

# Know the Edge... Then “Own the Edge”

**O**ur Soldiers continue to do a great job for our Nation in over 120 countries. In training or in combat, exposure and tempo are high; the terrain is complex and the missions are certainly challenging. Our Soldiers are combatants and “on the edge.” Composite Risk Management (CRM) teaches Soldiers to manage risk and “Own the Edge” by applying the proper control measures.

I recently gave a brief to a diverse group of folks and focused on the need for leaders to train Soldiers to Own the Edge through CRM. After the brief, a retired general officer scribbled a simple note on a piece of paper and handed it to me. In the message, he asked how Soldiers could Own the Edge if they didn't know where the edge was? It was a profound question.

Leaders at every level, from squad leader to general officer, are responsible for knowing their Soldiers and identifying where they are most at risk ... then teaching, coaching and mentoring them to emplace control measures. Because of maturity, experience and training, the “edge” is different for each Soldier. Whether it is during a complex air assault in combat or a weekend on the lake, leaders must know where their Soldiers are at risk, reach into their kit-bag, pull out the tool that fits that Soldier and apply it to the specific situation. Leaders have to show Soldiers where the edge is ... and then teach them to own it!

The Army is counting on each of us to preserve the human capital of our formation, and you are doing



great work! For the first time in three years, our Army's loss rates are beginning to turn downward. We are currently 12 percent below last year's accident rates for this time of year with almost 27 percent fewer accidental fatalities. This is an encouraging trend and we must keep pressing forward.

For ideas and tools, visit the CRC's Web site at <https://crc.army.mil> and select the Commander's Corner.

Whether in combat, training or blowing off steam, leaders need to be involved in identifying risks for each Soldier. With leader involvement, Soldiers can know where the edge is and, by applying CRM, they can OWN IT! ☆

  
BG Joe Smith

# The Need for Speed

**BOB VAN ELSBERG**  
Managing Editor

**T**he need for speed is natural for many of us. We are, by nature, competitive and winning feels good. It gives us a sense of pride and accomplishment, not to mention stature with our friends.

I know the thrill of speed and power because I've experienced it. For the most part, my street racing was on motorcycles because they provided the cheapest route to high performance. For a fraction of the cost of a muscle car, I could own a motorcycle fast enough to give me a real thrill.

That's how I looked at it until one night when I was home on leave. A carload of guys challenged me to a race down University Boulevard, the main street in my hometown. When the light turned green, we took off. They got an early lead, but I caught up and

passed them at 85 mph. I had one more gear and lots more throttle left before the Suzuki topped out. I was going to smoke these guys.

At that moment, something bizarre happened. It was as if time had stopped and everything in front of me suddenly froze. I saw a nightclub ahead on the left. I looked at the cars in the parking lot and wondered if a drunk had just gotten behind the wheel of one of them. I wondered if he'd even bother to look before pulling onto the road.

Then I noticed the many side streets on the right. Most of them were controlled only by stop signs. Even if a driver looked and saw me coming, he'd never expect me to be doing 85 mph on a 35 mph street.

I looked ahead at a four-way intersection controlled by a stop signal. I wondered who'd have the green light

and where the cars would be when I got there. At the speed I was going, I sure couldn't avoid anyone. And I'd already seen the consequences of a high-speed bike crash. A rider in my first unit slammed into a flatbed trailer that backed into his path. He was doing at least 70 mph and wasn't wearing a helmet. His head didn't even look human.

I asked myself, "Who cares if I win this race?" Certainly not the guys I'm racing. They'll just find someone they can beat. Then I asked myself, "Who cares if I crash and get killed?" I thought of my mother, stepfather, and fiancé. I had a lot of reasons to make it home that night, so I backed off the throttle and let the other guys go by. There's a proper time and place for racing—but late at night on a public street isn't it.

I gave up that race, but I didn't give up racing. While stationed in Hawaii, I

bought a Chevy with a high-performance V-8 and raced it on a track at Hickam AFB. I did well in my class and was proud of my performance. I had the thrill of speed, the challenge of competition and the assurance I'd be around to race the next weekend.

You can do the same thing. The Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) gives drivers a chance to see how well they and their cars stack up against the competition. You might want to check out their Web site at <http://www.scca.com/> and explore the possibilities.

If you race legally and win, send me your story along with pictures of your car. There's always room in this magazine for people who do things right.

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# Terminal Velocities with Reckless Disregard

*Editor's Note: This article is based upon a recent accident investigation conducted by the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center (CRC). The goal of this article is to provide lessons learned to help prevent future accidents. The names in the story have been changed, but the facts are accurate.*

**I**t was the Monday following the Thanksgiving weekend and Specialist James Wallace got off duty about 5 p.m. His family lived too far away to visit, but he had met Michael Holloway earlier that year at an area skateboard park. Jim and Mike had become good friends, so with nothing much going on that night, Jim picked up Mike and drove to another friend's house to watch videos. Mike had to be home by 10 p.m.

The friends watched movies until it was time for Jim to drive Mike home. They piled into Jim's 2003 Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution—a factory production street rally racer with a top speed of 152 mph. The Mitsubishi was Jim's "dream car." He'd boosted the 2.0-liter engine from 271 to almost 350 horsepower for even more "kick" on the highway. He'd also dumped the original 17-inch wheels and their 235/45ZR17 tires, going instead to 19-inch wheels sporting low-profile 215/35ZR19 85W tires for their "cool" look. The Evolution's original wheels and tires were tuned to the car's suspension to keep it sure-footed in the turns. But now that had been changed. (See "Dangerous Amateur Tricks.")

Jim and Mike headed east on a four-lane road that tied the city to the nearby Army post. They were still inside the city limits when they stopped for a red light. As they sat in the right lane, Jim noticed the car on his left—a Subaru STI. Like the Evolution Jim was driving, the STI was a factory-built rally racer. In fact, the cars were so closely matched, the October 2004 issue of *Motor Trend* featured a head-to-head shootout between the two.

Behind the Subaru's wheel, CW2 Matthew Pearson heard Jim rev the Mitsubishi's engine and took it as a race challenge. The light turned green, but both drivers eased forward cautiously to avoid drawing the attention of a police cruiser at the intersection. Once the cruiser was

out of sight, Jim hit the accelerator and raced past the Subaru, showing off his speed before slowing down to allow Matt to pull alongside. Matt paced the Mitsubishi briefly and then sped up to between 55 and 60 mph, pulling ahead of Jim and then cutting into the right lane in front of the Mitsubishi. Easing off the gas, Matt slowed down to show he was the better driver and had the faster car. Jim couldn't resist taking the bait. He pulled into the left lane and accelerated past Matt's Subaru.

For the next mile-and-a-half, the two played tag as they neared the outskirts of town, where the traffic would be lighter and, perhaps, they'd have a better chance to show off their speed. However, it had rained earlier and the road was still wet. Matt decided the road



was too slick for racing and slowed in the left lane to turn onto a side street that ran to his house. As he stopped to make the turn, Matt watched as the Evolution blasted past him and entered a slightly ascending left-hand curve about 200 yards ahead. On the right, the lights of a golf driving range lit the road well enough to show the outline of the highway.

As the Evolution entered the turn doing approximately 75 mph, it began losing traction on the wet road. Jim couldn't hold the Mitsubishi in the left lane and began drifting across the road toward the right shoulder. He tried to brake and regain control, but his right-side tires eased about four inches onto the grassy right shoulder. Trying to regain the road, Jim steered too sharply to the left and sent the Mitsubishi skidding sideways, passenger-side first, across the east and westbound lanes. The Evolution went onto the left shoulder and skidded 136 feet over the grass and dirt, striking a speed limit sign, a light pole and a junction box. Still sliding sideways at approximately 50 mph, the Mitsubishi's right side slammed into a large, wooden utility pole. The impact—right behind Mike's passenger door—snapped off the pole, crushing the right side of the car and part of its roof. Fortunately, the damaged power pole with its energized electric lines was leaning away from the wrecked car.

A short ways back on the road, Matt saw the

commotion ahead and feared there'd been an accident. Canceling his turn and driving toward the curve, he saw the mangled Mitsubishi on the left shoulder. Matt used his cell phone to call 911 and then got out to check on the car's occupants. He found Mike lying motionless, but breathing, about six feet in front of the crashed car. Mike wasn't wearing his seatbelt and was thrown from the vehicle when the impact ripped open the passenger-side door. Jim was also unconscious. He was laying across the front interior of the car with his head hanging out the passenger door. Unbelted, he'd been violently thrown against the car's interior and had taken brutal blows to his chest and head. He was bleeding through his eyes, and Matt could hear gurgling sounds as Jim labored to breathe.

An off-duty law enforcement officer arrived and helped Mike while Matt tended to Jim. Within minutes of the 911 call, police and fire department personnel arrived, followed a few minutes later by two ambulances. Jim and Mike, both unconscious, were transported to the local hospital. Because of his severe injuries, Jim was transported to a hospital in a larger city, where he could receive more comprehensive care.

Jim and Mike both survived, but there was a terrible price to be paid. As Jim was being treated in the hospital, it became evident his head injuries were permanent, severe and incapacitating. A

moment's recklessness had left him with a life-long sentence too difficult to describe and almost too tragic to imagine.

The consequences of this accident are now known. The questions that must be answered are why this crash happened. What were the links from which this tragedy was forged? In the end, every investigation comes down to a list of findings—actions that measurably contributed to the accident and its severity. In summary, those are listed below:

- Jim drove at excessive speeds, violating the posted 40 mph speed limit by more than 30 mph. This excessive speed, in conjunction with the wet road surface, led to the Mitsubishi losing traction and going onto the right shoulder. By willingly violating the speed limit, Jim demonstrated a disregard for the law and Army policy and also revealed a dangerous overconfidence in his driving abilities.

- Jim did not wear a seatbelt, nor did he require Mike to wear one despite their use being mandated by state law, Army Regulation 385-55 and the installation regulations where Jim was stationed. As a result of being unrestrained during the accident, Mike was thrown from the vehicle and Jim suffered serious head injuries.

- Matt, although not physically involved in the accident, nevertheless contributed to it when he accepted Jim's challenge and accelerated well

above the posted 40 mph speed limit. By posturing for a street race, Matt's competitive actions encouraged Jim to drive recklessly.

The events of that night can never be taken back, but there are some important lessons to be learned.

Racetracks are designed for high speeds and have expertly maintained road surfaces, proper banking and boundary protection. Also, when accidents do happen, medical help is immediately available. None of these things are true on the street.

Modern cars are designed to crush during impacts while protecting the passenger compartment. The key, however, is that occupants must remain in their seats. Without seatbelts, people are either thrown around violently inside the vehicle or thrown out, where they can land in the vehicle's path and be crushed. Soldiers are responsible for ensuring they and their passengers wear seatbelts.

Finally, only you can make the choice of whether or not to accept a street race challenge. However, if you've got the guts to say "no," you may not just be saving your life, you may be saving the other guy's.

**Comments or questions regarding this article may be directed to the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center Help Desk, DSN 558-1390, or (334) 255-1390.**

# Dangerous Amateur Tricks

**T**he modifications Jim made to his car, especially changing the wheels and tires, altered his vehicle's factory-tuned handling characteristics. The car's owner's manual specifically warned against those changes because they could degrade the stability of the suspension system and reduce traction.

The Evolution is a race-bred, factory-designed street rally car. Its agile handling characteristics result, in part, from a computer-managed all-wheel-drive system that distributes power to the car's wheels

to match the road and driving conditions. When Jim changed the car's tires and wheels, he altered the feedback from the wheels to the computers and also changed the way in which the vehicle applied power to the road. For example, the 19-inch wheels provided false feedback on the lateral (side-to-side) forces as the car entered the turn, went onto the shoulder and then into a spin. The larger-diameter wheels also turned more slowly than the originals, providing inaccurate information on the vehicle's speed. In addition, with their heavier weight they made

braking and accelerating more difficult and were no longer matched to the suspension. And although the 215/35ZR19 85W tires were larger in diameter than the factory-specified tires, they were also narrower and actually had less tread in contact with the road. This reduced the car's traction and braking ability—crucial issues when the Mitsubishi began drifting on the wet asphalt. Finally, when low-profile tires lose pressure, perhaps from hitting something in the road, they're very vulnerable to breaking their bead with the rim. In fact, both passenger-

side tires broke their beads and deflated, leaving the right side of the car supported primarily on the metal rims.

The engineers who design high-performance production cars such as the Evolution carefully optimize the suspension, wheels, tires and steering to provide the best-possible handling. When amateurs change those elements in the pursuit of a cool-looking car, the result is an unpredictable, unsafe car that can lose control at the worst possible moment.



# Terminal Velocities

## A Deadly Gamble

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**W**hat makes a guy take a high-performance car and go 127 mph through a residential area, ripping through intersections like they didn't exist? What makes a young Soldier who survived being badly wounded in Iraq throw away his life for a thrill or maybe bragging rights? What makes a person gamble his life when he knows the odds are bad and the winnings small?

SPC Ronald Matthews and his buddy, SPC Troy Wilkins, were assigned to an air defense unit on a large Army post. The two shared a mobile home some 50 miles from the post, rented from Wilkins' aunt, who lived in the area. With a 100-mile round-trip commute, Ron and Troy took turns giving each other a

ride to work. On days when Ron drove, the ride could be exciting. Five months earlier, he'd bought a Dodge Neon SRT-4, a 230 hp factory-built rally racer the manufacturer's brochure described as "barely street legal."

It was early February and Ron and Troy had been in the field with their unit all week. When the unit rolled back on post that Friday, the two got off duty about 5:45 p.m. and drove home, looking forward to an enjoyable weekend. Saturday, they both just hung around until Ron took off that evening for a card tournament at a local sports bar. He spent the late hours of Saturday playing in the tournament, then sacked-out until late Sunday morning. Troy spent Sunday working on his car, then left during the afternoon to help a friend fix his van.

Later in the afternoon, Ron took off in his SRT-4, possibly to go to dinner and play cards in another tournament. A few minutes before 7 p.m., Troy called Ron's cell phone to figure out who would drive to work Monday morning. Ron was driving when he answered, but he didn't mention his plans for the night. When Troy got back to the mobile home, Ron wasn't there.

Between 7 and 11 p.m., no one really knows where Ron went or what he did. Chances are he visited a local sports bar to play poker. What is known is about 11:13 p.m. Ron was driving north on a four-lane divided road connecting several subdivisions to a nearby city. He'd just crossed an east-west intersection where the road went from a rural setting into a residential subdivision area and the speed limit dropped from 45 to 40 mph. When he crossed the intersection, the Neon bounced noticeably from dips on both sides that were designed

to serve as water run offs. As he drove north in the left lane, a grassy median with trees divided the north and south-bound lanes. He'd only gone a short distance when he passed an intersection that allowed traffic to turn left into a strip mall. On his right, a road allowed subdivision traffic to turn onto the main road or cross to the strip mall. Stop signs controlled traffic on the side streets, providing right-of-way to cars on the main road.

At that time of night, traffic was light on the main road and at the intersections feeding the subdivisions on either side. Ron knew he had more than a half-mile before he'd hit an intersection controlled by a light, so he opened-up the Neon to see what it would do. The turbocharged 2.4-liter engine screamed as he ran the manual transmission's five gears. As he flashed through a second intersection, the road began a gentle right-hand curve. The Neon's 205/50R17

high-performance tires hugged the asphalt as Ron rounded the curve, passed a third intersection and entered a short straightaway.

The straightaway looked good and Ron took the Neon to its limit. The factory rated the Neon's top speed at 148 mph. The speedometer needle nudged 127 mph as Ron flashed through a fourth intersection and entered a second right-hand curve. But he was going too fast.

The Neon drifted to the left and brushed the median's concrete curb, scoring the car's 17-inch cast aluminum wheels. Ron felt the jolt as the Neon careened off the curb—but now he was out of control. The Neon, still doing an estimated 119 mph, veered across the road and slammed its passenger-side wheels and tires against the road's right-hand curb. The violent impact sent the Neon spinning counterclockwise 160 degrees as it skidded across the road toward the median. The passenger-side wheels stuck the median's curb, launching the Neon a couple of feet into the air before it slammed sideways into a tree.

The impact was horrendous. Still going

an estimated 94 mph, the Neon hit the tree with such force it sheared the car in half behind the front seats. The impact subjected Ron to the equivalent of 50 times his normal body weight being slammed sideways, rupturing his heart, liver and right kidney. The weakened floor made Ron's seat unstable, and the seat back collapsed and twisted to the right, leaving him in a reclining position. As the front half of the car rotated clockwise around the tree, centrifugal force threw Ron through the open hole where the rear of the car had been. He'd worn his seatbelt, but it was never designed to protect him from being thrown backward from a reclined seat. At that moment, the rear of the car was skidding across the southbound lanes toward a fence off the side of the road. The Neon's plastic gas tank had torn free and was spewing gasoline onto the asphalt as it slid along. Ron had landed 183 feet away and was lying in the southbound lanes just past an intersection he'd been approaching.

It was now 11:15 p.m. In their house near the intersection, Matt and Kathy Wellborn heard the

crash and ran out to see what had happened. They were shocked when they saw Ron's battered and apparently lifeless body. Kathy immediately ran inside to call 911 while Matt blocked traffic in the street. At about 11:24 p.m., the local police and an ambulance arrived—but it was too late for Ron. He was pronounced dead at the scene at 12:31 a.m. and taken to the county medical examiner's office for an autopsy.

### **Why Did This Happen?**

Ron died because he overestimated his skills as a driver and underestimated the dangers of racing on a city street. Although his vehicle was capable of nearly 150 mph, the road was not designed for those speeds. The 40 mph posted speed limit reflected the road's surface and curves and took into account cross traffic from residential subdivisions. Ron knew the road well enough to realize if someone pulled out from a side street he wouldn't be able to avoid them. Yet he chose to put himself and others at risk by going more than three times the speed limit.

Why he ran that fast, nobody knows.

The fact he entered the right-hand turn in the left lane, rather than the right, has led to speculation he was racing another car. Based upon that suspicion, police placed a notice in the local newspaper asking any eyewitness to come forward. But so far, none have.

Ron was responsible for his accident, but other people contributed. His close friends, to whom he often bragged about his street-racing exploits, never tried to warn or stop him. His leaders failed to develop an effective privately owned vehicle accident prevention program. They simply copied one from another installation, never updating it for their location.

### **What's The Answer?**

Whether or not you think you have the right to risk your life street racing, you don't have the right to risk others' lives. Although Ron didn't kill anyone else, he traumatized Matt and Kathy, who are in counseling to deal with what they saw at the accident scene. When Ron got behind the wheel, he ignored the fact he was responsible not only for himself, but

also for a lot of other people.

Ron's buddies were also responsible because they knew he was street racing and did nothing, even though he repeatedly risked his life. Where was the buddy system when it was needed? If his buddies cared enough to cover him in combat, why didn't they care enough to keep him from killing himself on the street?

Finally, there's leadership. Soldiers will always push the envelope to see what their leaders will allow. When leaders don't emphasize safety, Soldiers see it as a green light to push the limits. And when they do and the envelope tears, all too often what's left is a broken or dead Soldier.

**Comments regarding this article may be directed to the CRC Help Desk at (334) 255-1390, DSN 558-1390, or by e-mailing [helpdesk@crc.army.mil](mailto:helpdesk@crc.army.mil).**

# The Race

**CPT WILLIAM HOGE**  
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I listened to my father all through high school telling me how I couldn't have a motorcycle because they were too dangerous. When I turned 18 and moved to Tucson, Ariz., for school, I decided my father didn't know anything and bought a new Suzuki Katana 600cc bike. It was black with gold rims and had more power than any motorcycle I had ever been on. Of course, that wasn't saying much because I'd never ridden a motorcycle in my life. I did make the dealer throw in a helmet, which was the extent of my wheeling and dealing, and off I rode.

A couple of months later, I was riding on a warm summer

and landed head-first on a pile of rocks. I then bounced off the rocks and back onto the road, using my right elbow as a brake.

It took about 5 minutes before I could move or feel anything. There wasn't any skin left on my right elbow, but I was able to walk away from this accident. I hopped on the back of my friend's bike and we went to a pay phone to call a tow truck. We then went to the emergency room. Nothing was broken, but for months it hurt to move my arm as the skin regrew over my elbow. My helmet was destroyed, but it did its job well. It hurt having to spend money on a new helmet, but I can't think of many better investments.

I learned from this accident. Racing on the streets wasn't the smartest thing I'd ever done and racing at night was even dumber. Also, I realized motorcycling isn't something you teach yourself, so

I made sure I got proper training. The one thing I did right that night was wear my helmet.

*Editor's Note: My first ride was on a buddy's Honda 90. He'd shown me how to use the throttle, clutch and gearshift*

*but neglected to discuss the brakes. As I was ripping down a dirt road, I came to a "T" intersection bordered on the opposite side by a barbed-wire fence. It was then I realized the shortfall in my training. I rolled off the throttle, dragged my feet, wobbled the handlebars and dumped the bike. It wasn't pretty, but at least I didn't hit the barbed-wire fence.*

*Bottom line—getting Motorcycle Safety Foundation training isn't just an Army requirement; it's the smart thing to do. Trying to learn any other way is defaulting to the "dumb" position.*

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## CONNECTIONS

For more information on Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) training, visit the MSF Web site at <http://www.msf-usa.org/>. Also, check out the Army Motorcycle Safety Guide. You can see it online by visiting the Army Combat Readiness Center Web site at <https://crc.army.mil/home/> and keying in "Motorcycle Safety Guide" in the Search block.

night with a friend when we decided to race down a deserted road. He had a Yamaha FZR 600 and had been riding motorcycles (to include racing) since he was a kid. I decided, however, my two months of riding skills were more than a match for his racing experience. As we lined up, I made sure to rev my engine a couple of times, you know—for the "intimidation" factor.

Things were going well until I took a turn at 70 mph and hit a patch of sand. My bike lost traction and went off the road. Although I was able to slow down a little, I still went over the handlebars doing about 45 mph

## Runnin' With the Big Dogs!

**CW2 BRIAN CALHOUN**  
Aviation Safety Officer

It was a beautiful day in Germany, and a small group of co-workers and I set out on a mountainous terrain ride. Our skill levels varied from, "I just got this bike from the PX," to, "I own this mountain!"

I found myself in the middle of the pack. As a minimum, we all had bicycle helmets. I also had gloves, shorts and a T-shirt. After many map navigation errors, we found ourselves at the top of a mountain faced with a fast trip down a logging road back to the starting point.

Now I had to choose between running with the "big dogs" and racing down the mountain or staying with the cautious group and taking it slow. In my mind, the choice was easy, so I took off down the mountain with the fast group. As I was barreling down the logging road, I came to a bend and decided

to take the outside edge, since I was going about 35 mph. Unfortunately, I didn't see the mud near the edge of the road. I was leaning over in the turn when my tires hit the wet, soft ground and my bike came out from under me. I tried to catch myself as I went down, reaching out with my left arm and hand to break my fall. As I fell, the palm of my left hand dug in and my left shoulder and head slammed into the ground. I then slid down the road on my side for several feet before stopping. The school of hard knocks had just afforded me a

learning opportunity.

So, what exactly did I get from this? First, I realized how important my helmet was and how fortunate I was to have been wearing it. When I checked my helmet after the crash, I found a large dent on the left side with gravel stuck into the plastic. Without my helmet, the doctor would have been picking that gravel out of my scalp, not to mention possibly treating a concussion or worse. Second, wearing my gloves protected my hands, especially my left hand, from the gravel I had dug into. Still, I

didn't escape this accident totally unscathed. A nasty case of road rash on my left shoulder and hip provided me a not-so-gentle reminder I had ridden beyond my skills.

I also learned "smart" dogs know their limits and avoid trying tricks they're not ready for. Sure, it's fun to run with the big dogs; but it's a lot less fun if you finish the day licking your wounds.

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Imagine a kid approaching a busy intersection in Los Angeles and hitting his bicycle brakes only to see the front pads shoot out and bounce across the street. That kid—this editor—got into trouble by not paying attention during a little routine maintenance. After sliding my new front brake pads into their

mountings, I accidentally reinstalled the mountings backward. This left the open end—through which I'd slid the new pads—facing forward. Those pads, which had taken considerable thumb pressure to insert, came out easily when squeezed against the fast-spinning rim. Lesson learned—if you do your own bike repairs, do them right!

*Between January 2001 and February 2006, 65 Soldiers have been injured in bicycle accidents. The most common injuries were broken arms and broken or bruised shoulders. Below are some one-liners based upon these accidents:*

- Hit by car backing out of driveway.
- Attempted to pass a parked bus and was hit by oncoming car.
- Hit by car that failed to yield right-of-way at intersection.
- Thrown from bike when chased by dogs and forced off road.
- Thrown over handlebars when rounding blind corner and suddenly braking to avoid pedestrians.
- Crashed when attempting to regain road surface after veering onto shoulder.
- Struck by vehicle at night; rider had neither reflective clothing nor bicycle reflectors.
- Cornered too fast and slipped on gravel.

## CONNECTIONS

For more information on safely bicycling in traffic, visit the following Web site: <http://bicyclesafety.com> and type in, “How Not To Get Hit By Cars” in the Search block at the bottom of the page. For more on bicycle helmets and other protective wear, visit the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute’s Web site: <http://bhsi.org>. For information about mountain bike equipment and biking trails, visit [www.mtbr.com](http://www.mtbr.com).

## A Few Safe Riding Tips

Bicycles are particularly vulnerable when competing with motorized vehicles on the road and account for nearly 2 percent of all traffic fatalities. For example, during 2003, 622 riders—nearly two each day—lost their lives while riding bicycles. For each fatality, there are thousands of people who improve their health and find great pleasure in riding. To stay safe on the streets, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission offers the following tips:

- Protect your head by wearing a helmet.
- See and be seen by wearing bright colors and reflective stripes.
- Avoid riding at night.
- Stay alert for any obstacles in your path.
- Go WITH the flow of traffic, not against it.
- Be aware of the traffic around you and be especially alert around intersections and driveways.
- Obey all traffic laws.
- Make sure your bicycle is properly set up so you can ride comfortably and reach all controls.
- Check your brakes before riding to ensure they’re properly adjusted and not worn out.
- Check your wheels, ensuring the nuts are properly tightened and “quick-release” wheels are securely fastened.

## A Little “Sprocket-Rocket” CRM

CW2 JOEL TORRES  
Aviation Safety Officer

The nice late-summer weather inspired my wife and me to get outside and do something enjoyable. We decided to purchase new bicycles, although neither of us had ridden in at least five years. As we shopped for bikes and the needed accessories, I realized riding is more than just getting on and pedaling. I started thinking about how we could make it a safe and fun activity.

We started by using Composite Risk Management (CRM) to identify riding hazards and give us a clear picture of the steps we’d need to take for our safety. After identifying the main hazards, we developed and

put in place several controls to lessen those dangers.

First, we realized we needed to wear personal protective equipment and bought helmets along with our bicycles. These helmets are a rider’s best protection in a crash and are 85 to 88 percent effective in preventing head and brain injuries. Along with our helmets, we opted to wear sunglasses to protect our eyes from flying rocks and bugs. We also made sure to wear reflective belts so we would be clearly seen by passing vehicles.

The second area of concern was our choice of riding route. We live in a very traffic-congested area,

so using the area around our home was not an option. We decided to recon several routes and see what would best fit our needs. In the end, we decided to invest in a bicycle rack and take our bicycles to a park for a better, safer and less hectic riding environment.

Our final area of concern was bicycle maintenance. Even though they were new, the bikes’ tires needed air and their brakes and chains needed adjusting. Additionally, we test rode the bikes first just to make sure no major components were either missing or broken. Once we were satisfied we’d addressed our major concerns, we worked on the

lesser details. For instance, we decided to carry our cell phone for emergencies and Mace™ for protection against stray and wild animals. Also, we made a point of carrying water so we could stay hydrated. Anyone who has spent a day in the Army knows proper hydration is the best way to go before, during and after any physical activity.

These simple safety guidelines have allowed my wife and me to safely enjoy our leisure rides. And, like they say, who can argue with success?

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## Body Surfin' USA 1LT RODNEY O'HARA A Co. 1-285th ATKHB



**L**ike most folks, I enjoy the ocean. In fact, I jump in and play every chance I get. While stationed in Southern California on active duty in the U.S. Coast Guard, I would go surfing almost every day after work. I usually went by myself or with my friend, Tom, who was the ship's cook. On this day, though, I was going with Johnny and Brian.

And we weren't going board surfing; we were going body surfing.

I was familiar with the spot and had often surfed there. That day, however, the surf was a bit larger than normal, with waves about 6 to 8 feet tall. Otherwise, the weather was typical—overcast skies and water warm enough so we didn't need our wetsuits.

I consider myself competent when it comes to surfing and

waves as tall as these.

Johnny was a good swimmer too, but he lacked my experience in bodysurfing. Although he was in good shape, he didn't spend as much time in the water as I did. Brian was an OK swimmer, but he wasn't in the best physical condition. I was taking a pair of swim fins and decided to share one with Brian so he would have an easier time getting out past the breakers.

As we walked out on the beach, we analyzed the waves and determined a location to swim out to. We joked about getting pounded on the inside

### CONNECTIONS

For more information on swimming safety, visit the USLA's Web site at <http://www.usla.org/>.

swimming. On the cutter, I served as the No. 1 swimmer and had been a certified lifeguard. I also have surfed all over California and Hawaii, including the famed North Shore of Oahu with waves of 14-plus feet. However, it had been awhile since I'd been in

of the breakers by the large waves, but I knew I'd be OK.

As we started to head out, I swam out in front. I was going to show them how it was done. As I made my way out, I noticed the waves were a lot stronger than I'd expected. I was having

a hard time making it past the breakers and it was taking a lot longer than I thought it would. I started getting tired and looked around to see where Johnny and Brian were in case either of them

needed my help. Brian had already given up and headed back to the beach. Johnny was still trying, though. We were both being pounded by the waves. Every time I'd duck under a wave and

come back up, there'd be another wave bearing down on me.

After a couple more minutes, I looked around again for Johnny. He was now on the beach with Brian watching me. I still

figured I could show them how it was done, but I was getting tired—really tired. After a few more waves, I decided to give up and head back to the shore. It should have been easy enough; I'd just let the waves push me in. So I started back, but even that was harder than I thought. I was now extremely tired and losing energy. Now on the verge of exhaustion, I wasn't sure I would make it, but I managed.

When I finally made it back to the beach, I was completely exhausted. As I sat on the sand recovering, I thought about what I had been through. As I look back now, I can analyze the decisions I made. The waves were larger than normal and larger than I'd dealt with in a while. I also hadn't body surfed very much and went with only half the normal equipment (one fin). Most importantly, I was trying to show off and didn't want to go back in without showing up my friends. Fortunately, I made it back all right, but there are plenty of people who aren't so lucky.

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## SWIMMING Safety Tips

**The U.S. Lifesaving Association (USLA) reports drowning is the third leading cause of accidental death in the United States and offers the following safety tips to protect you.**

- **Swim near a lifeguard:**

USLA statistics over a 10-year period show you are almost five times more likely to drown at a beach without lifeguards than you are at a beach with lifeguard protection.

- **Learn to swim:** Learning to swim is the best defense against drowning.

- **Never swim alone:** Many drownings involve lone swimmers. By swimming with a buddy, you have someone to help you or signal for assistance should you have trouble. At minimum, have someone onshore watching you.

- **Don't fight the current:** USLA has found some 80 percent of rescues by USLA-affiliated lifeguards at ocean beaches are caused by rip currents. If you are caught in a rip current, don't fight it by trying to swim directly to shore. Instead, swim parallel to the shore until you feel the current relax, and then swim to shore.

- **Swim sober:** Alcohol is a major factor in drowning. Alcohol can reduce body temperature and impair swimming ability. Perhaps more importantly, alcohol and drugs



impair good judgment and often cause people to take dangerous risks.

- **Leash your board:** When surfing or bodyboarding, always use a leash that attaches to the board and your ankle or wrist. If you have a problem in the water, the leash will ensure you don't become separated from the flotation device. One additional consideration is a breakaway leash. A few drownings have been attributed to leashes becoming entangled in underwater obstructions. A breakaway leash avoids this problem.

- **Don't dive headfirst, protect your neck:** Every year, swimmers suffer serious lifelong injuries, such as paraplegia, from diving headfirst into unfamiliar water and striking the bottom. Check for depth and obstructions before diving, and then go in feetfirst the first time. Bodysurfing can lead to serious neck injuries if the swimmer's neck strikes the bottom. Use caution while bodysurfing and always extend a hand ahead of you.

## Body Surfin' USA BOB VAN ELSBERG Managing Editor



the shadow of our boat as we moved over the reef. But something was wrong. The dark shape was too shallow to be our shadow and moved with the sinuous smoothness of something alive—not like the static, rectangular shape of our boat. I twisted more to the right and leaned slightly over the side to see around our wake, which was distorting my view through the water. Then I pushed the outboard's steering handle to the left, using the boat's hull to temporarily blank the waves and smooth the water behind us so I could see more clearly. I was still more curious than anything else. Maybe it was a giant sea bass or a jewfish like I had once seen on a glass bottom boat tour in the Keys.

**T**he sky was a beautiful light blue as the sun shimmered on the water around our 14-foot boat. Looking through the clear water, I could see a kaleidoscope of colors reflecting from the reef below as we

slowly cruised along. My friend, Eric Van Winkle, and I had rented the boat to spend the day fishing off Long Key, Fla. We had already caught some beautiful tropical fish that amazed me with their brilliant colors.

The outboard barely idled as

we moved to another spot over the reef in hopes of catching some red snapper. Seated in the back of the boat, I let my right hand trail in the water, enjoying its pleasant warmth. Then something caught my eye. I thought it was



## This Ain't No Bull!

We all assume we're safe from shark attacks if we're in fresh water. However, the bull shark, outranked only by great white and tiger sharks in human attacks according to the International Shark Attack File (ISAF), is highly tolerant of fresh water. In fact, bull sharks have been seen in the Mississippi River above St. Louis, more than 700 miles from the ocean. Bull sharks grow to a length of about 7 ½ feet and can reach a weight of almost 300 pounds.

The boat angled to the right. Through the temporarily smoothed surface, the image that had trailed us by a dozen or so feet and five or six feet beneath the surface suddenly came into view. My heart froze. I jerked my hand from the water and yelled to Eric to get into the center of the boat. Some shapes in the ocean can never be mistaken for anything else. Our curious “shadow”

of the water and onto the raft when the shark attacked again. He tried his best to pull her onto the raft, but all he got was her right foot and ankle. The shark had taken the rest!

Shark attacks, such as the two that happened last June in the waters of the Florida Panhandle, get a lot of attention in the news. One of the victims, a 14-year-old girl, was fatally bitten as she boogie-boarded with a friend

## CONNECTIONS

For more information on sharks, visit ISAF's Web site at <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Sharks/ISAF/ISAF.htm>.

was no jewfish or giant sea bass. It was a hammerhead shark—about an 8-footer.

The sinister-looking shape glided off to our right—but it would not be the last time I would see one of the ocean's most remarkable predators. Sharks also frequented the waters around my next duty station, Oahu, Hawaii. During the summer of 1973, several swimmers, surfers and divers had close encounters with a larger than usual group of sharks that had congregated off Waikiki Beach. I remember that because one night when I was at the Shore Patrol office a young sailor was brought in. He was screaming and crying uncontrollably. He and his girlfriend had been swimming off a raft late at night when a shark attacked the girl. The sailor struggled to get her out

near Miramar Beach. Three days later, a 16-year-old boy was attacked by a shark while fishing in chest-deep water. Although he survived, his injured leg had to be amputated. Both are thought to have been attacked by bull sharks (see Fast FaX “This Ain't No Bull”). During 2005, 38 shark attacks were reported in the waters around the United States and Hawaii, with 18 occurring in Florida. Yet, despite the terrifying potential consequences of a shark attack, most people are more likely to be struck by lightning than become a shark attack victim. Still, when in the shark's environment, swimmers, divers, surfers and even those wading in waist-deep water need to exercise care.

## The Hawaiian Division of Aquatic Resources recommends the following safety tips:

- **Swim, surf or dive with other people and don't move too far away from assistance.**
- **Stay out of the water at dawn, dusk and night when some species of shark move inshore to feed.**
- **Do not enter the water if you have open wounds or are bleeding in any way. Sharks can detect blood and body fluids in very small concentrations.**
- **Avoid murky waters, harbor entrances and other areas near stream mouths (especially after heavy rains), channels or steep drop-offs. These types of waters are known to be frequented by sharks.**
- **Do not wear high-contrast clothing or shiny jewelry. Sharks see contrast very well.**
- **Refrain from excessive splashing; keep pets, which typically swim erratically, out of the water. Sharks are known to be attracted to such activity.**
- **Do not enter the water if sharks are known to be present and quickly and calmly leave the water if one is sighted. Do not provoke or harass a shark, even a small one.**
- **Be alert to the activity of fish or turtles. If they start to behave erratically, leave the water. A shark may be present.**
- **Remove speared fish from the water or tow them a safe distance behind you. Do not swim near people who are fishing or spear fishing. Stay away from dead animals in the water.**
- **Swim or surf at beaches patrolled by lifeguards and follow their advice.**

# Don't Be Hard Headed

CW4 EARNEST EAKINS  
Motorcycle Safety Program Manager  
U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center

**A** Soldier's death is always devastating, especially when it's from an accident that could have been prevented. When a Soldier dies, a comrade and vital part of a unit is lost and the unit suffers. The Army makes every effort to help protect Soldiers from becoming casualties. The personal protective equipment (PPE) required of military motorcyclists indicates the Army's commitment to protecting Soldiers.

Helmets are the most important piece of PPE worn by motorcyclists. Unfortunately, if helmets aren't properly fastened, or if improper quick-release devices are used, they can come off during accidents. If a helmet comes off when a rider needs it most, he might as well have not worn it.

Here's a potential problem. While most helmets have standard D rings for their straps, some more expensive helmets come from the manufacturer with a quick-release device. I'm concerned riders may see these and be tempted to modify their helmets with an aftermarket quick release, either for convenience or because the newer model of their helmet has one. Although riders may think they're upgrading their helmets,

they're actually making them much less safe.

According to James Ouellet and David R. Thom, contributors to the widely acclaimed "Hurt Report," aftermarket quick releases that don't meet Department of Transportation (DOT) standards can affect a helmet's original safety rating. At the International Motorcycle Safety Conference, held in Long Beach, Calif., Ouellet and Thom recommended against using such devices. They added, however, one could be used if it met the requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 218 and didn't involve modifying the original helmet retention straps. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) feels strongly about this issue and prohibits the use of

aftermarket quick releases that don't meet FMVSS 218 standards.

Now here's the interesting news. Of all of the aftermarket quick releases being offered for sale, I could only find one that claimed to meet FMVSS 218 standards. It was also the only one packaged with installation instructions! If you find an aftermarket quick release that instructs you to modify your helmet's original retention straps, that is clear evidence the release doesn't meet FMVSS 218 standards. It's simply far too risky for riders to modify their most important safety device simply for convenience.

Carefully consider any aftermarket accessory before



attaching it to your helmet because the price of convenience could be your life. Never use any accessories that do not claim to meet DOT standards.

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## Deep in Sea Doo-Doo

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**M**y sons and I were at the lake with friends enjoying a beautiful afternoon. We'd just gotten our Sea-Doo out of the shop after some routine maintenance and were ready to go play. Some of our friends had brought their jet skis, and my oldest son had been hogging our Sea-Doo. I was just about to get my chance when my boss, Todd, showed up with his son, who'd just enlisted in the service. They couldn't stay long, but his son wanted to take my jet ski for a quick ride. My jet ski, the fastest one in production at that time, had been described as "Sea-Doo's tribute to the 1960's muscle car."

Todd hopped on another jet ski and his son followed him on my Sea-Doo. Todd was about 50 yards ahead of his son—who was rapidly



overtaking him—when he decided to show off and do a donut. That was a bad move! Todd's jet ski was not a high-performance model like mine and bogged down in the water as his son came barreling straight at him. All Todd's son saw was water flying from the donut. He didn't see the stopped jet ski or his father.

Todd dove off his machine just as his son hit the front of the jet

ski. My Sea-Doo rode up over the front of the other jet ski and flew up into the air like it had gone up a ramp. When it landed on the other side, the rear of my Sea-Doo hit Todd's back. Fortunately, all he got was a minor scratch.

The jet ski Todd was on was another story. After flipping it upright and climbing onto it, Todd noticed the damage to the front hull. The front cover was crushed, the mirror was broken off and the handlebars were broken. Todd attempted unsuccessfully to start the jet ski, but ended up having to be towed back in by his son. The bottom of my Sea-Doo only had minor damage to its gel coat.

Overall, Todd was very lucky to come out with only a scratch on

his back—it could have been a lot worse. I no longer let friends just show up and hop on my jet ski. Now, they have to show me their boating license. They also have to listen to my speech on how to properly control the jet ski and what to do if they get into trouble. I won't subject you all to that lengthy speech, but I will share some safety tips provided by the safety folks at Fort Hood, Texas. They are as follows:

- Wear the proper safety equipment. An approved life jacket is a must. It's also a good idea to wear eye protection to keep water spray from obscuring your vision. Tennis or deck shoes offer better control on your machine, and gloves and a wet suit offer protection

Since 2000, eight Soldiers have been injured in jet ski accidents. Four of those accidents involved collisions with other jet skis or boats, and one led to the death of a Soldier. Another Soldier was knocked from his jet ski when he collided with a boat and was severely injured when he was struck by the boat's propeller.



from the elements. A whistle attached to your life jacket is a good idea in case you need to summon help. Never operate your personal watercraft without the safety lanyard attached to you. The lanyard cuts the engine if you fall, and could save a long swim home. Stay out of swimming areas and away from wildlife. Never operate at night or attempt to tow two water skiers.

- Respect the rights of others. This includes not following other boats closely or jumping their wakes, and staying away from people who are fishing or canoeing. Be conscious of the noise your craft makes. Remember, if

you run your personal watercraft in a small area for a long time, the noise can be irritating.

- Keep a lookout for other boats and watercraft. Collisions are the most common type of personal watercraft accident. Read the owner's manual so you understand the controls and features of your personal watercraft.

- Don't operate your watercraft after you've been drinking. Also, know the water you're operating in so you can avoid weeds, rocks and sandbars.

Getting onto a jet ski after you've been thrown from it or fallen off takes a bit of know-how and skill. Here are some tips for doing that safely:

- Locate the jet ski and swim over to it. The farther you are from the craft, the greater your chances of being hit by other boats while you're in the water.

- After you've reached the jet ski, first grab the re-boarding handle at the end of the machine with one hand and put your other hand on the back of the craft for leverage. If there's no handle, place both hands on the back of the jet ski.

- Next, give a flipper kick or a thrust to boost yourself onto the jet ski. As you push, use your hands to pull yourself up. The faster you do this, the easier it is.

- Since you are partially on the craft, get

to your feet and stay in the catcher position to prevent the jet ski from flipping again. If the jet ski begins to tilt to one side, place weight on the opposite side to balance the craft.

- Sit down on your jet ski and hold the handlebars for extra leverage. It's very important that you don't reattach your safety lanyard yet.

- Once you're sitting on the jet ski with your hands on the handlebars and ready to go, then reattach the safety lanyard.

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# We Don't Need No Stinkin' Ladder!

ANONYMOUS

**M**ost of us are so focused on our weekend plans we don't pay much attention to the tips in our weekend safety briefs. However, because my husband and I are both Army aviators, you might think we'd be an exception to that rule. In fact, you might think we'd be smart enough to be doubly safe. But if you did, you'd be wrong.

We'd bought a house several years ago and then rented it out for nearly 10 years. When we returned to the house, we decided it needed some improvements. Applying a new coat of paint and installing new gutters were at the top of our list of priorities. As we selected the paint and other needed items, I mentioned we might want to get a ladder. My husband's immediate response was along the lines of, "Ladder? ... We don't need no stinkin' ladder!" My husband had, no doubt, some creative, low-cost alternative

in mind that would allow us to paint the sides of the house and install the new gutters. I should have taken that as a clue trouble was coming.

The next morning, I got back from my run and started painting. It wasn't long before I convinced myself that standing on a tough box straining and stretching while trying to reach the eaves wasn't the way to go, so I took a break and went inside to fix lunch. As I got lunch together and was setting the plates on the table, I looked out the window and saw my husband rolling around on the ground.

I stepped outside and immediately recognized what had happened. The scene was like something out of a safety video. I saw a small stepstool set atop the tough box, my husband's tools scattered on the ground and him rolling around clutching his side. It didn't take Sherlock Holmes to figure out gravity had gotten the better part of my husband and his



makeshift, none-too-stable work platform.

Several thoughts went through my head at that time. My husband was obviously still breathing

and wasn't bleeding anywhere, so I decided not to call 911. For a few moments, I considered asking him if he'd changed his mind about buying

a ladder. However, I resisted temptation and, instead, asked if he thought his ribs were broken and if he wanted to go to the hospital.

At that point, he asked me to just go inside and leave him be for a bit. I went in and called a babysitter, figuring it would be better to have someone watch the kids than drag them all to the hospital. Whether my husband wanted to admit it or not, going to the hospital was the only smart thing to do. He eventually came inside and said he was going to shower and take himself to the hospital. I told him arrangements had already been made and

I'd drive him. Several hours later—after some good pain meds, a bit of swallowed pride and seeing the X-rays, there was no denying he'd broken three ribs.

We did end up buying a ladder and, after several weeks, got back to the painting the house and hanging new gutters. However, in the process, we learned two important lessons. First, despite what you think, you won't save time or money by trying to do a job without the proper equipment. And second, whether you want to admit it or not, sometimes you need to listen to the safety geek—even when you're at home and it's your wife.

# Ladder Safety Tips

The following safety tips from the Consumer Product Safety Commission are designed to keep you from becoming a

- Don't exceed your ladder's maximum load rating.
- Inspect the ladder before using it. Look for loose or damaged parts.
- Never allow more than one person at a time to be on a ladder.
- Make sure the ladder extends at least three feet above the roofline or working surface.
- Never stand on the top three rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder.
- Make sure your ladder has slip-resistant feet.
- Never use a metal ladder around electrical equipment. Never allow any ladder to contact live electrical wires.
- Be sure the locks on your extension ladder are properly engaged before climbing the ladder.
- The ground beneath the ladder should be firm and level. If it isn't, you can place large wooden boards beneath the ladder to help level it and keep it stable.
- Don't place a ladder in front of a door or gate that is not locked, blocked or guarded.
- Keep your body centered between the ladder's rails at all times. Don't reach way out to the side to get to an object—move the ladder closer instead.
- Straight, single or extension ladders should be set up at a 75-degree angle. To establish that angle, for every four feet in height you should move the bottom of the ladder one foot away from the base of the wall.
- Don't use a ladder for any purpose other than for which it was intended.
- Don't step on the top step or bucket shelf. Also, don't attempt to climb the back side of a step ladder.
- Never leave a raised ladder unattended.
- Read and follow the ladder's instruction labels.

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 killed when his car was broadsided by a construction truck that failed to stop at a stop sign.

- A Soldier lost control of his vehicle and hit a tree. He was taken to a local medical center, where he was declared dead on arrival. Alcohol use is suspected.

- A Soldier was thrown from his vehicle and killed when it was hit by a civilian POV that failed to stop at an intersection. The Soldier was not wearing his seatbelt.

- A Soldier riding as a passenger in a Chevrolet Silverado was thrown from the vehicle and killed after it left the road and overturned two-and-a-half times.

- A Soldier was struck by a dump truck and trapped inside his vehicle during a three-car pileup. He was flown via LifeFlight to a medical center, where he later died of his injuries.

- A Soldier was driving on the interstate when he lost control,

ran off the road and was thrown from the vehicle. The Soldier was pronounced dead by emergency medical personnel.

- A Soldier was on block leave when he lost control of his vehicle and struck a tree. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

- A Soldier was driving his Chevrolet Tahoe on icy roads when he reportedly lost control, overturned several times and was thrown from the vehicle. He was placed in a medically induced coma for treatment of head injuries.

- A Soldier was in leave status when he reportedly lost control of his car and struck a pole. He was transported to a local medical center, where he was pronounced dead.

- A Soldier was involved in a head-on collision with a tractor-trailer and suffered multiple traumatic injuries. The Soldier was in a coma and later died of his injuries.

- A Soldier in the National Guard was driving to her

annual training when she lost control of her vehicle and ran off the road, striking a fence and a metal building. The Soldier and her unborn child suffered fatal injuries.

- A Soldier was driving his car on a turnpike during inclement weather when his car left the road and struck a disabled vehicle. The Soldier was hospitalized for treatment and suffered a permanent total disability injury.

### Class C

- A Soldier was traveling south on a state highway when he veered into the oncoming lane, overturned and collided with an oncoming vehicle. Severe injuries to the Soldier's head caused him to be hospitalized for 17 days.

- A Soldier was on his way to physical training (PT) when he stopped at an intersection and was struck from behind. The Soldier was wearing his seatbelt and had only minor neck and shoulder injuries, despite severe damage to the rear of his car. Editor's Note: If you have an adjustable

head restraint (head rest), raise it so there is minimal distance between the back of your head and the front of the restraint. This will help reduce whiplash injuries.

- A Soldier was driving a midsize sport utility vehicle (SUV) on a two-lane highway in snow and ice conditions. Although he was driving below the 40 mph speed limit, a wind gust caused him to drift and lose control. The SUV rolled over three or four times before coming to rest in a ditch at the side of the road. The sergeant was wearing his seatbelt and sustained minor neck injuries that cost him four workdays. Of note is the fact the sergeant was unfamiliar with the vehicle and drove too fast for the conditions.

- A Soldier was driving in a local town when a vehicle in front of her stopped to make a left-hand turn. Because of the sun's glare and the custom dark covers on the vehicle's turn and brake lights, the Soldier couldn't see the signals and rear-ended the vehicle before she could stop. The sergeant, who was



Class A • A Soldier was a passenger in a POV that ran off the road and overturned three times. The Soldier was not wearing his seatbelt and was thrown from the vehicle, suffering fatal injuries.

## WEAR YOUR SEATBELT!

wearing her seatbelt, sprained her back and lost one workday and was placed on restricted duty for a week.

### POM

#### Class A

- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle when he collided with a POV. He was transported to a local medical facility, where he later died of injuries suffered during the accident.

- An Army Reserve Soldier entered a curve, lost control, slid into a guardrail and suffered fatal injuries. He was wearing his helmet and personal protective equipment at the time of the accident.

- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle when he lost control and struck a road sign. He was taken to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The Soldier was not wearing his helmet.

### Personnel Injury

#### Class A

- A Soldier was returning from a local establishment and decided to walk on some train tracks. The Soldier apparently

failed to see or hear an approaching train, which struck and killed him.

- A Soldier and two other people were boating on a river when their boat overturned. The other two people were able to make it to shore, but the Soldier drowned.

- A Soldier was playing basketball during regular PT when he complained of chest pains and was taken to the troop medical clinic. He died before he could be transported to a local medical center.

#### Class C

- A Soldier had stopped to help a motorist whose vehicle had spun out during an ice storm when an approaching vehicle lost control and struck both stopped vehicles. Although the Soldier was critically injured, he survived. His injuries included a punctured lung, a broken leg and bleeding in the brain.

- A Soldier was walking down a flight of stairs at a friend's house when he missed a step and fell. The Soldier broke the bottom of his right hand, his middle

finger and damaged a ligament. The Soldier lost one workday and was placed on 37 days' restricted duty.

- A Soldier was not paying attention while attempting to cut a loaf of bread and sliced his hand instead, lacerating his tendons. The Soldier, who was scheduled to have surgery, was hospitalized for six days, lost five workdays and was placed on 60 days' restricted duty.

- A National Guard Soldier was playing basketball when he fell and twisted his ankle.

When the accident happened, the Soldier was wearing low-top running shoes. The injured Soldier lost one workday and was placed on seven days' restricted duty. A recommendation was made that all Soldiers playing basketball be required to wear high-top basketball shoes.

- An Army aviator deployed to Iraq spent three days in the hospital and 90 on restricted duty thanks to a "rough" landing on a bicycle. The Soldier borrowed a BMX bicycle from some friends who were riding

in the life support area (LSA) and decided to ride off a three-inch-high deck. As he did so, his left boot slipped off the pedal, catching the toe on a rock and jamming it there. Momentum kept the bicycle going forward and the pedals turning. As the left pedal struck his jammed foot, it broke his ankle, tore most of the ligaments and shattered the lower end of his left fibula. After the accident, a recommendation was made that all sports activities take place on a hardtop road near the LSA.

- A Soldier was running in a relay race during unit PT when she fell and tore her left hamstring and lost five workdays. The race was run over grassy, uneven ground that had loose gravel in some spots. Because of this accident, a recommendation was made that a risk assessment be done before PT is conducted to ensure the area is safe.



# Snuffy A Quick Trip to a Nasty Fall

**BOB VAN ELSBERG**  
Managing Editor

**R**emember when you first learned to tie your own shoes? It was a right of passage—the first of many marks on the wall as you matured in life. However, not everyone passes that test. As Snuffy found out, untied shoestrings can send you on a quick trip to a nasty fall.

If you recall, PVI Joe Snuffy's last adventure proved the biggest dumbbell in the gym wasn't hanging on the weight rack. Still pained by his perforated pectorals, he decided to visit his sister, PVI Josephina Snuffy. Another member of the family helping maintain its long, if less-than-illustrious, tradition of Army service, Josephina lived at an Army post a couple hours away.

It was a great holiday visit as they talked about their many unusual, sometimes unconventional, experiences in the Army. As generations of Snuffys before them, they were committed to retiring as privates and, therefore, not overburdening the taxpayer.

Alas, the visit had come to an end. Glancing at his watch, Snuffy saw he had barely enough time to get back to his unit before his leave expired. Giving his sister a big hug and a kiss, he hurried out the door. It is here the plot thickens.

In his haste to exit his sister's abode, Snuffy neglected to do some basic PMCS on his sneakers. Had

he done so, he might have noticed a pair of shoestrings flopping up and down like the ears of a beagle chasing a cat. He headed for the stairs that led down to the parking lot.

Fate has no compassion for the stupid. On the first step, one shoe slipped free and launched itself down the stairs. Before he knew it, gravity took our now-unbalanced Snuffy and sent him head-over-heels in hot pursuit of his errant footwear. It was such a pretty night. Unfortunately, Snuffy only saw it in glimpses as he tumbled down the stairs. An occasional thump of the head against the guard rail, a skid mark here and there along the steps—all marks of Snuffy's rapid progress on his journey to the bottom.

The landing was none too graceful. Snuffy landed in a heap, broken on both ends with a fractured foot and a nasty concussion. We'd like to tell you what happened next, but that will forever be a mystery. You see, Snuffy didn't return to his unit that night. In fact, Snuffy didn't make it back for three days!

Maybe the concussion gave him temporary amnesia and he forgot he was a Soldier. Not to worry, when he finally returned to his unit, his commander reminded him. And, as Snuffy well knew, there's nothing like going AWOL to help a Soldier ensure his future in the lower enlisted ranks.

Medical help was forthcoming. Snuffy spent a day in the hospital and missed the following three days of work. When you toss in 90 days' restricted duty, he scored a perfect "10" on the Snuffy screw-up scale. It must have been embarrassing for Snuffy to stand in front of his commander, promising he'd tie his shoes in the future. You'd think that issue would've been settled in boot camp—or, maybe, kindergarten.

We now close this chapter in Snuffy's often unpredictable, occasionally bizarre, Army career. Keep watching the pages of ImpaX magazine as we keep you abreast of his adventures.

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