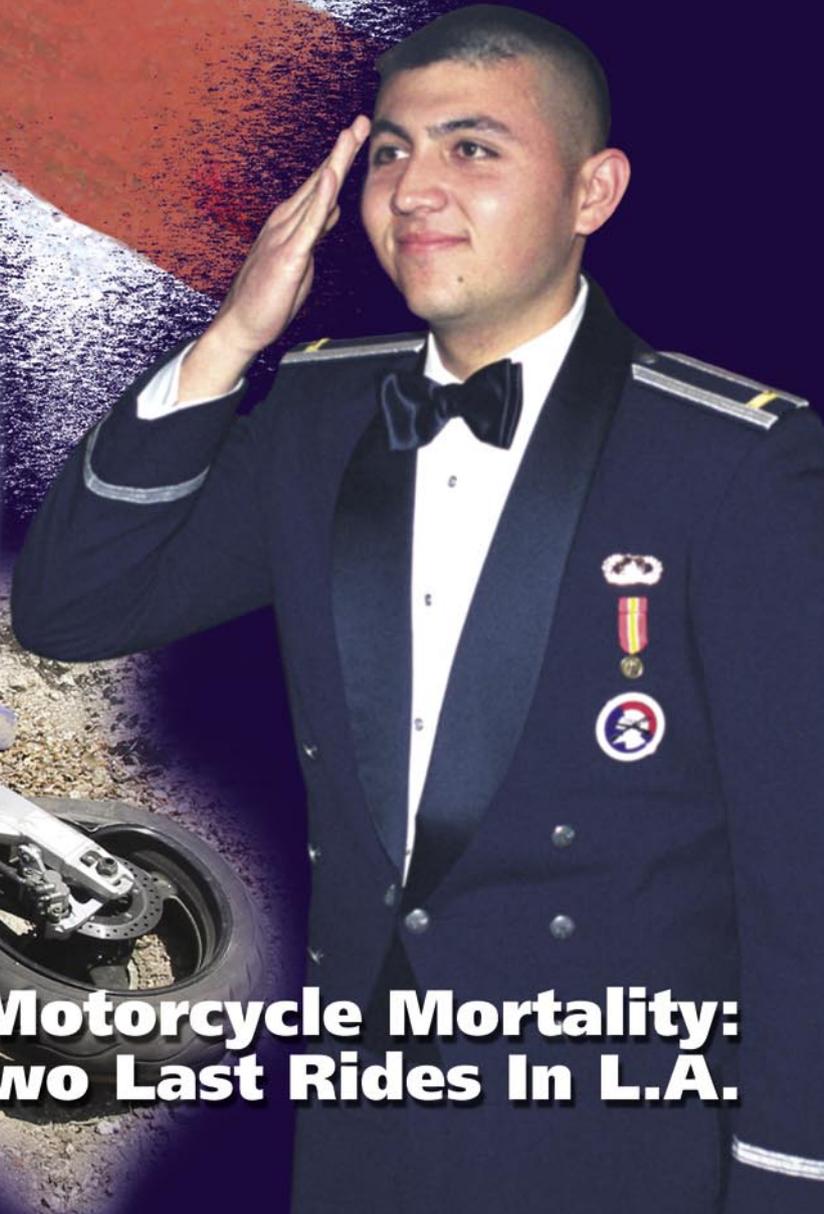


The Air Force Journal of Occupational, Recreational, and Driving Safety

# ROAD & REC

Volume 16, Number 2

Spring 2004



**Motorcycle Mortality:  
Two Last Rides In L.A.**

# ROAD & REC

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SPRING 2004



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# Do The Write Thing: Seeking Safety Stories Or Who Do You Think You Are, Mickey Spillane?

**JOHN COCHRAN**  
Managing Editor

**A**s the new managing editor of *Road & Rec*, a big part of my job is asking our readers to send in their safety-related stories. Have you or someone you know been hurt in an accident, either at work or off duty? Have you kept yourself or someone else from being hurt, because you recognized an unsafe situation and took steps to correct it? These are the kinds of "There I Was" stories our readers want to see in the magazine.

*Road & Rec* is "The Air Force Journal of Occupational, Recreational, and Driving Safety," so anything related to safety in the workplace, off-duty activities, or fun, is legitimate material for publication. In addition to active duty, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, the civilian workforce, spouses, and contractors, we welcome articles from others connected to the Air Force through their profession, background or interest.

We produce the magazine to help you prevent mishaps that cost the Air Force combat capability, productivity, money, and time. If your story influences our readers to be safer on the job, at play, and on the road, then you and we have done a great service for the Air Force. To that end, I welcome your articles, photos, comments and suggestions for *Road & Rec*.

Your personal testimony makes compelling reading, and we have a continuing need for new stories, so please contact me with your story ideas. You can e-mail me at [john.cochran@kirtland.af.mil](mailto:john.cochran@kirtland.af.mil); call me at DSN 246-0983 or commercial 505-846-0983; fax to DSN 246-0931 or commercial 505-846-0931; or mail your stories to Managing Editor, *Road & Rec*, HQ AFSC/SEPM, 9700 G Avenue SE, Kirtland AFB, NM 87117-5670.

The article length that best fits our magazine is 500-1,500 words. Photographs showing what the story tells will help convey meaning to the readers.

Send us a safety story and get a bullet statement for your performance report. Think of it as a new form of self-aid and buddy care.

Thank you for your interest in helping us "get the word out" Air Force-wide about safety. ■



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## CHIEF's Sight Picture



### **Motorcycle Safety: Each Rider A Mentor**

27 February 2004

How many times have you heard a story like this one: A couple of friends at a party had been drinking and one suggested they take his new motorcycle to get more alcohol. They hop on the bike, no helmets, and the operator decides to show how fast the bike can go. He's been signed up for training, but he hasn't completed the course yet. Before long they're traveling at 120 mph in a 60 mph zone. The operator loses control and they crash. The passenger is killed, and the operator spends 30 days in the hospital.

Or one like this: A new motorcycle owner decides to get the biggest, baddest Harley he can get. He doesn't wear a helmet because he doesn't think it's "cool." He had preliminary motorcycle training and a learner's permit. He decides he can pass a car on the right around a curve. He loses control and launches 100 feet into the air. He dies on impact. These actual incidents are only two examples of many similar stories that pass across my desk, and illustrate why we need to change the way we think about and approach motorcycle safety.

Motorcycles can be a great form of transportation and entertainment, but they must be respected. Lately, our Air Force members have been involved in a high number of motorcycle accidents, many of which were fatal. In FY03, we lost 24 Airmen to motorcycle accidents, most of which involved unsafe operation of single vehicles and operators who practiced poor risk management or operated beyond their abilities, and lost their lives in the process.

Every member of our Air Force is critical for mission success. On the job, we exercise good operational risk management in performing difficult and dangerous tasks. We take care to train new operators in the safest practice of our profession. We provide oversight and guidance for inexperienced Airmen and young officers as they advance from apprentice to journeyman and craftsman. We pass on the benefits of our experience and correct mistakes to help our Airmen succeed. We should also do so during our off-duty activities. Our concern for our people should not end with the workday, and our safety consciousness should not end there either. Learning about a favorite activity can be enjoyable in itself. The proper training, safety instruction, and skill level make any activity more enjoyable.

Just as we ask experienced operators to mentor and train our less experienced ones, I am asking experienced motorcyclists to mentor new riders and help them develop their skills and knowledge about riding. For that reason, I have asked the Air Force Chief of Safety, with the assistance of the Vice Chief of Staff and the Air Force Operational Safety Council, to explore, develop, and field a motorcycle mentoring concept that could foster the education and skills development of our motorcycle riders. This Air Force-wide network of motorcycle clubs could foster relationships between riders who have been riding in an area for years and those new to the area or new to riding. They can also create a supportive environment of responsible motorcycle riding and enjoyment while serving as a force multiplier for commanders' mishap prevention programs.

My vision is for a mentoring program that will provide motorcycle operators the opportunity to work together to maximize their skills, reduce their chances for mishaps, and have fun in the process. The formula is simple: fundamental knowledge in the form of street strategies and well-honed skills coupled with the most critical element—a responsible riding mindset.

I am also asking commanders to look out for their motorcycle riders. Make sure that the troops under your command who ride are trained to do so. A commander's responsibility for safety does not end with the duty day. Actively seek out those who have bikes or are interested in taking up motorcycle riding. Make sure they take the safety courses offered on our bases, even if they have no intention of riding on base, and encourage them to join these clubs. I ask commanders to encourage all their people to live life off-duty with the same regard for safety we practice on duty.

To those who ride motorcycles, I respect your right to choose a motorcycle as a form of transportation and/or recreation. But, I ask you to operate them safely, practice good risk management, and operate within your abilities. Above all, make sure you are wearing the proper safety equipment. Also, look out for those who aren't ready for more advanced challenges and prevent them from engaging in dangerous behavior. I'm a new rider myself, and I will be taking an approved motorcycle training course to make sure I am qualified to ride before I take my bike on the road. I'm looking forward to riding, but only when I have the skills necessary to ensure I won't be a danger on the road. And I won't go anywhere without my helmet.

Only through your efforts will we reduce the mishap rate throughout our Air Force. We will provide the tools necessary—it is every rider's responsibility to put them to use.



**M**otorcycle riding season is upon us, and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) reminds drivers and riders that May is Motorcycle Awareness Month.

Motorcycle riding is more popular than ever. Motorcycle sales rose a remarkable 9.4 percent in 2002, marking the nation's 10th consecutive year of rising motorcycle sales, according to the Motorcycle Industry Council. And these motorcycle purchases are being made by riders brand new to the sport, as well as by motorcyclists whose busy lives had caused them to lose touch with a favored pastime.

Sharing the road is where motorist awareness starts. MSF urges all motor vehicle drivers to expect to see more motorcyclists riding in traffic this spring and to respect that they rightfully enjoy the same access to the roads as other traffic. Further, MSF reminds all motorcyclists to be responsible riders, which includes following the four main safety guidelines listed below.

"Motorists often don't look for motorcyclists on the road," said MSF President Tim Buche. "In fact, the most common type of collision occurs when a driver pulls out from an intersection directly in front of a motorcyclist. Afterward, they usually say they never even saw the bike. This is why it is so important for drivers to remember to expect to see motorcyclists on the road, no matter what time of year."

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation offers these guidelines for motorcyclists:

**(1) Get Trained**—Whether you're a new rider or someone with years of experience, there's always room for skills improvement. More than 90 percent of all riders involved in crashes were either self-taught or taught by friends. The MSF's newest curriculum, the Basic Rider Course, is available at more than 1100 training sites across the U.S. For information on training in your area, call toll-free (800) 446-9227 or visit [www.msf-usa.org](http://www.msf-usa.org).

**(2) Ride Sober**—Recent data confirms that alcohol is involved in almost half of all single-vehicle motorcycle crashes. Don't drink and ride. And don't ride impaired. Drugs (prescription, over-the-counter, or otherwise) diminish visual capabilities and affect judgment. If you think you can't ride without taking a drink, please consider that alcohol dependency may be putting you at risk.

**(3) Get Licensed**—MSF worked with the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to update an improved motorcycle operator licensing system, now an official national standard. Licensing agencies in 31 states use one of four different MSF skill tests. MSF's motorcycle operator manual is used in 41 states, and 29 states incorporate the supporting knowledge test. For information on licensing requirements, check out [www.msf-usa.org](http://www.msf-usa.org), and click on the "State Laws" link.

**(4) Ride Responsibly**—Wear riding gear for both comfort and protection.

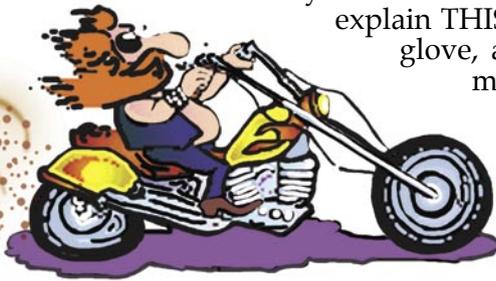
This includes a helmet manufactured to meet Department of Transportation (DOT) standards, eye protection, jacket, full-fingered gloves, long pants and over-the-ankle boots. Keep your bike well maintained. Use your "rider radar" when riding to scan for hazards. And most important, know your own skill level and ride within it. ■

*Information courtesy of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation.*



# May Is Motorcycle Awareness Month

# How Not To Argue With Your Wife



**MSGT GREGORY ROLFE**  
48 CMS/MXMPG  
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It was a dry, sunny day in England, a rare occurrence. I had just finished a Class A argument with my wife, which, of course, I lost. Not one to admit defeat, I decided that the best way to display my displeasure was to roar out of the driveway on my motorcycle, slinging gravel and throwing dust in the air. After all, that's what Marlon Brando would've done. I even had a "Rebel Without a Cause" motorcycle, a '72 BSA Victor 500. THIS would show her!

Funny thing about those older bikes; they aren't always completely reliable when it comes to the mechanical aspects of life.

Besides being hard to start, the old 'Beezers' had drum brakes, front and rear. This means you have to start trying to stop the bike long before you want the bike to stop. This isn't that much of a problem, until you add a 30-year-old carburetor. There's a reason no one uses those old carbs anymore: As they wear, the throttle slide tends to stick. Especially if you crank it open...HARD!

I left the driveway in a triumphant cloud of dust, hit the pavement, and worked her up into third gear. We live in the country, and our road is narrow and winding. As I approached the 15-mph corner, just past our neighbors' house, the warning voice in my head sounded: "You're doing 35 mph...time to start braking!" I let off the wide-open throttle...and it stayed that way—wide open.

Now, an old 500cc Beezer isn't the fastest bike in the world, which is why I was amazed at how much acceleration took place during the time it took for my brain to register the problem, send the message to my extremities to grab the clutch and brakes, and actually start slowing the bike down. I distinctly remember looking at the speedometer needle reading '60 mph,' just as I entered the corner.

Of course, I didn't make the corner. I almost did. There was one more factor that led to my demise that day: my neighbor's mailbox. Yes, I took it out. As I picked myself up, my first thought was for the condition of my bike...a broken rear turn signal was the extent of her injuries. They sure made those old bikes tough. I stood her up, kicked over the engine, and she fired right up. Now came my second thought: I've got to ride home and explain this to my wife. Oh, boy. On the bright side, at least I didn't get hurt!

As I pulled into the garage and parked the bike,

my mind was working fast. How was I going to explain THIS one? Then I pulled off my right glove, and my mind stopped. How did my wrist get so big?!? At that point, the adrenaline began wearing off, and the pain began. With the pain came the expletives. With the expletives came my wife wondering what had happened.

She didn't use any expletives. I wish she had. She just calmly drove me on a VERY silent ride to the emergency room.

The orthopedist knew me. Our sons play together on the high school varsity basketball team. He knew my wife as well. I think he was glad he wasn't me just then, and not because of the broken wrist.



In the end, my wrist was broken in five places and required a three-hour surgery and two screws to put it back together. Now, let's see, why did this happen? Oh, yeah, I got mad and decided to do something to express my anger.

I did something, all right.

On the bright side, I managed to learn some lessons from all this:

1. Anger is bad. Doing something stupid out of anger is worse.
2. Motorcycle safety gear works! I was wearing a helmet, boots, leather jacket, and gloves. I stepped off my bike at 60 mph, and managed to walk away. After seeing the divot taken out of my helmet by the mailbox post, I was definitely glad I was wearing it.
3. Mailboxes don't move, even if you signal and honk at them. Well, okay, they move some when you run into them.
4. If you think your wife is mad after the minor argument you just had, you haven't walked in the house with a stupid injury yet. Then you'll see her mad! ■



## That's A Paddlin'

**JOHN COCHRAN**  
Managing Editor

One of my favorite memories is of going on a canoe trip with a group of college friends. This was in the late spring after my freshman year at Central Missouri State University, and I went with several guys from my dorm.

After living in the same building for nine months, and going through the typical first-year events together, we knew each other pretty well, and everyone got along fine.

Our residence hall was a men-only building, and none of us had a steady girlfriend then, so this trip would be another male-bonding experience for us.

Hanging out with the guys, cooking hot dogs on a campfire, sleeping under the stars—what a great way to unwind after making it through the rigors of student life.

Yes, we had seen the movie, “*Deliverance*,” and we would all listen for the sound of banjo music, but still, we were determined to go and have fun.

On the day of the expedition, our party of six drove to the designated assembly point, paid our minimal fee to the man whose company provided the canoes and the bus transportation, and we were on our way to the chosen embarkation spot upriver.

Given Missouri’s unpredictable climate, we couldn’t have asked for a better situation to begin our float trip. Weather conditions were ideal, with air temperatures in the 70s, light breezes, and mostly sunny skies.

At the starting point, we split up into our three two-man teams, loaded our canoes with essential supplies—being mindful of proper hydration, we took plenty of canned drinks—and then we set off for hours of floating fun.

The whole point of this excursion was to get some fresh air and relax among friends; this was not about shooting the rapids in some extreme white-water challenge to our manhood.

Helping our cause was that one member of our party was an Army veteran, going to college on the GI Bill. He made sure that each of us wore our

life jackets, put on sunscreen, and that we all knew where our destination was, and how long it should take to get there.

After spending the day making like Huck Finn on the Mississippi, we maneuvered our canoes to the river’s edge and set up a campsite.

We had food, fellowship, and free entertainment—courtesy of another camper, whose truck’s eight-track tape player kept repeating the Beatles’ song, “*Rocky Raccoon*” on a continuous loop all night. I like the Fab Four as much as the next baby boomer, but after the first few dozen times, even songs you like start to grate on your nerves.

Despite that distraction, the day’s activity allowed us to sleep well, so we were able to get up the next morning and continue our voyage to the stopping point, where the bus driver met us, collected the canoes, and drove us to our cars.

The float trip proved to be a lot of fun, with plenty of laughs and camaraderie. Aside from some slightly overused sore muscles, nobody got hurt, and we all recovered in good shape.

What accounts for the positive outcome? For college kids, we were a mature group who looked out for each other, we stayed within our capabilities, we had the benefit of having a military veteran who’d “been around” and knew a good deal about safety, and we had good weather.

### Top Tips For Proper Paddling

The warmth of spring encourages many folks to take part in water sports, such as swimming, boating, scuba diving, snorkeling, jet skiing, kayaking and canoeing.

Regarding these last two activities, the National Safety Council and the American Canoe Association offer the following tips:

- Canoe with a minimum of three people or two crafts.
- Be aware that calm waters can conceal rocky crevices, high waters or lurking dangers. Use good judgment, common sense and preventive measures to ensure a safe trip.
- Learn about the sport before you plunge into it.

Classes are available across the country at various skill levels. Experts teach basic safety skills, such as how to handle a boat properly, select the right gear, and recognize common river dangers.

- Consider joining a local canoe club. Knowledgeable members can introduce you to the sport and show you how to have the most fun with the least risk.

- Each stream or river presents different challenges and dangers. Even seasoned veterans should be sure they become familiar with the body of water before plunging in.

- Be ready for an occasional dunking when you canoe. Don't panic. Stay upstream of the boat, to avoid being pinned between the boat and a rock. In calm waters, angle your way up to shore instead of paddling straight. Stay behind the boat, and hold onto it for flotation.

- Don't attempt rivers or rapids beyond your ability. Unfamiliar waters are not the place to "push the envelope."

- Of course, in all water sports, always wear your U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. ■

## PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES

If your family enjoys boating, sailing, and canoeing on lakes, rivers, and streams, be sure you and your children wear the correct life jackets.

Many children and adolescents think life jackets and life preservers are hot, bulky, and ugly. This is no longer necessarily true.

Newer models look better, feel better, and provide increased protection.

Many states require life preservers, and life jackets must be present on all boats traveling on bodies of water supervised by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Parents should choose from the following Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFDs). Child PFD approvals are based on the child's weight, so check the label's user weight.

## LIFE JACKETS

The U.S. Coast Guard has approved three types of life jackets.

—**Type 1:** Called an off-shore life jacket, the Type 1 provides the most buoyancy. It is effective for all waters, especially open, rough or remote waters where rescue may be delayed. It is designed to turn most people who are unconscious in the water from the face-down position to an upright and slightly backward position.

This jacket helps the person to stay in that position for a long time. Type 1 life jackets are available in two sizes:

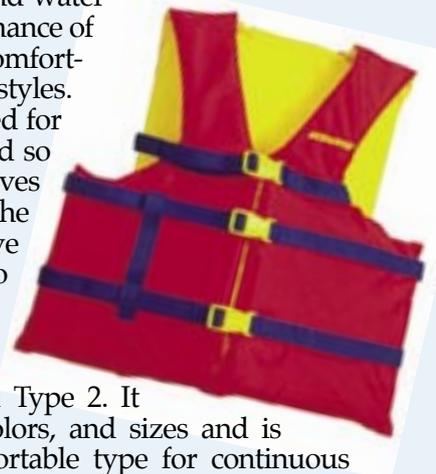


one for adults weighing more than 90 lbs., and one for children under 90 lbs.

—**Type 2:** This jacket, called a near-shore buoyancy vest, can turn a person upright and slightly backward, but not as much as the Type 1 jacket. It may not always help an unconscious person to float face up. It is comfortable and comes in many sizes for children. The Type 2 is intended for calm, inland water, or where there is a good chance of quick rescue. Inherently buoyant, PFDs of this type will turn some unconscious wearers to a face-up position in the water, but the turning is not as pronounced as with a Type 1.

—**Type 3:** This jacket, called a flotation aid, is for conscious users in calm, inland water or where there is a good chance of quick rescue. It is very comfortable and comes in many styles.

This life jacket is often used for water sports. It is designed so wearers can place themselves in a face-up position in the water. Wearers may have to tilt their heads back to avoid turning face-down in the water. The Type 3 foam vest has the same minimum buoyancy as a Type 2. It comes in many styles, colors, and sizes and is generally the most comfortable type for continuous wear. Float coats, fishing vests, and vests designed with features suitable for various sports activities are examples of this type of PFD.



## TIPS FOR TOTS

Only children who wear or use life jackets are protected. Also, life jackets should never be substitutes for adult supervision. Your children should wear life jackets at all times when on boats or near bodies of water. Teach your children how to put on their own life jackets.

Make sure your child is comfortable wearing a life jacket and knows how to use it.

Make sure the life jacket is the right size for your child. The jacket should not be loose. It should always be worn properly, with all straps belted.

Blow-up water wings, toys, rafts, and air mattresses should never be used as life jackets or life preservers. They are not safe for this purpose.

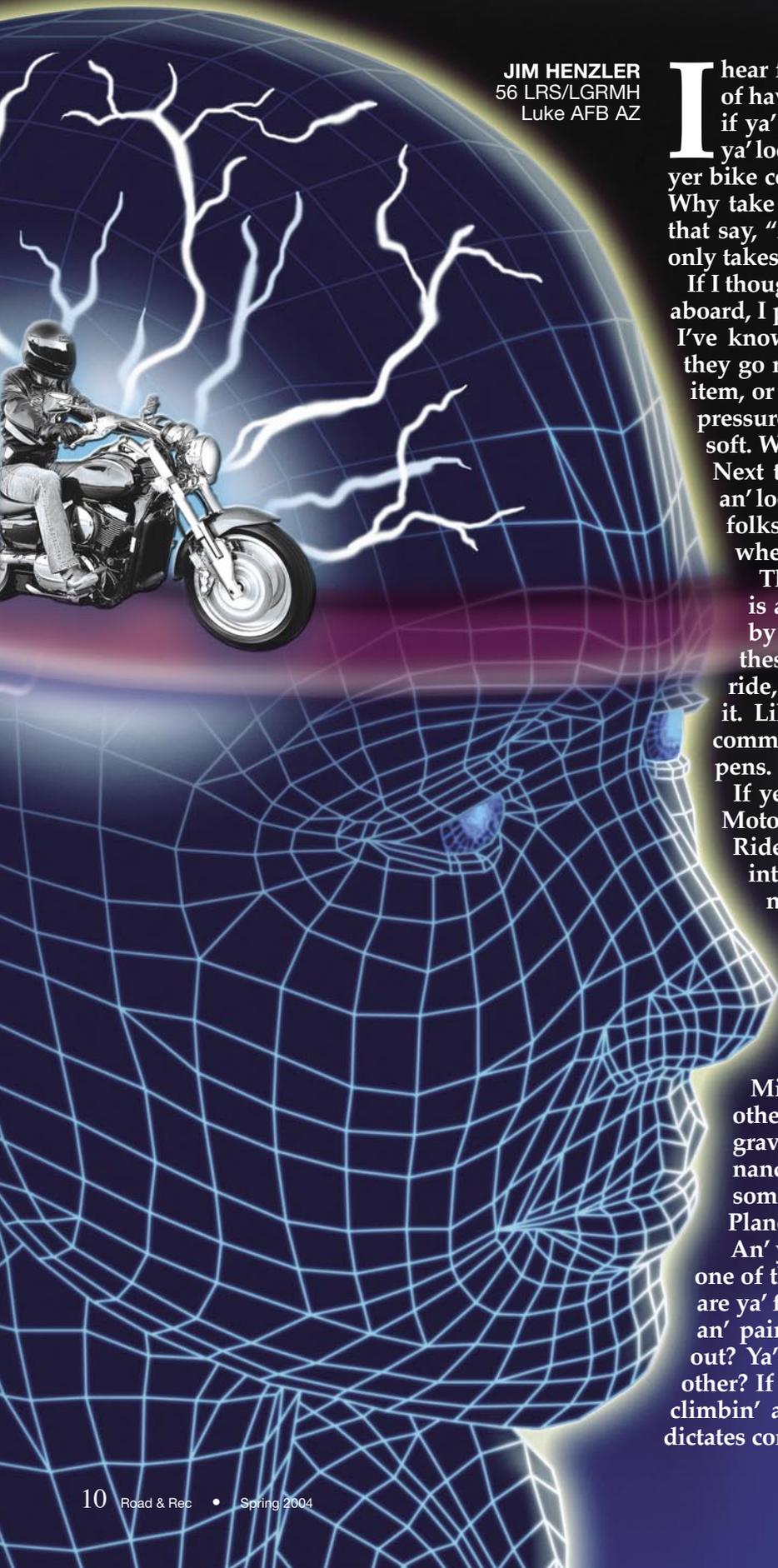
For their own protection and to set a good example, adults should also wear life jackets while on the water.

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Information courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

# Bikes an' Brain Power

JIM HENZLER  
56 LRS/LGRMH  
Luke AFB AZ



I hear folks say “Do ya’ realize that yer chances of havin’ a bike wreck are 16 times greater than if ya’ were drivin’ a car? Why do ya’ ride? Are ya’ lookin’ to get killed?” Others say, “Ya’ know, yer bike could fall apart from under ya’ at 60 mph? Why take that chance?” An’ then ya’ got the folks that say, “All those parts that make up yer bike; it only takes one part to fail an’ then yer gone.”

If I thought along those lines every time I climbed aboard, I probably would sell my bike an’ forget it. I’ve known riders that fret an’ worry every time they go ridin’. They’re thinkin’, “Did I check this item, or that bolt? I can’t remember what the tire pressure was on the front wheel—looks a bit soft. What’s that noise comin’ from the engine?” Next thing ya’ know, they’re down to 30 mph an’ lookin’ forward to gettin’ back home. Those folks need to sell their bikes an’ stick to four-wheel transport.

There’s no doubt about it, motorcycle ridin’ is a risk, but it’s one that can be minimized by usin’ somethin’ that ya’ don’t see a lot of these days, COMMON SENSE! If yer gonna ride, ya’ need a plan. There’s no gettin’ around it. Like everythin’ else, there’s rules to usin’ common sense—it’s not somethin’ that just happens. Here’s a few fer yer consideration:

If yer gonna ride, ya’ need to take a certified Motorcycle Safety Course an’ the Experienced Rider’s Course. The instructors are genuinely interested in yer safety an’ well-bein’. Ya’ need to ask questions. There’s no such thing as a dumb question when it comes to motorcycle safety. Ya’ need to get to know yer bike. Don’t just assume all bikes handle the same, because they don’t. I’ve ridden a bike identical to mine an’ it handled entirely different.

Mine had a front fairin’ an’ a tour pack, the other one didn’t. A totally different center of gravity. Ya’ need to have a plan fer maintenance an’ stick with it. Puttin’ it off can, in some instances, jeopardize yer existence on Planet Earth.

An’ yet another portion of common sense, an’ one of the most important, is you, the rider. How are ya’ feelin’? Headache? Upset stomach? Aches an’ pains? Depressed over somethin’? Stressed out? Ya’ been havin’ words with yer significant other? If yer not up to speed, ya’ don’t need to be climbin’ aboard yer two wheels. Common sense dictates complete concentration fer the ride.

Fer the final portion of common sense, I like to call this one "Usin' that helmet-covered section to full advantage." Goes somethin' like this:

"Poppin' a wheelie looks cool—I think I can do that." Or perhaps, "I don't need my helmet, I'm only goin' two blocks away." How 'bout this one? "My buddies don't wear all that safety junk, why should I? It doesn't look cool, an' they'll just make fun of me."

The bottom line is ya' gotta use yer head when yer ridin'. It's not just some place to park yer helmet an' keep yer ears apart. Ya have to think about what yer doin' and what the consequences of yer actions might be. Ya' can't allow yerself to get in over yer head. If yer uncertain about tryin' somethin' new and ya' have it in the back of yer mind that it just might be stupid an' dangerous to yer health an' well-bein', there's every possibility that it is. Use yer helmet-covered noggin to think before ya' act; use common sense. ■

## Using Your Head: The Only Controlled Environment

ROD KRAUSE  
5 BW/SEG  
Minot AFB ND

Let's talk about motorcycles and the consequences of not thinking. I sincerely hope to evoke thought, because one death from a motorcycle mishap is far too many.

Fatality—it doesn't mean scrapes or bruises, scratches, bumps or even broken or dislocated bones. It means death—the end. On a motorcycle, death is a possibility at all times, because you're not in a controlled environment. When riding a motorcycle, the only controlled environment is in your mind.

Unfortunately, every year we have fatalities—keep these in the back of your mind next time you get on a bike. Ask yourself, why do these things happen? They often involve inexperienced riders. Is training a factor? What about the use of alcohol? Some fatalities are the result of a lack of good judgment and not using good old common sense. In all fatalities, the controlled environment was violated. The rider/victims were just not thinking.

So, riders, maybe you should ask yourself, am I a safe rider? Do I know my limits, or do I take excessive risks just to prove a point? What about the riding

area—are you familiar with it? Wherever you travel, you always have intersections and curvy roads.

Let's look at training. Have you been through a Motorcycle Safety Foundation Course? Do you feel that you may need a refresher to refine your skills?

What about your equipment—do you wear personal protective equipment that's required on and off base, as well as on and off duty?

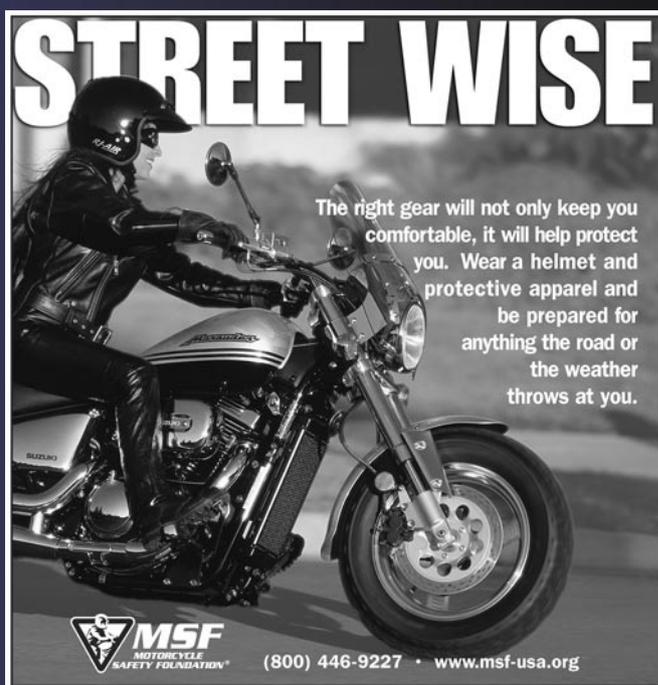
Let's look at speed. How high does your speedometer go—100, 140 or even 180 miles per hour? Have you ever attempted to top it out? Is this really worth risking your life?

I don't know why anyone would want to ride a motorcycle at 140-plus mph. You can't see anything—everything is a blur. How would you react if you hit a stone, or if a vehicle "popped out" in front of you?

Years ago, at my last assignment, we had a motorcycle fatality that involved overconfidence, excessive speed and a vehicle that "just popped out." The rider was in his early twenties, traveling at more than 100 mph when he hit the vehicle. What does it prove? Nothing, except that you can get killed if you're reckless, exceeding the speed limit, neglecting basic rules of the road and not wearing the proper equipment.

Think! Think of the big picture the next time you go out for a ride. Think about your surroundings. Think about your friends and family. Think of the gang back at work; you will be missed, believe me.

Your family, friends and co-workers need you in their lives. They want you to enjoy yourself, but within reason—without unnecessarily risking your safety or your health. You all play an important part in the big picture. To continue playing that part, please attempt to remain in a controlled environment when you're riding. Use common sense—and think. ■



# STREET WISE

The right gear will not only keep you comfortable, it will help protect you. Wear a helmet and protective apparel and be prepared for anything the road or the weather throws at you.

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# Just One Wrong Turn



**PEGGY HODGE**  
SMC/PA  
**2D LT HEATHER COBURN-SCHILL**  
Los Angeles AFB CA

"Lt Rojero was a model lieutenant who possessed all the attributes you would want in a young officer," said his supervisor, Maj David Spak. "His professionalism was razor-sharp, and his enthusiasm and motivation seemed endless."

"Mr. Perkowski was my 'Mr. Dependable,'" said Mr. Joao Ramalho, his supervisor. "Whatever I needed done, whenever I needed it done, I would just have to ask James. He was always ready to help other staff members or customers in any way."

Unfortunately, Lt Rojero and Mr. Perkowski are no longer with us.

First Lieutenant Abel Rojero, a member of the Satellite and Launch Program Office at the Space and Missile Systems Center, was killed in a motorcycle mishap in the Angeles National Forest July 26, 2003. James Perkowski, a fitness specialist at the Los Angeles AFB's Fitness Center, was killed in

a motorcycle mishap August 4, 2003, as he drove on the most dangerous highway in America—Interstate Highway 405.

## Lessons Learned

Lt Rojero and several of his friends had gone out to enjoy a motorcycle ride on a sunny day. Those who knew him tell a story about an exceptional officer, friend and motorcyclist—they also have a story to tell all motorcycle riders.

"Lt Rojero was a passionate and experienced motorcycle rider who did it all right—the right gear, the right training and the right riding preparation," recalls Capt Paul Gilbert, who was riding alongside Lt Rojero at the time of the fatality. "If I could go back to the moment before we'd gotten on our bikes, I would have stressed to him to ride his own ride—to not try and push his limits, but rather to slow down a little

and enjoy the good roads, good weather and good friends.

"For me, the incident was like having a bucket of ice water dumped down the collar of my shirt. It really opened my eyes to the risk inherent to riding motorcycles on the street," said Gilbert. "Ever since then, I've completely changed my philosophy on street riding and have become much safer."

"Always ride within your own abilities," said Capt Brian Yoshimoto, another rider in the group on that fateful day. "If you are on a group ride and don't have the same level of experience as the other riders, let them know. Other riders can set up a plan to help you stay within your limits.

"There are a couple of ways to do this, such as setting up meeting points along the route, usually at turns or overlooks. Or, put the inexperienced rider at the front of the group. This allows the other riders to follow at a comfortable speed for the new rider, not pushing his limits beyond his control," explained Yoshimoto.

Another rider in Lt Rojero's group, Lt Luis Segura, said the mishap emphasized three things for him. "It's about proper equipment, proper training, and knowing your limits and riding within those limits.

"I have well over a thousand dollars worth of protective gear. Protecting your body is something you should never, ever 'cheap-out' on. Wear the proper gear, including full-faced helmet, leather suit or leather jacket/pants, boots and gloves.

"Take every safety course available to you, even if you think you don't need it. The basic course is not enough. Only an advanced course can even come close to properly and safely training you. These courses will improve your riding ability and survivability by immeasurable amounts. Practice and integrate what you have learned into your everyday riding.

"Finally, get to know your riding ability, your safety envelope, your limits and never, ever exceed them," explained Segura.

### Working on Safety—What We're Doing

Motorcycle mishaps are on the rise. In Fiscal Years 98-03, the Air Force lost 85 people, with nearly half the fatalities in the last two years. Many motorcycle fatalities are the result of single-vehicle events, where riders used poor risk management and faulty judgment.

To support a new proactive approach to

continued on next page

## Cause and Effect

### BILL SLUTTER

The Aerospace Corp.  
Los Angeles AFB CA

### Lt Abel Rojero Accident—July 26, 2003

Six junior officers met outside the Los Angeles AFB gate on a warm and sunny Saturday morning. They planned a motorcycle ride on a curvy, mountainous stretch of road known as the Angeles Crest Highway (CA-2). Their destination was Newcomb's Ranch, a favorite motorcyclists' eating establishment. It was on the return trip to Los Angeles AFB, only 4.6 miles down the road from Newcomb's, that Lt Rojero failed to properly negotiate a wide-sweeping right turn, and died after colliding with a pickup.

As his instructor for the Experienced Riders Course, and as a fellow motorcyclist, I firmly believe Lt Rojero was a proficient and thoughtful rider. It just took a momentary lapse of proper cornering technique and some compounding factors that took our highly regarded lieutenant from family and friends.

I have reviewed all the factors for the Rojero accident, and I believe the cause to be from a motorcycle-unique phenomenon called "high-siding." As he entered a wide sweeping right turn, he applied excessive torque (acceleration) to the rear tire, causing it to walk (or slide) out of alignment from the front tire. At the apex of the curve (or midpoint of the turn), he closed off the throttle, causing the rear tire to whip back into alignment with the front tire. The frame of the motorcycle compensated by flipping from the right lean angle to its left side in a fraction of a second, throwing him to

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motorcycle safety, the Air Force held a world-wide motorcycle safety summit in September 2003, to look at areas we can work on to help prevent motorcycle mishaps.

In-depth reviews of current initiatives in mentorship, training, programs, and policy and enforcement revealed opportunities for improvement in each area.

At LA AFB, this issue has the attention of senior leadership.

"To ensure how serious I am about motorcycle safety, I am requiring every member who operates a motorcycle on the base to take a refresher course. I hope a serious review of all the safety issues relating to motorcycle operation will help those drivers stay alive," said Lt Gen Brian Arnold, Commander, Space and Missile Systems Center.

"We, unfortunately, lost two individuals on the highway last year to motorcycles, and we're not going to allow that to happen again," he said. "If you are new to SMC, you cannot ride a motorcycle until you have been to our classes."

The SMC Chief of Safety, Phillip Rodriguez, said, "One life lost is too many. I'm putting all available resources toward a proactive motorcycle safety approach at Los Angeles AFB."

From 12-14 August, Los Angeles AFB held its first ever on-base Basic Motorcycle Safety Course. In the past, riders were sent to other locations, which usually meant a long wait. This course was 16 hours of intense training, divided into two parts—Riding and Street Skills, and Classroom Instruction. The classes were separated into two components: Basic Skills Development and Street Skills Development. At LA AFB, this course is mandatory for military members and highly encouraged for dependents and civilians.

"Riding a motorcycle is not as straightforward as a beginner might expect. There are some dynamics or motorcycle rider actions that are counter-intuitive, but actually necessary to understand and practice," said Mr. William Slutter, LA AFB Motorcycle Safety Instructor.

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the ground. Lt Rojero was thrown into the opposing lane at the same instant a truck was headed in the opposite direction. The truck ran over both rider and motorcycle. Lt Rojero's helmet and full leathers would have protected him from the fall, but they were no match for the two tons of steel.

The lesson for the experienced motorcyclists in this case is twofold.

- First, it's the motorcyclist's responsibility to ride within his limits, the limits of the motorcycle, and the limits of the environment.
- Second, explore your limits in a safe environment, such as an abandoned parking lot or a closed motorcycle racetrack, depending on the skills you want to improve.

### **James Perkowski Accident—August 4, 2003**

James Perkowski, a military dependent, was very excited about learning to ride a motorcycle. He bought a motorcycle in advance of the basic motorcycle safety course that the base safety office had arranged for him.

He signed up for the course, called Riding & Street Skills, which would have started a few days after his accident, at the nearby Los Angeles Harbor College in Wilmington, CA.

On this Monday, he was riding the motorcycle back to his residence on Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, CA. He was traveling south on the 405 freeway and exited at the off-ramp for the southbound 110 freeway. Unfortunately, he and the motorcycle did not successfully make the turn and he struck the guardrail. His impact with the fixed object was fatal. The evidence

from the scene indicates that no other vehicles were involved, nor did adverse road and weather conditions cause loss of control.

Much of what we can determine about this accident comes from observing similar mishaps. This event fits similar new-rider crashes caused by target fixation. Target fixation is the tendency of a motorcycle to travel where the rider is looking. If a rider freezes, giving

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Slutter said the SMC stood up a Motorcycle Rider Mentorship Program in early 2004.

"I strongly support this program. I liken it to a motorcycle club with a focused outcome."

"My hat is off to our motorcycle people—we have scheduled many motorcycle safety training courses and stood up a new mentoring class," Lt Gen Arnold said. "These classes are important to all of us, to ensure the safety and well-being of our people who ride motorcycles."

The SMC and Air Force Space Command have increased motorcycle safety awareness through their work in all the current initiatives, and lead the charge for increased motorcycle safety value-added programs.

### Two Permanent, Preventable Losses

Mr. Perkowski and Lt Rojero will be missed.

"Lt Rojero was a great guy and a great officer," said Capt Marcus Chaney, who previously supervised Rojero. "He loved his bike. He was more excited about riding his bike than just about anything else. He strongly believed in motorcycle safety. Unfortunately, you only have to be unsafe going around one wrong turn."

"Losing Lt Rojero was a tragedy our Program Office will not soon forget," said Col Edward Bolton, the Satellite and Launch Control Systems Program Director. "It is my hope that all motorcycle riders in the Air Force will think of Abel every time they ride. He rode safe and he rode smart, but even the safest riders can be hurt if they lose focus for the slightest moment."

James Perkowski's family and friends praised his contributions at home and at work. The Fitness Center Superintendent and a friend of James' described him as a very dedicated employee, always working to improve the facility's appearance and programs.

"He loved his family. He was an extremely dedicated father and husband to his two sons and wife, and would always manage to set aside time for them. He will be sorely missed."

"The loss of Lt Rojero and Mr. Perkowski were personal for Los Angeles AFB," said Lt Gen Arnold, SMC commander. "These losses brought anguish to their families, brothers, sisters, children, parents, as well as leaving a tremendous hole in our lives. We mourn and remember them as individuals who contributed to the accomplishment of our SMC mission." ■

no steering inputs, and stares at an object, he will hit that object. New motorcycle riders generally react with a similar response or worse, the wrong response. I know, because I was self-taught in the mid-'70s, and almost met a similar fate because I was unaware of basic motorcycle dynamics.

The lessons we can draw from this accident are threefold.

- First, motorcycling is very challenging and requires a basic understanding. Take a basic motorcycle safety course before you get into traffic.

- Second, proficient motorcycling takes frequent and purposeful practice, no matter how long you've ridden. A good motorcyclist will make it a habit.

- Third, family, friends, and supervisors should encourage any new rider to seek a basic understanding through a safety course, instead of the school of hard knocks. ■

*Bill Slutter has been riding street motorcycles since 1974. He attended the Better Biker Program at Los Angeles AFS in 1985. In 1987, the LA AFS Safety Office sent him through the Instructor Preparation Course, and he has taught military and civilian motorcycle safety courses ever since.*

## ROAD & WRECKS

In the six fiscal years from 1998-2003, 310 Air Force people died in car and motorcycle wrecks. Motorcycle mishaps killed 85; privately owned car and truck wrecks ended 200 lives. Fourteen people perished in crashes involving government vehicles. Seven pedestrians and two bicyclists died in motor vehicle collisions.

More than 75 percent of those who died—233—were between 18 and 29 years old. About 17 percent (53) of them were in their 30s, more than six percent (20) were 40-49, and slightly more than one percent (4) were 50 or older. The oldest victim was 58.

The deadliest single hour for motorists was between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m., with 22 deaths occurring then. Eleven p.m. to midnight, and 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., each claimed 20 lives. Five p.m. to midnight accounted for 103 deaths. Eighty-nine died between midnight and 7 a.m.

June was the deadliest month, with 41 airmen losing their lives. August took 34, May claimed 30, and July totaled 28. ■





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<http://afsafety.af.mil./AFSC/posters/postermenu.htm>

# A Way Ahead: 20 AF Safety Council



The "Skid Monster"

MAJ SCOTT MACKENZIE  
MAJ KIM PARKER  
MSGT JOSEPH PAPE JR.  
20 AF/SE  
F.E. Warren AFB WY

**T**he safety culture of the Air Force is changing before our eyes. The Air Force has always made personnel and equipment safety a top priority. In the past, we focused heavily on learning from our mistakes.

We focused on corrective actions based on safety investigation recommendations following mishaps or tragic events. We often said, "If we had only done such and such, the accident probably would not have occurred." Today, our safety focus is shifting toward a more active approach, embedded in risk management. Twentieth Air Force embraced this change, developing a risk management and safety initiative. The 20 AF Safety Council manages our "way ahead."

Safety is an imperfect science. Even safety experts cannot totally define or provide guidance on what makes the perfect safety program. Twentieth Air Force tackled this problem head-on by establishing a Safety Council, focused on accountability, responsibility and planning for contingencies presenting risks to our mission, people and resources. The highly successful Safety Council contributes to an improved safety posture, including the lowest number of on-duty government motor vehicle rollovers our command has seen in 10 years!

The 20 AF Safety Council was born three years ago, following a severe accident, coupled with an increasing Government Motor Vehicle rollover rate. The accident involved a head-on collision between a six-passenger GMV pickup truck and a civilian tractor-trailer. Road and weather conditions were poor, with a ground blizzard, icy roads and limited visibility. A two-member ICBM crew, returning 80 miles to

base after alert duty, drove the GMV pickup truck. The crew sustained severe injuries and narrowly escaped death. Initial help was slow to arrive because no one knew the crew had been in an accident.

After this incident, 20 AF senior leadership brainstormed ways to better manage the risks we face day-to-day, including the alarming increase in GMV rollovers. The result: inception of the 20 AF Safety Council.

Over the last three years, Safety Council initiatives have improved 20 AF safety posture. The council convenes every six months, with Numbered Air Force and wing O-6 leadership attending, as well as the safety community. Commander involvement is the backbone of every strong safety program.

To date, our commanders and safety staffs have attended eight councils and produced more than 100 safety initiatives.

Five 20 AF initiatives have reaped enormous payoffs in lives saved and mission success.

- (1) Equipping the vehicle fleet with global positioning system equipment aids in navigating the over 20 million miles a year we travel through our 45,000 square-mile missile complexes;**
- (2) Standing-up unique transportation control centers at our units to coordinate road and travel conditions and track all missile field-bound trips;**
- (3) Developing specialized gravel-road and skid-car driver-training courses;**
- (4) Creating and using driver's risk-assessment forms; and**
- (5) Providing the wings with written operating instructions on missile-complex travel safety.**

Equipping our military vehicles with GPS technology is a giant leap forward for safety. This, combined with an initiative to stand up a wing TCC, provides an

effective means to safely manage travel and emergency response.

Nearly all GMVs that dispatch to the missile complexes are outfitted with GPS terminals. The GPS units enable commanders and TCCs to access instant information on a vehicle's location, speed and status (i.e., involved in an accident). The GPS units also allow vehicle control centers and vehicle operators to instantly communicate with each other. Wing TCCs can immediately notify teams of road, weather, and construction advisories. They can re-route teams onto safer roads.

Two other noteworthy initiatives resulting from the Safety Council are the gravel-road training courses and the skid-car driver-training program, to help expose drivers to risks associated with winter and rainy driving conditions. Each 20 AF Wing trains drivers on a prepared, controlled gravel-road training course, using vehicles equipped with roll bars and five-point seatbelt harnesses. This course trains drivers to handle treacherous gravel road conditions, including what and what not to do to prevent a rollover. The unique part about this training is qualified instructors actually let students drive into a ditch to give them the experience of what to do to prevent a rollover. Additionally, 20 AF has implemented skid-car, better known as "Skid Monster," training. The "Skid Monster" is a specially designed vehicle outfitted with a remote controlled rear-wheel assembly that skids when an instructor initiates a control lever.

The "Skid Monster" vehicle simulates the loss of rear-wheel control a driver might experience on icy, wet, or gravel roads.

Another positive initiative from the Safety Council is the development of driver's risk-assessment forms. Each 20 AF wing provides a form for drivers to determine risks associated with mission-related travel. The form contains a wide variety of information pertaining to driver's age, experience, fatigue, travel distance, vehicle type, road conditions,

area familiarity, weather and other factors, such as night travel, road types and holiday/weekend travel. These risk-assessment factors are documented, weighed and measured to determine the overall risk a driver and crew face before dispatching to the ICBM complex.

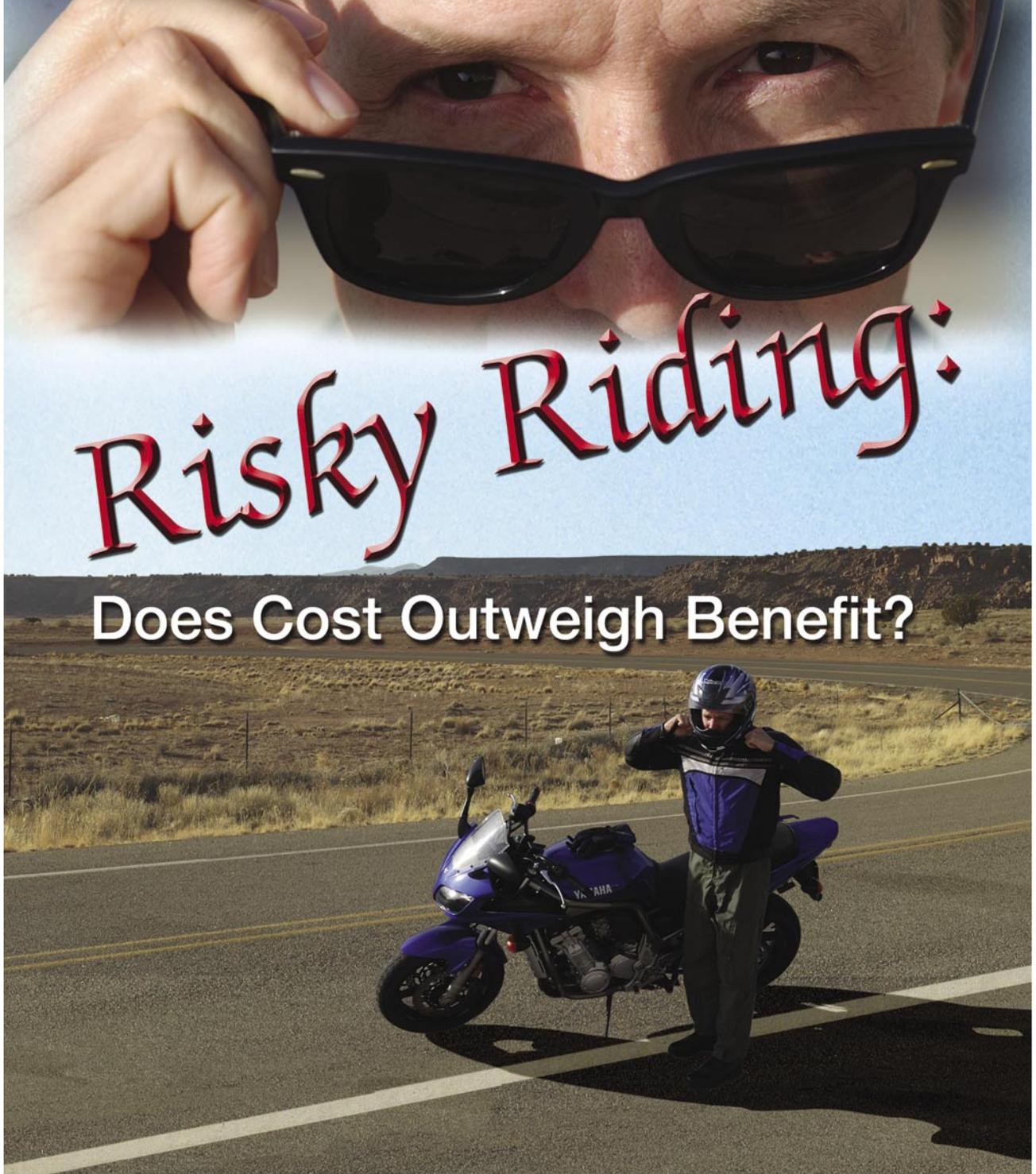
If the risk is moderate to high, mitigation steps are applied to reduce or eliminate the risk to an acceptable level. For example, if a driver scores too risky (high) based on fatigue, a commander, flight leader or supervisor would mitigate the risk by not allowing the tired individual to drive that day. These forms have proven very useful in reducing our mishap rate.

Also, the Safety Council pushed an initiative to write a 20 AF Operating Instruction (OI) for drivers and teams dispatching to the ICBM complex. The OI provides detailed guidance on proper vehicle checkout procedures, determining road conditions, and preparing ORM driver's risk-assessment forms.

The 20 AF Safety Council has truly made a positive impact on safety in our command. Our GMV on-duty rollover rate has been reduced significantly since the council first formed. In 1998, before council formation, based on per-million miles driven, 20 AF experienced a rollover rate as high as 1.16, to a record low of .36 for 2003, a reduction of more than two thirds. In FY03, 20 AF experienced only seven rollovers, compared to 23 in FY98. These seven rollovers resulted in zero fatalities and only minor injuries. To put these numbers in perspective, in 2002, the general public had a rollover rate of 166 per two million miles, while 20 AF had only one rollover per two million miles driven. Not only has the rollover rate improved, but also the severity of injuries has significantly been reduced.

Air Force units clearly benefit when they get top-level commander involvement in safety and mishap prevention efforts. The 20 AF Safety Council has truly contributed to a safer command and safety posture.

If you have questions about the 20 AF Safety Council or the initiatives in this article, call 20 AF/SE at DSN 481-5270/5355. ■



# Risky Riding:

## Does Cost Outweigh Benefit?

### **SMSGT TY FOSTER**

21st Space Wing Public Affairs  
Peterson AFB CO

For as many years as I've been a rider—even longer—I've been concerned about motorcycle safety.

Two months before I bought my first bike, as I was driving my parents' 1970 Chevy pickup, a motorcyclist started to pass me on the right, as I was turning right. As his bike crashed into the side of the truck, everything turned into slow motion.

He flew right over the hood of my truck—30 feet through the air. Waiting to turn at the intersection, two other motorcyclists watched in dismay as this human projectile hurtled toward them, while his

mangled bike careened their way.

He landed face up and unconscious underneath the nearest bike. His right leg had a gash so bad that I thought it had been severed. Pulling the bike off of him, I looked at his helmet-less head. His face, cut by my rearview mirror, was lacerated from the top of his forehead to the tip of his nose—blood pooled over his closed eyes.

His motorcycle lay in the ditch 10 feet away. The Hamm's beer that had been between his legs as he began his impatient pass was in the grass near my parents' truck.

His name, I later learned, was Ricky, and he was alive.

I met him—under better circumstances—about a

year later. It had taken about 300 stitches to fix his wounds, and he had almost lost his leg. He told me it wasn't my fault; he was drunk and had done a stupid thing.

I was 18 years old. I'm 43 now, and I can remember that wreck like it happened yesterday.

Between then and now, I've logged tens of thousands of miles on motorcycles. I've taught motorcycle safety classes at eight sites, in two states, to more than 650 people.

Hardly a day goes by when someone, regardless of rank or position, doesn't approach, e-mail, or call me about some motorcycle-related topic.

Somehow, people learn that I taught motorcycle safety for 11 years, and that I've been riding for about 24 years, so they ask for my advice.

Whether it's an officer who's a new motorcycle owner or an NCO who's rejoining the rider corps, I welcome opportunities to discuss motorcycle safety issues. Usually, I step up on my soapbox.

Whenever someone tells me they want to start riding, I start running through mental checklists to categorize the prospective rider. I evaluate their age, training, experience, philosophy on riding gear, and attitude. It's sort of a risk-management/resource-protection way of thinking.

I'll admit it—I try to dissuade people from riding. Why? Because it's risky, and if you aren't aware of those risks, you can die.

In 2002, 25 of our Air Force riders found that out the hard way. In Class A mishaps, 23 died and two were permanently and totally disabled.

For some, riding too fast for road and traffic conditions is fun. For others, doing wheelies or stoppies in traffic is their idea of cool. There are those who scoff at wearing an approved helmet and other protective clothing. Some even think it's okay to have a drink or two and ride.

These behaviors, and the attitudes that lead to them, elevate exponentially the risks associated with riding.

As supervisors and commanders, we may know a rider to be a great worker and a wonderful family man. But, what does he do when he's out of sight? Is he the one who doesn't wear a helmet when he's riding in a state without helmet laws? Or does she try to put one over on everyone by wearing one of those wannabe helmets—a beanie?

I'd like to say the only people they're affecting when they're maimed or killed in a crash are themselves, but I'd be wrong. Their family has to make its way without them. Their co-workers have to shoulder that additional load to carry out the mission. The nation's security may suffer because of one person's selfish decision to ride irresponsibly.

Well-worn riders, like me, constantly assess low-, moderate-, and high-risk activities during a ride. Each action has a risk cost and a risk benefit. Our training and our experience have taught us that if

the cost outweighs the benefit, we do not take the risk. In other words, we manage the risks we face on a daily basis.

On the other end of the spectrum, 18- to 24-year-old males, and novice riders, often lack the judgment—gained through training and experience—to accurately assess the cost vs. benefit. This is not an inflammatory statement. It is reality. Riders, supervisors and commanders, take heed because, for various reasons, data—both military and civilian—bear out the reality that young male riders are in the high-risk category.

Not one to discriminate, death is tapping on the over-40 rider's shoulder more often, too. Perhaps this is because riders in this age group finally have enough coin to drop on their dream bikes. The call of the open road beckons them. The wind blowing through their receding hair rolls back the years. But reality strikes when they find out—the hard way—that their reflexes aren't what they used to be.

The motorcycle itself is a factor to consider when managing the risks of riding.

Today's motorcycles are high-tech, highly capable, mechanical marvels, with engines ranging from 100 cubic centimeters in some scooters to more than 2000 ccs in some of the land rockets on the market. Higher horsepower, greater stopping capabilities, lighter weights, and eye-catching designs are all effective lures to the new, and sometimes not-so-new, motorcyclist.

In the hands of one who is not mentally or physically proficient, these machines can send a rider on a fast trip to an early grave.

To stay alive, riders must know their abilities as a motorcycle operator, know the mechanical and technological abilities of their machines, and not exceed either of those limits.

Air Force riders must protect themselves, too.

Some of our riders have a misbegotten belief that wearing all the required protective equipment is a matter of choice.

I tell people, "It doesn't really matter what you think about wearing it. You give up that 'choice' when you take your oath." Just as wearing our uniform is a matter of compliance, so too, is wearing all the protective equipment required by military instructions.

It's about our integrity, not our image.

So argue, if you will, about the degrees of protection the required items offer. Will they protect you from serious injury or death in the event of a crash? Maybe, but "maybe" is better than "no."

Even so, nothing we wear will prevent a crash. The most important piece of equipment that will be lodged firmly between our ears.

How can we stem the rising red tide of Air Force motorcycle deaths and injuries?

Supervisors and commanders—you are pivotal in

continued on page 23

# Common Sense

**SSGT ADAM STUMP**  
5 CCG/PA  
Robins AFB GA

**W**hen I was 19, I thought I was Superman. I wasn't delusional, thinking I could leap a building in a single bound or stop a locomotive. I simply thought mishaps wouldn't happen to me. They happened to the other guy. I was somehow invincible.

About a month after my arrival at Holloman AFB, N.M., I decided to go home to Phoenix, Ariz., for the weekend. Even though I had worked a full day, I hopped into my car and drove the eight hours on an unfamiliar series of roads to see my dad and girlfriend. I knew I could make it. I was invincible.

Fortunately, I did make it in one piece, and had a fantastic weekend. I hadn't seen my dad or girlfriend in some time, so I wanted to fit in as much time with them as I could. When Sunday rolled around, my original plan was to go see my girlfriend for a few hours, then go back to my dad's house and sleep for about six hours before I left to go home.

Early Sunday morning, I left to go see my girlfriend, and we found ourselves not wanting to say goodbye. It had been almost six months since we'd seen each other, so instead of returning to my dad's house after lunch to sleep, I ended up staying until almost 6 p.m. I then drove to my dad's and talked to my girlfriend on the phone for a bit before I finally went to bed at 8 p.m.

I couldn't sleep. My girlfriend was distraught about being separated again. I tossed and turned for an hour and a half, then got up to grab a bite to eat

and hit the road at 10 p.m. for the eight-hour trip back to Holloman. I was Superman. I could handle it.

That dumb decision almost cost me. I found myself on the same unfamiliar road going back, and was extremely tired. I could barely stay awake and wasn't attentive. On more than one occasion, I found myself veering off the road.

I made it back to my dorm alive at 6 a.m. Monday, just in time to shower, shave and go to work. I was a complete joke that day. I

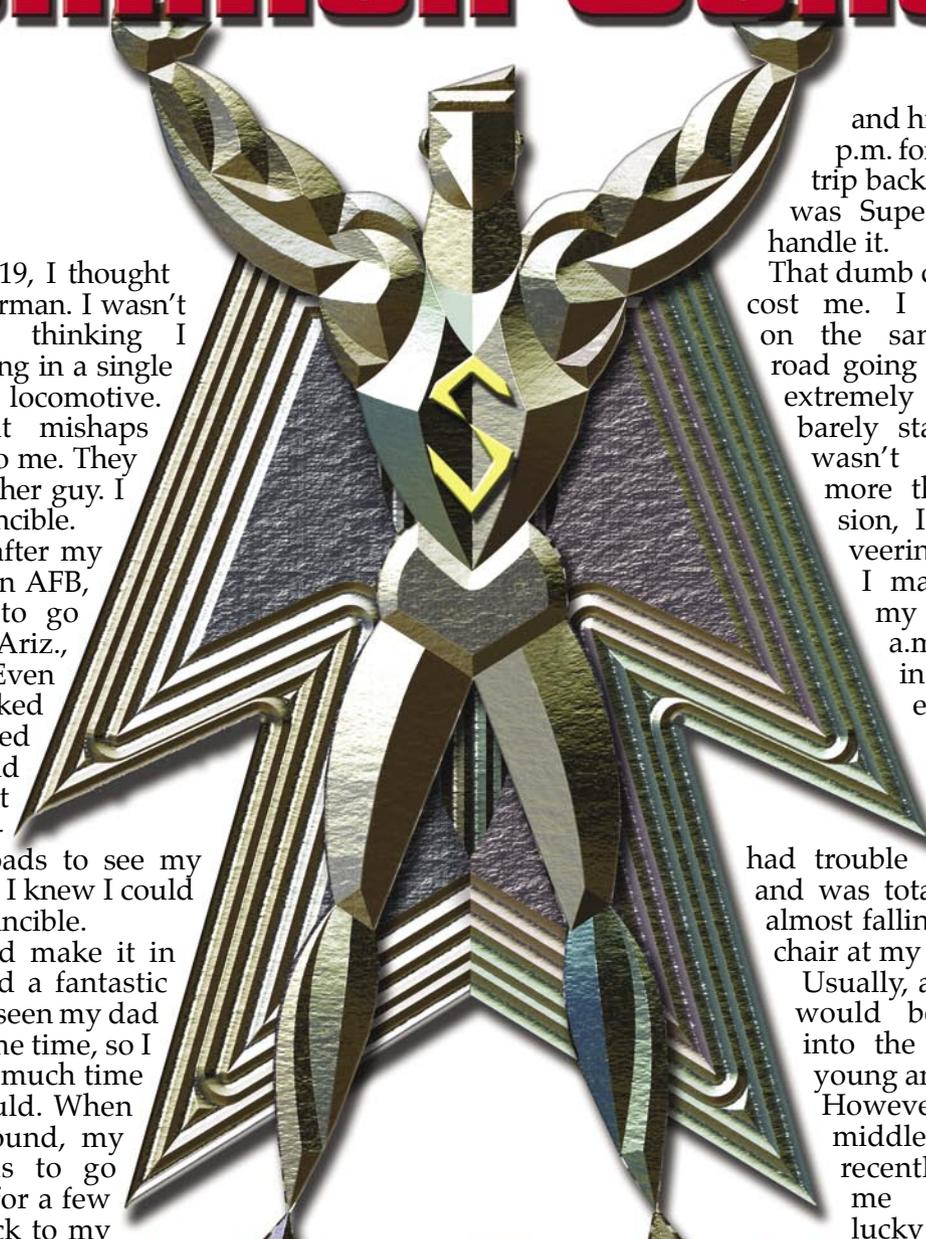
had trouble staying awake and was totally ineffective, almost falling asleep in my chair at my computer.

Usually, a story like this would be filed away into the "when I was young and crazy" days. However, I was in the middle of an accident recently that made me realize how lucky I was.

In July, I came in Monday morning after physical training and was immediately summoned to the group command-

er's office, along with the safety NCO. When we arrived downstairs, we got the news: an airman from one of our squadrons had died.

As the public affairs NCO for the group, I had to find out the details to put together a release for the news media. Over the course of a few hours, I found out the airman had just arrived from technical school, and had traveled home to Florida for the weekend to visit his family. Instead of leaving dur-



## Is More Powerful Than Superman

ing the day, he left late Sunday night, trying to make it home for a little rest before work Monday morning. He was on an unfamiliar road and lost control of his car. The car rolled over and he died from head injuries. He had been awake more than 12 hours and was trying to drive a long distance back.

As I uncovered the details, I thought about the chilling resemblances to my case. Young airman visiting home. Long distance. Limited sleep. Unfamiliar road. The comparison was uncanny. It was also unsettling. That could've been me.

That's common sense. But that's what safety is about—common sense. There are fancy terms like personal risk management, but you have to be able to use common sense to realize you're not Superman, and that you need to use sound judgment and know your limitations.

Although it was 10 years between the two incidents, there was a lesson to learn. It's something that I remember every day and tell others every chance I get: You can pretend to be Superman all you want, but those fictional powers won't save you from a mishap. Common sense will. ■

### *Risky Riding* continued from page 21

developing good judgment in your young motorcyclists. Be involved in their training and help them develop sound riding habits. Know who all of your riders are—both on- and off-road enthusiasts. Document their training, check their protective gear, and assess the mechanical soundness of their machines. If you're not sure, check with your base safety office.

Don't assume just because you never see someone riding on base that they don't ride. The Air Force has an underground riding population out there that we need to bring into the fold. The only way we can do that is to know our people and for them to know and trust us.

Novice riders: Start your riding career out right by attending an approved motorcycle safety course. Apply those mental and physical street-riding strategies to heighten your safety and the enjoyment of motorcycling. Riding may be risky, but it doesn't have to be reckless.

Experienced riders: Serve as the role models for your young counterparts. Lead by example in wearing the protective equipment required by the Air Force, both on and off base.

In the end, I realize there is no panacea—no cure-all—to eliminate Air Force motorcycle deaths and injuries. It doesn't matter how many articles I write or workshops, inspections and demonstrations I conduct. As involved in their riders' lives as supervisors and commanders can be, they can't make that decision that might cost a life—that responsibility is on the rider.

When riders decide to straddle their bikes, start

## ROAD AWARENESS OR...ROAD RASH

**LT COL HARRY L. DRUTOK**  
HQ AFSC/SEW

This motorcycle incident happened years ago, but remains vivid in my mind. It was a beautiful Louisiana morning and I was riding my Honda 550 on my way to work. I was a fairly experienced motorcycle rider and had, at that point, never experienced a motorcycle mishap before. I considered myself a safe rider, always wore a helmet and obeyed traffic laws.

Anyway, back to the story. I was really not paying much attention to the road conditions and was thinking more about what I would do when I got to work. I was going through a traffic light and making a gentle right turn, when I felt the motorcycle start to slide on me. I felt I was going down and I suppose I overcorrected. The bike got cocked under me, and the next thing I knew, my motorcycle and I were sliding through the traffic light.

After I stopped sliding down the road, I ran over and righted my motorcycle. The gas cap had popped open and gasoline was pouring all over the road and the hot engine. Luckily, nothing caught fire. I was pretty scraped up and had torn a hole in the back of my blue pants. I don't know if I was more embarrassed because my underwear was showing, or because I was so stupid and dumped my motorcycle in front of hundreds of people.

When I got up, I noticed loose gravel on the road that I had not seen. If I was paying more attention to riding and less attention to thinking about work, it wouldn't have happened. My motorcycle was not really damaged too badly—just bent the mirror and put a few scratches on the gas tank. My legs and backside were scraped up as well. My ego was also a little bruised, but I guess I got off easy.

Moral of the story...pay attention to road conditions at all times. ■

them, shift into gear and roll onto the road, they've accepted the risks—whether they know it or not—and the responsibilities for whatever may occur. Their split-second decision to speed up, slow down, pass, swerve or not to ride after a drink of alcohol is in their hands—or, rather, it's in their heads.

They have a choice to make every millisecond they're on the road. Ride responsibly and live—or die by the motorcycle.

I choose to live. Do you? ■

*For 11 years, SMSgt Foster taught Motorcycle Safety Foundation courses. He has also conducted riding workshops, safety demonstrations, written many articles and, most recently, participated in the USAF Motorcycle Safety Summit.*



# Blocking Mixed Messages

**LT COL BLANE ARMSTRONG**  
HQ AFSC/SEME

I've heard about safety my entire career, but only recently have I begun taking to heart the messages from the safety community.

This made me think about Generation X. I've heard you can't get a message across to them. "They believe in extreme sports—how can you teach them safety?"

Let's try this: Say there's a car with four friends in it. In 20 years, maybe only one of the people in that car will be alive. Why? Because we treat safety like church—we give it maybe an hour a week, and then we live our lives the way we want.

In high school, I was part of a group of five friends. Of that five, I'm one of two survivors. All three of the fatalities involved drunk driving. One of them included a five-year-old son. My friends were not the drinking drivers; they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

How is this related to us in the Air Force?

We are continually bombarded with safety messages, clever slogans and images of mangled automobiles and motorcycles. I don't think we can claim this is a "shock and awe" bombing campaign. Too many people don't seem to hear the message, or the message is mixed.

Think back on your images of military life—hard work, hard fighting, and hard drinking, maybe? How did the Air Force recruit you? Did we show you action images? Did we have an aerial demo team shock you with skill and noise? Did it look risky? Did you read "Air Force" on the side of a NASCAR racer as it competed with all the beer, cereal and laundry detergent cars?



In the daily reality of the Air Force, we avoid confrontation, because we don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. Some might see that having another person correct the behavior their parents should have corrected as discrimination, or "picking on you."

We miss our target. We work 8-5 at home station, some units devote a day each week or month to training, and only a small percentage of us carry arms, or actually help deliver weapons to our enemies. Don't get me wrong—it takes a whole team to deliver war to our enemies, but it's just a small percentage who are actually involved in combat.

Even our leaders are giving us mixed messages. How many of us have had a mandatory safety meeting just before a three-day weekend? How many have left that mandatory session on the evils of drinking and driving, and then gone straight to the base service station for gas? Have you noticed how there will be a beer-sale tent in the parking lot of the service station every three-day weekend? Mixed message? You bet!

In the late 1970s or early 80s, the Air Force made a now-common decree that drinking and driving is



ber there will be a consequence for what you do. Give safety more than lip service and more than your attention once a week. Make safety follow you home—maybe even give it a ride.

You will either have to live with your decisions, or die from them. Your choice. ■

## EKU Air Force ROTC Cadets Rescue Car Crash Victims

**CADET ASHLEY DAY-HAYNES**  
Air Force ROTC, Detachment 290  
University of Kentucky

*Editor's note: This story illustrates the Air Force core value of "Service Before Self." Cadet Day-Haynes's commander is Col Mark Roland, the AFSC Chief of Education and Media, and editor-in-chief of Road & Rec, from September 2000 to July 2003. He has obviously taken the "Safety Mindset" with him to his current assignment, and is passing it on to his students.*

On Sept. 30, 2003, I was one of a group of Air Force ROTC cadets preparing for physical training. As Eastern Kentucky University students, we do our cadet training at the University of Kentucky. That morning, we began our usual cross-town journey to UK, where we meet our cadet colleagues for PT.

Driving north on Interstate 75, we came across a major wreck. A driver, having a seizure, had stopped in the middle of the three-lane highway. When the stalled truck's lights went out, the situation became critical. Before the driver and passenger could react, an approaching vehicle struck their truck, knocking it deep into the nearby trees.

Within minutes, my fellow cadets and I arrived at the scene. Cadets Pete Shelton, Ricky Hopkins and I stopped to see how we could help. With help from a witness, Cadet Shelton, a certified emergency medical technician in Virginia, found the truck. After determining that the passengers were conscious, Cadet Shelton and I flagged down the approaching ambulance.

To help the passengers, Cadets Shelton and Hopkins crossed the knee-deep muddy trench to help remove the pair from the vehicle, getting them stable and into the ambulances.

With the passengers en route to the hospital, we cadets continued our morning drive to PT, thankful that we'd been able to help someone in need. ■

not approved. Then someone had the "great" idea to consolidate shoppettes and Class VI stores. The result: nearly drive-through liquor sales with a big tent and neon signs advertising alcohol, all at the gas pump. Kind of puts a new meaning on "convenience store," doesn't it? We are sending a mixed message—don't do it, but look how easy and tempting we can make it look.

So, you're bombarded with safety, and then we shoot alcohol directly at you. What choice do you have? Make a choice; relate the consequences with your actions. What goes up must come down.

Guaranteed, there are consequences for every action. Think before you drink. Stay off roads populated with drunks. Between the base and the bar, anywhere there are cruisers, between the ball game and the main highway home, Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, July 4. People get killed on holiday weekends.

Put your melon to use looking for some risks you don't need to take. Reorganize your social life to avoid costly mistakes.

The Air Force has been trying to convert you to the religion of risk management. If nothing else, remem-

# MOTORCYCLE SAFETY SEARCH-A-WORD

1ST LT TONY WICKMAN  
ALCOM/J74  
ELMENDORF AFB AK



Balance  
Chain  
Engine  
Gas  
Goggles  
Helmet  
License  
Motor  
Physically Fit  
Race  
Safety  
Speed  
Signal  
Training  
Visor

Brakes  
Dirt  
Fluids  
Glove  
Harley  
Indian  
Maintenance  
Oil  
Reflective Vest  
Riding  
Skills  
Sport  
Tire  
Tune Up  
Wheel



# Texas Wing King's Motorcycling Tips



**COL MARTIN NEUBAUER**  
17 TRW/CC  
Goodfellow AFB TX

*Editor's note: Although the incidents described here refer to events at one base, the lessons learned, tips and reminders apply universally to all motorcyclists.*

**W**e've dodged at least two bullets this month, as two of our Wing riders were involved in accidents. Both are lucky enough to live to ride another day, but either of these two accidents could have been fatal. In the first one, a rider took out a deer. In the second, a driver ran a red light and struck the rider in an intersection. While neither rider was at fault, there are a few lessons we can take away, from an Operational Risk Management point of view.

In the case of the deer strike, it's no mystery that there are hundreds of thousands of deer in this part of Texas, and they're on the move. They tend to move in the morning and evening hours, which is when our accident took place (early evening). This rider made the choice to ride his bike, but anyone who's driven the highways around here can tell you there's a 100 percent chance of seeing deer in or near the roadway, and a very high chance of an impact. That accident was preventable.

In the second accident, our rider was riding at

night, in the rain. He did nothing wrong, once on the bike, but that was another choice that might have been made differently. You all know how few drivers see you in the daytime, and at night, it's much, much worse. You basically become invisible, and if a driver's windshield wipers are on, it's even worse.

If you choose to ride at night or in the rain, you're dramatically increasing your risk, and you can control that by choosing not to ride under adverse conditions. If you choose to ride a bike in the morning or evening in deer country, you're making a deliberate choice to raise your risk. You're free to choose, but you're also responsible for the consequences of those choices.

If you choose to ride at night or in adverse conditions, improve your odds by wearing the brightest gear you can. White is best. White helmets can help, as can a white jacket with a reflective vest. And you really should look into halogen or LED lights, which can help as well. This is YOUR choice, so make a good one.

Also this week, I've seen two riders without contrasting vests or jackets in the daytime. That's illegal. Please police yourselves so our SF troops don't have to. They have much better things to do!

Ride safe! ■

*Source: American Patriot News, Issue 3, Dec 2003.*

# Spring Training, Not Straining, For Softball

**JOHN COCHRAN**  
Managing Editor

**W**hen I was growing up, I loved playing baseball. My dream was to play shortstop for the St. Louis Cardinals. Then, when I failed the tryouts for my local Little League team two years in a row, I knew that my chances of realizing this dream were less than slim, but I still enjoyed playing recreational softball.

Later, when I was on active duty in the Air Force, I played—well, let's say I showed up for the games—on squadron teams at a couple of different bases.

During batting practice one day, I took a mighty swing at a pitch, and drove a sharp

grinder down the third-base line. The ball took an ugly hop on the dirt infield and smashed our team's starting third baseman right in the mouth, dislodging several of his front teeth.

After an emergency visit to the base dental clinic, and several follow-ups, his pearly whites regained their normal position and function. Certainly, a mouth-guard would have been a good piece of protective gear for him, but we simply didn't think of it before this incident. Since then, the Air Force has highlighted the importance of wearing mouth-guards while playing sports.

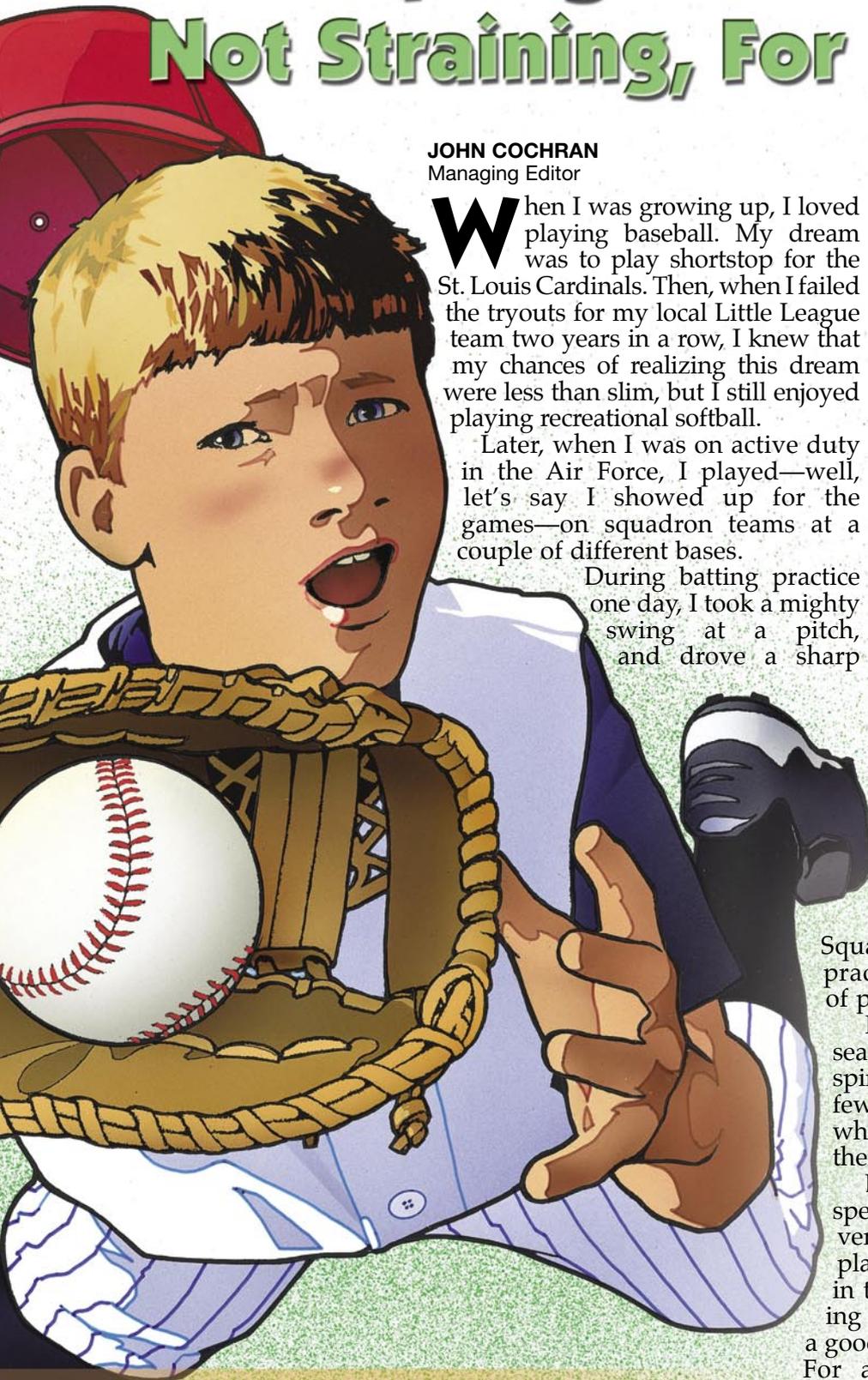
That softball season proved to be my last—even though my teammate recovered well, my feeling of responsibility for his injury troubled me, and I gave away my glove and other gear.

For those who still play the game, spring brings the start of intramural softball season at Air Force bases around the world. Squadrons form their teams, schedule practices, and, for those with plenty of players, even hold tryouts.

For some of us, the winter "off-season" brings on creaky joints, stiff spines, wobbly knees, and maybe a few extra psi in the spare tire. That's why softball players need to prepare their bodies for the game.

Beyond overall conditioning, sport-specific exercises can help people prevent injury when they practice and play their chosen games. Space limits in the magazine keep us from including them here, but we can point you to a good source on the Web.

For a video demonstration of "The Throwers 10 Exercise Program," designed to exercise the major muscles necessary for throwing, see the American Sports Medicine Institute web site, at <http://www.asmi.org/SportsMed/throwing/thrower10.html>. ■



## **Injury Facts**

From the National Athletic Trainers Association:

- More than half of all sports injuries occur at practice.
- Among those injured while playing sports, 60-70 percent suffer minor injuries that could have been prevented with proper sports safety training.

# Bird Strikes Are One Thing, But **Moose** Strikes?



**MSGT JOE A. JOSEPH**  
354 FW/SEG  
Eielson AFB AK

In preparation for an air show at Eielson AFB, Alaska, a senior airman assigned to the 354th LRS and several coworkers were tasked to ferry rental vehicles to the base from Fairbanks. After being dropped off at the rental agency, they started their 25-mile trip back to the base. Due to the number of vehicles needed, two trips would be necessary. The first trip was uneventful, and there was no reason to think the next one would be any different. Little did they know that one of them would be involved in a near-fatal accident with a moose.

Traveling the speed limit of 55 mph, and only a couple of miles from the base, the senior airman figured he would soon be home relaxing. About a mile from the base, the vehicle rounded a slight bend in the road, when the driver noticed something out of the corner of his eye. Before he could react, a moose ran directly into the path of his vehicle. With no time to stop or swerve, the senior airman scored a direct hit on the moose at 55 mph.

He didn't remember anything after that. He was later told that when he hit the 350-pound moose, the bumper took the legs out from under the moose and the animal crashed through his windshield, and then rolled over the top of his vehicle. The moose landed 100 feet away from the point of impact, and the vehicle rolled to a stop, amazingly still in the lane the senior airman was traveling in before the collision.

When the emergency responders arrived, they had to cut and pry the top of the car from around the driver to get him out. At the hospital, the senior airman was diagnosed with several fractured vertebrae in his neck and was soon flown to a hospital in Anchorage for special care.

Safety officials determined from the driver's speed and the speed of the moose, up to 30 mph, that the

collision was unavoidable. Fortunately, the senior airman was wearing his seatbelt. Though the moose did cause extensive damage to the vehicle and injury to the senior airman, it is unlikely the driver would have survived had he not worn his seatbelt.

On average, drivers strike 300 moose each year on Alaska's roads. Many of these collisions result in motorists being seriously injured or killed. What can be done to reduce the risk of collisions with wildlife? Be aware of the hazards wildlife pose in your area and be prepared to take defensive measures. Animals are unpredictable, so when you see them alongside the road, slow down and be prepared to stop if the animal darts into the road.

Although these actions will reduce your risk of being in a collision with wildlife, they will not eliminate the risk. That is why it is so important to wear your safety belt. ■





# Snapshot on Safety

**MSGT BRYAN PUTTONEN**  
HQ AFSC/SEG

## Automobile Fatalities

- An airman first class was driving a pickup truck on a rural two-lane road at 5 a.m. He veered off the road and struck a group of trees. His estimated speed was 60 mph in a 45 mph zone and he had likely fallen asleep at the wheel.
- An airman first class had taken a 320-mile trip to visit relatives. Around midnight Sunday, he was returning to show for work Monday morning. He was traveling down an unfamiliar road at high speed. He lost control trying to stop at an intersection, rolled the vehicle, and suffered fatal head injuries.
- A senior airman was driving at high speed at 11:30 p.m. He entered a curve, lost control, skidded into the oncoming lane and was struck by an oncoming car. His vehicle rolled several times and he suffered fatal injuries. He was not wearing a seat belt.
- Two airmen were traveling in a car to their first duty station. They failed to yield to a tractor-trailer at an intersection and were struck broadside. Both

sustained fatal injuries. One airman was not wearing a seat belt.

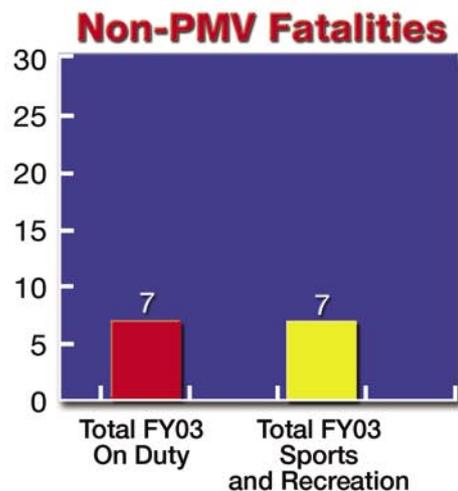
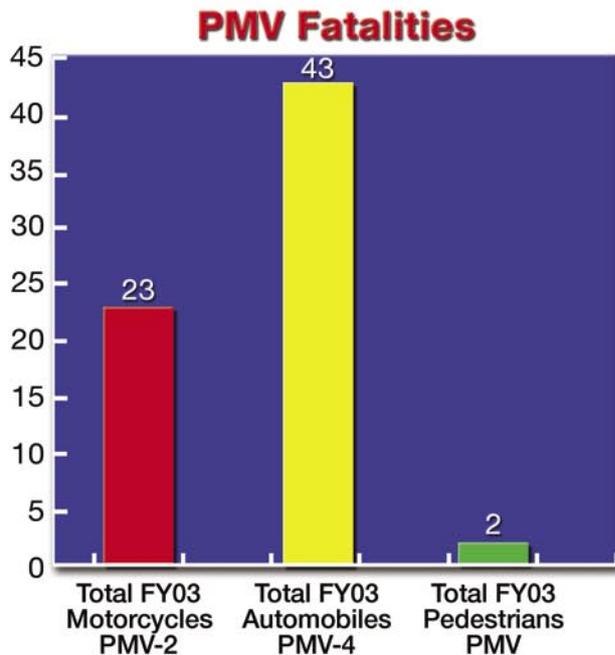
- An airman first class was consuming alcoholic drinks with friends in the dormitory. She left the dorm to drive her car. She was speeding on a two-lane road and lost control in a curve. The vehicle struck several trees. Her blood alcohol level was determined to be .25.

- An airman first class was driving on a rural two-lane road. The posted speed limit was 65 mph, with no reduction for a construction zone. The airman lost control after striking some loose debris and several potholes. He sideswiped a car and then struck a semi tractor-trailer.

- An airman first class was operating his mother's car a few minutes past midnight. He was familiar with the roads in his hometown area. He came upon a 25-mph curve at high speed, left the road, and struck an oak tree on the driver's side.

- An airman basic and airman first class were driving approximately 100 mph in a 55-mph zone. The driver lost control in a turn and crashed into a tree, killing both of the airmen. Before this accident, the two were participating in street racing.

- A technical sergeant was driving southbound on a four-lane divided highway at 3:45 p.m. He changed lanes from the left to the right and struck a vehicle in the right lane. He



## 4th Qtr FY03 Update





lost control, slid into the northbound lanes and was struck by oncoming traffic. His blood alcohol level was .22.

- A master sergeant was traveling on a two-lane highway. She had been on the road for approximately 12 hours and it was 7:25 p.m. She slowed at an intersection to make a left turn and was struck by a semi tractor-trailer that was passing her on the left.

- A staff sergeant was driving during a light rain. She was returning to work at an estimated 10 mph over the speed limit. She encountered a curve in the road, lost control, and slid into a tree that was three feet from the edge of the road.

- A senior airman was operating a motor vehicle and stopped at a four-way stop intersection. She made a left turn and was struck on the driver's side door by a vehicle that ran the stop sign at a high speed.

### Motorcycle Fatalities

- A lieutenant was on leave after completing technical training. He was riding a 500cc all-terrain vehicle (ATV) on sand dunes. He had previous riding experience and had ridden at the same park before. He crested a dune and lost control on the descent, suffering a fractured neck. He was not wearing a helmet.

- An airman first class decided to visit a girlfriend 285 miles away, even though it was past midnight. He was riding a 600cc sport bike he had owned for about one year. He was about 40 miles from the destination when he veered across the centerline and struck a vehicle head-on. Alcohol was not a factor.

- A technical sergeant had recently purchased a 1200cc motorcycle. He had been riding a 1000cc motorcycle for five years, but had not attended the mandatory Air Force-provided motorcycle safety training. He was turning a sharp corner and crossed into the oncoming lane. A full-size pickup came around the corner and struck him head-on.

- A staff sergeant was riding a 1000cc motorcycle on a narrow (15 feet wide) road. He accelerated to about 70 mph, when a pickup truck pulled in front of him. He struck the vehicle at approximately 30 mph and suffered fatal head injuries. The operator was an inexperienced rider and had owned the motorcycle for less than six months.

- A lieutenant was riding his 1000cc motorcycle with a group of riders. He was negotiating a curve below the speed limit. He failed to maintain control, dropped the bike and slid into the oncoming lane. He was struck by an oncoming pickup truck.

- A staff sergeant was riding his 1000cc motorcycle at 1:50 a.m. He was an experienced rider and was attending a large motorcycle rally. He was not wearing a helmet and was intoxicated. As he drove

down an interstate on-ramp, he struck a pedestrian who was crossing the road. He died of head injuries from the impact with the pedestrian.

- A technical sergeant was operating a 900cc motorcycle at 1:50 a.m. He was traveling on an interstate highway at an estimated speed of 100 mph. He lost control and was thrown into a guardrail. The operator was not wearing a helmet and was operating the motorcycle on a state permit that does not allow night riding.

- A lieutenant was operating his 600cc motorcycle without a license and without the required Air Force-provided motorcycle safety training. He had ridden the motorcycle for approximately 600 miles since buying it. With excessive leaning, he changed lanes in traffic and lost control. He hit a curb and was ejected into a guardrail.

- A technical sergeant was operating a 1450cc motorcycle. He had a blood-alcohol level of .078. He attempted to make a left turn at an intersection without yielding the right-of-way. He was struck by a pickup truck. He was not wearing a helmet.

### Non-Traffic Fatalities

- A major was backing his sailboat into a parking location at a yacht club. The parking area had an overhead power line hazard, marked by an orange sign on one pole. He was backing without a spotter and the mast contacted the power line. He exited the vehicle and was fatally electrocuted.

- A colonel was piloting a small private aircraft from a rural airport. The Cessna was seen taking off, possibly entering a stall, and then crashing into some trees. The colonel suffered fatal injuries.

- An airman first class and two friends were riding ATVs at 1:40 a.m. The airman was intoxicated. The group went around a cable that blocked access to a riding path along some railroad tracks. They rode for a distance and returned. The airman did not remember the cable and struck it at an estimated 50-60 mph.

- An airman was swimming in a river with friends. Participants lost sight of the airman as he was moving down the shore in an attempt to swim out and retrieve his tube that had gotten away from him. He was found drowned.

### On-Duty Fatalities

- A technical sergeant was a passenger in a government motor vehicle. The vehicle was involved in a three-vehicle collision, with all the vehicles traveling in the same direction.

- A senior airman was operating a government semi tractor-trailer loaded with munitions. He was negotiating a curve when the vehicle turned over on its left side, causing fatal head injuries. ■



## *Road & Rec Magazine* Reader Survey Is On The Web

Your opinion counts! While you're surfing the Net, please take a few moments to fill out the new *Road & Rec Magazine* reader survey. Your responses to these 12 questions will help us focus on issues that are important to our readers.

To make finding the survey easy, we've posted it in two places. It's on the HQ Air Force Safety Center home page (<http://afsafety.af.mil>), and you can also find it on the *Road & Rec Magazine* page ([http://afsafety.af.mil/magazine/htdocs/r\\_rfirst.htm](http://afsafety.af.mil/magazine/htdocs/r_rfirst.htm)).

Thanks for your time and attention. We appreciate your feedback.

