

# New Truck Made Old

By AO3 Jacob Clarno

**H**as there ever been a time in your life when you wish you could go back in time and fix a mistake you made or solve a dilemma you might have created? It would be a machine with rewind, erase, and re-dub functions to fix recent errors with a push of a button. I would put one in every shop. I could have used such a machine because I made a big mistake, one that easily could have been avoided.

It started out as a great day; the sun was shining, the Virginia sky was blue and cloudless, and a cool breeze blew on my face. Fifteen minutes later, storm clouds gathered, and the weather changed to a much gloomier forecast, at least for me. I was assigned to remove a centerline pylon from one of our FA-18 aircraft. Two other people were assigned to help. I gathered all the tools and bolted out the door to our ordnance truck.

The truck was parked temporarily just outside the shop in a fire lane. The truck never should have been there in the first place, but it was a convenient place to load and off-load gear. A nearby cluster of poles about three-feet tall was the only hazard around. They protruded from the ground to protect a hangar fire main. There was just enough room to drive between them and the building, but you had to be careful. I had driven around these obstacles many times before without trouble, so I thought nothing of it.

After grabbing a couple of guys and loading the truck, I started it and drove forward. I noticed a turn screen lying on the deck near the truck, but it didn't seem to be in the way, and there was enough room to maneuver around it—I thought.

I pulled forward, steering a little to the right of the screen, then turned to the left to avoid the poles, and finished by turning back to the right to get around some stairs. Thinking everything was clear, I accelerated to drive away. I assumed a buddy was looking out the passenger side window to tell me if I got too close to the poles. He didn't, and as soon as I hit the gas...wham! We stopped instantly. I had hit



one of the poles with the side door, driving the post deeply into the door. My lookout was on another planet, the brand-new truck was smashed, and I was in deep kimchi.

I slowly backed up the truck, hoping to get it off the post and wanting to assess the damage, but it didn't work. The pole had dug itself so deeply into the truck body that turning the wheel drove it farther inside and behind the door, flaring the skin out even more.

I ran to the shop and let my leading petty officer know what had happened. The squadron notified the base police, safety and everyone else within a one-mile radius. I felt like an idiot. The shop supervisor had told us not to drive through that area to avoid damaging our new truck. My LPO didn't think we were bad drivers, but he foresaw a potentially bad situation, and I didn't heed his orders.

The bill for damages came to around \$1,000. I suffered a second time when I learned the money to pay for my mistake came from command funds, not mine. It was painful because someone told me those dollars could have been used on picnics, barbecues, or other squadron events. Instead, they were paying for my mistake, which could have been avoided by slowing down, paying attention and following orders. I now know they were joking about the money for burgers, but it made me think of how irresponsible I had been. 

Petty Officer Clarno works in the ordnance shop at VFA-87.



With the pole dug into the door, pulling forward or back made the damage worse.



The damage doesn't look too bad, but it cost \$1,000.00 to fix.

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This "obstacle course" became a mine field.

