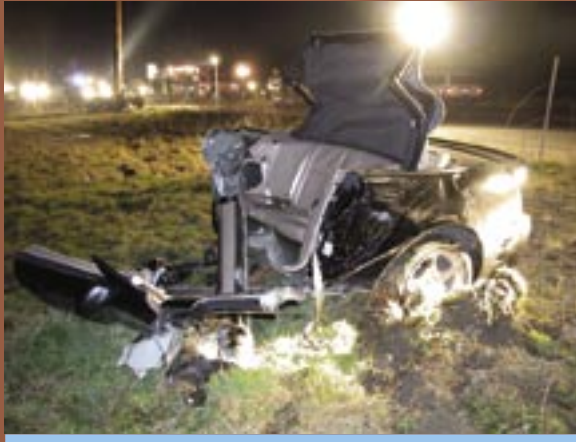


A Deadly Case of Bad Judgment



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“Operator was showing off or racing another vehicle at speeds over the posted speed limit.” That’s how the mishap report describes a crash in which the drunk driver died when he lost control and slammed his 2000 Ford Mustang convertible into a telephone pole.

The driver, a 32-year-old Sailor, and three shipmates were going an estimated 95 mph at the time of the crash. They reportedly were on the way home from a local restaurant-bar. Two other friends in a second car were following them.

According to the mishap report, the driver lost control of his Mustang in a long, sweeping, right-hand curve. The rear end of the car broke traction and came around to the left. The car then slid sideways about 20 feet (the length of the skid marks) before hitting the telephone pole just aft of the left, front tire.

The Mustang then split in half, with the operator and front half staying at the telephone pole. Meanwhile, the front passenger seat rolled up with the floorboard it was attached to, sending the passenger into the back seat. He then traveled with the two back-seat passengers in the rear half of the car

through a barbed-wire fence and across a grassy field—a distance of more than 100 feet—before coming to rest.

Witnesses claimed to have seen the driver drinking on a couple of occasions in the two days before the mishap. According to the toxicology report, his BAC at the time of the crash was more than twice the legal limit of .08. All three passengers also had been drinking, but their BAC was unknown.

The driver died from a blunt-force trauma to his torso and neck, despite the fact he, like all three passengers, was wearing a seat belt. The front-seat passenger suffered a blow to his head (with momentary loss of consciousness), a bruised right thigh, and multiple cuts to both feet but was released from the hospital the same day. He lost only eight workdays.

One rear-seat passenger, a PO3, also was released from the hospital the same day with a small scratch on his forehead and one on top of his hand. The other rear-seat passenger, a PO2, spent two days in the hospital with a bruised lung, lacerated liver, and a cut on his right calf. 