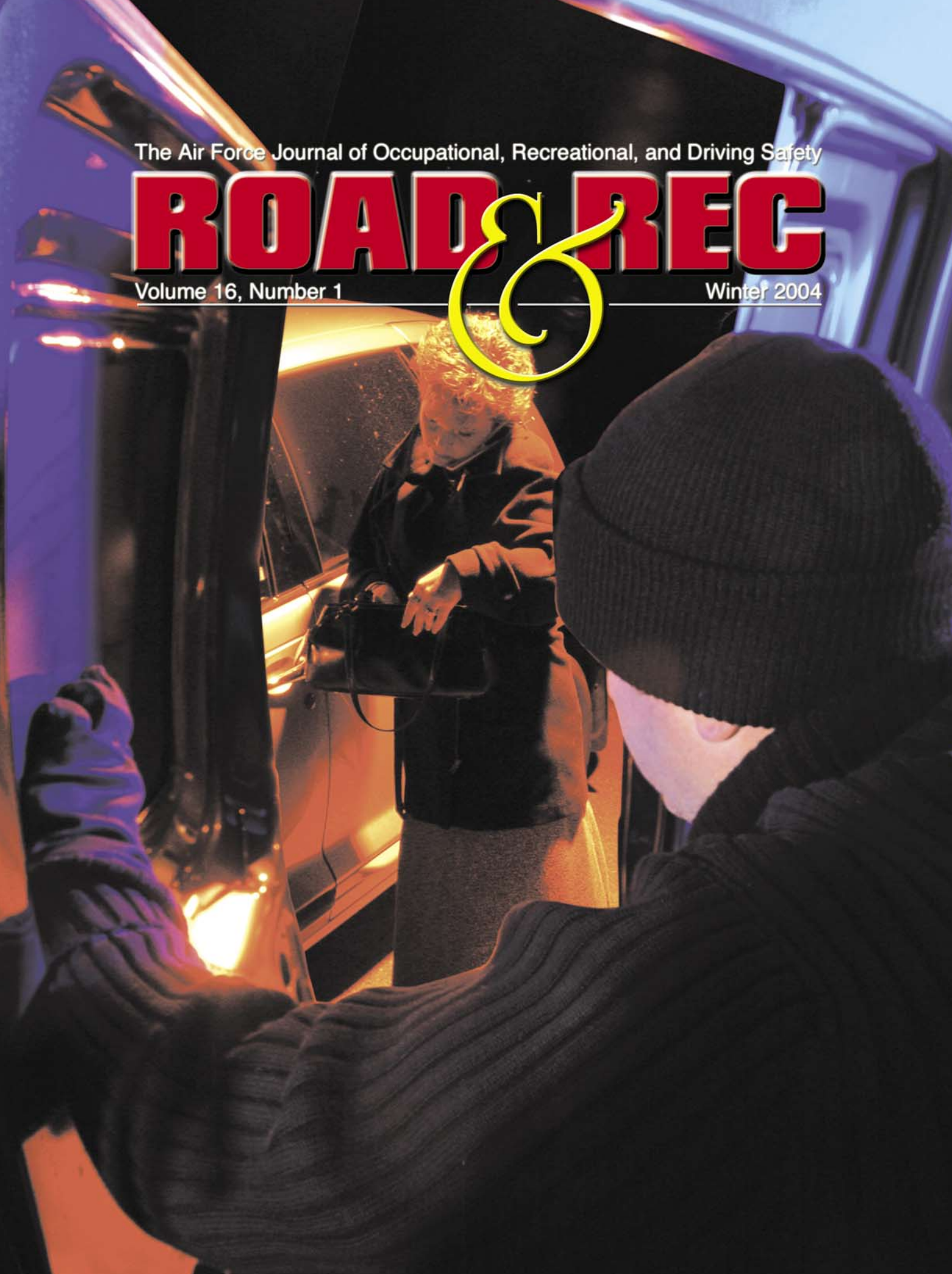


The Air Force Journal of Occupational, Recreational, and Driving Safety

ROAD & REC

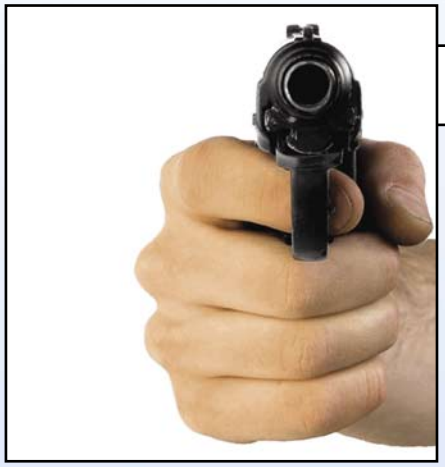
Volume 16, Number 1 Winter 2004

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

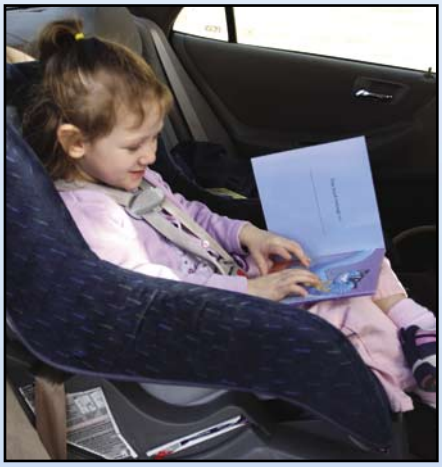
ROAD & REC

Volume 16, Number 1 WINTER 2004

AIR FORCE RECURRING PUBLICATION 91-2



page 4



page 24

page 30

Features

Departments

USAF front cover by TSgt Michael Featherston
USAF back cover by SSgt Suzanne M. Jenkins

Factoids...

Cruise (Out Of) Control?

There's a story going around about the danger of using your car's cruise control when driving on wet or icy roads, that using cruise control can make a hydroplaning situation worse, even causing a loss of control. At least one law enforcement agency warns against it—the South Dakota Highway Patrol. (For more information go to: http://hp.state.sd.us/deskof/hp58.htm.)

To us, it seems to only be common sense that when you're on slick pavement, you should be in total control of your vehicle. That means both hands on the wheel, and your right foot controlling your speed and braking—and no cruise.

Keel Moose

This car hit a moose. (More to come from Eielson AFB.)

Pile It High

Shoveling snow is strenuous…

—If you have a heart problem, consult a doctor before you shovel snow.

—Don't shovel after eating, consuming alcohol, or while smoking.

—Pace yourself.

—Don't try to lift too much at once.

—If the snow is too heavy to lift, push it like a snowplow.

—Use your legs when you lift.

—Take frequent breaks.

Cold Enough For Ya?

Wind Chill Chart

Temperature (°F)

Wind (mph)	Calm	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	-5	-10	-15	-20	-25	-30	-35	-40	-45
5		36	31	25	19	13	7	1	-5	-11	-16	-22	-28	-34	-40	-46	-52	-57	-63
10		34	27	21	15	9	3	-4	-10	-16	-22	-28	-35	-41	-47	-53	-59	-66	-72
15		32	25	19	13	6	0	-7	-13	-19	-26	-32	-39	-45	-51	-58	-64	-71	-77
20		30	24	17	11	4	-2	-9	-15	-22	-29	-35	-42	-48	-55	-61	-68	-74	-81
25		29	23	16	9	3	-4	-11	-17	-24	-31	-37	-44	-51	-58	-64	-71	-78	-84
30		28	22	15	8	1	-5	-12	-19	-26	-33	-39	-46	-53	-60	-67	-73	-80	-87
35		28	21	14	7	0	-7	-14	-21	-27	-34	-41	-48	-55	-62	-69	-76	-82	-89
40		27	20	13	6	-1	-8	-15	-22	-29	-36	-43	-50	-57	-64	-71	-78	-84	-91
45		26	19	12	5	-2	-9	-16	-23	-30	-37	-44	-51	-58	-65	-72	-79	-86	-93
50		26	19	12	4	-3	-10	-17	-24	-31	-38	-45	-52	-60	-67	-74	-81	-88	-95
55		25	18	11	4	-3	-11	-18	-25	-32	-39	-46	-54	-61	-68	-75	-82	-89	-97
60		25	17	10	3	-4	-11	-19	-26	-33	-40	-48	-55	-62	-69	-76	-84	-91	-98

Frostbite Times: 30 Minutes | 10 Minutes | 5 Minutes

Wind Chill (°F) = 35.74 + 0.6215T - 35.75 ($V^{0.16}$) + 0.4275T ($V^{0.16}$)

Where T = Air Temperature (°F) and V = Wind Speed (mph)

Effective 11/01/01

Chart from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Weather Service

ROAD & REC

Vol. 16, Number 1 WINTER 2004

GENERAL JOHN P. JUMPER
Chief of Staff, USAF

MAJOR GEN KENNETH W. HESS
Chief of Safety, USAF

COL KIRBY HUNOLT
Director, Safety Education and Media
Editor-in-Chief
DSN 246-2968

JERRY ROOD
Chief, Media Branch and Managing Editor
DSN 246-0950

MRS. PAT RIDEOUT
Editorial Assistant
DSN 246-1983

FELICIA M. MORELAND
Electronic Design Director
DSN 246-5655

TSGT MICHAEL FEATHERSTON
Photo Editor
DSN 246-0986

Web page address for the Air Force Safety Center:
http://safety.kirtland.af.mil

Commercial Prefix (505) 846-XXXX
E-Mail – jerry.rood@kirtland.af.mil

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
CHIEF OF SAFETY, USAF

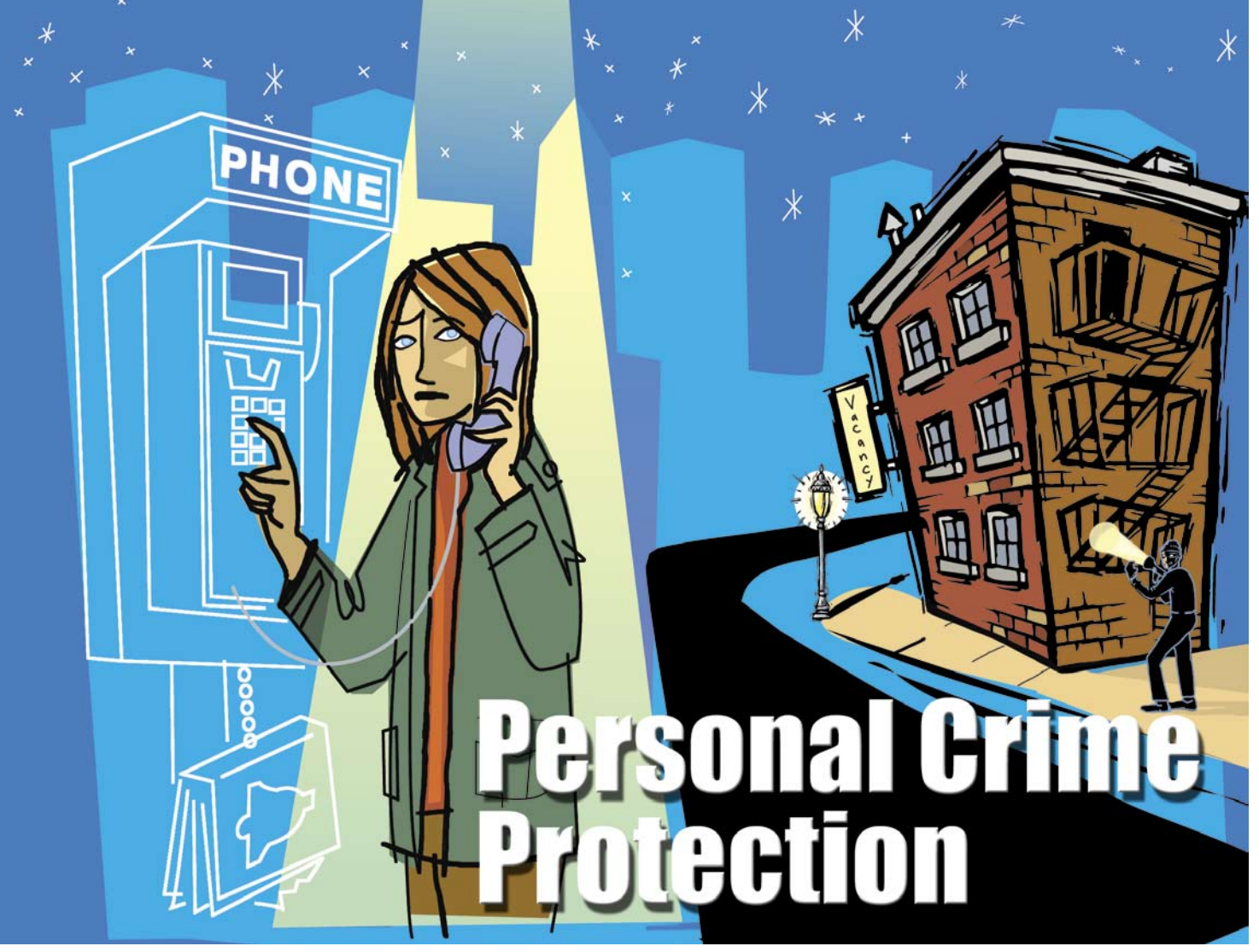
PURPOSE — ***Road & Rec*** is published quarterly for the prevention of vehicle and other ground mishaps. The contents are not directive unless so stated. **REPRINTS —** Air Force organizations may reprint articles from Road & Rec without further authorization. Non-Air Force organizations must advise the Editor of the intended use of the material prior to reprinting. Such actions will ensure complete accuracy of material amended in light of most recent developments. The inclusion of names of any specific commercial product, commodity, or service in this publication is for information purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the Air Force. Certain individuals shown in this publication are not members of the Air Force and therefore do not conform to Air Force grooming standards. **DISTRIBUTION —** One copy for each five members of the USAF. Air Force units must contact **Mrs. Pat Rideout at HQ AFSC/SEMM, Voice – DSN 246-1983, Fax – DSN 246-0931, E-Mail – Patricia.Rideout@kirtland.af.mil,** or by letter to:

***Road & Rec* Magazine**
HQ Air Force Safety Center
9700 G Avenue SE, Ste 282A
Kirtland AFB NM 87117-5670

to establish or change requirements. Back issues of the magazine are on limited availability from HQ AFSC/SEMM.

POSTAL INFORMATION — ***Road & Rec*** (ISSN 1055-7725) is published quarterly by HQ AFSC/SEMM, 9700 "G" Avenue, SE, Kirtland AFB NM 87117-5670. Periodicals postage paid at Albuquerque NM, and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Road & Rec, Attn: Editorial Assistant, HQ AFSC/SEMM, 9700 "G" Avenue, SE, Kirtland AFB NM 87117-5670.

CONTRIBUTIONS
Editor
Road & Rec
HQ AFSC/SEMM
9700 G Avenue SE, Ste 282A
Kirtland AFB NM 87117-5670



Personal Crime Protection

JERRY ROOD
Managing Editor

(Editor's note: There was enough information in the briefing described in this article to fill this entire magazine—and then some. The following is only a sampling of the facts presented by the National Crime Prevention Task Force. See the note at the end for more on this organization.)

"We're all alike," said the retired policeman. "We believe violent crime won't touch us."

The cop, a representative from the National Crime Prevention Task Force (NCPTF), speaks to groups all over America, explaining why that attitude is in error. This briefing, to personnel at Kirtland AFB, NM, presented a wealth of facts on the problem of violent crime in America, and the ways to prevent it.

Dangerous World

One startling statistic cited by the NCPTF spokesman was that 58 percent of the crimes in this country are committed by young people under the age of 17: "I've seen kids as young as 10, 11 or 12 years old doing crimes."

A lot of crime is gang-related, and *all* gangs are involved in crimes, he said. Some gangs have initiations where certain crimes—robbery, even murder—are requirements to join the gang.

Increasingly, kids are carrying weapons—knives and even guns—into school. He cited one grade school-age child who was discovered carrying a Mac-11 submachine gun, and another who was found with a folding automatic weapon with several 30-round magazines—the kind that are available only for sale to law enforcement.

Police have found such nasty weapons as knives hidden in handles of hairbrushes and in lipsticks, and one even found an 18-inch blade hidden inside a metal baton that was taken from a criminal.

Loose Lips…

Of course, you many never encounter an armed assailant. Being the victim of a burglary is much more common, and criminals have many ways to get personal information they can use to gain access to your home.

Digital Illustration by Felicia Moreland

One method the "bad guys" use is calling on the telephone and requesting information in a phony "survey" that asks for personal or home data. Another is to offer a free meal at a restaurant and then burglarizing your home on the night you go to the restaurant (to find, of course, that the restaurant knows nothing about any freebie).

Criminals can get around your alarm system by, for instance, calling you in the middle of the night (when you're at your most groggy) and saying, "This is the (ABCXYZ) Security Service. Did you accidentally set off your alarm? The police are on the way. I'll need your identification code to shut off the alarm."

Even something as seemingly innocent as a conversation at the salon might be designed to elicit information on you and your home.

The solution: Don't give personal information to anyone, over the phone, in person or anywhere, if you don't know who you are talking to.

Denying Access

One simple solution to averting break-ins is already on most homes, but our ex-cop said many people don't use it—the dead bolt. Even if the homeowner does use it, burglars can kick a door in easily, so the NCPTF says to secure the dead bolt's strike plate with long screws (like six inches) so it is attached to the nearest beam and not just the door frame.

Most home burglaries happen by the thief going in through the garage door. One easy method: They use a bent wire to slip between the panels of the garage door and catch the T-handle on the rope that opens the door manually. The NCPTF advice: Cut off the T-handle. You can just pull on the rope to open it from inside, and it eliminates the chance of a thief entering this way.

"Garage door openers are like a key to your home," the NCPTF said, and far too many people leave them in plain sight in their cars, hooked to the sun visor where they can easily be stolen. (A solution: Hide it in the glove box.) Some companies sell openers that will open lots of different doors, and the bad guys can drive up and down the street, pushing buttons to see what doors open. (Answer: Change the code.)

Carport doors are also a vulnerable spot, where burglars can break in with less chance of being seen. An inventive solution: Put up a "No Solicitors" sign, and below that stick some tape on which you write "Day Sleeper." The bad guys will likely think "A cop lives here" and go elsewhere.

Home Invasion

But even the threat of a home burglary pales in comparison to a new danger our retired cop detailed: Home invasion. "This is the next crime we're expecting to increase," he said. Home invasions happen when several criminals break into the house *while you're there*, rape the women, beat up the men, and ransack the house.

These crimes are related to carjackings. Because alarm systems and keyless entries made it more difficult to steal cars, some criminals took to stealing cars while the drivers were inside, and the alarms were off. Similarly, home invasions occur while the owners are home and their alarms are off. One person knocks on the door, and when you open it, several burst in to do their dirty work.

One NCPTF solution: Set up a code word for the family ("Geronimo" "Tally-ho," etc.) that means "Get out—now!" Or have a "safe room" in the house where you can barricade yourself. The room must have a *solid* door with a dead bolt, (attached with the long screws). Keep the cell phone charger in this room, and put the cell phone there each time you come home. If you're invaded, you can retreat to the safe room, call police and wait for help. Tell them you've called the police, and *don't come out for anything.*

To avoid the hazard of opening the door to strangers, install an inexpensive intercom system. Our briefer found one at an electronics store for only $15.

Personal Assault Protection

The first thing to remember in avoiding assault is to *pay attention to your surroundings.* Establish a five-foot radius around you that someone must have a reason to be there.

"We're less careful in the daytime, so criminals know they can get closer to us in daytime," the speaker said. They will stalk in daytime, wait for the victim to separate from the crowd and then attack. "It takes less than 60 seconds for them to mug you."

Be alert for anyone who is watching you. The natural tendency is to look away when you find someone is looking at you. But if you look away, you'll be seen as scared or passive, and therefore a better target. It's best to look back—but not to *stare* back, which might be seen as a challenge.

An important tip: Don't wear expensive jewelry. The bad guys know the value, and it's an invitation to them. The NCPTF man said, "Don't wear any-

continued on next page

thing around your neck that's more valuable than your head."

Robbery and Rape

Because of the very real danger of a robber being either violent or on drugs, or both, the NCPTF man said, "Do not give them any grief. Don't curse or talk back or mutter under your breath. Give them what they want, and get out of the situation."

He continued, "We used to tell women to wear a purse with the strap across the body. But thieves sometimes took a wire hook, hooked it in the strap and pulled it away. They didn't care if they drug the woman some distance across the pavement. Now we tell women not to carry a purse, but use a fanny pack, the kind with a zipper at the back where they can't reach."

Women are often attacked in parking lots—at the grocery store, at the job, in high-rise garages. He repeated, "If they want to rob you, give them what they want, *get out of the situation*." But there was another dire warning he stressed over and over: "If they want to take you somewhere else, do everything you can not to go—because *you won't be coming back*." You are not raped at the point of attack, he said. They take you somewhere else for that.

His advice: Get to the ground, roll up into a ball and scream. Try to roll under the vehicle if you can. Contrary to the advice commonly given to try gouging eyes or kneeing groins, he said the best way is to get on the ground and kick. Your legs are stronger than your upper body.

And keep screaming. The bad guys don't want attention.

Another tip: If you are accosted just as you are getting into your car, throw your keys as far as you can, and run. They will follow your keys. They don't want you, they don't want your children, they want your car or your money.

When getting into a car, put everything else in first, then put your child in the car seat. "If they attack you then, throw the keys, run as far as you can, screaming, 'Help! They've got my child!' They are not going to go chasing after you to fight over who's going to look for the keys. Get on top of a car if you can. They do not want the attention." How about the child? "They do not want the child. They are using the child to control *you*."

"I'm sorry to be cold about this," he said, "but if they were going to shoot somebody (you or the child) it would be better to be in a place where they might get medical help quickly."

USAF photos by TSgt Michael Featherston

Light Fingers

During the holidays, be aware that pickpockets may be working in the dense shopping crowds. To thwart them, spread your money around your body in different pockets, not just in your wallet. Or put rubber bands around your wallet so they can't remove it without your noticing. Or put a pocket comb in the fold of the wallet; the comb will catch on your clothing, and they won't be able to remove it.

Another good idea for holiday shopping: Put your cash and credit cards in your shirt pocket, and wear a pullover sweater over it. This makes it impossible for the pickpocket to get at it. ■

"If you get taken somewhere, you are not coming back." He stressed again, "*Don't let anyone remove you from the point of the attack. The second site is the death site.*"

Breakdowns

To avoid having a breakdown, keep the car in good shape, and keep the gas tank full. If you do have a breakdown, stay in the car, and keep the dome light on so the police can see you're in there.

Carry a "Call Police" banner that can be stuck in the window. Many people with cell phones will call the police. If someone stops to help, ask them to call the police. The person might be OK…but maybe not.

Weapons

The NCPTF doesn't recommend guns. First, they say, you won't have time to get to it. Further, you won't be that good with it, because it takes weekly practice to become proficient with a gun, and most people don't do that. Mostly, you won't be calm enough to "squeeze the trigger" or anything like that. Our ex-cop cited an incident when he, himself, was facing an armed assailant and, trained officer and good shot though he was, he rapidly fired two clips and missed with all but two shots. "I was just plain scared."

Besides, for every one criminal killed with a gun, 18 innocent people are killed.

Best advice for a gun? Get a shotgun. You don't have to be a good shot to hit an assailant with it, and just the sound of a shotgun being cocked will scare off burglars.

He also recommended against stun guns because of the difficulty in keeping them charged, and the necessity of being in contact with the person for four to six seconds. "In four to six seconds, they'll take it away from you and use it on *you*."

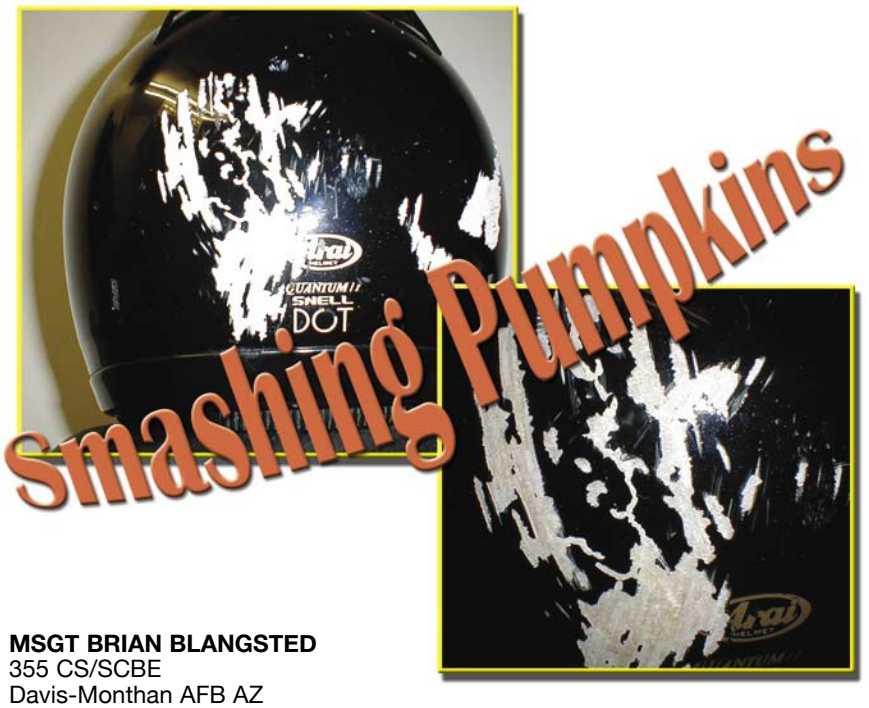
Mace, he said, is not always effective on drugged people. Pepper gas must be sprayed into the eyes to be effective, and the minerals can get into the nozzle, clogging it and making it useless just when you most need it.

Paranoid?

Hopefully, this information has made you more aware of some things you can do to protect yourself against crime. There's a somewhat tongue-in-cheek saying: You're not paranoid if they really are out to get you. Or, to put it another way, if you think violent crime won't touch you, you just might be wrong. ■

(The speakers from the National Crime Prevention Task Force do their crime protection briefings for groups ranging from education and government to Fortune 500 companies. For information on the organization, and how to schedule a speaker, call 770-806-1199 or 888-806-1199 (toll free), or see their website at http://www.ncptforce.com/. We guarantee an eye-opening, valuable—and occasionally frightening—presentation.)

Editor's Note: The following are two stories of motorcyclists who sustained head injuries, one serious, one very serious. Both of these men were wearing helmets. As you read these stories, continue to ask yourself, "How badly would they have been hurt if they hadn't been helmeted?"



Smashing Pumpkins

MSGT BRIAN BLANGSTED
355 CS/SCBE
Davis-Monthan AFB AZ

Crashing sucks. Crashing and not remembering 20 minutes of my life is intriguing, especially when I was supposedly up, awake and answering questions; a walking zombie, if you will.

Turn 7 at Gateway International Raceway (in Madison, IL) became my last turn of the day, but I had no idea what transpired to actually slam me on the pavement. Fellow track instructor Mark and I were riding well during our Track Day. For two sessions I had shown him the best way around Gateway. I would ride ahead, show the way, let him go around, and then I would show some more. Lots of fun; we were in a zone of new-found ease for Mark.

Turn 7 approached like any other time, no real drama, just asphalt-surfing from corner to corner; no racing, well within our limits. Thinking back now after the accident, I can remember Mark was just ahead of me as we started dialing in some throttle for the apex. Mark's foot-peg dug in on a bump where the infield transitions to the oval. Simultaneously, Mark's front wheel started tucking in as he headed for the pavement, and I was saying, "no, No, NO!" That's where the mystery begins.

Waking up in the infield medical room is a helpless feeling, and I was disoriented. Many questions were coming at me, but my brain wasn't understanding. I did realize I had crashed—how else to explain my surroundings? I remember someone saying we were going to the trauma center. Next moment I remember, I was talking with the emergency medical technician (EMT) en route, which seemed like a 30-second ride. The EMT was telling me I was up and waving off treatment immediately following the accident. I couldn't believe it; that wasn't me…

Then I was in the trauma center, lying on a gurney in the emergency room, and that is when I noticed I had a huge brace keeping my neck immobile. I struggled to remember the events; I had no idea what had happened. I started from scratch: address—a momentary struggle but OK; phone number—OK; married to BJ—OK.

Then my neighbor Sandy walked into the E.R. Dumbfounded, I was thinking, "I know we aren't married." I said, "Sandy, what are you doing here?"

She threw me for a momentary loop when she answered, "BJ called and was frantic that I check on you. She said you had an accident and had a very bad head injury."

My brain suddenly realized the true impact of the events unfolding. BJ was surely a wreck with only the knowledge that I had left the track unconscious with head trauma. "Sandy, you have to call BJ and tell her I'm fine! Please call her now."

"What's her cell number?" Sandy asked.

Crap; a little trouble with recall, but I stumbled across the right combination of numbers. Sandy was off to a phone.

Before Sandy could make the call, BJ walked in like she was seeing a ghost. Just moments before, she was thinking the worst as she entered the trauma area. When Sandy intercepted her to say I was okay, she had only seconds to grasp the concept that I just might be. BJ and I looked at each other, and I now know there is a special look soul-mates have when one almost loses the other.

X-rays were performed, and then a CAT scan. I have never felt claustrophobia at this level. With my hands tied by my sides and my nose suddenly itching, I was unable to scratch while stuck in the scanner. It was all I could do to remain still and composed. It was not pleasant. Done and out—and scratching my nose—I was glad it was over.

While waiting for the results, BJ filled me in on what she knew. "You and Mark had an accident."

"What?" At the time I had no idea. "What do you mean? Is he okay?"

She told me he was very sore and at the track.

Photos by Brian Blangsted

"What happened?"

"All I know is you two got tangled up."

This seemed crazy, if not impossible. I didn't even remember being with him on the track.

BJ was a wreck. Her world was rocked and it showed; this was the true tragedy of the day. She was reeling from the event.

When the Doc finally came in, we got the news. While taking off the brace, he said, "Everything looks normal, but you cannot have any impact to the brain whatsoever for the next month. And with the nature of head injury, each time will compound the problem and could be worse, so you'll want to think hard about what risks you are willing to take." He continued with how I should take it easy and watch for signs of damage.

Sitting up for the first time in hours, I realized I was damn lucky. While we waited for the discharge paperwork, we looked over my leathers and Arai helmet that were brought in with the EMTs. The big divot of road-rash on my elbow was unusual because there was no hole in my leathers. But the real deal was the huge fracture my helmet took for my head. It looked surreal, but I was holding reality in my hand; my life was spared by the high technology of the helmet. It took an incredible impact to the backside, yet the liner appeared to be unmolested. I couldn't imagine the force required to fracture a helmet like that.

On the way out I asked to go by the track, but Sandy said the guys were taking care of everything. I tried Mark's cell number, but when I got no answer I insisted on going to the track. A few of the staff were still there, happy to see me talking.

"What happened?" I asked.

After a pause: "Well, Mark is taking it hard because he thinks he caused the wreck."

"Was there anyone else involved?"

"I don't know…"

I got Mark on the phone, and he sounded relieved to hear me.

"Mark, what the heck happened?"

As he told me he lost the front end when his footpeg dug in, the image appeared like a chunk of memory falling into place. Then he started to apologize, but I stopped him.

"Mark, it isn't your fault I was riding close, and for all we know, someone slammed into me. We crashed hard and we are okay. No fault."

Then he explained how, while he was crashing, he remembered breaking the fall of my motorcycle and how his body hurt.

I said, "That had to hurt bad; I guess you're lucky I wasn't on a Gold Wing!"

We laughed, but it was serious.

Back at home I found my gear, trailer and motorcycle were there. Although it was totaled, my motorcycle was thoughtfully tied down.

Friends were at Sandy's, looking relieved. The track manager called to check on the "zombie." If you ever want to know what the motorcycle racing community is like, leave the track in an ambulance.

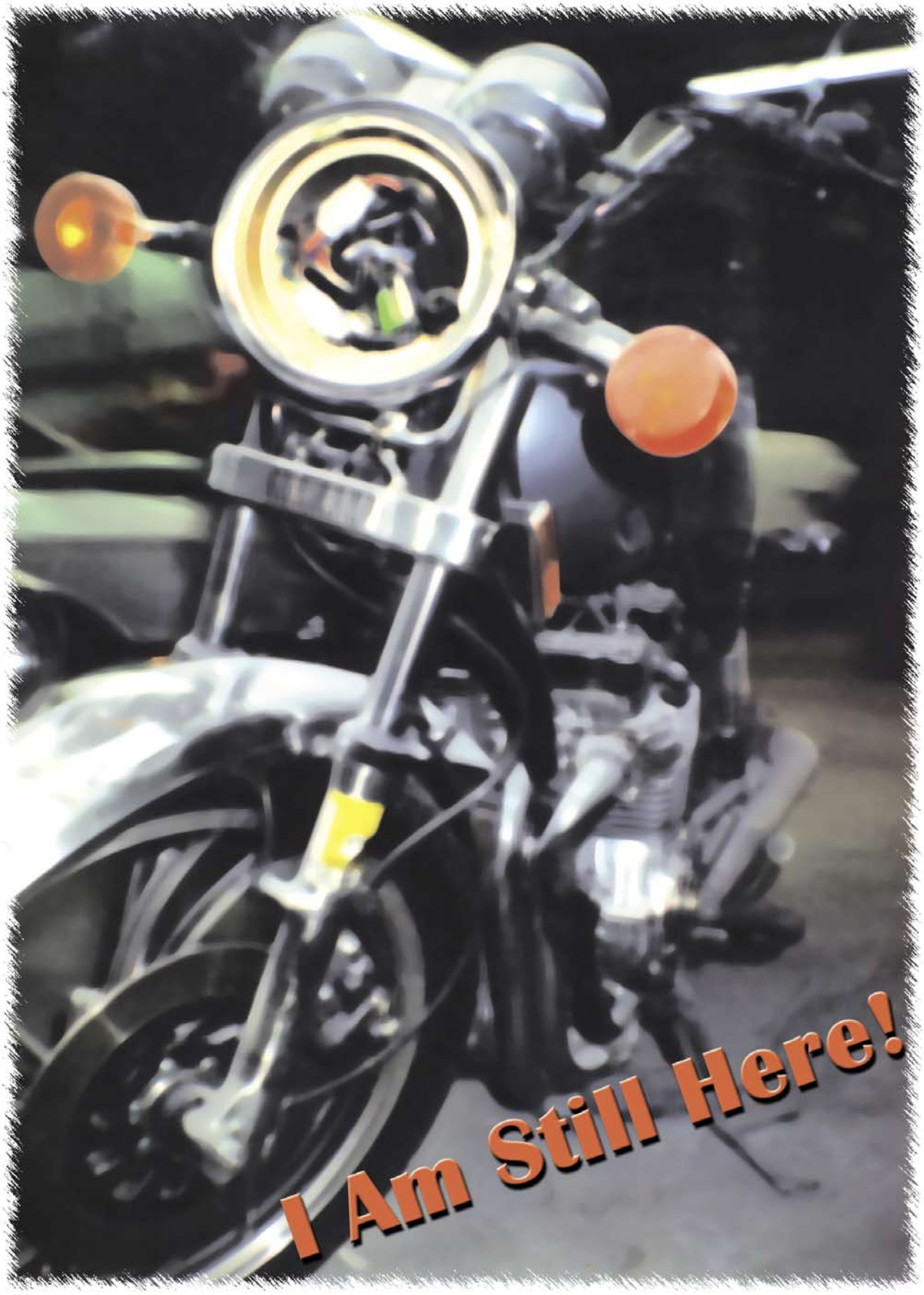
E-mails came from friends wishing Mark and me well, asking if we were okay. We even received a good account of the incident from riders who were behind us.

Reality-check: Many of us ride on public roads like it's a controlled environment. Mark and I were riding well within our abilities, but an unplanned chain of events brought us down in a big way. Had this happened somewhere on tree-lined back roads, I doubt the outcome would have been the same.

Track Days have their place for riders who want to ride uninhibited or free of public road hazards. Track Days give room to crash, and proper medical attention awaits the unplanned event. And Track Days require proper gear.

Track Days work, but crashing still sucks. ■

Photo of the author by Jack Beaudry of SliderPhoto.com


I Am Still Here!

MSG SHANE CURTIS
Aviation Systems Safety Manager
U.S. Army Safety Center

Motorcycles were my thing as I grew up. I raced in motocross competitions just about every weekend and worked for the shop that sponsored me. I fell often enough to learn the hard way that my helmet, gloves, elbow and shoulder pads, boots, long-sleeved jersey and riding pants really did work. But it wasn't until one night after I joined the Army that I learned just how important my helmet was.

I bought a new Yamaha 650 and ordered a full-face helmet that looked cool and worked. That cost me some money. I always needed more money, which meant I needed to get my sergeant stripes. To get that promotion, I needed to go to night school to further my education and gain an airframe and powerplant (A&P) license. Riding my motorcycle was part of that process. When I got off duty, I rode home, grabbed my books, and headed off to school on my new bike.

But everything would change one night. As I was going down the four-lane road toward our house, a teenaged girl who'd had her license less than a week came toward me from the opposite direction. She saw me coming her way, but thought the car behind her was going to rear-end her, so she turned in front of me, thinking she could make it. She didn't. Instead, she hit me head-on.

I flew over the handlebars and into her windshield. The back of my head bounced off her steering wheel, and then I was thrown face-first into a telephone pole on the side of the road. The doctor said that if I hadn't been wearing my full-face helmet, parts of my head would have been smashed into the windshield and the left side of my face would have been left on the pole.

I was in and out of consciousness for the first four days after the accident. I woke up long enough to say that I wasn't unconscious the whole time, but I was in a semi-unconscious state for the next two weeks. By the time I realized what was going on, close to a month had passed. Although my parents had come to see me, I didn't even know they were there. Some of my co-workers were there every day to help my wife, who basically lived in my hospital room with me—but I don't remember that either.

I spent more than two months in the hospital receiving physical and occupational therapy. I had suffered a double brain concussion, and my brain swelled so badly the doctors thought they would have to drill holes in my skull to relieve the pressure. Fortunately for me, the day I was supposed to have the drilling done the swelling went down on its own.

I lost most of my memory and even had to learn how to walk again. The doctor would give me a razor and tell me to shave, but it wasn't until after I was released that I found out the razor didn't have a blade in it. The doctors just wanted to see how good my coordination was—they didn't trust me with a blade.

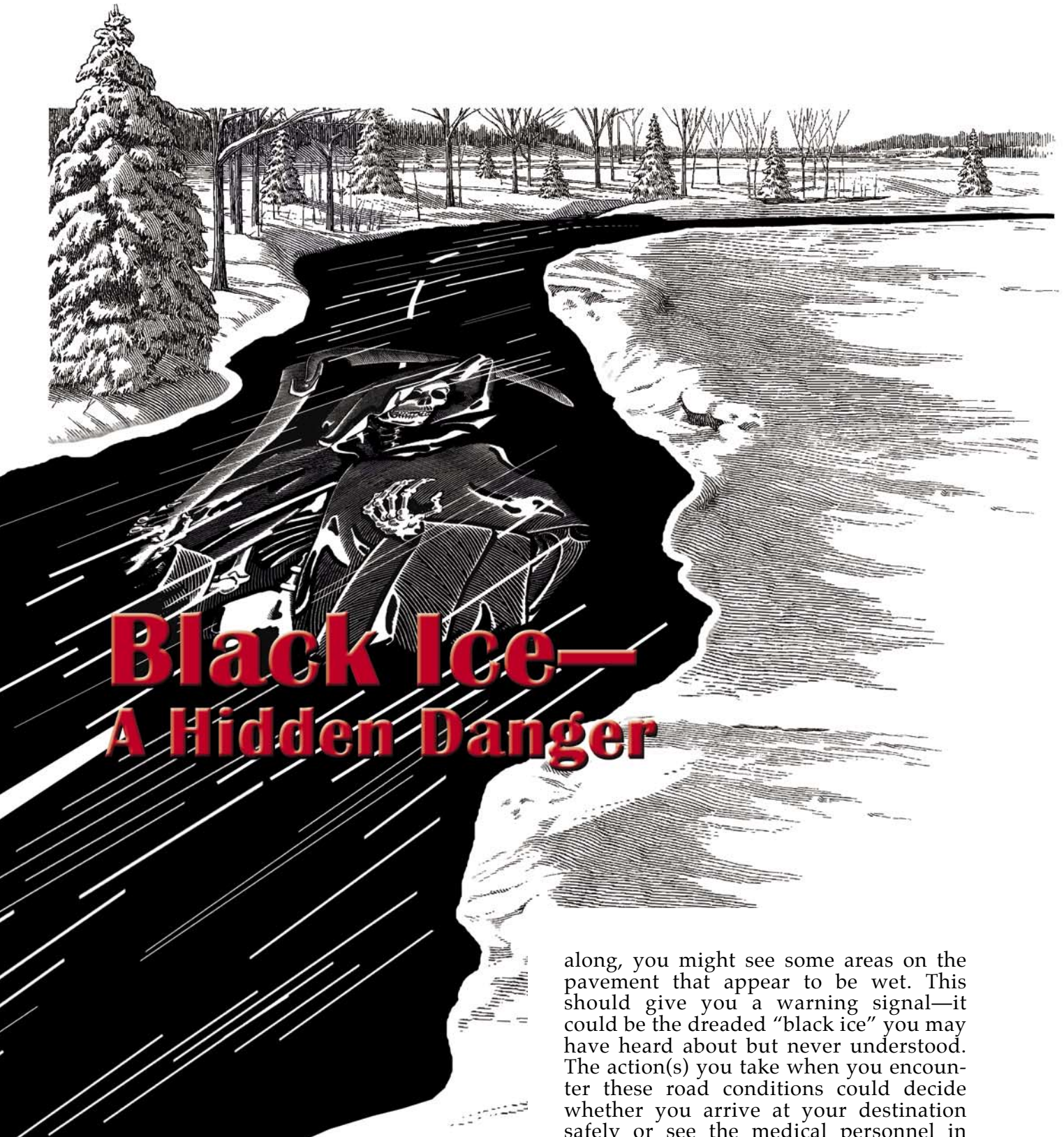
I also had a problem with my memory; I knew names and people, but that was about it. Part of my therapy was going back out to the airfield to learn stuff that I once knew. It was only after I was told what an item was that it rang a bell and would come back to me. I'd say, "Oh, yeah, that's what that is; now tell me again what it does." Once they did, I'd say, "Oh, yeah, that's right, I remember now!" After a little more than two months, the doctor gave me a quick "test." He told me to remember three things: the number seven, ice cream and blue sky. After he talked to me for what seemed like an hour, he asked what the three items were. Once I told him, he said I was ready to go home.

The things I couldn't do that were listed on my profile made me feel like there was little that I *could* do! No driving for a year, no climbing on top of aircraft, no going inside an aircraft unless the ramp was down and I could walk up it. I couldn't stand for more than 10 minutes, walk more than a mile, run, do physical training, and—for fear of blackouts—go anywhere alone. My flying and crewing days were over for the next couple of years.

It took years of hard work before I got back to normal—well, about as normal as I will ever be. I still have some minor problems with my memory, but I did make it back on flying status after several years. For me, life is good. I am living a life that would have ended if I hadn't been wearing my helmet the night that girl turned in front of me.

You hear people argue that wearing a helmet gets in the way of their "personal freedom" or keeps them from hearing or seeing dangers around them. Well, I can tell you from experience that helmets work because I AM STILL HERE. ■

Photos provided by author



Black Ice—A Hidden Danger

TSGT RICHARD BURTON
86 AW/SEG
Ramstein AB, Germany

As you scrape away the frost or ice from your vehicle's windshield, think about the condition of the road you will soon be traveling on. As you drive along, you might see some areas on the pavement that appear to be wet. This should give you a warning signal—it could be the dreaded "black ice" you may have heard about but never understood. The action(s) you take when you encounter these road conditions could decide whether you arrive at your destination safely or see the medical personnel in action first hand! Here's what it is, and what you can do when you face it.

What Is Black Ice?

Black ice is called "black" because it takes on the color of the underlying pavement. It is very thin, and often gives the impression of having some surface irregularity, and therefore appears to supply

Digital Illustration by Felicia Moreland

some traction. These looks can be deceiving, because as soon as you apply brakes (or make significant turning movements), you start to slide.

Black ice may cover the road only in shadowed areas, and it can be one of the most dangerous driving conditions to deal with in winter. You can be riding along on bare pavement one minute and sliding down the road the next instant. What we call black ice comes from sleet or rain or melted snow that refreezes as a sheet and is not visible as ice. The road looks the same as it always does—which is why it's so hard to detect, especially if you've been driving for a while. Sadly, you may not detect it until you suddenly feel your vehicle's back end slipping out to one side or the other.

What Are The Indications For Black Ice?

Look for signs of ice other than on the roadway. That means looking for ice on windshield wipers or sideview mirrors, on road signs, trees or fences along the highway. If ice is forming on any of those things, it's possible that it may be on the road as well.

Then again, ice may not have formed on anything but the road. For example, it may have been a warm day during which the snow melted and then froze as ice after the temperature dropped at night. In other cases, there will be ice in shaded areas, such as cuts through hills and along banks, before there will be ice on the open roads.

Listen to the radio for reports on the temperature outside. When the roads have been wet and the temperature drops below freezing, ice can form quickly.

Remember that bridges freeze before roads. Look for signs that tell you there is a bridge ahead. It will give you time to slow down so you have better control, just in case there is ice on the bridge pavement.

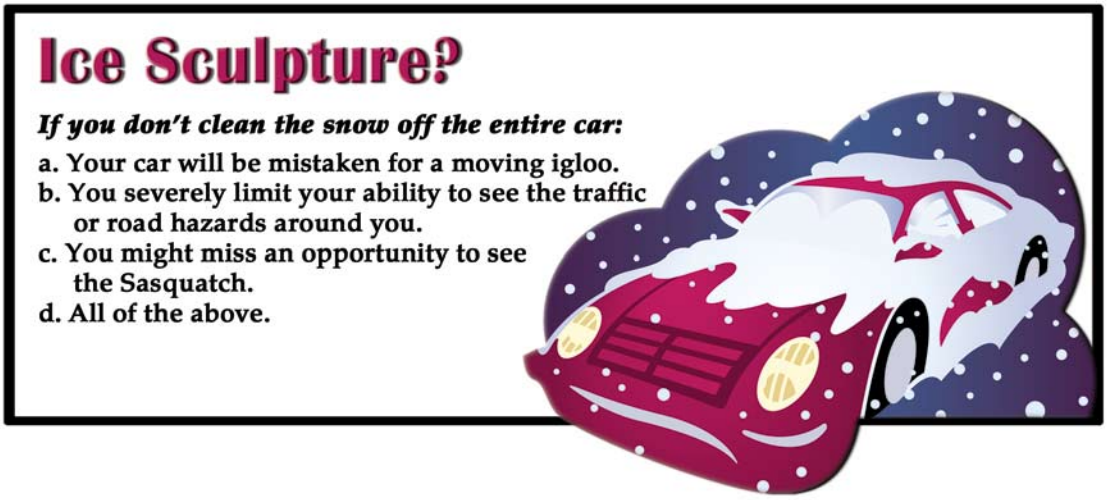
Braking and Techniques

Black ice conditions require special consideration. Braking on black ice will cause a slight melting of the surface layer of the ice, producing a very thin layer of water. Water on ice is a lot more slippery than just ice. It is not recommended using your brakes once you drive onto black ice. The best way to respond is to let up on the brakes and stay off the accelerator.

Watch out on hills, and especially on sharp corners. Slow down, and do not brake! Your vehicle's back end will spin out if you do.

Black ice is also one of the winter hazards that four-wheel drive cannot overcome. Some of us get complacent because we have four-wheel drive. However, you need to be just as careful as the motorist who has a two-wheel drive (front or rear) vehicle when it comes to ice on the roadway. The same goes for large-sized vehicles.

Black ice is a hidden danger in winter. Extreme caution, reducing your speed, and proper steering and braking methods are your best defense. Drive safely. ■



SSGT MATTHEW PIPES
31 FW
Aviano AB, Italy

Listen To Your Body

During March of 2002, I went with a group of friends to enjoy the snowcapped landscape of Garmisch, Germany. After traveling six hours from Aviano and getting a full night's rest, we started what we hoped would be a great day of snowboarding. In our group of seven, we had four boarders—each varying in skill and experience levels. I had begun snowboarding while stationed in Misawa, Japan, and had a couple of years of experience.

We all had our own equipment and performed the routine maintenance to keep our boards serviceable. I had been back into snowboarding for about a month and thought I knew my limitations—however, I still wanted to try some new tricks. I had also bought a skiing helmet to protect my head from my occasional "hard landings."

As we boarded down Zugspitze Mountain, I attempted a series of jumps and ended up landing flat on my back with the wind knocked out of me. That should have been a sign to un-strap and call it a day. Instead, my back began to feel better after about an hour and I decided to continue my day of snowboarding. That was my first mistake—I didn't listen to my body.

It was getting late and the lifts were getting ready to shut down. We knew we had enough time for one more run. There were many moguls (rough bumps in the snow) on the way down, and then the trail smoothed out for the rest of the run to the bottom of the hill.

I slid to a stop to wait for my buddy, Damian, to catch up with me. When he did, we noticed a small lip of snow on the outside edge of the trail and thought it would make a nice final jump to end the day. We planned the route we were going to take and headed toward the natural jump. I was the first to go. I caught more speed than I knew I could handle, so I slowed down before the jump. After I hit the jump, the only thing I can remember is tumbling, then coming to a stop and feeling a pain in my right foot. I immediately unstrapped my board and began screaming. Damian aborted his jump and came to my aid. I told him that I had broken my foot and needed to get help. I was carrying a friend's cellular phone and used it to call two broken my foot and needed to get help. I was carrying a friend's cellular phone and used it to call two of our friends to let them know about my situation and where I was. Shortly thereafter, the emergency medical technicians arrived and wrapped me in blankets, then put me on the back of a snowmobile. Ultimately, I was airlifted off the mountain in a helicopter.

I arrived at the emergency room of a local hospital. The X-rays revealed that I had broken my fibula (the smaller leg bone) and my ankle. The German doctors pushed the idea of doing surgery to install pins and screws to support my ankle. However, because I was skeptical about international doctors, I refused. They put a cast on my leg and I returned to Aviano where I got a second opinion two days later. After much deliberation, it was clear that I was going to need the kind of surgery the German doctors had suggested. I had surgery a couple of days later and now have a metal plate and six screws in my leg--including one that goes through the fracture. I went through 10 casts and about a month and a half of physical therapy.

During the seven months that have passed since the accident, I still have some minor pain and haven't regained full movement in my ankle. Each day I look at the four-inch-long scar and am reminded of how much pain I went through that day. My only hope is that, according to the doctor, in about a year I will have the option of removing the hardware. Until then, I will continue to set off metal detectors in airports.

Safety is always a concern when engaging in outdoor activities. Often, the victim is blamed for not wearing the proper safety gear. I'm here to say that wearing safety equipment isn't everything; it's only a start. Even if you use top-of-the-line equipment, you can still be injured. I thought I had covered all of the bases to protect myself, but I was wrong.

So, what's the bottom line? Listen to your body. If you're hurt or tired, call it a day. Also, know your limitations and, unlike me, don't make the mistake of exceeding them.

---

*(**Editor's note:** SSgt Pipes recently wrote, "I still have the hardware in my ankle, and I get tightness in the joint. It can also become painful when stretching for exercising, and my foot falls asleep when I cross my leg over my other knee. I want to have the hardware removed, but do not look forward to going through physical therapy again."*

Some injuries can cause long-lasting, even lifelong problems. We can only repeat his message: Listen to your body, and know your limitations.)

MAJ CINDI FELDWISCH
HQ AFSC/SEME

"The snow is falling and the flakes are driving!" That phrase came to me last year while I was avoiding inexperienced winter drivers on the way to the base with the first snow falling on the city. Between overconfidence in their driving skills, or in their vehicles' four-wheel drive, they were just dangerous.

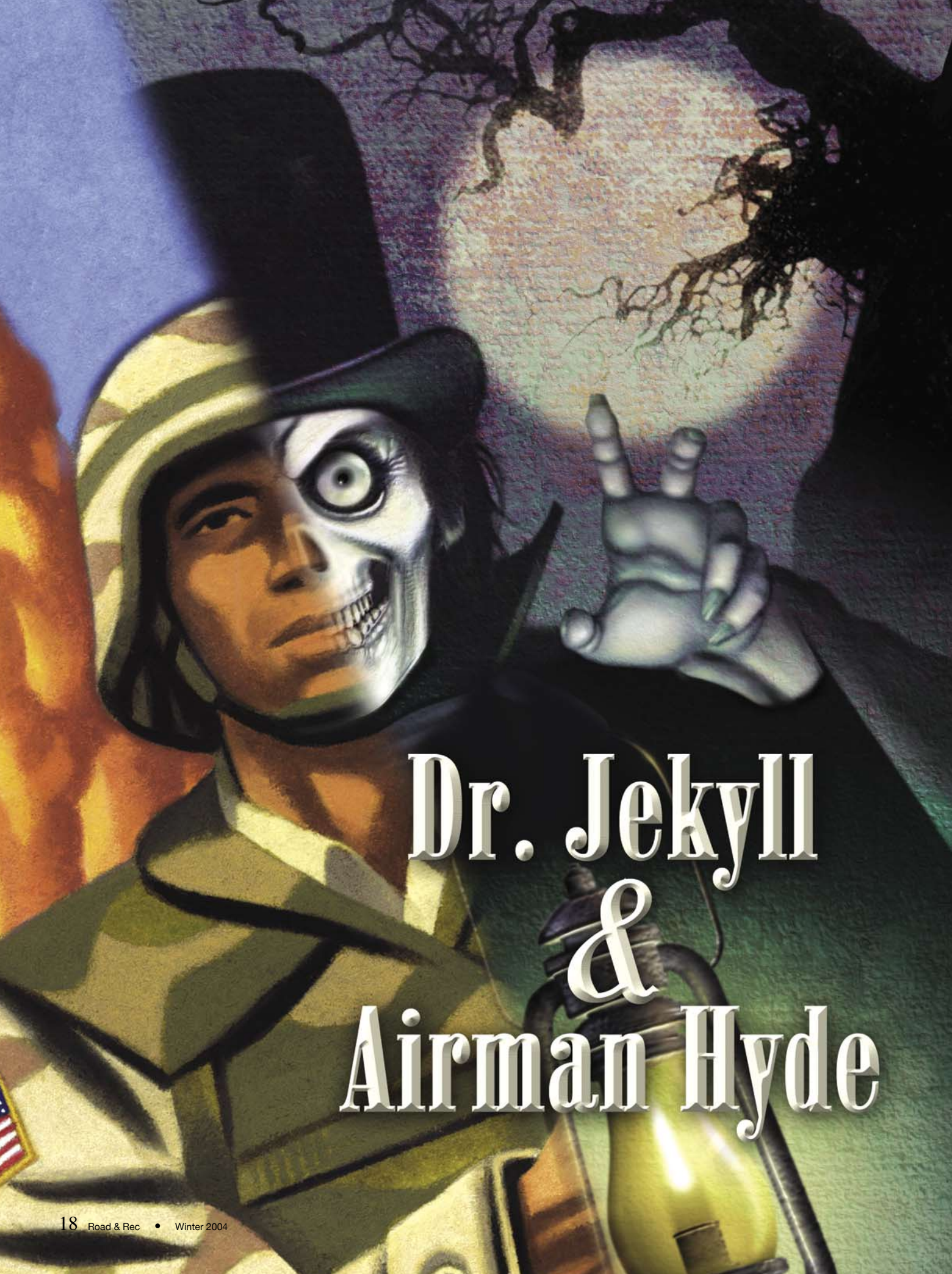
Skidding off the road is common, and every year we hear news reports of people dying stranded in their car due to exposure or attempting to walk for help. It is just as important to take care of the inside of your car as it is to prepare the outside before heading out—no matter how far you plan to travel. I called the American Automobile Association for information on tips for winter preparation. They recommend the following items be included in your winter driving kit:

- Tire chains
- Small bag of abrasive (sand, salt or non-clumping kitty litter)
- Small snow shovel
- Snowbrush
- Traction mats
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Ice scraper
- Cloth or roll of paper towels
- Booster cables (include goggles to use when jump-starting your battery)
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Warning devices (flares or triangles)
- Bottle of windshield wiper fluid
- Bottle of antifreeze
- Change for pay phone or a fully charged cell phone
- Fully inflated spare tire
- Basic automotive tool kit, including electrical or duct tape and flexible wire
- Basic First Aid kit
- Multipurpose dry chemical fire extinguisher
- Cigarette lighter (to heat keys to de-ice door locks)
- List of emergency telephone numbers, including AAA
- High-energy food (granola bars, trail mix, dried fruit, etc.) and water
- Candles and matches
- Extra cold weather clothing (boots, socks, gloves, coat)
- Maps
- Tow rope or chain
- Colored cloth (to put on antenna if you get stuck)
- Pen or pencil and paper

Winter driving doesn't have to "drive you nuts" if you prepare yourself and your vehicle before leaving. No matter where you live, the weather can change in an instant, and your survival—and maybe that of others—may depend on your preparations. Old Man Winter doesn't care if you're prepared, but your loved ones do! Drive safe and watch out for the "flakes"! ■


Stay Safe...
whatever your winter activity

Digital Illustration by Felicia Moreland


Dr. Jekyll
&
Airman Hyde

LT COL WALT FLINT
1 RS/CC
Beale AFB CA

Do you have a split personality? Are you one person on duty and another when you're not at work?

I knew a young airman who, when at work, seemed the epitome of our Air Force core values; integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. He never failed to impress everyone around him with his professional excellence, courtesy, and dedicated service. Despite long hours in blistering heat, freezing cold or wet weather, he never complained and always performed his duties in a superb manner.

Frankly, this young airman was motivating to me. How could I complain about the poor working conditions, extra duties and endless meetings I had when he was doing whatever was asked of him every day, in all conditions, without hesitation?

So you can imagine my shock when I heard he'd been caught driving under the influence of alcohol and resisting arrest. I was glad to hear he hadn't killed or injured himself or others. But I knew he'd just severely curtailed his career, and lost several thousand dollars and his base driving privileges. Perhaps most importantly, he'd lost the hard-earned respect of his co-workers.

What happened? This didn't sound like the professional airman I knew. He'd never have done this at work. Why would he not uphold the same values off-duty as he exemplified on the job? Was it because his supervisor wasn't there?

He had two companions with him who could have prevented him from getting behind the wheel after he'd been drinking. They could have also reminded him to use the base dial-a-ride program, but they chose not to. I'm sure they would have said or done something to help had they been at work.

This incident demonstrated the polar opposite of integrity, service before self, and excellence.

When you join the military, you choose a way of life that doesn't allow you to select when you'll follow our core values and when you won't. Air Force members are subject to duty 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays. They must be ready to report for duty at any hour, at any location, and remain as long as necessary to get the job done.

The Air Force mission necessitates more restrictive rules and standards than are normally found in civilian life. If you can't abide by these higher standards and values, I suggest you find a new line of work.

You don't have to get a DUI to demonstrate a lack of integrity. While driving to work, I often see fellow blue-suiters speed dangerously past me, well in excess of the posted speed limit, only to follow them onto base where they abide by the limits when under the scrutiny of our Security Forces.

What does this say about a person? It shows a disregard for our values and a complete lack of concern for the safety of others, as well as yourself.

An entire family was recently killed in a head-on collision with someone who was passing in the on-coming lane while speeding to work. Please don't let this be you (or your family).

Our core values are essential to the preservation of valuable Air Force equipment and resources, the protection and safety of our people, and our very existence as an effective institution. These fundamental and timeless values—integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do—form the bedrock of our force. It is crucial that our members share a common understanding of these values, and live by them 24/7.

Use these values when you assess the risk in all your activities, or "ACT" (Assess the situation, Consider the options, Take appropriate action). You owe it to the Air Force, your co-workers, your family, and yourself.

Air Force Core Values

Integrity First is the keystone of military service. Integrity is the moral touchstone that is the foundation for always doing the right thing for the right reason, even when no one is looking. Our military force operates on the basis of trust—we expect our people, throughout the ranks, to live up to the highest standards of integrity.

Service Before Self is at the heart of the military profession. It represents the absolute need to put our nation, our Service, our unit and our mission before ourselves. There can be no room for personal agendas at the expense of the institution or the nation.

Our push for Excellence In All We Do fuels our endless drive to improve ourselves and our capabilities. Mediocrity is not tolerated in our profession; the stakes are too high. The Air Force has learned never to relax or rest on past laurels, because we must be prepared to face tomorrow's challenges. ■

Digital Illustration by Felicia Moreland

Winter Driving: Are You Ready?

Winter driving can be inconvenient, annoying, even infuriating, but most of all—DANGEROUS! Winter is the most difficult driving season. Not only do you have snow and ice to deal with, but there are fewer hours of daylight as well. However, you can offset those aggravations and minimize the special risks of winter driving by following a few simple steps and taking certain precautions before and during driving.

Getting started: Pre-check

Here are some routine precautions to help you avoid starting problems:

—Get an engine tune-up.

—Switch to winter-weight oil if you aren't already using all-season oil.

—Be sure all lights are in good working order.

—Have the brakes adjusted.

—Battery and voltage regulators should be checked.

—Make sure battery connections are good. If the battery posts are corroded, clean them with baking soda and water. Then apply a thin film of petroleum jelly to the posts to prevent future corrosion.

—Be sure all fluids are at proper levels. Antifreeze should not only be strong enough to prevent freezing, but fresh enough to prevent rust.

—Check the action of the wiper system (and the rear wipers, if your car is so equipped).

—Make sure wiper blades are cleaning properly. Consider changing to winter wiper blades, which are made for driving in snow. Winter blades are covered with a rubber boot to keep moisture away from working parts of the blade.

—Also make sure the heater, defroster and rear window defogger are all working properly.

—Ensure that the exhaust system is in good condition.

Driving

—Before winter weather arrives, make sure your vehicle is in good condition, especially the tires.

—Purchase good snow tires, and put them on early. Never combine radial and non-radial tires on the same vehicle. It's best to put snow tires or all-season tires on all four wheels, not just the drive wheels.

—Before you start out each time, check your lights, battery, windshield washer fluid, antifreeze,

motor oil and gasoline.

—Clear the ice and snow from your vehicle, including all windows, mirrors and the windshield wipers.

—Plan your route.

—Be familiar with maps and directions to avoid confusion.

—Check the local news for weather reports and road conditions, and adjust starting times accordingly.

—Let others know what your route will be and give an estimated arrival time.

—Always fill the gasoline tank before entering open country, even for a short distance, and stop to fill up long before the tank begins to run low. Keeping the gas tank as full as possible will minimize condensation, providing the maximum advantage in case of trouble.

—A cellular phone can be very useful to you or another stranded motorist in case of an emergency. Remember, pull off the road to talk on a cell phone.

—In heavy snow, keep your low beams on, as well as fog lights (if available).

—***Drive slowly!*** Even if your vehicle has good traction in ice and snow, other drivers will be traveling cautiously. Don't disrupt the flow of traffic by driving faster than everyone else. Remember how far it takes to bring your car to a stop on dry pavement? In winter conditions, allow at least three times that distance to reach a full stop and to avoid skidding. This means your safe distance behind the car in front of you should be three times as far as in dry weather, and you must begin braking three times as far away from the stoplight or corner where you turn. In a rear-wheel drive vehicle, you can usually feel a loss of traction or the beginning of a skid. However, there may be no such warning in a front-wheel drive vehicle. (See "Controlling Skids" on page 27.)

—To avoid skids, brake carefully and gently on snow or ice. Squeeze your brakes in slow, steady strokes. If your vehicle has an antilock braking system ABS, do not pump the brakes; instead, apply a steady pressure and allow the wheels to keep rolling. If your brakes start to lock, ease off the brake pedal. As you slow down, you may also want to shift into a lower gear.

—When sleet, freezing rain, or snow starts to fall, remember that bridges, ramps, and overpasses are likely to freeze first. Also be aware that slippery spots could still remain after road crews have cleared the highways.

Getting unstuck

If you should find yourself stuck, here's what to do:

—Turn your wheels from side to side a few times to push snow out of the way. Keep a light touch on the gas and ease forward.

—Don't spin your wheels—you'll just dig in deeper.

—Rocking the vehicle is another option, but be sure to check your owner's manual first; rocking can damage the transmission on some vehicles.

—Shift from forward to reverse and back again. Each time you are in gear, give a light touch on the gas until the vehicle gets going.

—For front-wheel drive vehicles, snow tires should be on the front—the driving axle—for better traction in mud or snow.

If you get stranded...

First, don't leave the car unless you know your exact location and the time and distance required to get help. You may feel helpless, stuck in the snow in a lonely place, but there are things you can do to survive until help reaches you.

—Stay in the vehicle.

—Don't wander—you could get lost or frostbitten.

—Run the engine for heat about once every hour, or every half-hour in severe cold.

—Clean snow from around the end of your car's tailpipe to prevent carbon monoxide buildup.

—For extra heat, burn a candle inside a coffee can, but don't set the can on fabric.

—Make sure the vehicle is *not* airtight by leaving one window cracked open. (Make sure this is a window *away* from the wind.)

—Clear outside heater vents (the grill under the windshield).

—Avoid alcohol—it lowers body temperature and causes drowsiness.

—Remember that freezing winds and driving, wet snow can quickly seal a vehicle.

—Signal to other motorists that you're stranded by using flares or flashlights, or by tying a piece of brightly colored cloth to the radio antenna.

Ice

Expect icy conditions any time the outside air temperature reaches 40 degrees F or lower. Although water freezes at 32 degrees F, road surfaces can freeze when the air temperature drops to 40 degrees or less. An important place to watch for this condition is on bridges. Bridge surfaces are exposed to the wind and cool off faster than the rest of the road. You should also prepare for icy conditions on roads through shaded areas, where a cold wind can freeze a wet road surface.

Winter driving requires motorists to be extra careful and alert, but the most important tip for winter driving is SLOW DOWN! Always give yourself plenty of time to get where you are going, and get off the road before you get stranded by worsening weather conditions. ■

Information for this article was adapted from the Safety Division, Ft. Bragg and the National Safety Council.

Saved by the Belt

COL WES SOMERS
HQ AFMC/MS (CE)
Wright-Patterson AFB OH

I think describing an incident close to me will help answer the question "Does wearing a seat belt make a difference?" The short answer is "absolutely." See if you come to the same conclusion once you read this story.

The story starts in San Antonio, Texas, on March 2, 1998. The day was like any other day in San Antonio—sun shining and nice temperatures. My oldest son, Nathan, was attending the University of Texas, and we were stationed at Columbus AFB, Miss. At about 4 p.m., my wife received a phone call from a hospital in San Antonio, saying they were bringing in our son for severe head trauma resulting from a car accident. The nurse told my wife our son was a "Code 3," the most serious, and possibly on life support. A helpless feeling came over us, because we were more than 1000 miles away and there wasn't much we could do.

However, this story had a happy ending because of a seat belt.

Nathan left Kelly AFB after visiting a friend and headed back across town on the interstate. Those of you who have driven in San Antonio know how much fun this can be! Nathan admitted that at first he wasn't wearing his seat belt, but he got "this feeling" and put the belt on when he approached major construction on I-10. I'm convinced this saved his life.

About 10 miles after getting on I-10, and about three miles from his apartment, Nathan was involved in a major accident. We don't really know how the accident happened. A witness thought that Nathan appeared to lose consciousness just before the accident, possibly due to a kidney infection.

As Nathan was exiting the interstate, his car hit the guardrail at the end of the exit ramp, flipping it end over end into a ditch. Then the car rolled over several times, ending upside down, rammed into the center support of a large drainage culvert. It took rescue workers more than 45 minutes to cut Nathan out of the car.

When the police officer arrived and saw the wreck, his question was, "How many fatalities do we have?" The firefighters responded, "You aren't going to believe this, but the person is alive." About eight hours later, Nathan walked out of the local hospital with eight staples in his head and several stitches in his left forearm.

This story could have been a lot worse had Nathan not been wearing his seat belt. Nathan finished college and received his commission into the Air Force. He is stationed at Little Rock AFB, Ark., and is currently serving in Southwest Asia in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

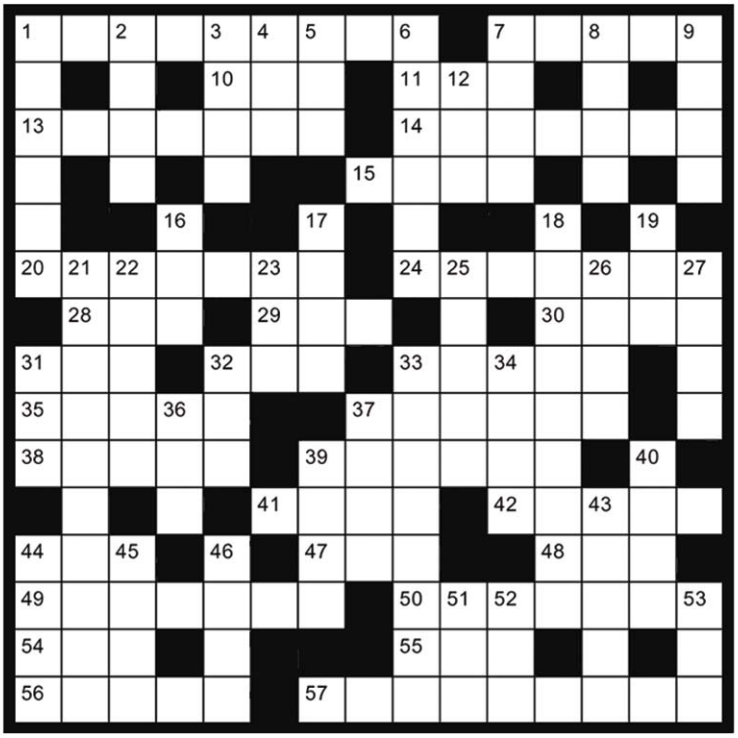
I am convinced that small, thin piece of cloth—the one that some folks refuse to wear when they get into a car—saved his life. Look at the picture of his car and you be the judge: Does wearing your seat belt make a difference?

So take that extra few moments when you get into a vehicle and buckle up for yourself and for your loved ones. It *does* work. ■

Photo courtesy of the author

Vehicle Safety

By 1st Lt. Tony Wickman
Alaskan Command Public Affairs



ACROSS

1. Items that can save lives in a car crash
7. Major factor in most vehicle crashes
10. Commotion
11. Airport abbrev.
13. Contributing factor in car crashes
14. Important vehicle safety item for children
15. Band instrument
20. Period of time when traffic is heaviest
24. Extract
28. Navy equivalent to AFB
29. Mining goal
30. Fines (result of paying traffic costs)
31. Vesicle
32. Stroke
33. Confession
35. Result of 21 DOWN
37. Vegetables
38. Band combo
39. Steinbeck's *The* ____ *of Wrath*
41. Angolan currency
42. Cut into cubes
44. Summer drink
47. Writer Rand
48. Baron ___ Munchausen; boastful German known for tales
49. Major factor for vehicle crashes
50. Medical students
54. USN rank
55. Flagstaff, AZ school
56. Mist
57. When you're more likely to encounter drunk drivers

Answers on page 28

DOWN

1. Where passengers should be when a vehicle is in motion
2. St. Louis landmark
3. Thai currency
4. Tokyo formerly
5. Computer laugh?
6. Why vehicle occupants use 1 ACROSS: ___ themselves
7. Actress Gilbert
8. Paradise
9. Information
12. Bar charge
16. USAF commissioning source
17. Dynamic
18. Type of driving needed to avoid car crashes
19. Dangerous driving condition that contributes to accidents
21. Result of not paying attention while driving (two words)
22. Boat
23. A Stooge
25. Necessity to avoid 21 DOWN
26. New Jersey team
27. Sports channel
31. ___ Paulo, Brazil
32. CA time zone
33. What can be used to avoid 21 DOWN
34. Require
36. Snakelike fish
37. Western writer Zane
39. VA "alien" theatrical shock-rock heavy metal group
40. Actor Sean of *Sam I Am*
43. Welsh dog breed
44. Astonishes
45. Soothe; ____ up
46. Attention getter
51. Nope
52. Egyptian boy king
53. Sault ___ Marie

Child Safety Goes With You

JANET DOROTHY AND JULIE SHELLEY
US Army *Countermeasure*, Aug 2003

It was a dreary, rainy day in March 1978, and I had spent most of the day at a laundromat nine miles from home. My two-year-old daughter was not on her best behavior. She did not understand that we were about to leave our home to live in a foreign country.

We had been at the laundromat that day to help prepare for our PCS move to Belgium. When we returned home nearly four hours later, I discovered I'd left several loads of laundry at the laundromat. I put my daughter back into the car and we got on the highway again. The rain was coming down hard, but I was in a hurry and ignored safety.

As we were driving, a flash flood suddenly rushed down the side of a hill, bringing with it a branch that caught my car just behind the left front tire. I lost control and realized I was going to crash. Instinctively, I grabbed my daughter, who was not

USAF photo by TSgt Michael Featherston

in a child safety seat, and pulled her from the backseat onto the front seat. Then I covered her body with mine in the hope she would survive.

The car crashed into a grove of sugar maple saplings. We flipped and bounced for what seemed like a half an hour. The car finally came to a stop on the side of road, sitting on four flat tires. Thankfully, we survived with only some bumps and bruises.

In 1978, the law didn't require the use of child safety seats and I didn't use one. As a result, I endangered my child's life, something of which I am ashamed to this day. I now have two granddaughters and make every effort to ensure they are strapped into their safety seats properly. People with small children must take the time to ensure their children are buckled up safely and correctly. I know—from experience.

Ms. Dorothy, who works at Fort Polk, LA, learned her lesson in child safety seat awareness the hard way. Fortunately, both she and her daughter lived to tell this story, but many children do not. An estimated 1,471 children died in vehicle accidents in 2000. Of those fatalities, 52 percent were unrestrained, 18 percent were incorrectly restrained, and 35 percent were in the front seat of the vehicle when it crashed. A child safety seat works only if it is used properly and installed correctly. The following information is derived from the "One Minute Safety Seat Checklist" found on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) website (www.nhtsa.gov). The site also provides other excellent information on child safety seats, including a recently released safety standards grading card for infant, convertible and booster seats, as well as safety seat recall information.

Always check to be sure:

- All children age 12 and under are properly restrained in the backseat.
- A child is not placed in a rear-facing child safety seat in the front seat where a dash-mounted passenger air bag is present.
- You've read the child safety seat use and installation instruction manual.
- You've read the section in your vehicle owner's manual on seatbelts and child safety seat installation.

Are you using the proper child safety seat?

- Infants from birth to age one who weigh at least 20 pounds should ride in the backseat in a rear-facing safety seat.
  - Harness straps should be at or below the infant's shoulders.
  - Harness straps should fit snugly and lie in a relatively straight line.
  - The harness chest clip should be placed at the the infant's armpit level to keep the harness straps positioned properly on the child's shoulders.
- Infants less than one year old who weigh less than 20 pounds should ride in a rear-facing convertible child safety seat rated for heavier infants (some convertible seats are rated up to 30 to 35 pounds when used rear-facing seats).
- Children older than one year who weigh at least 20 pounds may ride on the backseat in a forward-facing child safety seat. Children should ride in a safety seat with a full harness until they weigh about 40 pounds.
  - Harness straps should be at or above the child's shoulders.
  - In most cases, the harness straps should be threaded through the top slots.
  - The harness straps should fit snugly and lie in a relatively straight line.
  - The harness chest clip should be at the child's armpit level to help keep the harness straps positioned properly on the child's shoulders.
- Children less than 4'9" tall who have outgrown child safety seats should be restrained properly in booster seats until they are at least eight years old.
  - When using belt-position booster seats, make sure the shoulder and lap belts go across the child. The shoulder belt should be snug against the child's chest, resting across the collarbone. The lap belt should lay low across the child's upper thigh area.
  - Booster seats should be used as "interim" safety devices for children weighing more than 40 pounds who have outgrown a forward-facing child safety seat.
  - Booster seats should be used until children can sit with their backs against the vehicle's backseat back cushion, their knees bent over the seat cushion edge and their feet on the floor. That normally requires the child to be approximately 4'9" tall.
  - State child safety seat laws may vary. Be sure you understand and follow your state's requirements. ■

If I'd Only Had A Plan...

TSGT X

Editor's note: *Last issue, we published "Self-Inflicted Pain," about the aftermath of getting a driving under the influence (DUI) citation (Road & Rec, Fall 03). That story is not unique. Please take a moment to read the following story, about a Hill AFB master sergeant who chose to drive after drinking "a few beers." The consequences changed his career and affected his whole future. The writer, whose name has been withheld at his request, wrote this commentary hoping that others will avoid the same mistake.*

I committed a crime—the crime of driving under the influence of alcohol.

I'm not going to go into the DUI statistics because you've heard them before through the DUI program. But I am voluntarily telling my story to convey what a DUI has cost me—and could cost you.

I went to the club to socialize, but I didn't have a plan to get home safe. I only had a few beers on a full stomach, so I didn't think I was under the influence. I was doing a lot of thinking that night, but my thought process was under the influence and I wasn't smart enough to realize it.

How could I think I was safe to drive home if I had been drinking? If I'd only had a plan I wouldn't be in this situation right now and have this mark against me for the rest of my life. Alcohol does impair your ability to reason—I found that out the hard way.

I was stopped by the security forces after leaving the club on base, allegedly for erratic driving at a high rate of speed. The security forces said they smelled alcohol on my person and my breath, so they conducted a field sobriety test. I was then taken to the security forces building, where I failed the blood alcohol test. After a few hours of processing, I was released to the acting first sergeant, who had to be awakened just because of my stupidity.

The next day I found myself in front of the commander at 0730 in blues; he informed me what a disappointment I was. I next stood in front of a full-bird colonel who issued me an Article 15 and reduction in grade, and explained to me the severity of my crime. A simple plan would have prevented this misery.

And I lost more. I lost my license to drive on base for a year—basically, the freedom to go where I needed to go. I lost my license to drive off base for four months. Try going shopping, getting a haircut or getting to an appointment without a driver's license! I truly didn't understand what a privilege a driver's license was until mine was taken away.

Some of my friends and co-workers choose not to associate with a criminal. Some see me in a different light and now treat me differently. A few understand I made a mistake and continue normal dialog.

I was told I was a disgrace to the NCO corps. I've been removed from a leadership position and from a duty section. Now I hand out tools. I've lost my honor, dignity and respect.

I was an E-7—a master sergeant—with E-7 financial obligations. Now I'm an E-6—technical sergeant—with the same E-7 financial obligations. I'm losing $6,500 per year through that reduction in grade, and approximately $18,000 in retirement pay. I could have saved $24,500 with one phone call, to a sober friend to drive me home, or even just a cab. I cannot afford my current bills with my current pay and I don't want to also become a financial embarrassment to the Air Force. I'm going to retire.

After all the punishment I've inflicted upon myself, I still consider myself fortunate—I didn't kill someone's baby, daughter, father or a friend. I don't know how anyone could live with that burden.

As sure as I'm standing here today, driving under the influence of alcohol kills. If not lives, it will surely kill your driving record, your ability to keep your financial obligations under control and your career.

If you go anywhere that alcohol might be involved, and you take your vehicle keys with you, don't forget to take one of the most important keys of your life with you—A PLAN! It's all about doing the smart thing.

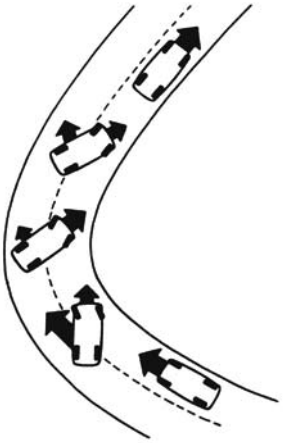
Please—don't drink and drive. ■

Official USAF photo

Controlling Skids

JERRY ROOD
Managing Editor

For most drivers, the question is not if you'll skid in winter, it's when. Skids happen when you drive too fast for road conditions, and we all do that once in a while. Possible contributing factors are sudden turning of the steering wheel, heavy acceleration or hard braking. If you skid, first and foremost, don't panic, don't brake heavily and don't jerk the steering wheel. Here are the specifics of handling skids.



Rear-Wheel Skids

Cars with front-wheel drive

1. Steer in the same direction as the rear wheels are skidding (that is, steer back in the direction you want the car to go).

2. Declutch on a car with a manual transmission or take your foot off the gas pedal on a car with automatic. (With automatics, don't try to shift to neutral unless you are certain of finding it immediately.)

3. Wait until the rear wheels stop skidding, then steer gently back, so the front wheels point straight ahead when the rear wheels are back on course.

4. Release the clutch and press on the gas gently so that the engine speed matches the road speed. Accelerate gently.

There's no real risk of the car skidding in the opposite direction.

Cars with rear-wheel drive

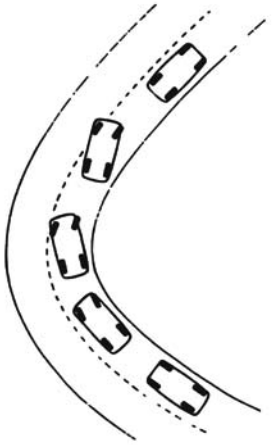
1-3. Same as above.

4. Be prepared: The rear wheels may start to skid in the opposite direction. Use extremely gentle movement of the steering wheel to counter the skid. When you feel that the car is straightening up, follow back with the steering wheel. But make sure not to over-correct; this could cause a rear wheel skid in the opposite direction ("fish-tailing").

5. Release the clutch and press on the gas gently so that the engine speed matches the road speed. Accelerate gently.

Front-Wheel Skids

Though far less common than a rear-wheel skid, a front-wheel skid is not as dangerous. It is easier to correct and there is no risk whatever of the car skidding in the opposite direction. For front-wheel skids, your best way out is as follows. (Note: This works regardless of whether you have front-wheel or rear-wheel drive.)



1. Don't move the steering wheel.

2. Declutch on a car with a manual transmission or take your foot off the gas pedal on a car with automatic. (With automatics, don't try to shift to neutral unless you are certain of finding it immediately.)

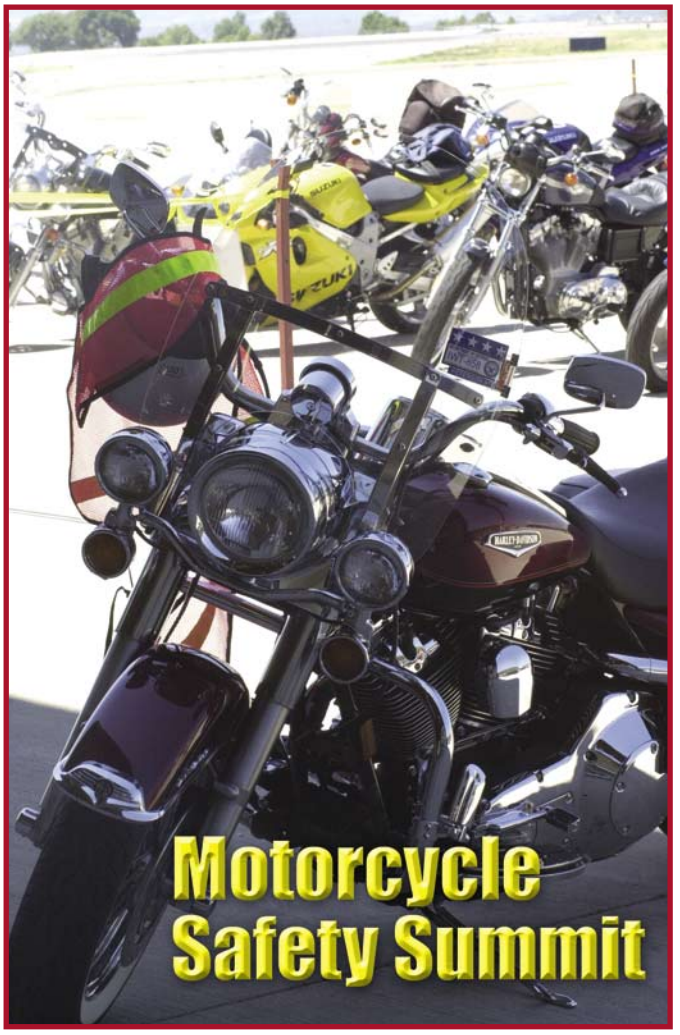
3. Wait for the front wheels to grip again. Since the wheels are skidding sideways, they exert some braking effort. As soon as the speed has dropped off enough for the road surface or the curvature of the bend, the car will start to steer again.

4. When the front wheels have gripped again, steer the wheels carefully to make up for what you have lost in the skid.

5. Release the clutch and press on the gas gently so that the engine speed matches the road speed. Accelerate gently.

There is no real risk of the car skidding in the opposite direction. ■

Information and illustrations adapted from a pamphlet from Saab-Scania.



FRANK KELLEY
Motorcycle Safety Program Manager
HQ AFSC/SEG

During the past two years, the Air Force has seen a sharp rise in the number of motorcycle mishaps. Accompanying this was a parallel increase in the number of fatal mishaps. This increase has raised concern among senior leaders, up to and including the Air Force Chief of Staff.

HQ Air Force Safety Center (HQ AFSC) data has revealed that most of the motorcycle fatal mishaps were the result of single-vehicle events that involved both trained and untrained riders exercising poor risk decisions and faulty judgment. The Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen John P. Jumper, directed a Worldwide Motorcycle Safety Summit be conducted with the primary focus of reviewing current program initiatives to determine ways of improving mishap prevention efforts.

Held in late September 2003 at HQ AFSC, the summit included representatives from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the United Services Automobile Association, as well as motorcycle safety training instructors, program managers, and both experienced and novice riders. An in-depth review of current initiatives revealed inadequate training

capacity, deficiencies in policy guidance and the lack of a framework for mentorship.

The summit attendees considered a wide range of initiatives to develop a way ahead to improve operator performance and mishap prevention. They recommended the following initiatives as the best way to enhance motorcycle safety program effectiveness:

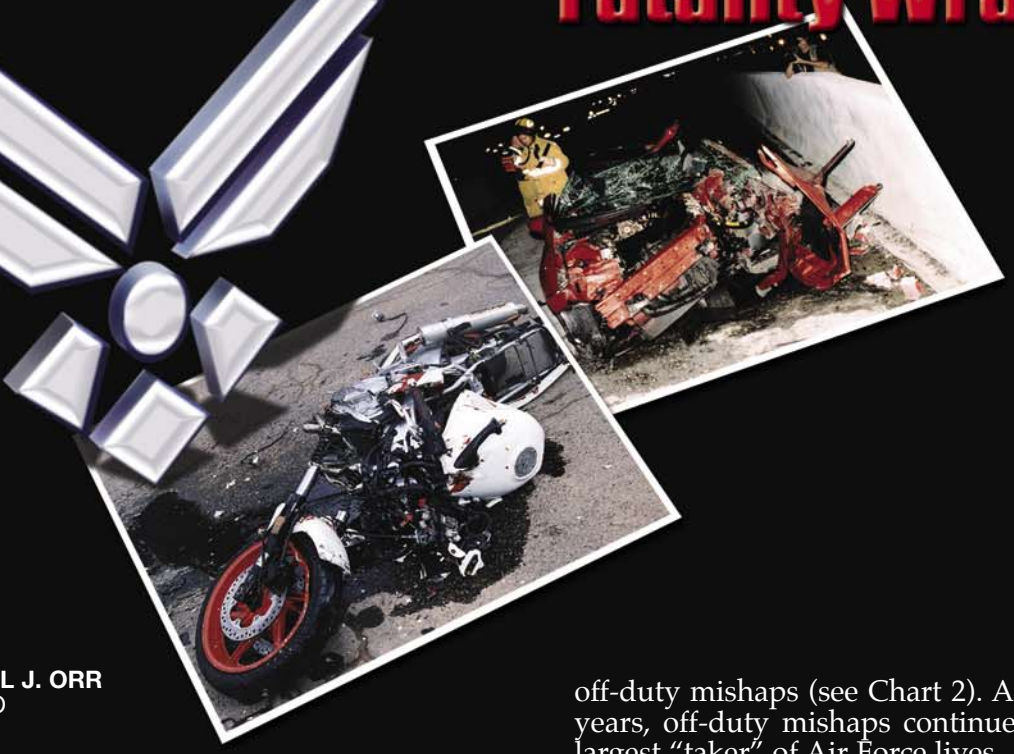
- Create an environment that fosters rider mentorship
- Identify the rider population and determine training needs
- Eliminate the backlog of members awaiting training
- Address programmatic shortfalls and modify policy guidance
- Increase accountability at all levels

Senior leadership is driving an aggressive implementation plan for each of these initiatives. In the end, successful motorcycle mishap reduction requires the support of commanders, first sergeants, supervisors, motorists, and the military and civilian communities at large. It is only through their collective involvement that mishap reductions will occur. ■

Answers to page 23

S	E	A	T	B	E	L	T	S	■	S	P	E	E	D
E	■	R	■	A	D	O	■	E	T	A	■	D	■	A
A	L	C	O	H	O	L	■	C	A	R	S	E	A	T
T	■	H	■	T	■	■	T	U	B	A	■	N	■	A
E	■	■	O	■	■	P	■	R	■	■	D	■	I	■
D	A	Y	T	I	M	E	■	E	S	S	E	N	C	E
■	N	A	S	■	O	R	E	■	L	■	F	E	E	S
S	A	C	■	P	E	T	■	T	E	N	E	T	■	P
A	C	H	E	S	■	■	G	R	E	E	N	S	■	N
O	C	T	E	T	■	G	R	A	P	E	S	■	P	■
■	I	■	L	■	L	W	E	I	■	D	I	C	E	D
A	D	E	■	A	■	A	Y	N	■	■	V	O	N	■
W	E	A	T	H	E	R	■	I	N	T	E	R	N	S
E	N	S	■	E	■	■	■	N	A	U	■	G	■	T
S	T	E	A	M	■	N	I	G	H	T	T	I	M	E

FY03 Ground Safety Fatality Wrap-Up



MSGT MICHAEL J. ORR
HQ AFSC/SEGO

A review of our FY03 fatal mishaps revealed we experienced a decrease in both on-duty (one) and off-duty (eight) mishaps. Despite these decreases, it was our second-worst year since 1995, second only to last year. In total, 82 people lost their lives in ground mishaps—82 people who won't return to their families, friends or co-workers. Seven (nine percent) of our fatalities occurred in on-duty mishaps (see Chart 1), while 74 (91 percent) occurred in off-duty mishaps (see Chart 2). As in recent years, off-duty mishaps continue to be the largest "taker" of Air Force lives.

The summer typically brings increased opportunities for many off-duty outdoor activities and travel. These opportunities also bring an increase in mishap potential, and the 101 Critical Days of Summer campaign was developed to help mitigate the increased mishap potential. This year, the 101 Days were a critical period in our fatality rates. Almost half, 44 percent, of our fatalities occurred during the campaign this year, compared to the 33 percent that occurred

Chart 1

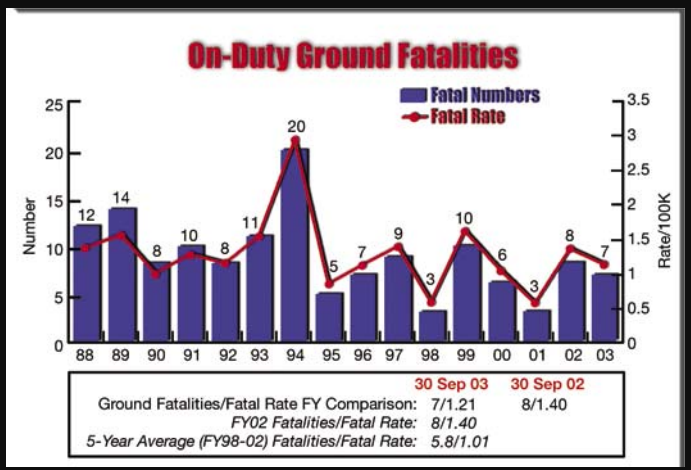
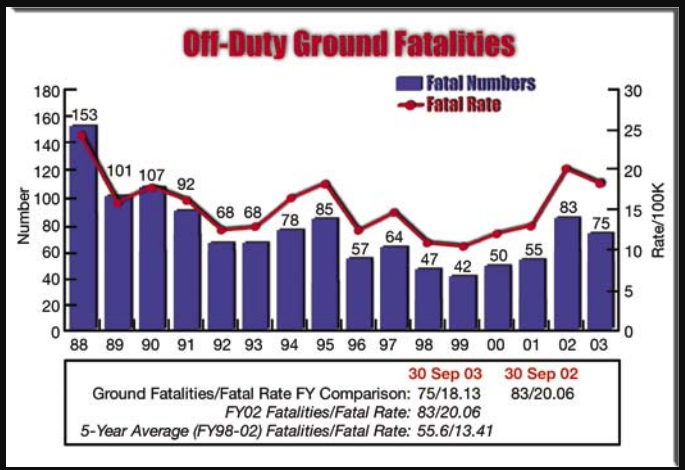


Chart 2



continued on next page

FY03 Ground Safety Fatality Wrap-Up

continued

during both the '02 campaign andí'01 campaigns. The most notable increase occurred in motorcycle fatalities, as our numbers

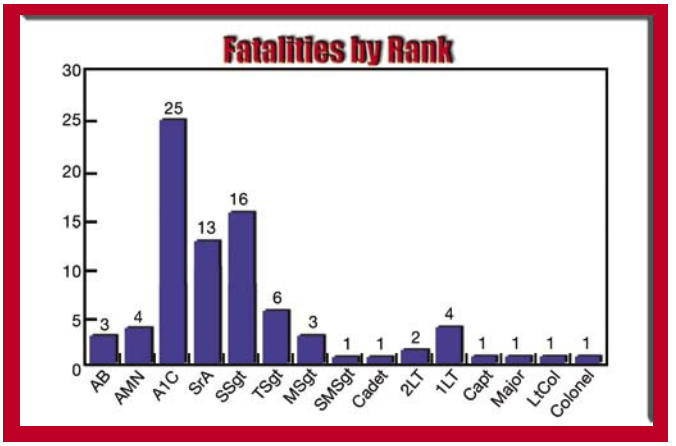


Chart 3

more than doubled from the previous campaign. Again, as the days get warmer, activities may change or increase, potentially resulting in a greater hazard exposure and mishap potential.

Chart 3 shows a breakout of our fatal experience by rank. The grades of A1C-SSgt dominate our losses. Combined, they account for 67 percent of our fatalities. Also, those between the ages of 18-25 accounted for a combined 61 percent of our fatalities (see Chart 4). Increased attention must be focused on reaching out to our younger members and helping them understand the need to analyze their actions and modify their behavior. By the way, young males accounted for 81 percent of the fatalities for those 25 years old and younger.

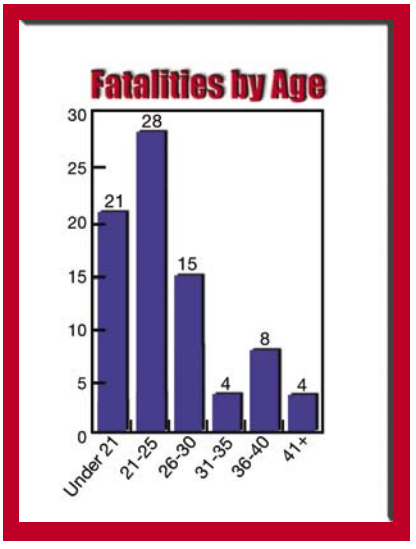


Chart 4

Without a doubt, operating vehicles in the traffic environment takes the largest toll on our people. Vehicle operators have a huge responsibility, not only for their own safety but the safety of their passengers, as well as the other people on the roadways, whether they are operators, passengers, bicyclists or pedestrians. Driving is a complicated task involving the processing of many different stimuli in very short periods of time. At higher rates of speed, tasks get even more critical. Failure to properly process this information and initiate the proper response can and often does result in a mishap. These mishaps often result in fatal consequences.

Charts 5 and 6 reflect an operator's common risk factors for automobile and motorcycle traffic deaths. Again, common factors for automobile mishaps were speed and alcohol. For motorcycle mishaps, proficiency and speed were the key factors.

Take Away Point

From our losses we know the following:

- Alcohol use was involved in 18 fatal mishaps.
- Alcohol was never a single identifiable factor in any fatal mishap; another factor was always present, such as speed.
- Identifiable trends in automobile accidents are driving too fast for conditions, alcohol and darkness. Alcohol impairs judgment and reaction time.
- Young airmen, particularly males, con-

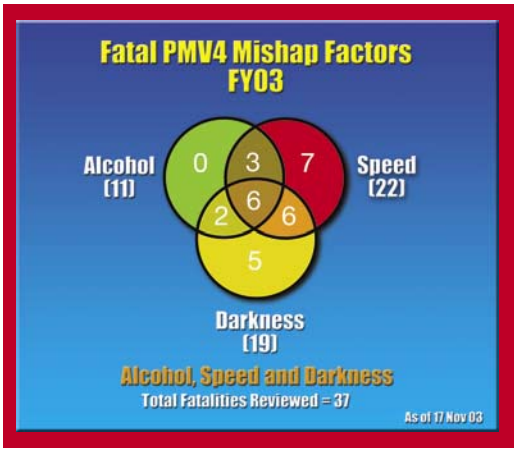


Chart 5

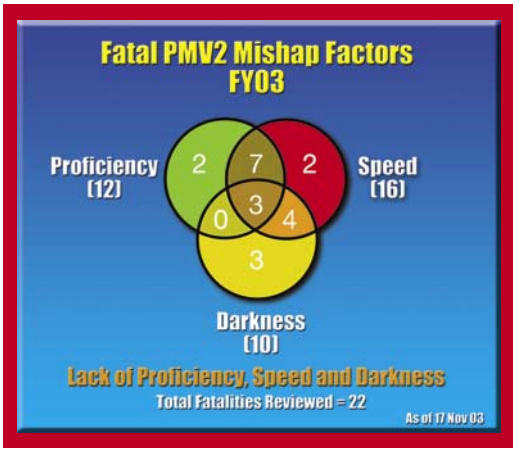


Chart 6

tinue to be our group most at risk.

- Eleven were not wearing seat belts.
- Off-duty motorcycle mishaps resulted in 23 Air Force deaths, three more than last year.
  - Factors included excessive speed for conditions and proficiency.
  - Eleven were a result of loss of control and did not involve a collision with another vehicle.
  - Three involved alcohol.
  - Six had not received MSF training.
  - Six did not wear a helmet.
  - Most were single-vehicle mishaps.

Final Note

The most significant factor in our losses was our own people. Eighty-eight percent of the causal findings were accounted to our people. Of the reasons, judgment, discipline and self-induced stressors clearly led the way (see Chart 7). We are, in effect, killing ourselves by the lack of sound risk management decisions or disregarding clear and understood requirements. Regardless if we are riding in a car, operating a motorcycle or participating in other high-risk activities, risk must be identified and mitigated. Is there

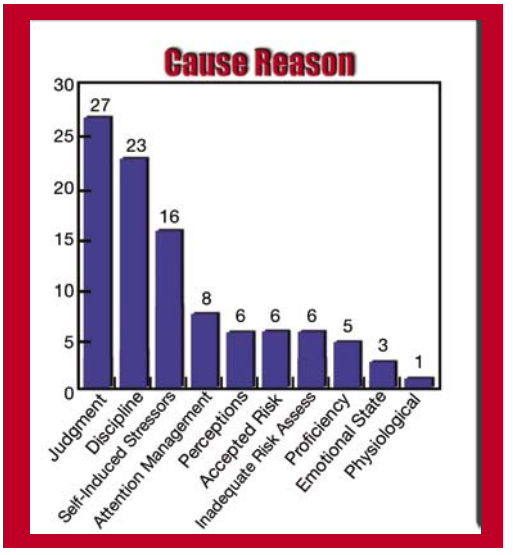
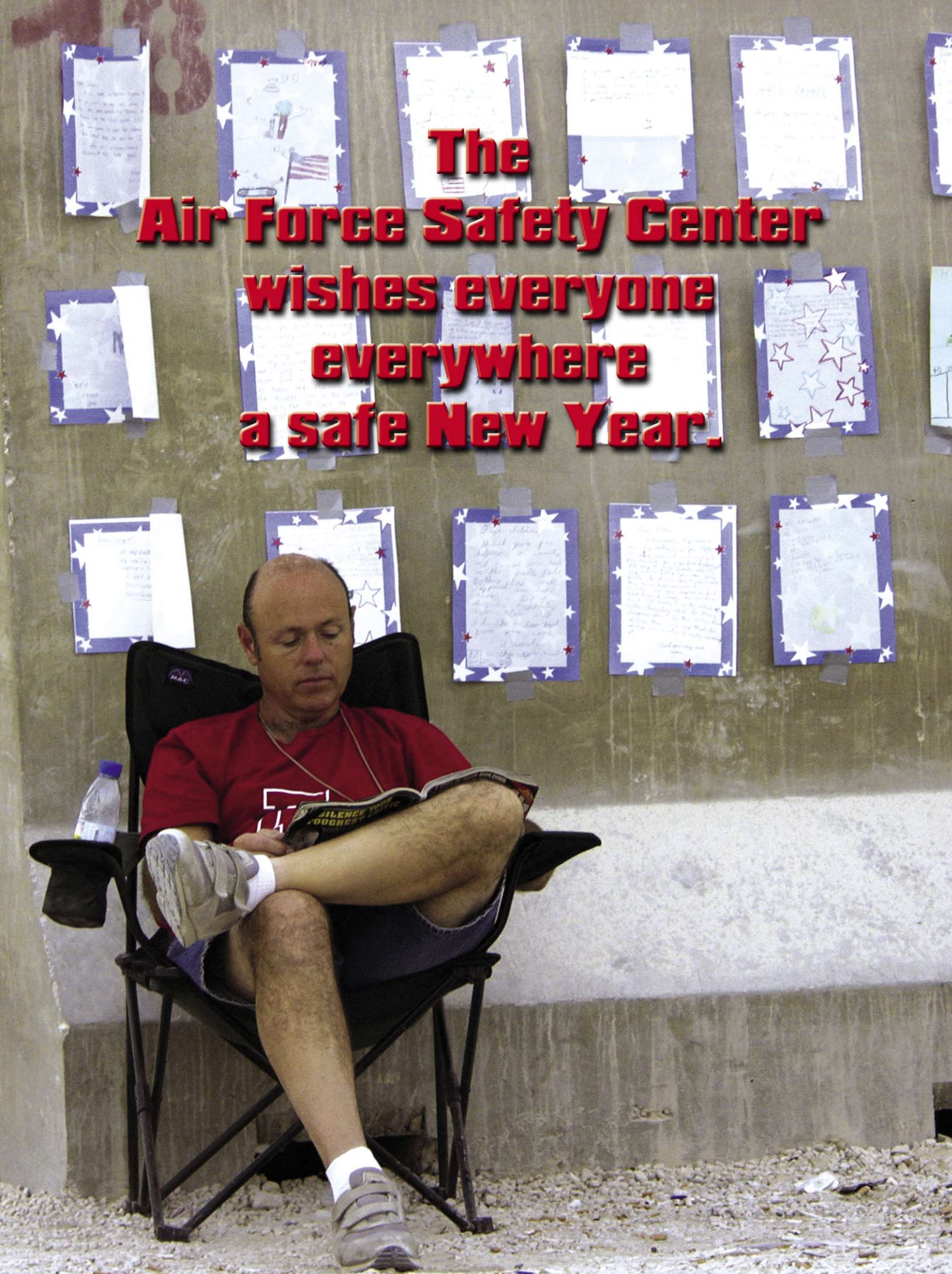


Chart 7

an easy answer to reverse our current trends? Doubtful. More than likely, it will take a concerted effort from supervisors, commanders, peers and individuals alike, to reverse this trend. Each mishap has a negative effect on mission capability. By using sound risk-management principles, we ensure we can attain the highest level of mission accomplishment, day-in and day-out. ■

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 2004-573-322 / 53060


The
Air Force Safety Center
wishes everyone
everywhere
a safe New Year.