that it was becoming routine, and I wasn't counting on things changing late at night. So what was different on that long stretch of highway after 10 p.m.? To make things easier late at night, those red lights changed to flashing yellow caution lights so you didn't have to stop at every other traffic signal. Made sense to me. After making this trip for three days and nights I was getting comfortable with this section of road—maybe a little too comfortable.

On the fourth night things were going well for the unit. The only thing left to do was outbrief the command the next day, so a few of the Guard guys decided to follow me back to the hotel for a small get-together. I was in the lead with three other cars behind me. No problem, right? Wrong! As I started down the slope, I could see all those yellow caution lights flashing away. I cruised down the slope expecting yellow lights all the way, but as I went beneath the overpass a Jeep

Cherokee suddenly pulled out in front of me. My first thought was, "What is this guy doing?!" With me going 50 mph and him only 20 yards in front of me, I didn't have much time to react. My rental car became a knife and cleanly shaved the front end off the Jeep. I won't go into all the details of the damage done to both vehicles. Let's just say it was severe enough that they couldn't be towed and had to be loaded onto slide-bed wreckers.

So what happened? Remember all those red lights that changed to flashing yellow at 10 p.m.? Well, not all of them had changed, and the one that hadn't was the one behind the overpass. As I came down the slope I could see every light except that one.

“Whether you're 25 miles from home or TDY 2,500 miles away, keep your head in the game all the time.”

This accident could have been catastrophic. I realized had I entered the intersection a couple seconds later, I would have perfectly T-boned the Jeep. That would surely have killed its driver and done who knows what to me.

Had I become complacent and unaware of the actual danger, or had I become conditioned and assumed the lights all did the same thing at the same time? Either way you look at it, the story is the same.

So what's the point of this? The combination of complacency and conditioning can lead you into a deadly trap. Whether you're 25 miles from home or TDY 2,500 miles away, keep your head in the game all the time. Not doing so can get you killed. 

Contact the author via e-mail at paul.madrid2@us.army.mil



A Close Call on a Slick Road

CW2 AMELIA DAWSON
Company D, 2nd Battalion, 135th
Aviation Regiment
Camp Robinson, Little Rock, Ark.

I've always considered myself a safe driver. Knock on wood, I've never been involved in a serious accident, and I haven't received a ticket since I was 19. However, I recently discovered that anyone can be caught off guard on the road, and if you're not prepared, you can get in big trouble.

I'm a National Guardsman and my civilian job is approximately 30 miles from my home in Arkansas. It was about 4 p.m. on a spring afternoon and I was driving home after work. There'd been a brief thundershower earlier that day, but the skies had cleared by the time I left work. The roads, however, were still pretty wet.

I was driving in the far left lane of a six-lane highway separated by a concrete divider. The shoulder on either side of the road was wide enough for a vehicle. The roads were still wet, but as I was traveling at the 65 mph speed limit I was surprised when my car began to fishtail. At first

I was calm because I felt I was still in control of the vehicle and could drive out of the fishtail. However, it quickly became apparent that I couldn't. My car spun 180 degrees, landing me in the center lane facing oncoming traffic, then continued to spin until it stopped on the left-hand shoulder. Fortunately, I wasn't hit. This entire event probably took less than five seconds, but I recall having time to think, "This is really going to hurt!"

Afterwards, I thought about the conditions that led to this incident and what, if anything, I could have done to prevent it. I searched the Internet and on the www.smartmotorist.com Web site saw where it said the three main factors contributing to

hydroplaning are vehicle speed, tire tread depth, and water depth. On that particular day I had all three working against me. Even though I hadn't been speeding, I had been traveling too fast for the road conditions. Also, the last time I bought tires, I only replaced two of them. Although the water on the road wasn't deep, it was deeper than the tread on the two older tires.

All in all I was very lucky and came out of this with a lot of food for thought. I've since replaced all my tires and am more careful when there is water on the road. Sliding out of control down the highway is a ride I hope never to repeat. 🚗

Contact the author via e-mail at dawsonamelia@vams.edu or amelia.dawson@us.army.mil.

Here are some safety tips to help prevent hydroplaning

- **Replace worn or balding tires.** If you stick a penny in the tread and can see the top of President Lincoln's head, you need to replace the tire. The shallower the tread, the shallower the water needs to be to cause hydroplaning.
- **Slow down.** There is a relationship between tire pressure and hydroplaning speed. At a tire pressure of 36 psi, you'll begin hydroplaning at 54 mph. At lower

inflation levels, you will hydroplane at even slower speeds.

- **Avoid puddles, especially on curves.**
- **Try to drive in the tracks of the vehicle in front of you—but don't tailgate.**
- **Maintain at least twice your normal safe following distance.**
- **If your car does hydroplane, avoid hard braking and turn your wheels in the direction you want to go until you regain control.**

I approached the intersection and entered the left turn lane just as the signal turned red. The cross traffic had just started to move when I heard the sound of screeching brakes—but it was too late. A car had run the red light, entering the intersection and crashing into a young woman's car. Her signal light had turned green, and she'd just begun moving. The red light runner hit her car in the driver's side front fender area and caused significant damage. Fortunately, the young lady was not killed.

RED LIGHT ROULETTE

Does this sound all too familiar? According to the Federal Highway Administration, one in three people claim they know someone who has been injured or killed in a red light running crash.

We all remember the childhood game "red light, green light." While running through an imaginary intersection the "designated" traffic officer would shout for us to either stop or go. The game was a prelude to what we would face when we grew up and started driving. Sadly, too many drivers aren't playing by the rules anymore. Instead they are playing "red light roulette"—trying to hurry through an intersection after the light has turned red, hoping they don't hit another vehicle or pedestrian.

The statistics are sobering: In 2000 there were 106,000 red light-running crashes that resulted in 89,000 injuries and 1,036 deaths. Numbers from more recent years show the deadly statistics are on the rise.

Who is running red lights? The answer is that every demographic group is involved in this dangerous practice. More than half of Americans admit to running red lights, and yet 96 percent of drivers say they fear being hit by a red light runner in an intersection. Half the drivers who run red lights say they're

CW4 BRIAN FULLER
160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment
Fort Campbell, Ky.

just "in a hurry."

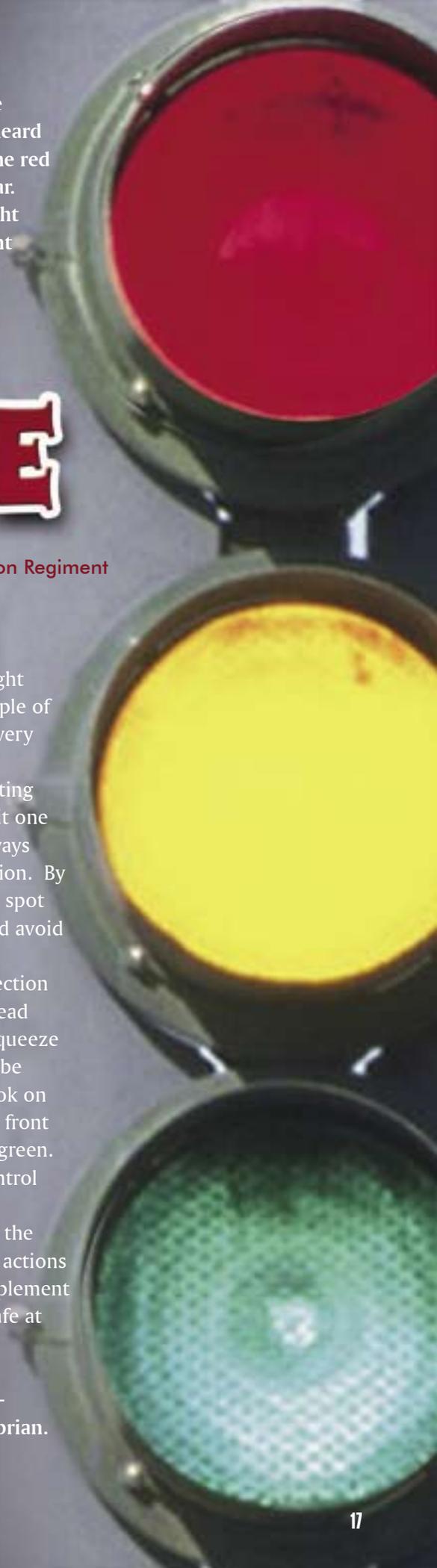
What can you do to reduce your risk of being hit by a red light runner? I have developed a couple of control measures that I use at every intersection.

When you're the first car waiting for a red light to turn green, wait one or two seconds and look both ways before pulling into the intersection. By waiting, chances are good you'll spot the guy running the red light and avoid an accident.

When approaching an intersection with a "stale" green light, go ahead and stop rather than trying to squeeze through on a yellow. Yes, you'll be delayed a minute or two, but look on the bright side—you'll be at the front of the line when the light turns green. Just be sure to heed the first control measure.

We're not alone out there on the highways. You can't control the actions of other drivers, but you can implement control measures to keep you safe at intersections. 🚗

Contact the author at (270) 798-1442, DSN 635-1442, or e-mail brian.fuller@us.army.mil.



Car Speak

SUSAN JERVIS
Army Materiel Command
Feri Belvoir, Va.

You can't wait for tomorrow to get here! Finally, after many years, it's time to shop for a new car. Well, maybe it won't be brand new, but it will be new to you and definitely newer than the clunker sitting in your driveway.

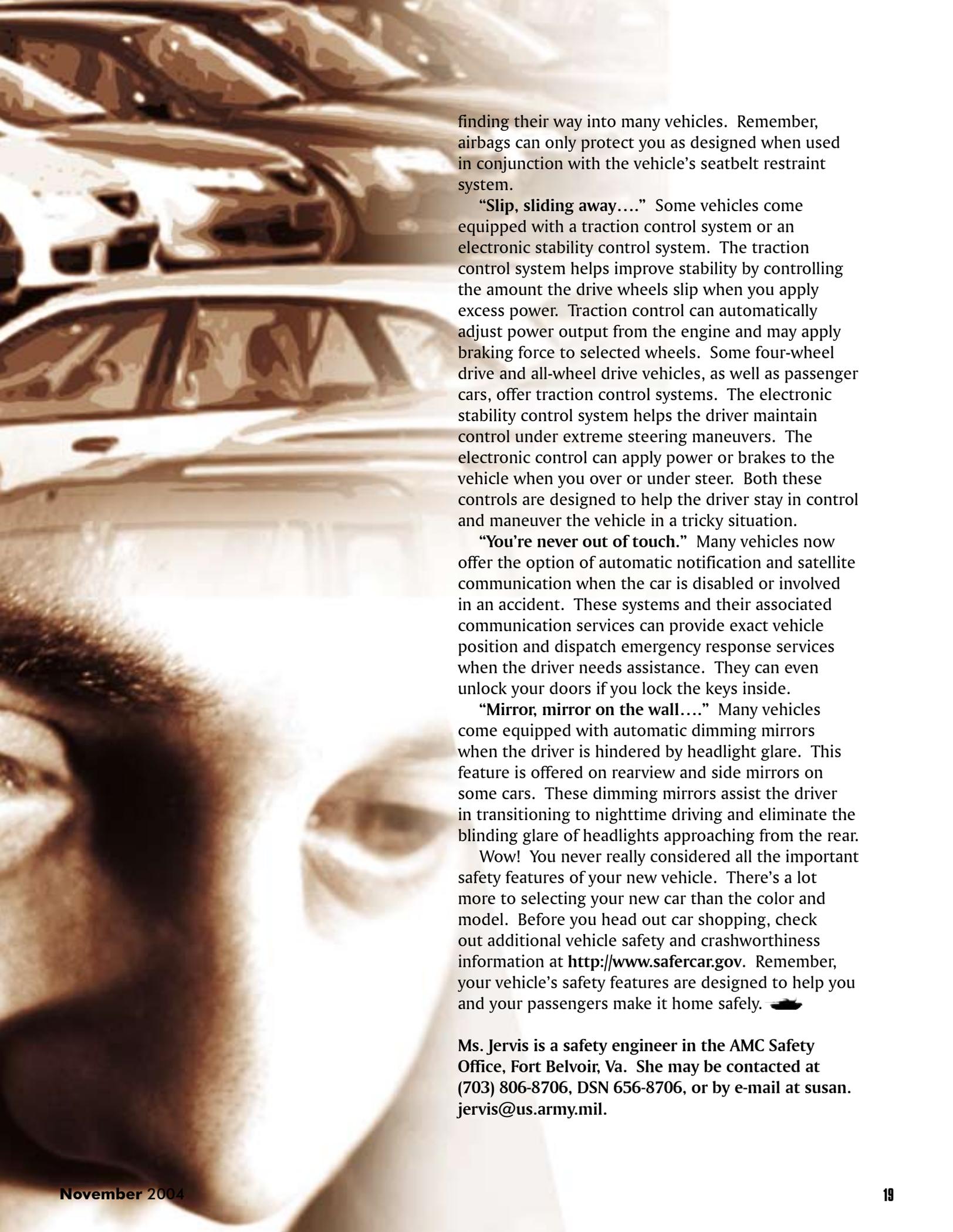
As you climb into bed, you're still thinking about all those options. Do you want a sports car, sedan, sport utility vehicle (SUV), or truck? Do you prefer red, blue, or silver? There are so many important decisions before heading to the car dealership. Hopefully, you'll have a better idea in the morning.

When you wake up, you're puzzled by a crazy dream. Instead of dreaming about the color and model of your new car, you were watching vehicle safety devices come to life before your very eyes. You're still baffled that you were actually listening to an anti-lock braking system (ABS). Who will ever believe you got the hard sell from a bunch of safety stuff?

"With ABS, you can get your exercise from pumping iron instead of the brakes." The ABS is available as a standard feature or option on almost every vehicle. The system is designed to help drivers avoid crashes. If you need to slam on your brakes to avoid a collision, the ABS will keep the brakes from locking and allow you to maintain better control and confidence in an accident situation.

"What's the big deal about a headrest?" The head restraint system is designed to prevent the backward snap of your neck and head in an accident. Most vehicles have head restraints incorporated into the front seats, but more and more vehicle manufacturers are putting the same type of restraint in the back seats. The restraint should be at least level with the top of your ear and located less than 10 centimeters from the back of your head. Closer head restraints can be twice as effective in preventing injuries in an accident.

"So you think I'm full of hot air?" Driver- and passenger-side airbags have been required in cars since 1998, and in SUVs, trucks, and vans since 1999. Over the years, airbags have saved lives and lessened the severity of injuries suffered in a vehicle accident. Airbags are designed to stop the driver's or passenger's impact with the hard surfaces inside the vehicle. While airbags present unique hazards to children and those of smaller stature, statistics indicate airbags are still an effective safety device. New-generation airbags come with sensors to control the force of airbag deployment depending on whether you're buckled up, how hard you crash, or if children are in the seat. Side-impact airbags also are



finding their way into many vehicles. Remember, airbags can only protect you as designed when used in conjunction with the vehicle's seatbelt restraint system.

"Slip, sliding away...." Some vehicles come equipped with a traction control system or an electronic stability control system. The traction control system helps improve stability by controlling the amount the drive wheels slip when you apply excess power. Traction control can automatically adjust power output from the engine and may apply braking force to selected wheels. Some four-wheel drive and all-wheel drive vehicles, as well as passenger cars, offer traction control systems. The electronic stability control system helps the driver maintain control under extreme steering maneuvers. The electronic control can apply power or brakes to the vehicle when you over or under steer. Both these controls are designed to help the driver stay in control and maneuver the vehicle in a tricky situation.

"You're never out of touch." Many vehicles now offer the option of automatic notification and satellite communication when the car is disabled or involved in an accident. These systems and their associated communication services can provide exact vehicle position and dispatch emergency response services when the driver needs assistance. They can even unlock your doors if you lock the keys inside.

"Mirror, mirror on the wall...." Many vehicles come equipped with automatic dimming mirrors when the driver is hindered by headlight glare. This feature is offered on rearview and side mirrors on some cars. These dimming mirrors assist the driver in transitioning to nighttime driving and eliminate the blinding glare of headlights approaching from the rear.

Wow! You never really considered all the important safety features of your new vehicle. There's a lot more to selecting your new car than the color and model. Before you head out car shopping, check out additional vehicle safety and crashworthiness information at <http://www.safercar.gov>. Remember, your vehicle's safety features are designed to help you and your passengers make it home safely. 🚗

Ms. Jervis is a safety engineer in the AMC Safety Office, Fort Belvoir, Va. She may be contacted at (703) 806-8706, DSN 656-8706, or by e-mail at susan.jervis@us.army.mil.

T

here we were in a remote location in the Middle East, careening across the desert with clouds of dust billowing behind us. Guys were screaming as their heads bounced off the vehicle's windows. Were we evading an ambush or an improvised explosive device? Not even close! We were just "seeing what this baby could do" in the rental car our aviation unit had acquired for crew transport.

It has always amazed me that aircrews—or any Soldiers, for that matter—who have been issued a rental vehicle feel the need to "wring this baby out." Over my career I've seen it time and time again, and it's almost become tradition. The feeling is infectious, and I've been caught up in it too. Aviators

**NO CURE
TOO STEEP
IT'S A
RENTAL!**

by nature are a competitive lot, and on this day doing more than the last guy was encouraged and cheered by the other passengers. The situation was getting out of hand fast, with an accident the only sure outcome.

I was the newly assigned unit safety officer and I immediately objected to the aggressive driving. I was challenged and seen as the "bad guy" for stopping the fun. But the "power slides," "brake checks," and "going cross country" were dangerous and becoming more so. Fortunately, I was able to reason with some of the unit's senior guys, who also recognized this. With their help the stunt driving stopped without getting the command involved. Best of all, no one was hurt or killed in a rollover or other accident.

Driving a rental car like an off-road vehicle or a race car is dangerous and threatens the Soldiers inside, and even the mission itself. We would not tolerate this kind of behavior in a HMMWV or other tactical vehicle. Just think about the last time you and everyone else in the back of an LMTV or 5-ton truck yelled at a

CW4 (RET) SEAN MORRILL
Safety Specialist
4th Infantry Division
Fort Hood, Texas

driver you thought was driving too fast. Rental cars can kill or maim just as effectively if they are misused.

Remember, rental cars are authorized to help you accomplish your assigned mission. Since we were in a remote location, we were fortunate to have a rental vehicle to augment the meager transportation we had available. Our mission schedule was hectic and ever-changing, and demanded that we be at the flight line at various hours (i.e., oh' dark thirty). The rental vehicle was a great tool to help us accomplish our missions and gave us the flexibility we needed.

Don't let aggressive driving in a rental car kill or injure your buddies or cause your unit's mission to fail. Recognize it for what it is—an enabling tool that needs care and proper use so everyone gets to go home when the mission is done. 🚗

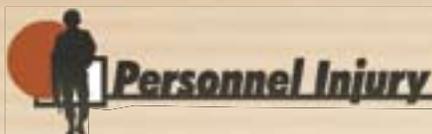
Contact the author at DSN 737-0852 or via e-mail at sean.morrill@us.army.mil.



ACV

Class A (Damage)

■ M1A1 suffered Class A damage after its engine caught fire. The tank had departed its refuel point when fire was discovered coming from the engine. The crew initiated shut-off procedures, but they failed; the crew then disconnected the engine fuel line. No crewmembers were injured.



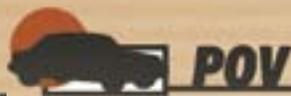
Class A

■ Soldier collapsed and died during a cool-down period following self-paced physical training. The Soldier was pronounced dead at the local emergency room.

■ Soldier collapsed and struck his head on a concrete pad after a five-mile foot march. The cause of death was not reported.

■ Soldier was killed when he lost control of his all-terrain vehicle and struck a pole. The Soldier was thrown from the vehicle during the accident sequence. The accident occurred during the late evening hours.

■ Soldier suffered fatal injuries after being electrocuted outside a metal latrine. The Soldier was leaning against an exterior wall of the latrine when he suffered the electrical shock. The cause of the electrical surge was not reported.



POV

Class A

■ Soldier was killed when his vehicle was struck head-on by a vehicle driving in the wrong direction on a four-lane highway. No other details were provided.

■ Soldier suffered a permanent total disability when his vehicle struck a tree. The Soldier, who reportedly was driving at a high speed, encountered a sudden rain shower on an interstate highway and lost control of the vehicle. The vehicle spun 180 degrees, slid into a median, and struck the tree. The Soldier was wearing his seatbelt.

■ Soldier was killed when he was ejected from his vehicle during a rollover. The Soldier lost control of the vehicle, causing it to overturn. The accident occurred during the early-morning hours.

■ Soldier died after his motorcycle was struck head-on by a pickup truck. No other details were provided.

■ Soldier suffered fatal injuries when he lost control of his vehicle and struck an 18-wheeler. The accident occurred during the late evening hours. No other details were provided.

■ Soldier died after he was thrown from the back of a pickup truck driven by another Soldier. The driver lost control

of the truck and hit an overpass guardrail, causing the deceased Soldier to be thrown onto the highway below the overpass. The Soldier lived for six days following the accident. The driver, who was not injured, is suspected to have been under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

■ Soldier was killed when his vehicle was rear-ended by another vehicle and forced into another lane, causing it to be struck by a second vehicle. The accident occurred on an interstate highway.

■ Soldier suffered fatal injuries when he lost control of his motorcycle, causing it to overturn. The Soldier, who was wearing his helmet, was riding with a group of motorcyclists at the time of the accident.

■ Soldier died after being ejected from his vehicle. The Soldier was traveling with another Soldier and a civilian when the vehicle crashed for unknown reasons. All three occupants were ejected. The deceased Soldier, who was driving, is suspected to have been under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The accident occurred during the late evening hours.

POV UPDATE

FY 04
through
Sept 04

130

Total
POV
Fatalities

Class A-C accidents/soldiers killed

Cars	156/88
Vans	1/0
Trucks	58/18
Motorcycles	109/23
Other*	10/1

*Includes tractor trailers, unknown POVs, and bicycles

FY03

103

3-Yr
Avg

101

Chillin' Out on the Slopes

ANONYMOUS

Several years ago I was stationed at Buckley Air National Guard Base in Denver. I'd never snow skied, but after my first "initiation by fire" trip I was feeling pretty comfortable and actually considered myself a somewhat fearless skier. I would go hard and fast until I hit something or just fell down. Ski equipment would scatter from where I fell to where I slid to a stop—meaning I spent a lot of my time crawling back up the mountain for my

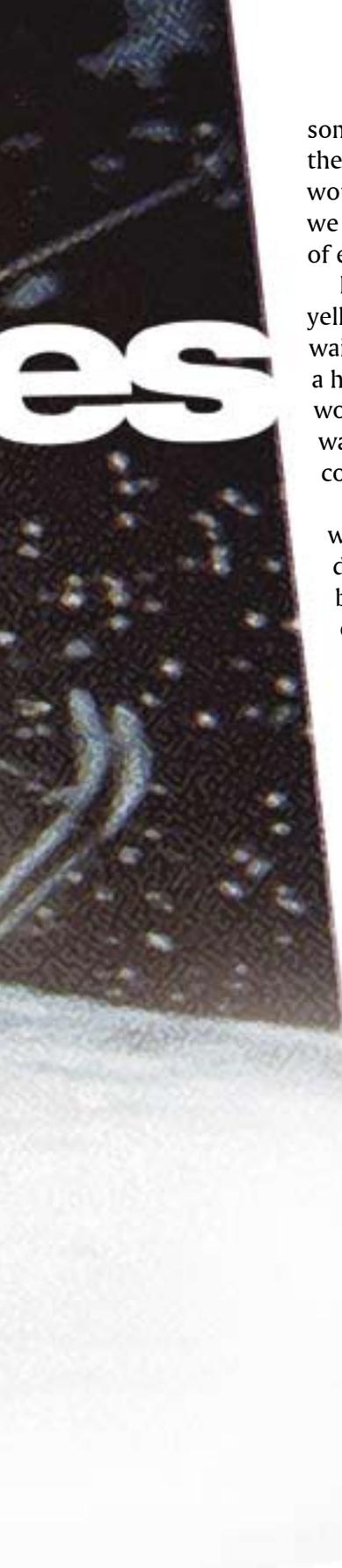
gear. This style was somewhat modeled after my good buddy Jim.

Jim was a Special Operations weapons sergeant and fearless in nearly everything, including skiing. We often went "tree bashing," where we turned off a cleared ski run and cut through the trees to the next run. The space between the runs was usually a couple hundred yards wide, and skiing through the trees made for a limited view. Reaction time was minimal and if you didn't react quickly enough, you bashed into a tree. The snow in the wooded areas wasn't packed like the normal runs, and the loose powder was

sometimes deeper than I was tall. Trying to get back up on skis in that snow was a lot like swimming.

One day a group of us had gone up the slopes for some fun and spent the day trying to outdo each other. The day had started out pretty warm, but it was getting colder. I'd worn ski bibs and been hot all day. Jim had worn polypropylene bottoms with jeans over them and a jacket. He'd probably been more comfortable, but things were about to change.

It was getting late, so Jim and I went up for one last run. We looked at a map and picked which runs to take, including



some that would be good for tree bashing. However, we made a wrong turn on the way down and went one run further to the right than we'd intended. We wound up about a half-mile from our intended run. To make matters worse, once we turned into the trees we got separated. Although we were still in voice range of each other, we should have come out of the trees sooner.

I then noticed that Jim—by far the better skier—was starting to fall behind. I yelled to see where Jim was, and he told me to go to the edge of the trees and wait for him there. I didn't make it far before I heard Jim say he was having a hard time skiing. Now, Jim is the type of guy who won't complain unless he's dying, so when he said he was having a hard time moving his legs I was a little concerned.

I began skiing uphill in loose powder to find Jim. He was standing on a stump, stripping off his wet pants. I didn't realize that jeans, which aren't waterproof, would be useless in loose powder. That hadn't been a problem earlier because he rarely fell and when he did it was on packed snow that didn't stick to him. I got really concerned when I saw that Jim was having a hard time balancing on the stump. He had begun to shake, and his legs were turning blue. The sun was going down fast. It was significantly colder in the shade and getting worse by the minute. We didn't even know where we were—we just knew we had to keep going and get out of the trees before dark.

I stripped down and handed my bibs to Jim. He gave me his wet pants, which had begun to freeze and also were a couple sizes too big. As soon as Jim warmed a little, we made a break for the bottom. I was amazed at how fast the wet pants cooled me off. It seemed like I was instantly cold and shaking all over. Skiing was more difficult wearing the wet jeans, too. I didn't have enough hands to negotiate the trees and keep the pants up at the same time, so I let them slide to my ankles. I had an added incentive not to fall in the loose powder with just my polypropylene between my skin and the snow!

Luckily, we were only three or four hundred yards from the tree line. It wasn't long before we emerged from the trees and found our group, who'd been looking for us. They'd been loaded and ready to go, but as time went by without the sight of either Jim or I, they began to worry. We were thoroughly chastised before we got into the van, stripped off our wet clothes, and finally warmed up.

Jim's legs were blue for half the trip back to Denver. He had minor burns down the outside of his thighs from the cold, but no serious injuries. I was fine after I warmed up. It was a memorable day and I think it scared both Jim and I. Jim, true to his character, still skis in jeans. I, however, learned my lesson—I'll always ski in waterproof clothing. It's better to prepare for the worst and be a little hot, than be very cold when the worst does happen! 🐾

skiing safety tips:

- Use the proper equipment. Buy or rent the equipment from experts who can instruct you on its proper usage.
- Take lessons from a qualified instructor before venturing out on the slopes.
- Wear clothing that is water and wind resistant.
- Dress in layers to accommodate your body's constantly changing temperature.
- Always wear eye protection. Goggles or sunglasses can protect you from "snow blindness" and dangers from falls and collisions.
- Know your limits. Most injuries occur at the end of the day when fatigue has begun to set in.

Safety tips provided courtesy Safety Times.

Been in a close call that taught you how to better stay alive? Here's a way to share what you learned with your battle buddies. Go to our "Warrior Stories" Web site, https://safety.army.mil/pages/warrior_stories/, and follow the easy instructions. Then watch for your "Warrior Story" in an upcoming issue of *Countermeasure*.

