

# My Helmet Saved My Life!



This helmet probably saved the rider's life.

By VMGR-352

**S**an Diego County in Southern California is a bastion of year-round sunshine and splendid weather. Outdoor activities of all types flourish here. One of the most popular, especially among locally based Marines and Sailors, is motorcycling.

The wind in one's face and the sunshine on one's back, coupled with the thrill of a twisty mountain road, attracts many riders. Unfortunately, this glorious attraction has a dangerous and deadly underside. Even with the personal protective equipment and mandated safety training, riders are exposed to some of the most dangerous conditions in the country.

Heavy automobile traffic from the Los Angeles and San Diego metropolis is constant on the highways of Southern California. In addition, the roads are slick from grease, motor oil, and other automobile fluids. Frequently, these same highways are littered with debris, ranging from furniture that was secured improperly to automobile parts. Any of these hazards can spell disaster for the recreational motorcyclist. Now, more than ever, motorcyclists must ride defensively and wear quality protective gear.

On Sunday, 3 June 2002, Sgt. Marty Cantrell of VMGR-352 leisurely rode his shiny, new 2002 Suzuki GSXR 750 sport bike along the scenic highways of western San Diego County. A fairly seasoned rider, Sgt. Cantrell had completed all the appropriate military and civilian motorcycle train-

ing and had been riding for over three years. He also was smart enough to wear his full-face helmet, leather jacket, leather gloves, and heavy-gauge jeans.

As Sgt. Cantrell slowed from 30 mph and turned his bike to take the onramp for Highway 15, he passed through an oil slick. The bike's tires lost traction with the road, and the bike slid out from underneath him. He struck his head against the pavement, lost consciousness, and slid 60 feet across the pavement.

When he regained consciousness, the dazed sergeant moved aimlessly across the onramp to the highway. The impact and slide had destroyed his helmet, leather jacket, and gloves, and damage to the motorcycle was estimated at \$9,000. Miraculously, Sgt. Cantrell emerged without a scratch to his body but he suffered a minor concussion, which caused him to miss just one day of work.

Clearly, this accident was a disaster narrowly avoided. Today, when asked, Sgt. Cantrell will testify that his helmet saved his life. It completely took the force of the collision with the pavement. Motorcycling hazards can be mitigated. Ride safely, wear protective gear, and learn from others' experiences. 

