

impax

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U.S. ARMY

Army Non-Tactical Risk-Management Information



Paula was eating her lunch in the cafeteria. As she ate, she thumbed through a magazine left on the table. Flipping through the pages, she discovered a short test to measure stress levels. She scanned the questions and began to think about all the things going on in her life right now. She'll probably top the chart when she tallies up her stress level. Stress seems to peak at home and at work during September with end-of-the-fiscal-year deadlines and the start of a new school year for her children.

ALL STRESSED UP Nowhere to Go

SUSAN S. JERVIS
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Fort Belvoir, Va.

As she finishes her lunch, Paula quickly answers the 10 questions and calculates her stress level. Just as she suspected, she's in the "High Stress" category. She definitely needs to read the rest of the article and figure out how to deal with the stress. But not now—she's going to be late for an important meeting. No time now for learning about stress management. Maybe she'll have a chance to read about ways to cope with stress after she gets her kids into bed.

Later that evening, Paula settles down at the kitchen table and begins reading the magazine article again. She starts to think about the signs of stress that have become part of her daily life. Yes, she's definitely been experiencing several symptoms associated with high stress levels. Every night she falls into bed exhausted, but she has difficulty falling asleep and she keeps waking up throughout the night. Since

the start of school, she's been waking unusually early, thinking about all the chores needed to get her kids out the door on time. Her shoulder muscles have been getting extremely tight and usually ache when she's working at her desk. Her stomach has been upset recently, and her appetite has been less than normal. She also realizes that she's been critical and impatient as she helps her kids with their homework. All in all, her days are a whirlwind of activity with few, if any, opportunities to relax.

Paula is convinced it's time to take positive action to counteract and reduce the effect of stress in her daily life. She continues reading as the article describes ways to help manage and alleviate stress at home and at work.

Prioritize

This will help you organize your tasks and plan your actions. Don't let yourself get upset if you

can't complete every job on the task list. Once all the tasks for a week are written down, prioritize and schedule each one for a specific day. This technique will help you identify those tasks that you can eliminate or postpone until later. Enjoy the sense of accomplishment as you finish each task on the list.

Take mini-vacations

Take a few minutes between projects to close your eyes and visualize a soothing, relaxing scene. Maybe you're visualizing yourself on the beach, listening to the waves rhythmically pound the sand. The key is to totally focus on something that is soothing and allow your mind to use this time to relax. Taking deep breaths will also calm and relax. The combination of deep breathing and visualization can make a difference in your attitude and stress level within a couple of minutes.

Exercise

Even when everybody is placing demands on your time, it's very important to wedge some exercise time into your day. Exercise will help increase your overall energy level and give you a fresh perspective on the tasks ahead. Exercise also helps keep your body healthy, strong and better able to cope with the seemingly endless demands. As you list your priorities for each day, include some form of exercise. While 30 minutes a day is recommended, even a short 10- to 15-minute session (e.g., a walk at lunch) can make a difference.



Eat healthy meals

Try to maintain a balanced diet. Fast food will keep you going, but it's not optimal. Your body is better able to cope with stress if it has the proper fuel provided by nutritious meals. Don't skip breakfast; it's the most important meal of your day. If need be, reorganize your mornings so that you have time to eat a proper, nutritious meal. Rushing out the door with a half-eaten toaster pastry will not give you what you need to start your day. And don't overload on the caffeine and sugar. Too much caffeine and sugar—combined with skipping meals—will only make you feel more jittery, tired and stressed-out. Since time is at a premium, use a variety of prepared foods to save a few minutes during meal preparation and still enjoy

a healthy diet. (Checking information on food labels while in the supermarket will help you find the most nutritious prepared foods).

Get enough sleep

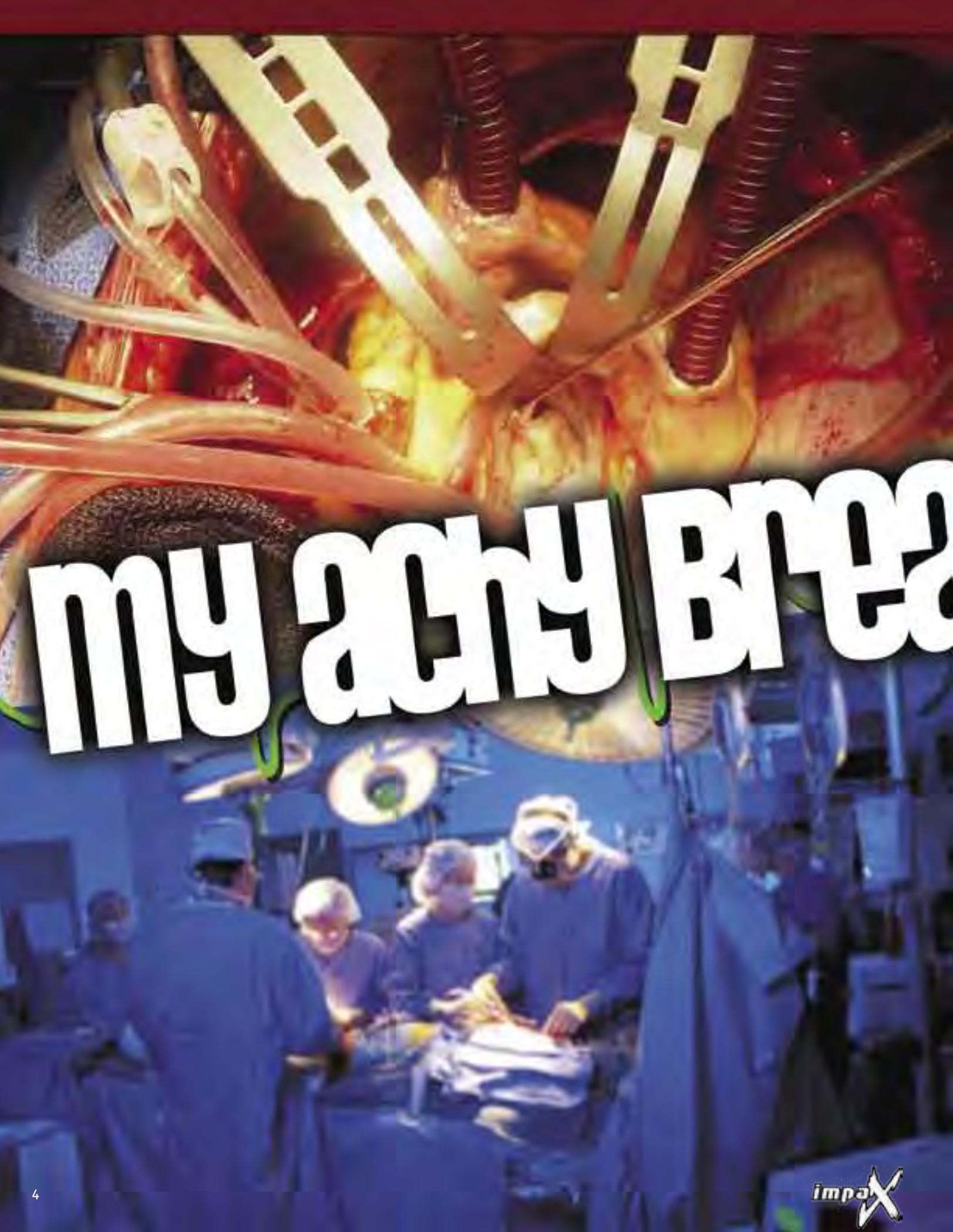
Even though your days are crammed full of activities, you still need sleep. Sleep provides your body with the time to physically and mentally recharge. Set aside enough time so that you'll have at least eight hours of sleep every night. For most people, this means planning for more than eight hours in bed because it takes time to fall asleep and many people wake up once or more during the night. Without adequate rest,

your ability to cope with challenges and complete tasks can be seriously degraded.

Paula lays the article down and closes her eyes. She's tired and needs to go to bed if she's going to get a reasonable amount of sleep. But the magazine has given her some new ideas and the

resolve to help her control her stress level so she and her family can survive September and the busy months ahead. ✕

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my achy Brea



I was sitting at my desk writing the story, "Like a Bat outta Hell", while my chest and left shoulder ached. I also noticed I was having trouble getting my breath when I walked down the hall to get a cup of coffee. I thought, "This is what I get for pushing myself too hard during yesterday's workout." Still, what's that old saying? —"no pain, no gain."

MY HEART

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Managing Editor

It scared me a bit that morning when one of my co-workers gave me a worried look and suggested I see a doctor. However, I'd been working out steadily for 18 months and was in the best shape I'd been in since my 20s. I was also concerned ImpaX magazine was falling behind schedule, so I didn't want to take time off for a doctor visit. I chose to ignore the symptoms and press on, working past my normal hours. When I got home that night I was still feeling bad and my wife got me to call the local hospital. When I

described my symptoms to the on-call nurse, she said, "Consider this a 911 call and get to the nearest emergency room immediately!" (See the related article, "Early Warning Signs.")

Within 20 minutes I was sitting in the ER. Shortly after I got there, an ER nurse drew some blood. I'd taken a couple of aspirin at home and was already feeling better. When the doctor asked me how I felt, I smiled and told him "great!" I was hoping he'd send me home with just a prescription and an order to see my doctor.

No such luck. About 30

minutes later the ER nurse came back with the lab results. He wasn't smiling when he said, "Mr. Van Elsberg, you've had a heart attack." I sat there stunned as the reality of what he said sunk in.

I had a few minutes to sit there and ponder the news. I still clung to the hope I'd be going home that night. After all, I'd survived the heart attack and was feeling better. End of story, right? Not quite. Within a few minutes I was loaded into an ambulance headed for Flowers Hospital in Dothan, Ala. A lot would happen before I went home again.



This artery is severely narrowed.

The pictures told it all

My first day in the hospital, Dr. Christopher Byard, a board-certified specialist in cardiovascular disease, performed a cardiac catheterization on me. This allowed him to inject dye into my heart and use an X-ray machine to look for narrowing in my coronary arteries. Finding any narrowed areas is important because these arteries feed blood to the heart muscles to keep them working. A narrowing or blockage in one of these arteries can cause a heart attack and permanent heart damage.

After the procedure, I was taken back to my room. I didn't hear from the doctor that day, so I assumed either there wasn't much wrong or things were so bad he needed extra time to study the X-rays. I decided to be an optimist, but the next morning would prove me wrong. Byard walked into my room and showed me the X-rays, pointing to areas he'd circled in black. One of those circles showed a 90-percent blockage. As we looked at the other circled areas, he told me I'd need at least five bypasses. I was shocked! He assured me 97 percent of patients came through the surgery safely, but how many of them had five or more bypasses? I figured my surgery would be longer and more complex, and that would edge me closer to the unfortunate three percent who either didn't survive the operations or died of complications afterward. When he asked me if I wanted the surgery, I asked for a night to think it over.

When Byard came by the next morning, I gave him the go-ahead for my surgery. The next day I was rolled into the operating room at 2 p.m. and rolled out a little more than three hours later.

My cardiothoracic surgeon, Dr. Steven Johnson, performed six bypasses—more than I'd ever heard of! I spent the next four days recovering in the hospital and the following seven weeks recuperating at home. For three months I went to cardiac rehabilitation classes at the hospital, where the staff watched my vital signs while I put a lot of miles on a treadmill. I liked the exercise, but I missed the intensity of what I'd been doing before my heart attack. What I could safely do had changed, and I'm still in the process of building myself up gradually. My diet has also changed. No more three helpings of fried chicken at all-you-can-eat buffets or gobbling down that fourth piece of pizza. Truth is, these changes are for the good. If I'd made them earlier in life I might not be writing this story from first-hand knowledge.

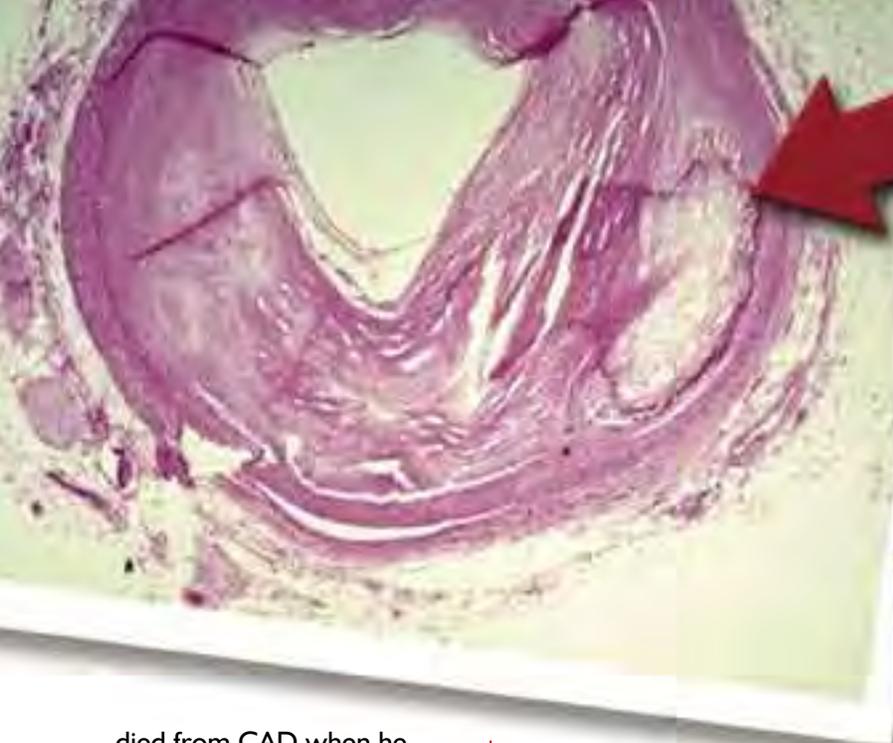
My experience was a rude awakening. It's not just old or out-of-shape people who have heart attacks; they can strike healthy-looking people of all ages. For example, earlier this year a 19-year-old Soldier died of a heart attack after doing PT. He certainly didn't fit the profile of a "typical" heart attack victim. So how could someone that young die of a heart attack? As I talked to my doctors I found out coronary artery disease (CAD) can strike anyone, including young Soldiers.

It's a "family" thing

If you want to know if you're in the "crosshairs" for CAD, just look at your family's history of heart trouble. I knew my dad



This is a normal artery able to carry as much blood as the heart muscle requires.



There is also an area of calcification indicated by the arrow.

Helping HEART ATTACK Victims



died from CAD when he was only 31. He'd suffered rheumatic fever as a child—which weakened his heart—and also drank, smoked and ate a high-cholesterol diet. I'd always assumed his lifestyle caused his early demise. However, while I was in the hospital I found out my grandmother was only in her 40s when she had her first heart attack. Although I hadn't realized it, I'd always been in the crosshairs.

The issue, Byard explained, is that our livers naturally generate low-density lipoprotein (LDL)—typically called “bad cholesterol”—that gets dumped into our bloodstream. The genetic problem is that some of us produce more LDL than others, making us more vulnerable to CAD. However, you and your family don't have to be caught by surprise. Cholesterol checks can be done on children as young as 2 years old. Caught early, Byard explained, CAD can be controlled through diet and the use of special medicines called “statins.”

CONTROLLING YOUR RISKS

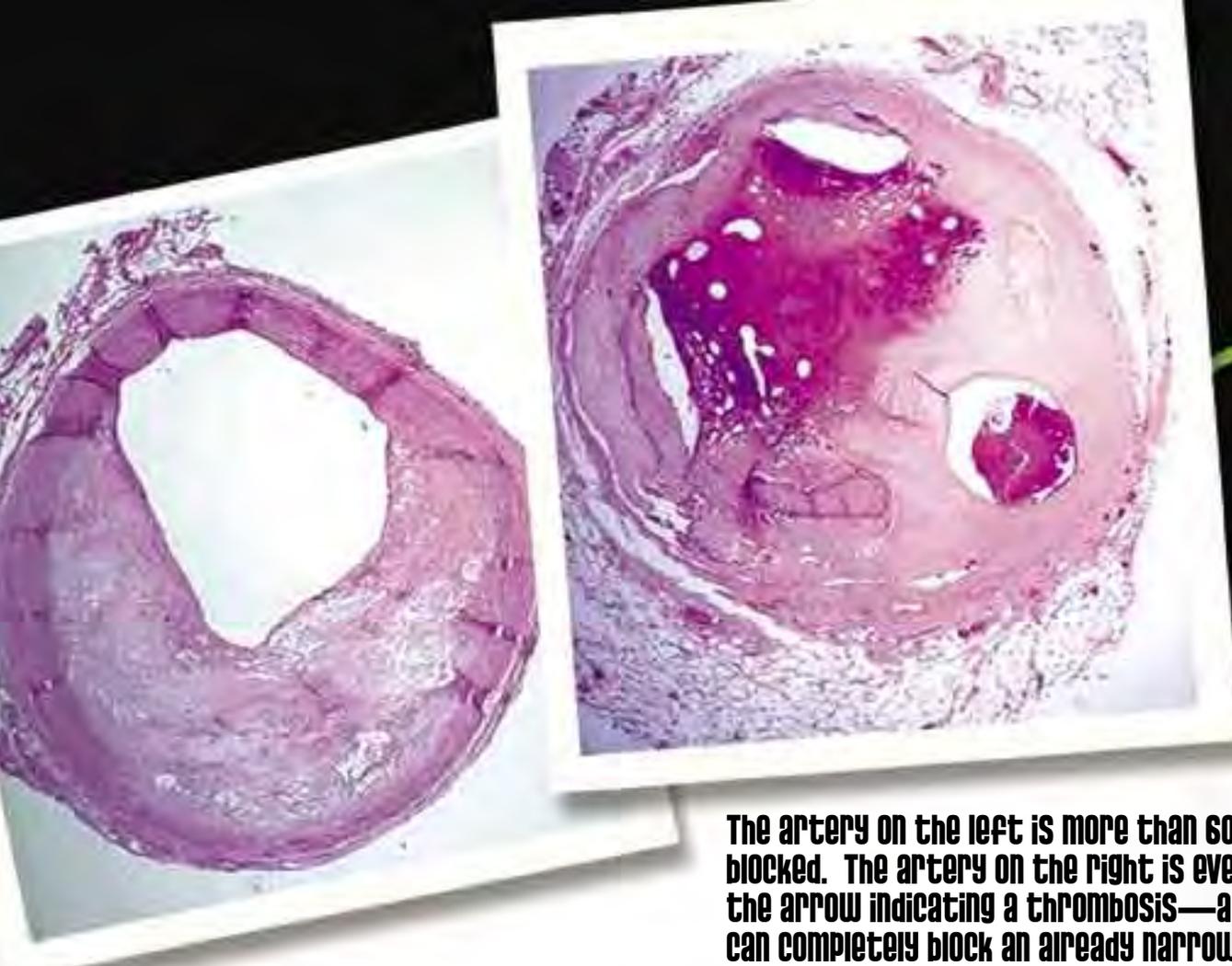
While you can't control your genetics, Byard explained you can control your other CAD risk factors. The keys, he said, are keeping your weight down, avoiding smoking, exercising three times a week for at least an hour, having your cholesterol checked regularly and reducing the fat in your diet. He stressed that people who have high blood pressure must see their doctor and get on the proper medications. Diabetics, he added, are at very high risk if they don't follow their doctor's directions on diet and medication. And here's something else I learned from experience. During your physical or checkup, ask if you can take a stress test—which normally involves walking on a treadmill—during your electrocardiogram (EKG). My EKGs for the two years prior to my heart attack were done while I was lying on a table. My heart never got the chance to work hard enough to show any problems.

So what do you do if you're a Soldier and you see a buddy fall out of PT and discover he is having a heart attack?

Dr. Christopher E. Byard, a board-certified specialist in cardiovascular disease who practices in Dothan, Ala., advised, “The first thing you do is check to see whether they've got a pulse, if they're awake and if they're breathing. If they don't have a pulse, then begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Once they're breathing and have a heartbeat, get them to the nearest medical facility immediately.”

Time is of the essence. Once deprived of oxygen, the heart muscle dies, leaving the heart permanently damaged. If that damage extends to 20 to 30 percent of the heart, the victim may not survive or may have severe limitations after recovery. People only get one heart, so protecting it is vital.

The commercials you've seen about taking aspirin if you're having a heart attack are spot-on, according to Byard. He explained, “There is proven benefit from taking aspirin because it keeps the blood cells from sticking to the obstruction in the artery and totally blocking it.”



The artery on the left is more than 60 percent blocked. The artery on the right is even worse with the arrow indicating a thrombosis—a blood clot that can completely block an already narrowed artery.

all stressed up ...

A certain amount of stress is a natural part of life. The problem, however, is when people live or work in a high-stress environment and become overwhelmed. Byard explained this causes the body to dump fatty acids into the bloodstream and also raises a person's blood pressure by constricting their blood vessels. The National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) also reports, "As high levels of stress hormones are signaling a 'fight or flight' reaction, the body's metabolism is diverted away from the

type of tissue repair needed in heart disease."

So what can you do about stress?

"We do know that exercise—getting out and walking and things like that—helps relieve stress," Byard said. He added, "Yoga, meditation and prayer also certainly help."

Byard explained that counseling can help those who constantly feel depressed or angry. He warned that the worst thing people can do is bottle up stress inside. Sooner or later something's going to give, and that

something could well be the person's heart.

When I looked at my risk factors for CAD, I realized stress was the one I hadn't controlled. Because I feel passionately about what I do, I was living to work instead of working to live. My priorities were upside down and I needed to reevaluate them.

I have made some changes in my life. I go home on time most nights now because my family is more important than whatever I could accomplish by staying late. I also take more time to help others

because my friends took time to help me when I really needed them. I also don't sweat the "small stuff" anymore. Next to dying, unfinished "To Do" lists, short-fuse deadlines and life's other aggravations are "small stuff." You'll only get so many heartbeats in this life, so why waste them on worry or stress? Spend them on people and doing things that will give you enduring satisfaction. That'll do your heart good. 🙏

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early warning signs

My heart attack didn't feel like I thought one would—a searing pain in my chest as I struggled to get my breath. Instead, it felt like a muscle ache in my chest and left shoulder—nothing I couldn't handle with some ibuprofen. I was also short of breath, but that had happened occasionally during the previous couple of months. I just wrote it off to my allergies. Because I didn't recognize the symptoms of my heart attack, I delayed taking action for far too long. I was fortunate not to die at my desk.

Truth is, although I didn't recognize it, my body had been trying to get my attention for some time. My shortness of breath during the previous couple of months, especially when I hadn't been exerting myself, should have been a red flag, according to Dr. Christopher Byard, my cardiologist.

He explained, "The early warning symptoms may include profound fatigue, weakness, a marked decline in your ability to exercise, shortness of breath with minimal activity and finding things you used to do easily have become much harder."

Byard said most heart attacks start off feeling like a dull, aching pain accompanied by a feeling of pressure in the chest. The pain may be felt in the front of the chest, the armpits, the insides of the arms, between the shoulder blades, or in the neck. He added victims also may feel weak or light-headed.

The cost for delaying can be high when someone fails to recognize these symptoms or has a macho attitude and decides to "suck it up" rather than seeing a doctor. Byard said 20 percent of people who have heart attacks die suddenly. And people like me who have a mild heart attack and choose not to pay attention are rolling the dice with their lives. Heart attacks—even seemingly mild ones—affect the electrical impulses that cause the heart to beat. One of the possible complications is what Byard called "ventricular tachycardia"—a situation where the heartbeat becomes irregular and increases to more than 100 beats per minute. He explained, "The heart just sits

there and quivers, not pumping out any blood. If that happens for longer than a couple of minutes, then the heart stops."

So what can you do? First, if you have any pain in the chest, especially if you're also having shortness of breath, get medical help immediately. Also, if you think you may be at risk for heart trouble, carry some chewable aspirin around with you. I took two the day I had my heart attack and within 20 minutes the symptoms subsided and I felt much better. Aspirin has been proven to reduce cardiac muscle damage and is recommended if you believe you're having a cardiac event.

Heart attack-related PLPs

The following are excerpts from heart attack-related preliminary loss reports we have received at the Combat Readiness Center from May through August of this year.

- A 17-year-old private in his third week of basic training suffered a cardiac arrest after completing his first 2-mile run. He was returning to his barracks when he collapsed and was transported to the troop medical center and later to a hospital where he died. Initial reports indicate he had a potentially undiagnosable cardiac problem which led to his death.

- A 40-year-old Special Forces master sergeant was conducting physical training with his unit when he collapsed during a run. Two medics participating in the run immediately began treating the NCO. He was transported to a hospital where he was later pronounced dead.

- A 40-year-old National Guard private first class had just returned to his barracks after completing a conditioning obstacle course and a 2-mile run when he fell from his bunk complaining of a burning in his chest. On-site medical personnel performed life-saving measures on the Soldier. He was transported to a hospital where he died from a coronary thrombosis (a blood clot in a coronary artery) and coronary artery disease.

- A 46-year-old colonel collapsed while performing personal physical fitness training and conducting morning gate checks. Police in the area immediately rendered assistance and the Soldier was transported to a local medical facility where he was pronounced dead. ✕

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During my tour in Afghanistan, a couple of my buddies and I decided we would buy ourselves motorcycles as coming home presents. After a lot of research, I decided on a Honda CBR600. I picked a 600cc motorcycle because it was my first bike and anything bigger made me nervous.

We were 10 months into a six-month rotation when we finally got home, and I was very excited about buying a bike. My buddies went out and bought theirs right away, but I didn't want to buy a new bike so I looked for a while. After three months of watching my buddies ride their bikes, I came across a Honda CBR600 F4i with only 1,187 miles. It wasn't exactly the bike I wanted, but it was close. The price was right, so I bought it.

I didn't have a motorcycle license so I needed to enroll in the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Basic RiderCourse. Army regulations required I take the course and our state also required I take the training before being issued a motorcycle license. I had to wait an agonizing month for the next course to start.

When it finally got close, I found I was up against one of those circular dilemmas—I couldn't ride my bike until I had insurance, but I couldn't get insurance until I had a license. I thought I would miss the whole riding season. Fortunately, a friend of mine who owned a motorcycle was in air assault school at the time and lent me his bike. I spent four days completing the training and received my motorcycle license.

Two weeks went by before my buddies and I were able to go on our first long ride together. We met and decided on a route that had a lot of curves and hills and some long straightaways where we could really see what these bikes had. Only one of us had ever seen the route before. Two riders had 1,000cc bikes, while the rest of us had 600s. At the straightaway the two big bikes took off. We didn't want to be left behind, so we caught up and tried to stay with them even though they were much more experienced. We reached speeds near 155 mph a few times. More than once I found myself in a shallow turn doing more than 100 mph and not sure if I could make it. As

we crested a hill at 110 mph we saw an intersection with a line of cars sitting at a red light. There was no way to stop in time. The only thing I could think of was what one of my instructors said in Afghanistan when he was teaching us how to land on a narrow mountain ridge, "Always have an escape route!" I didn't see any cars in the oncoming lane, so I swerved into it to miss the cars stopped in front of me. I hit the brakes, but by the time I stopped I was in the middle of the busy intersection. The other riders had been able to use the right lane and shoulder.

Fun Doesn't Last as Long as Dead

ANONYMOUS



We were all a little shaken when we pulled into a friend's driveway a few miles down the road for a breather, but we laughed it off. Although I was feeling a little more nervous now, I would never let the other guys know.

After a short rest we started out again. We'd only gone a few miles when we were riding at more than 100 mph. We came over another hill and once more got surprised. But this time instead of an intersection it was a police officer with a radar gun! As the first bike crested the hill the rider hit his brakes, but the officer still clocked him at 75 mph. The rest of us managed to slow down to the 55 mph speed limit in time. We waited around as the officer wrote the first rider a ticket, and then we continued. We finally got to the part of our route that was full of curves and hills. At that point I knew I'd had enough of high-speed riding, so two other riders and I stayed back while the others tried the curves going much faster. As the three of us who stayed back approached one particular curve, we saw where the other riders had gone off the road and into a field. They had narrowly missed hitting a telephone pole and guardrail.

By now, we'd all seen enough and decided to call it a day. When we returned to work the next week, we talked about our ride. Since we were blessed enough to have survived such a stupid day, we decided that would be the end of our high-speed rides.

To this day I look back on that ride and realize that I nearly traded my life for a few minutes of thrills. That's a lousy bargain because having a little fun doesn't last nearly as long as being dead. I will never ride like that again, no matter who is around. Ego and pride almost got all of us killed that day. X

Editor's note: When I got this story via e-mail and read it, I put it at the top of the list for the September-October issue of ImpaX. More than anything else I have received, this story describes why we are seeing a tragic spike in motorcycle fatalities this year. Had any of these riders been killed, it would have affected their unit's readiness. Composite Risk Management includes every activity you do, not just on the front lines but also when you come home.

Mentoring

WALT BECKMAN
Driving Task Force
U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center

Suppose you are a Soldier interested in purchasing a motorcycle. Where would you start? Would you find one of your fellow Soldiers who owns a bike and have them walk you through the details of purchasing one, or would you go to a dealership and ask the staff for assistance? Or maybe, thinking you're indestructible, would you just jump on a friend's and take it for spin?

What if I told you that your installation has a program that can provide you with the answers to all of your questions? Would you be interested? The U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center (USACRC), following

the lead of the U.S. Air Force, is developing a Motorcycle Mentorship Program for the Army. The CRC is staffing this program at the Army-level even as you're reading this article.

If the Army is successful in developing this program, you may soon have one at your installation. The program creates motorcycle clubs where first-time riders will be paired with experienced riders to learn the responsibilities of motorcycle ownership and safe riding skills.

The need to improve the skills of Army motorcycle riders—particularly those who are new to motorcycling—is clear from the fatality figures, which have

doubled over the past six years. Motorcycle mishaps resulted in 94 fatalities from FY 99 through FY 04.

As of Sept. 15, 2005, the Army has experienced 122 Class A through C motorcycle and ATV accidents during FY 05, resulting in the deaths of 40 Soldiers. The reports indicate more than half of those deaths were single-vehicle crashes where riders exercised poor risk decisions and judgment. Males between the ages of 18 and 25 accounted for a large portion of our motorcycle fatalities and are our major "at-risk" population. However, we are seeing problems with Soldiers ages 30 through 40. Soldiers

age 33 have averaged the highest number of motorcycle and ATV fatalities of any age group during the past six fiscal years. And this fiscal year has been particularly bad with five 33-year-old Soldiers dying. Only 20-year-old Soldiers, who lost seven of their number, have been hit harder.

Some of you might be wondering why the CRC is taking this on. The CRC is the focal point for all information concerning the loss of our Soldiers—men and women whose absence from our ranks reduces our combat power! Within the CRC, the Driving Task Force (DTF) develops programs to prevent the loss of Soldiers to privately owned vehicle,

The Rider



motorcycle, and Army motor vehicle and combat vehicle driving accidents.

The CRC's goal is to change behavior and teach Soldiers the skills needed to reduce our accident rates. If we can teach Soldiers what "right" looks like, they'll be the ones to answer the secretary of defense's

challenge to reduce these rates by 50 percent.

The preliminary loss reports (PLRs) show we need help. To put a human dimension on this problem, please read the following PLR:

An NCO died when he was operating someone else's motorcycle and lost

control, entered the median, struck some bushes and went airborne. The NCO landed in the oncoming traffic lane and the motorcycle came to rest approximately 50 feet away. The NCO was transported to the hospital, where he died from his injuries. Witnesses indicated that excessive speed was a possible factor in this accident. The NCO was wearing a helmet, but was not trained or licensed to operate a motorcycle.

Had this Soldier gotten the required Motorcycle Safety Foundation training and also participated in a Motorcycle Mentorship Program, he might still be alive today.

Will this program be the "cure all" to stop all of our motorcycle fatalities? Will every installation be able to put together one of these clubs? Will the members of these clubs be the kind of mentors we want? I think the answer to these questions can be "yes," but only if leaders get involved and take this issue as seriously as they do their tactical and training operations.

Such clubs offer a second benefit. As motorcycle mentors get to know their riders, they can hone their leadership, teaching and coaching skills to make them better officers and non-commissioned officers in the process.

By providing Soldiers a positive role model who also enjoys motorcycling, mentors can help the Army reduce its motorcycle fatalities. Soldiers want and deserve our best efforts; the Motorcycle Mentorship Program is one way for us to provide them that. 

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WATCH YOUR SPEED

Of all vehicles, motorcycles accelerate the fastest, while trucks and buses are the slowest. Please watch your speed around trucks, especially in bad weather or at night. Colliding with the back of a truck will end your riding days.



The Toothache

CW2 JEREMY FRANKHOUSE
C Co., 5/101 AVN
Fort Campbell, Ky.

Road trips can be dangerous, so I always take the steps I think are necessary to be prepared. I plan ahead, check my route on the map, and make sure my vehicle is serviced and ready to go. However, I could never have anticipated what happened to me and my family on a Sunday in Florida. Our brand new vehicle was totaled and I wound up in the hospital—not because of a crash on the highway but from an accident in a parking lot!

Here's what happened.

I was stationed at Fort Rucker, Ala., and my wife and I had planned to spend the weekend with our two daughters Kaylee and Sophia in Destin, Fla. We'd made hotel arrangements for Saturday night and planned to return late Sunday evening. The weather on the way down wasn't as forecast (imagine that). Instead, the skies were overcast and the clouds threatened rain. By the time we got to Destin it was raining, so we decided to spend the afternoon exploring the town. We were hoping the

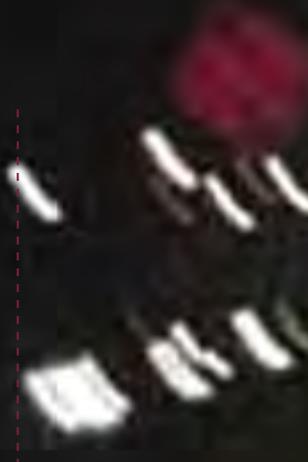
weather would be better on Sunday. No such luck. It started raining and didn't look like it was going to clear up anytime soon.

We gave up on the weather and decided to head home. We'd been on the road for an hour or so when we decided to stop for coffee. We saw what we thought was a gas station ahead and pulled in, only to find out it was some sort of gift shop. Since we were stopped, I thought I'd take the opportunity to check something in the owner's manual before we took off again.

We were about 20 feet

off the road and facing the direction of travel. My wife was in the backseat between the two child car seats trying to keep the girls occupied. I was looking down and reading the owner's manual, so I never saw the Pontiac Firebird coming at us. The 19-year-old driver had his girlfriend with him and was driving his dad's car way too fast for the road conditions. He lost control and began to hydroplane, and then slid off the road and into the parking lot headed straight for us. He struck my left-rear bumper so hard it spun my car around twice.

I regained consciousness about four hours later. I'd suffered a minor concussion and had two staples in my head from where I was thrown into the door frame



r d r i v e r





during the crash. My wife was beaten up by the girls' car seats and had the biggest black eye I'd ever seen. She also had a bruise about the size of my hand on her back. Fortunately, the girls were not injured, although Kaylee ended up on her back in the rear of our vehicle, still strapped into her car seat. I'd secured it with the shoulder belt according to the seat's instructions before we'd started driving.

We called a friend to come and get us. After we left the hospital, we stopped by the junkyard where our car had been towed to get our stuff. Our new car was destroyed. The rear was crushed, the floor was cracked all the way to the front and the frame was bent. The damage estimate was more than \$10,000.

We eventually recovered. It took us a month of fighting with the insurance company, but eventually we got our claim paid off. Although our injuries left us a bit uncomfortable for a while, we got through it and were able to replace our vehicle. Given the circumstances, it could have been a lot worse.

I still plan my road trips just as I always have in the

PLR

PRELIMINARY LOSS REPORTS

CW2 Frankhouse's crash is just one of many where the Soldier was obeying the law and yet wound up being killed or injured because of the reckless behavior of other drivers. These accidents were derived from recent preliminary loss reports.

- A national guardsman was killed while driving to his duty station to perform drill when an oncoming vehicle swerved into his lane and hit him head-on.

- An Army reservist was killed when his vehicle, the last in a line of slowed vehicles exiting an interstate because of foggy conditions, was struck from behind by a tractor trailer.

- A Soldier stopped at a traffic light was killed when he was struck from behind by another vehicle.

- A Soldier, his wife and his stepdaughter were killed when a speeding pickup struck their vehicle as they were backing out of their driveway.

- A Soldier riding as a passenger in a small car was killed when a drunk driver in a pickup stuck the car.

past. However, I now have child safety seats secured with three-point restraints instead of only a shoulder belt. And no matter how safe I think I'm being, I'm ALWAYS on the lookout for the other driver. ✕

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AVOID THE AMMER



W2 Frankhouse and his family aren't the only members of the Army who've been the victim of a jackass behind the wheel of another vehicle. A review of the Combat Readiness Center's Risk Management Information System database from Oct. 1, 2004, through Aug. 25, 2005, showed 15 POV accidents that were clearly caused by other drivers. The most common causes were head-on collisions (the other vehicle crossed the centerline), rear-end collisions at intersections or stop signs, red light runners blowing through intersections, and vehicles not yielding right of way while entering the road. Thanks to 15 jackass drivers (who, as a group, probably couldn't match the IQ of a lug nut), four Soldiers were killed and 11 others were injured.

You can't control what other drivers do, but you can at least try to avoid suffering the consequences of their bad driving. Here are some tips I have learned from personal experience that might be useful to you.

PRACTICE HIGH HORIZON-DRIVING.

Don't just look over your hood and 50 feet down the road, look as far ahead as you can to spot problems in your lane or in the oncoming lanes.

WATCH THE CARS AROUND YOU.

Are they hugging the divided line or the edge of the road? Those drivers are in danger of wandering into another lane (maybe yours)

IMING RICAN HIGHWAY CASES

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Managing Editor

or running off the road. Is a vehicle drifting from side to side in its lane? Those are signs a driver may be distracted, fatigued or under the influence. Although it might go against your pride, your safest bet may well be to let him pass you and back off a safe distance. It's better to arrive at your destination a little late than to be "on time" for his crash. Also, check out the vehicles around you. If a car looks like a worn-out heap on the outside, then you can probably bet the brakes and steering aren't so great either. Do you really want a rolling junkyard on your back bumper should you have to stop suddenly?

WATCH THE OTHER DRIVERS.

Are they constantly looking to the side while talking to a passenger? Are they fiddling with the radio, lighting a cigarette or trying to grab something from the right front seat? Are they dialing their cell phone or,

perhaps, busily engaged in a conversation? Are they eating or drinking? Are they using the rearview mirror to do personal grooming? (I once had a woman do her eyebrows while tailgating me during rush hour traffic in Kansas City.) How about reading a book or using a laptop (see "Surfing Down the Highway" in the June 2004 issue of *Countermeasure*). Do they look agitated, tired or distraught? These drivers' bodies may be behind the wheel, but their minds are AWOL. While they're busy multitasking, they have attention gaps big enough to turn your car into junk and you into highway hash. The safest bet is to keep your distance.

SPACE

Space is life on the road because it gives you time to react to problems. Try using the "Four Second Rule." It's simple—when the car ahead passes a certain point, start a four-

second count. As long as you don't pass that point before you complete your count, you're in good shape. The beauty of this system is that it automatically adjusts your following distance to whatever speed you're going. Obviously, other drivers will take advantage of that space you're leaving and pull into it. However, it pays to back off and keep your distance, even if it is sometimes frustrating. Whatever slight delay doing this might cause your schedule, it's nothing like the delay you'd have if you were caught in a multi-car pileup. It also beats the sudden adrenaline rush tailgaters get while trying to stomp their brake pedal through the floorboard.

WATCH OUT AT INTERSECTIONS AND SIDE ROADS.

Never assume people will respect stop signs, red lights or right-of-way. Don't just pull out at an intersection when your light turns green; look for potential red light runners. Even when you have right-of-way or a green light and don't have to stop, keep a close eye on the

vehicles on the right and left sides of the intersection. One trick I use is to watch the hubcaps on the front tires of these vehicles. If those hubcaps are moving (unless they are the new free-spinning type) it means the car is also moving. If the driver hasn't looked my way, I assume he hasn't seen me. Therefore, I get off the gas, cover the brake and prepare to maneuver quickly. And, of course, there's the horn—but use it wisely. Tapping it gently can get the other driver's attention so he'll stop. Blaring your horn can startle an unsuspecting driver whose foot might just be hovering over the gas pedal. Also, leave at least a car's length—or more—in front of you when you're stopped behind another vehicle. If you see you're about to be hit from behind, take your foot off the brake so your car can roll forward into that space. That will reduce the impact forces on you and your vehicle. 🚗

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I knew I was late taking off for my cousin's wedding as I strapped her present to the back of my motorcycle. I should've left at least an hour earlier, but I always procrastinated. I looked at my watch. I'd have to go like a bat outta hell to get to the wedding before the organ started. No sweat! Highway 395 (later to become Interstate 15) had several long, straight stretches, and I'd already proven I could do 105 mph and still have some throttle left.

Like a Bat Outta

Traffic wasn't too bad in San Diego and I was north of town when I caught up to a Jaguar XKE—my favorite sports car of the time—running in the left lane. I pulled up beside the car, gave the Jaguar an admiring look and its driver a friendly wave, and then goosed the Suzuki's throttle a couple of times. Since I was already in a hurry, I figured I might as well have some fun. The driver grinned, nailed

the gas pedal, and we took off like a couple of dogs after a rabbit.

It was fun as we chased each other around the curves and wove through traffic. I didn't have much time to watch my speedometer, but the occasional glance showed we were running 85 to 95 mph. I figured our game of nip and tuck would help me make up even more time.

We finally got to a long straightaway and eased

back to cruise side-by-side at 85 mph as we enjoyed the road and the power of our machines. I wasn't too worried about getting a ticket because we both were speeding. I figured if a highway patrolman spotted us he'd pull over the Jag driver, who obviously had more money than I.

I was feeling very cool when a pickup approached from a road on the right and suddenly turned into my lane. I

thought he'd see me and jump on the gas—but he didn't. Instead, he piddled along at maybe 30 mph.

I was in a world of hurt. At my speed there was no way I could slow in time not to rear-end him. I hit the brakes as hard as I dared, taking care not to lock up the wheels. I realized I was going to have to do some quick maneuvering, so I came off the front brake and downshifted, using the engine to help me brake.

The options didn't look good. The right-hand shoulder was too narrow and rough to tackle at the speed I was going. My only hope was the left lane, so I glanced over at the Jag. The driver was already on the brakes, opening a place in his lane for me to move into. It was the chance I needed, and I veered into the left lane and just missed the pickup. As I went by, I glanced at the driver. He was an older man who seemed oblivious to the drama that had just happened behind him.

I looked in my rearview mirror. The Jag was blocking the following traffic so I wouldn't get run over if I hit the pickup and went down. After passing the pickup I moved to the right lane and slowed until the Jag caught up. In every way I knew how, I thanked the driver for what he'd done.

Once my heart stopped pounding, I realized how close I'd come to attending a funeral instead of a wedding. I also realized I was fortunate to be alive to learn from my mistakes. Not everyone is that fortunate,

PLR

PRELIMINARY LOSS REPORTS

A 40-year-old Soldier was riding his motorcycle on a clear, dry day when he rounded a corner and collided with a truck. The Soldier was wearing a DOT-approved helmet, but was operating with a suspended license and was apparently going too fast for the curve and road grade. The Soldier was pronounced dead at the scene.

a Bat outta Hell

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Managing Editor

so I'll share my lessons learned. Maybe they'll help you avoid a crash.

- Speed limits are based on several factors, most of which have more to do with other drivers than on how fast you can go on a given road surface. For example, state highways don't have controlled access like interstates, and traffic suddenly can appear from a side road. Speed limits are designed to give motorists time to

react to such traffic. Also, bear in mind that drivers entering from side roads are watching you and trying to estimate how fast you're approaching while they decide if it's safe to pull out. If you're speeding it throws off their timing, which reduces or eliminates any safety margin.

- Motorcycles are much narrower than cars, which presents two major problems for drivers entering from a side road.

First, motorcycles are much more likely to be hidden from view by road signs or foliage. Second, drivers have fewer visual cues when estimating a motorcycle's distance and speed of approach.

It all boils down to a simple rule of thumb—always try to see yourself through the eyes of other drivers. If you have approaching traffic and haven't made eye contact with the other driver(s), assume they haven't

seen you. Be prepared to stop or take evasive maneuvers—don't ride like a bat outta hell like I did. After the "thud," it really won't matter who had right-of-way—the car will be dented and you will be broken. ✕

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ADAPTED FROM ECHO MAGAZINE
5th Signal Command
USAREUR

Paige Butkus has a personal battle she's fighting to keep Soldiers safe as they travel on the road. It's not a battle against snipers, rocket-propelled grenades, or improvised explosive devices—it's a battle against an equally deadly but even more pervasive enemy. It's a battle against drinking and driving. It's a battle her brother lost, but she is determined to win.

Paige had been an Army private first class assigned to the 44th Signal Battalion in Germany when she got word her 17-year-old brother Peter was recovering from serious injuries caused by a drunk-driving accident.

She flew home to Southbury, Conn., to join her family at Peter's hospital. He'd spent 20 hours in surgery, received two blood transfusions and had been unconscious for three days before she arrived. However, nothing could have prepared her for what she'd see when she entered his hospital room.

She recalled, "Peter couldn't move and he was just lying there with tears rolling down his cheeks ... he couldn't

even move his head."

Peter had joined the Army National Guard and completed basic training the previous summer. He'd planned to attend advanced individual training after graduating high school. But with broken legs, broken ribs, a broken wrist, and metal plates and rods where he once had bones, his plans for service in the National Guard have been put on hold. More than eight months after



the accident, he still could not run. Nothing like this had ever happened before in Peter's family, and he never thought about the possibility it could happen to him.

Paige described what happened as if she had been there.

"He told me that night he'd been drinking before he left a party, but it hadn't hit him," she explained. Although the alcohol didn't hit him immediately, it would hit him later. Paige believes her brother blacked out behind the wheel.

"It was about 10 p.m. and Peter was going about 40 mph. He was only a mile from the house when he wrapped his car around a telephone pole. The transformer fell down, shorted out, and could have electrocuted him. ... He could have died." She added the police initially thought Peter was dead and only later realized he was still alive inside the vehicle.

He had survived—barely. As he recovered from his injuries and surgery, he needed physical rehabilitation just to learn how to move his toes again. Mounting medical bills and insurance coverage limits made it necessary to bring Peter home from the hospital.

Peter's father made alterations to the family home to adjust for Peter's needs. To have time to take care of their son, Peter's dad and stepmother went from their normal work schedule to working half days. Aunts and uncles also pitched in by preparing meals.

Ultimately, Peter's drunk-driving crash touched every member of his family, but perhaps none more so than his sister. Seeing her brother's shattered body motivated Paige to warn other Soldiers of the dangers of drinking and driving. When she returned to Germany, she carried a photograph of Peter's mangled automobile, showing it to other Soldiers so they could see the consequences of driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol. Even so, she explained, some of the Soldiers she talked to just didn't "get it."

"One of my friends complained about his extra duty and how he lost rank because of a DUI. I told him that he was lucky he only got that!" Paige said.

Whether or not every Soldier she has talked to gets the message, Paige openly uses her family's tragedy to drive home her point. Because her brother's accident has turned her life upside down, her goal is to encourage others not to drink and drive and perhaps tragically change their lives forever. ✕

Editor's Note: PFC Butkus has left active duty and now serves the Army as a non-appropriated fund civilian. She can be contacted at paige.butkus@us.army.mil.

CONNECTIONS

MADD launches a 24-Hour Live Helpline

Beginning August 1st, emotional support, guidance, and referrals are now available to victims/survivors of drunk driving, as well as friends and families, around the clock through a toll-free helpline.

If you are a victim of drunk driving in need of assistance, please call MADD's toll-free help line at 1-877-MADD-HELP to speak with a counselor who is ready to help you.



It was that time of the year already; hunting season was down to its last day. I was ready, that big buck was mine. I had gone through my gear one last time to ensure it was complete. I took a final look at my climbing tree stand, making sure I had my safety harness. After I finished all of my checks, I sat down and went through my hunting plan before I went to sleep.

MINNICK L. EARGLE
CP-12 Intern

The next morning, I was up before the sun. The drive to my hunting spot, which was on state game lands, was quite a long one. I walked into the woods and headed for the tree I'd marked to begin my day's hunt. Things seemed to be going well, or so I thought. I arrived at my tree, attached my stand and checked to make sure it was secure. I then attached my safety harness

and started climbing. When I climbed high enough to get a good view of the food plot, I checked my safety harness and ensured my tree stand was secure and stable. I raised my weapon from the ground using the safety line attached to the bottom of my stand. I then loaded my gun, made a few grunt calls and settled in for a long day's hunt. The day lingered

Can't Stand It?

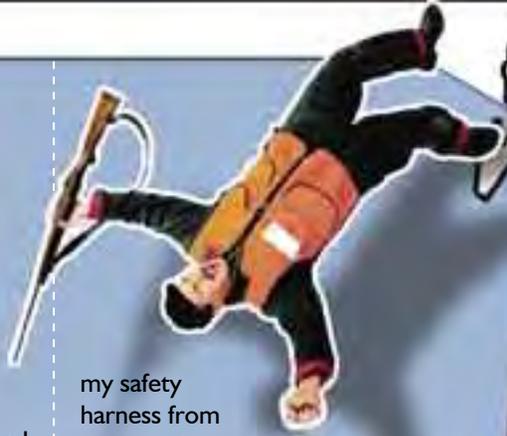
The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in cooperation with Hunter's View of Peoria, Ill., has recalled approximately 500,000 tree stands sold during 2004 because of faulty safety harnesses. Consumers should stop using these stands immediately and contact Hunter's View at (888) 878-0440 or go to their Web site at www.huntersview.com to receive a free replacement harness. The stands were sold under the following names and model numbers.

<u>Product Name</u>	<u>Model Number</u>
Eagle	ATC-4000
12' Buddy XL	LS-425
Condor	TC-500
Condor Lite	ATC-5500
15' Cougar	LS-500
Silver Condor	TC-560
Silver Condor Lite	ATC-5600
Cougar Magnum	LS-508
Stealth	TCD-500
Silver Hawk Lite	ATC-6000
16' Whitetail	LS-510
Hawk	TCW-400
Trophy Hunter Lite	ATCD-5600
16' Silver Puma	LS-555
Wildcat	TS-105
Silver Condor Lite	ATCW-5600
16' Lynx	LS-575
Bobcat	TS-111
Wildcat CS Lite	ATS1050
15' Buddy Stand	LSA-403
Mountain Cat	TS-120
Panther Lite	HVATS-2000
15' Buddy Stand	LSD-402
Panther	HVTS-200
Timber Cat Lite	ATS-2150
15' Magnum Buddy Stand	LSD-425
Razorback	TS-350
Big Horn Ram Lite	ATS-4100
15' Steel Ladder Stand	LSD-
500 Hunter	TS-355
Silver Daddy	ATS-4650
15' Deluxe Ladder Stand	LSD-502
Silver Hunter	TS-365
Monster Mag Lite	ATSD-4100
15' Dual Season Hunter	LSD-525
Bighorn Ram	TS-400
Full Body Fall Arrest System	FAS-3000
15' Condo	LSD-602
Big Daddy	TS-465
16' Black Bear	LS-213
12' Buddy Stand	LSW-400
Magnum	TSD-102
12' Buddy Stand	LS-400
Prairie Falcon	TC-120
Razorback	TSW-350
15' Buddy Stand	LS-403
Hawk	TC-400

on, but I never saw a deer.

As the sun started to set, I decided to stop for the day. My pride was hurt. I just knew today was the day I'd get the big one. I unloaded my weapon and safely lowered it to the ground. As I turned to begin my descent down the tree, for some reason I reached up and disconnected my safety harness. That was a bad move. I was about 25 feet from the ground when the bungee cords that keep the climber attached to my stand gave way. My immediate response was to pull myself up. However, as I did, my feet slipped out of the footholds on the climber, which slid to the ground without stopping. I pulled myself back up onto my stand and began planning a safe way to get out of this mess, not realizing how close I was to taking a big fall.

After realizing that I had disconnected my safety harness, I immediately reattached it to the tree. My first choice was to call my roommate for help, but that was out of the question since I'd left my cell phone in my truck. By now, the sun had set and I knew I was in trouble and began to worry. How was I going to get myself out of this mess? I decided to use my safety harness and stand to try to get down the tree safely. I lowered my safety harness to just above the seat on my stand, hugged the tree and locked my feet under the seat and then slowly lowered the stand until my legs were straight. I secured the stand back to the tree, stood up on the seat, lowered the safety harness strap and sat down. I repeated this procedure until I was about three feet from the ground. After I disconnected



my safety harness from the tree, I jumped from the stand. I gathered up my gear and made my way to my truck. I spent the drive home wondering how this happened to me. I'm an avid hunter and take every step I can to have a safe hunt.

When I arrived home, my first order of business was to determine what caused the bungee cords to break. When I checked the bungee cords, I noticed they were both dry-rotted and needed replacing. I have since made it a point to replace the bungee cords at the beginning of each hunting season, adding them to my safety inspection checks.

As I reflect back on the incident, I realize that because my safety harness wasn't attached, I could have fallen more than 20 feet. That made me realize I needed to be more careful and take my time when using my tree stand.

What, me have a near miss? I thought it could never happen to me. 🦌

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CONNECTIONS

For information on tree stand safety and an interesting video clip, check out the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Web site at <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/Hunting/deer/tree.htm>.

The following reports reflect accidents that have happened to Soldiers in their privately owned vehicles, during recreational activities, and in other non-tactical environments.



POV

Class A

- A Soldier was returning to his unit's armory after completing physical training. He was driving his POV when it ran off the road and struck a

house. The Soldier was treated by emergency medical technicians, but was declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

- A Soldier was operating his POV when he apparently lost

control and overturned several times. The Soldier's injuries caused him to be paralyzed from the waist down.

- A Soldier who may have been attempting to avoid a large bird

was killed when he lost control of his POV, ran off the road and into a ditch.

- A Soldier was operating his POV on an interstate when he reportedly lost



Class A
A Soldier was operating his POV with two civilian passengers when he lost control of his vehicle. He was thrown from the vehicle and died at a local medical facility.

WEAR YOUR SEATBELT!

control, ran off the road and hit a tree. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

- A Soldier was traveling on a road when his POV collided head-on with another vehicle at the crest of a hill. The Soldier was taken to a hospital, where he later died of his injuries.

- A Soldier was fatally injured when his POV was struck by an oncoming vehicle. The Soldier was pronounced dead at the scene by the county coroner.

- A Soldier was driving his POV in the left-hand lane of a road when he drifted onto the left shoulder and struck a guardrail. The impact spun the car 360 degrees. The driver suffered fatal injuries.

- A Soldier lost control of his POV, skidded off the road and then struck a telephone pole. The pole impacted the driver's side door, causing the Soldier's fatal injuries. Another Soldier riding as a passenger in the vehicle was injured.

POM

Class A

- A Soldier was killed when he attempted to go around a curve at too high a speed, went off the road and was thrown from his motorcycle.

- A National Guardsman was killed while in weekend drill status when his motorcycle collided with a civilian POV.

- An Army reservist on active duty was riding his motorcycle when he reportedly lost control and hit a guardrail. He was taken to a local hospital, where he later died.

- A National Guardsman was killed when a civilian-operated POV pulled into the path of his motorcycle.

Personnel Injury

Class A

- A National Guardsman was killed when he was operating his boat late at night and struck a rock face at the water's edge.

- A Soldier was killed when a shotgun accidentally discharged and struck him in the chest.

- A Soldier was critically injured when he was walking along a roadway and struck by a civilian POV which left the scene. The Soldier was transported to a local hospital, where he later died.

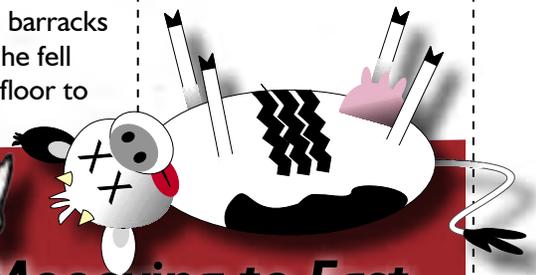
- A Soldier was hanging out his barracks window when he fell from the third floor to

the sidewalk. He was hospitalized but died the following day.

- A Soldier was assisting with a recreational dive when he experienced difficulty at a depth of three meters, surfaced and was brought back into the boat. Efforts to revive him by performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation failed and he was pronounced dead.

- A Soldier was hiking with her spouse when she reportedly fell from a steep edge and suffered fatal injuries.

UNNATURAL selections



Moooving to Fast

A motorist traveling on a rural road at speeds around 65 mph struck a cow, never hitting the breaks. The cow came through the

windshield—knocking the driver out instantly—and peeled the roof back like a sardine can. State troopers arrived at the accident scene and

transported the driver to a nearby hospital. The driver suffered a severe concussion and a broken nose. The cow was sent to a nearby McDonald's.

SNUFFY

Private Joe Snuffy, the Army's most fumble-prone Soldier, was in a "hooah" mood one fine afternoon as he stalked the woods with his paintball gun. As anyone who has played paintball knows, winning requires a keen eye, quick reflexes, and the ability to fire quickly and accurately. Snuffy, being the keen Soldier he was, had modified his paintball gun by removing the safety lever. After all, he figured, not having to release that safety might allow him to get in the first shot and plaster his opponent.

Snuffy ducked and dodged the little colored balls flying fast and furious around him. He spotted one of his opponents in the open, aimed his paintball gun and squeezed the trigger. But drat—the darn thing jammed!

Not to worry. Snuffy considered himself something of an expert in weapons maintenance. After all, he knew how to clear a jam in his M-16. How hard could it be to fix a paintball gun?

Snuffy did good when he removed the ammunition hopper from the jammed paintball gun. You wouldn't want to shoot yourself—not even with a paintball—while fixing your weapon. However, this problem would obviously require a close inspection, so Snuffy pulled off his goggles. Wouldn't want a scratch on the lens to make it harder to see the problem.

Snuffy jiggled this and fiddled with that but he just couldn't get the thing to work. He figured something had to be jammed—maybe he could see it if he looked in the barrel.

Unlike his trusty M-16, he couldn't disassemble the paintball gun and look down the barrel from the breech end. That only left Plan

B—eyeballing the problem by peering down the muzzle. Not to worry, he'd already removed the ammunition hopper.

Snuffy angled the jammed paintball gun to get some sunlight down the barrel so he could see better. Perhaps he thought, "If I can just wiggle the trigger a bit, maybe I can see what's got this thing all jammed up!"

Well, wouldn't you know it, somewhere during all the jiggling and fiddling the part that jammed the paintball gun decided to get back to working just like its manufacturer meant it to. Squinting as he peered down the tube, Snuffy got the surprise of his life when pushed on the trigger. "WHAM!" A paintball came smokin' out the barrel and scored a direct hit on his left headlight!

"Ow!"—or other words that can't be printed in this publication—erupted from Snuffy's lips. We don't know whether Snuffy saw stars, God, or Elvis as a result of this unwanted impact. Ultimately, however, Snuffy did see the doctor—at least with his right eye. The injury was bad enough to put Snuffy in the hospital for five days and then on restricted duty for a month.

Lessons learned? An engineer made good money designing the safety on that paintball gun. It was put there because the manufacturer wanted it that way. Therefore, a



word to the wise is—DON'T "Soldier-improve" something so it doesn't work anymore! Also, the muzzle is usually where bad things happen, so try to avoid looking down it. This is doubly true with firearms, as bullets will not only mess with your eye, they'll mess with other vital organs inside your noggin. And keep your safety goggles on whenever you're handling a paintball gun. It's tough to tell distance with only one eye—that's why God gave you two to start with. It's best not to mess with that arrangement. 🦋

Editor's Note: Our "Snuffy" stories are taken from actual Army accident reports. We feel there's no point in missing out on a good lesson learned!

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Scores



BULL'S-EYE!

Impax

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