

**Driver's Ed. Education
A Series of Specifics for Success
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Article # 19
"The Dark Side"

This is an editorial that I published in the June 1998 issue of the Redline Report, the monthly newsletter of the Central NY Region Porsche Club of America, while I was serving as Editor of that publication. The event that spawned its creation was very sad, but I hope through printing it here that some good may come of it, and that all who undertake to drive will heed the warning carried within.

*Few of us are professional drivers, who must rationalize such things. However, I'm not sure it represents a good way to die in any event. I hope you readers will understand my aim...
... and take it to heart.*

Since I joined the Porsche Club of America in 1990, I have had occasion to do a moderate amount of performance driving. I have also cultivated no small amount of interest in instructing others in the finer points of this avocation; to pass along what I have learned for their benefit. These are things that I, along with many others in the PCA, regard as a great privilege; as food for the soul. I find it all a very stimulating experience. No, not nearly in the way of fist pumping and high-five'ing, but in a deeply, inwardly satisfying sense. I'm not completely sure why, but that's the way I feel about it.

The nuances of machine, gravity, and driver as they interact are fascinating to myself and my track friends. We revel in and share openly amongst ourselves the euphoria it lends, but yet at once, we respect it as said privilege, and treat it also with due care and respect. We hold fast in the back of our minds the desire not to consort with the back edge of what we know to be a finely honed sword. As the car and driver cut neatly in unison on a *perfect* flying lap, so to does the hand of fate also cut unerringly and without reserve when the limits of physics or common sense are exceeded.

I would, however, hope that all involved in this pastime would see fit to take stock before taking to the track and re-think what they are doing and why. This is not an arcade game. There is no reset button. It is not Fox Tabloid TV or Zena-Warrior Princess. It is *not* a light-hearted endeavor; while it is serious fun, it is not a fool's paradise and must be granted proper accord. Save your reckless abandon for the local go-kart track or your Sony Playstation. Safety, sanity, and propriety are the names of our game... period!

We lost one of our own on Saturday, May 9th, 1998 at the Lime Rock PCA Club Race. I can imagine that Richard Colhoun - a man I had never met, who's name had never before entered my consciousness - came up through Driver's Education and progressed to Club Racing in the spirit in which both were intended. He tragically has become a symbol of the dark side of that two edged sword. The side that we would rather not acknowledge, as perhaps he did not fully... and yet must keep firmly affixed in our minds in order to maintain our sense of priority.

My friends, I am not here to scare you away from Driver's Education or Club Racing. Far from that; I am here, as always, to encourage participation in these most rewarding pursuits. Now, as ever, I am convinced that the lessons learned there are of far greater benefit than the admitted risk, which I honestly feel is minimal... with the proviso that one understands - and stays - within ones limitations, both mechanical and personal.

Car control is a vital aspect of our modern lives. I see what the Sword's Dark Edge - unerring in its proclivity - has rendered every day professionally as it carves up the feeble fops of our roadways. I see that the skill and privilege of driving is taken far too lightly in this country, and I feel it a necessity to do all that I can to train myself to be better in this regard, and to help others expand their talents and abilities as far as I can. Some would call me a Road-Rager (I would prefer a *Champion of Logic*), but I don't suffer the fools of our streets *at all* well, irregardless of whether they currently provide me my living or not!

In a certain sense, to race is to court disaster. Racing, by its nature, is a potentially dangerous pursuit. Gravity and the Laws of Physics know no bounds - other than their own - or care not of man's propensity for flouting them. The inherent risks lying therein are something that we must all assume, whether driving on the street or the track, or climbing from bed in the morning for that matter. The specifics of Mr. Colhoun's particular incident are not overly important. Suffice to say that it was an unfortunate alignment of circumstances - regardless of the setting - and like most such situations, could have likely been avoided given certain revisions in equipment or mindset. Then to... in some sense, it actually could have happened anywhere that cars travel.

That it happened to one of our own, pursuing a fun and rewarding hobby with friends is most sad (since he was a PCA Club Racer, the fact that he was even slightly more talented behind the wheel than the average schlub is unquestioned). I was there at Lime Rock on Friday supporting region friends and racers, and generally visiting with old acquaintances and anyone else who seemed interesting. Feeling somewhat a part of that world as a constructor and preparer, I was

resoundingly set back in my chair on Monday when the e-mail from National Race Chairman Monte Smith imparting this sorrowful news fell before my eyes. I must say it dulled my senses for the rest of the day, and continues to cause me reflection at the very least.

In any event, my sincerest hope is that there will be but one repercussion: That everyone's minds become ever more focused on fun and safety first.

Let us all live to drive...

To have driven quite well...

And let us all live to drive yet another day.

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I have striven to make this an extremely well written and accurate series on a subject that is not to be taken lightly and can obviously be dangerous. To maintain the accuracy and proper presentation of that message, I would ask that absolutely no use whatsoever of any text herein be made without my express written consent.

I would ask you to please abide by this request.

Thank you.