



Editorial:

How Cool Is Public

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There seems to be a difference of opinion about the answer to that question. As AD1 Dennis L. Piert, Jr. and I [the authors of a summer 2003 Ashore article with the same title] noted, public stunt-riding “really isn’t cool.” Some visitors to our story on the Naval Safety Center website, however, took exception. Here are their unedited comments, along with my response.

M. N. wrote, “I am in the industry and have about 3 videos out, including stunts in the movie bikerboyz. The starboyz are my friends and i dont think you have permission to use that picture of kevin marino from the starboyz, I have emailed the pic to them and we have copied it also. I suggest you take it off. NOW.”

I did use a picture from the Starboyz website, depicting what your head will look like when it hits the ground at a speed faster than you can walk. Does it matter whether the victim fell off a car or a motorcycle? I think the photo is an excellent example of how a bad judgment call, involving motor vehicles of any kind, can ruin your day. My only regret is that



I didn’t first ask for permission to use this photo, and, for that, I apologize. [This photo has been removed from the Naval Safety Center website.—Ed.]

Then came this note of indignation from J. B.: “I was just looking at your article on the website titled ‘How Cool Is Public Stunt-Riding?’ Why in the hell would you put up a picture that has absolutely NOTHING to do with motorcycles, let alone stunt-riding, along with this article. All you did was fng a nasty pic off the Starboyz website and post it to try to prove that stunt-riding is dangerous. When in fact the head injury was caused when the guy fell off of a moving GMC sport utility vehicle, which the caption beside the picture clearly stated on their website. That is one fine piece of journalism and research.

“Here’s another idea for you guys; do an article about the hazards of not wearing seatbelts and then add a picture of a gunshot victim to go along with the text to illustrate your point. And while your at it....Leave the stunt-riders alone!”

This slam was one of my favorites. I’ve already addressed the picture of a guy whose head skipped across the ground without a helmet, so let me address J.B.’s attempt to read my mind. My intent in writing the article simply was to prevent shipmates from killing themselves on motorcycles—something that, statistically, doesn’t happen very often.

Stunt-Riding?

However, it happens too often for me. When it happens because they were being stupid, it pisses me off, so I won’t leave public stunt-riders alone.

I don’t need to use a picture to prove that stunt-riding is dangerous. If it weren’t, would you still call it a “stunt”? Oh, and if I thought not wearing a seat belt could lead to a gunshot wound, I would write an article about it and think nothing about including a gory photo.

The next English-lesson gem came from someone who wouldn’t even divulge his or her initials: *“You need to do conduct a littel bit more research on your topic, instead of inter-viewing squids, try actual stunters, plus the photo you have isn’t even from a motorcylce accident, and i doubt you have permission to use it, since it is from the starboyz”*

And, finally, I share this crass note from another disgruntled reader, who also withheld his or her initials: *“the story you got on stunt riding is some complete B.S. ... all of your comments on how to do wheelies are wrong and who the hell did you interview anyway for the answers you got..?talk to a real stunter for real answers..www.stuntlife.com”*

I’ll address these last two sets of comments together. As for the photo—geez, guys,

let it go! If you want, send me some photos of your smashed-up bikes—surely you have a few—and I’ll use them with my next article. You should be pleased that I took your advice and visited the website you mentioned. After weeding through the message board for two hours, I completely see your point of view. There are countless stories of reckless-driving tickets, suspended licenses, crashes, and, yes, even deaths—all related to “real stunters.” Where do I sign up? It sounds like a blast to me.

Enough of this banter, though. What really matters here is that these “stunters” missed the point of the article in the summer 2003 *Ashore*. Public stunt-riding is stupid, dangerous and, more importantly, illegal!

The professionals who do it on closed courses, for money, are some seriously skilled motorcyclists—without question. However, I think they have a responsibility to discourage inexperienced riders from attempting those same stunts on public roads. Too many people are swayed by what they see in movies and homemade videos.

Operating a motor vehicle is a privilege, not a right, and, with it, comes responsibility. You simply cannot shrug off intentionally negligent behavior with phrases like, “I’m not hurting anyone, so leave me alone.” The tragic truth is that you do hurt other people. If you don’t believe me, write a letter, or, better yet, visit a mom whose son nearly killed himself on a bike you sold him a week ago. It doesn’t matter who’s at fault—it sucks all the way around.

Tell it to his buddies whom he doesn’t recognize anymore. Tell it to the CO who has to figure out who is going to take his place on deployment. If just one person wears a helmet because of this editorial or my co-authored article in the summer issue, then it’s a good day.

One last thing: I tend to take constructive criticism a lot more seriously when the grammar and punctuation are correct. ■