

Keeping Us Safe

Providing practical, real-life solutions to older drivers and their families



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Keeping Us Safe to Present at the Ohio Mature Driver Conference

Posted on [July 24, 2014](#)



Matt Gurwell, founder of Keeping Us Safe, will be speaking at the Ohio Department of Transportation's "Educating the Mature Driver" Conference in Columbus, Ohio, on July 29, 2014.

The conference was developed by ODOT for individuals certified (or interested in becoming certified) in providing Ohio's Mature Operator Course through their driving school, and for individuals interested in learning more about mature driver needs. Gurwell will be facilitating a discussion centered on Keeping Us Safe's "Bringing a Peaceful Resolve to Complex and Sensitive Senior Driving Issues" presentation.

Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, Keeping Us Safe is a national organization that provides services to older drivers and their concerned families as they face the emotional and delicate issue of a loved-one's diminished driving skills as a result of the aging process.

"Our programs provide concerned families with the missing link between their desire to bring the driving issue to a peaceful resolution, and their ability to actually do so", explains Gurwell, who is also a retired Ohio State Trooper.

"I am very excited to be participating in this conference. My hopes are that I can provide conference attendees with valuable insight on how to address the issue of age-related diminished driving skills, so that the individual's dignity and independence are not jeopardized." Gurwell stated.

The one-day conference kicks off at 9AM at the ODOT complex located at 1980 West Broad Street in Columbus, Ohio. For more information on the conference contact

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ODOT's Valerie Luptak at 614-466-3524.

For more information on Keeping Us Safe's programs please visit www.keepingussafe.org. Media inquiries are asked to call 216-904-8841.

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Keeping Us Safe Will Present Their “Beyond Driving with Dignity” Program at the 2014 Florida Conference on Aging

Posted on [July 23, 2014](#)



Matt Gurwell, founder of Keeping Us Safe, has been accepted by the Florida Council on Aging Program Committee to speak at the 2014 Florida Conference on Aging in a session titled “Beyond Driving with Dignity”.

The conference, sponsored by the Florida Council on Aging, is being held at the Bonaventure Resort & Spa Hotel in Weston (Ft. Lauderdale) from August 4-6, 2014.

The title of this year's conference is *Aging; Unleashed*.

Keeping Us Safe is a national organization that provides services to older drivers and their concerned families as they face the emotional and delicate issue of a loved-one's diminished driving skills as a result of the aging process.

“The ‘Beyond Driving with Dignity’ program provides concerned families with the missing link between their desire to bring the driving issue to a peaceful resolution, and their ability to actually do so”, explains Matt Gurwell, who is also a retired Ohio State Trooper.

“I am very excited to be part of this year's conference.” Gurwell stated. “On a *personal* level, being among such high caliber professionals that share the desire to help older adults remain independent and to give them options to age in a dignified manner will prove very rewarding. On a *professional* level, my hopes are that I can provide conference attendees with valuable insight on how to address the issue of age-related diminished driving skills, so that the individual's dignity and independence are not jeopardized.” Gurwell concluded.

The conference is being sponsored in partnership with the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, the Florida Association of Aging Services Providers and the National Institute of Senior Centers. For more information on the conference, visit the Florida Council on Aging at <http://www.fcoa.org>.

When asked what the turning point was for starting Keeping Us Safe, Matt explains

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“There was never one particular event. It was the result of 20-plus years of holding dying people in my arms at terrible car accidents, and delivering dozens of death notifications to families. I would much rather work with families bringing a peaceful resolve to this sensitive and uncomfortable issue now, rather than have them deal with it when a police officer is knocking on their front door”.

For more information on Keeping Us Safe’s “Beyond Driving with Dignity” program please visit www.keepingussafe.org. Media inquiries are asked to call 216-904-8841.

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A Retirement From Driving Does Not HAVE to Equal House Arrest

Posted on [July 23, 2014](#)



It goes without saying that for any of us, driving represents freedom, control, and of course, a degree of personal independence. But this is particularly true for the older driver. Here are five reasons a senior driver may not be willing to retire from driving, despite what may be obvious and quantifiable safety reasons:

1) For a senior driver, losing the ability to drive can be an obvious emotional set-back.

In some cases, this set-back can be even more complicated when combined with recent losses such as the death of a spouse, a close friend, or a recent diagnosis of a serious health condition.

Imagine for a moment that only months ago your spouse of 50+ years died unexpectedly, and now your adult children are trying to take your car away from you. Or that just last week you were diagnosed with cancer, and today your family doctor compounded your anguish by suggesting that for safety reasons you stop driving, effective immediately. The recipient of all of this wonderful news would certainly feel like a tsunami of doom has just reached their beach.

2) A senior driver may believe that if he/she can no longer drive, they will become a burden to others. This may be the furthest thing from the truth, but it becomes very real in the eyes of the beholder. Imagine for just one minute that you can suddenly no longer drive...ever. Although completely unwarranted, it is human nature to feel at least somewhat burdensome asking others for help getting you to and from your doctor’s appointments? Taking you to get groceries? Driving you to the hairdresser or barber? Taking you to visit an old friend?

3) Many seniors see a surrender of their driver’s license as an acknowledgement that their physical wellness, agility, mental sharpness, reflexes, sight, hearing or memory are beginning to deteriorate. Or that an illness or pre-existing medical condition is “getting

worse”.

4) Many older drivers believe that if they give up their driving, they will have fewer social opportunities than what they are accustomed to.

5) Despite everyone’s best efforts, driving cessation can sometimes trigger depression in elderly people which, in turn can cause a noticeable deterioration in your loved one’s physical health.

There are obviously many, many more examples of the emotional distress driving cessation can cause for an older driver. The good news is; a retirement from a long and successful driving career does not have to be all doom and gloom, and does not have to be the equal of “house arrest”.

Keeping Us Safe provides services to both older drivers and their families across the United States. You can visit them online at www.keepingussafe.org or call toll-free at [\(877\) 907-8841](tel:8779078841) for more information.

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Extending an Older Driver’s SAFE Driving Career

Posted on [July 23, 2014](#)



With each passing year, each of us knows that the day is coming when we will lose some of our personal independence. Driving an automobile is one of the most important privileges of being an independent adult. And it is a privilege most of never want to give up.

Weighing the factors about whether it is time to retire from your driving career can be an extremely complex task. However, from the simplest of perspectives, the key to extending one’s safe driving career can be summed up in just two words; **self awareness**. Each of us must have the self-awareness to recognize any personal physical or mental deterioration that might affect our ability to drive safely. Although hanging up the car keys is rarely simple or easy, I believe that self-awareness is the foundation for keeping us *safe* drivers for as long as possible, as we progress through the aging process.

Physiological functions such as vision and hearing, reflexes, memory, agility, muscle and bone strength, are obviously very important in our ability to remain safe drivers. Many of these functions naturally diminish as we get older. Changes can also be aggravated by medications, depression, and even loneliness.

We also need to remember that accidents are more likely to cause serious or fatal injury an older person, regardless of who is at fault. In two-car fatal collisions, where one driver is 70 or older, the older driver is *3.5 times* more likely to be killed. Injuries that are seen as moderate to severe for most people are often fatal to people aged 70 and older.

The key to maintaining your self-awareness is to be very cognizant and alert to what others are saying to you. Your doctor, clergy member, an occupational therapist, a driving assessor, your spouse, children and other relatives, friends or even a trusted neighbor are all great sources of information. By being receptive and listening to what these people are gently trying to tell you, you can avoid having a future discussion with the police, a tow-truck driver, your insurance agent, emergency room physicians, your attorney and the court system, the news media, or someone else's grieving family.

Matt Gurwell is founder of Keeping Us Safe, LLC. Matt works with older drivers every day to help them determine whether they are still safe drivers. Please visit his website at www.keepingussafe.org or call him at 877-907-8841 to learn more about their Enhanced Self-Assessment Program, designed specifically for senior drivers, or to schedule a presentation for your group, business, or organization.

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Keeping Us Safe partners with All About Aging to bring life-saving program to Florida's older drivers and the families

Posted on [April 12, 2014](#)



[Keeping Us Safe](#) is proud to announce that All About Aging, LLC. has added yet another Certified "Beyond Driving with Dignity" Professional to their staff.

Lisa Rodriguez, Certified Dementia Practitioner, has successfully completed an intensive training program and is now certified as a "Beyond Driving with Dignity" Professional. She joins Geriatric Care Manager Barbara Herrington (owner of All About Aging, LLC) and Care Manager Assistant Kate Svoboda, who became certified in the program in 2013.

The "[Beyond Driving with Dignity](#)" professional certification program has been designed to arm qualifying professionals from across the United States and Canada with tools necessary to help older drivers and their families work through the complicated issue of age-related diminishing driving skills.

Having received this certification, Herrington, Svoboda and Rodriguez are now able to provide older drivers and their families with a very *specific* program that will help make decisions on how to keep the older driver safe.

Barbara Herrington, owner of All About Aging, LLC explains "We are pleased to offer the Beyond Driving with Dignity program to residents of Polk and Highlands counties as part of the services we provide to families. We look forward to helping families initiate conversations about safe driving while also assisting with determining solutions that satisfy everyone involved."

Certification in the Beyond Driving with Dignity program is designed to be a common-

sense approach to facilitate (and often times mediate!) rational, common-sense driving-related solutions based on tangible facts and personal observations.

To learn more about the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” program, contact All About Aging, LLC., at 863-557-7604 or visit them at www.allaboutagingllc.com.

The “Beyond Driving with Dignity” professional will receive annual in-service trainings will have to meet standards of professionalism to maintain their certification. For more information on the program please visit www.keepingussafe.org (media inquiries are asked to call 216-904-8841).

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Longtime Cincinnati Resident Receives Keeping Us Safe’s “Retired Driver Trophy”

Posted on [April 12, 2014](#)

Longtime Cincinnati area resident, Mary Ann Breeden, was presented with Keeping Us Safe’s “Retired Driver Trophy” in a ceremony held in her home earlier this week. The award was presented to Breeden by Nancy Schuster, one of Keeping Us Safe’s Certified “Beyond Driving with Dignity” Professionals.

The trophy was developed by Keeping Us Safe as a way to recognize and honor older adults that have made the difficult decision to retire from driving, based on diminishing driving skills. Ms. Breeden will also be entered into Keeping Us Safe’s national retired driver “Hall of Fame”.



Nancy Schuster and Mary Ann Breeden

Like so many older drivers, Mary Ann Breeden was a very safe and conscientious driver throughout her 65 year driving career. However, she began to notice that her driving skills were beginning to slip as a result of the natural aging process. Not ever wanting to ever hurt herself or someone else, Breeden made the difficult decision to give up driving.

Nancy Schuster, who also serves as the Executive Director of ITNGreaterCincinnati, has been active in the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” Professional Certification program since August, 2011. Nancy commented that “It was an true honor to be able to present the trophy to Mary Ann. She is such a conscientious individual.”

Matt Gurwell, founder of Keeping Us Safe, explains that “So many times we hear and read about tragedies surrounding older drivers. It should be noted that these tragedies

are caused by a very small percentage of older drivers. Albeit a very difficult decision, so many drivers, like Mary Ann Breeden, simply decide quietly to give up driving when they sense slipping skills. Unfortunately, those drivers are rarely recognized for ‘doing the right thing’ and are seldom recognized for their years of commitment to driving safety. Our Retired Driver Trophy is one way that we can give back to these conscientious and compassionate individuals.” Gurwell adds that “Mary Ann Breeden, and so many others like her, are everyday heroes who’s commitment to safety often goes overlooked”.

To order a “Retired Driver Trophy” for the loved-one in your family, please visit Keeping Us Safe at <http://keepingussafe.org/retireddrivertrophy.htm>, or call us at 216-904-8841.

Trophies are personalized with your loved-one’s name and number of years of driving. All proceeds from the trophy sales go to the charity of your choosing.

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Jo Rinehart to Serve on Keeping Us Safe’s “Executive Vision Committee”

Posted on [September 22, 2013](#)



Jo Rinehart

On January 13, 2011, the headline of The Washington Post read “Elderly couple found frozen to death after getting lost during drive”. That couple was Mr. William Fresch (85) and his wife Betty (79).

Months in the making, and with 100% of the family’s support, I am both pleased and honored to report that later this fall, we will be formally dedicating the Keeping Us Safe website to “The Memory of Mr. and Mrs. Willam Fresch”.

In addition, we will now be recognizing (annually) one of our Certified “Beyond Driving with Dignity” Professionals for their outstanding achievements in the program.

That award will be aptly named “The William and Betty Fresch Award for Outstanding Achievement”, and will be presented on or about January 13th, annually.

We are also very proud and honored that Jo Rinehart of Fairfileld, PA (daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fresch) has graciously accepted a position on Keeping Us Safe’s ‘Executive Vision Committee’. Who better to serve as a representative of the families that we so humbly serve. Thank you Jo, Jeanne and Paul for all of the help, support and insight you bring to Keeping Us Safe!

Please consider taking a moment to read the article from The Washington Post, it is a

very touching (and tragic) story.

<http://wapo.st/hXdg0K>

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More About Our “Beyond Driving with Dignity” Professional Certification Program

Posted on [August 12, 2013](#)

[Keeping Us Safe's](#) “Beyond Driving with Dignity” (BDD) training and [certification program](#) has been designed to arm certain professionals with tools necessary to help older drivers and their families work through the complicated issue of age-related diminishing driving skills.

Our training and certification program supplements your core competencies, professional skills and life experiences with a very pro-active, targeted program that will help older drivers and their loved ones work through what can be a very complex, sensitive and emotional transition.



The [Beyond Driving with Dignity](#) program is not built around the premeditated goal of “taking the keys away” from an older driver. Rather, the program is designed to help the older driver and concerned family members make appropriate decisions on the future of the individual’s safe driving career. It is true that in certain circumstances, this may involve assisting the older driver in making a smooth and permanent transition from the driver’s seat to the passenger seat.

The Beyond Driving with Dignity program is designed to be worked in close conjunction with “[Beyond Driving with Dignity: The workbook for older drivers and their families](#)”.

The workbook complements the efforts of the BDD Professional, and the BDD Professional complements the contents of the workbook. Both the BDD professional and the workbook work in tandem to bring a peaceful resolution to the complex and sensitive issues surrounding an older driver’s diminishing driving skills.

The Beyond Driving with Dignity certification program is not a program to train individuals to become driving assessors. Certification in the Beyond Driving with Dignity program is designed to be a common-sense approach to facilitate (and often times mediate!) rational, common-sense driving-related solutions based on tangible facts and personal observations.

The “Beyond Driving with Dignity” Professional will receive training in:

- Evolving a concerned family’s opinion and speculation into solid, tangible facts

- Helping the older driver and his or her family make appropriate driving related decisions
- Providing a viable, practical plan that will help ensure a smooth driving retirement, or in helping the older driver self-impose appropriate driving restrictions
- Creating a culture of ongoing support to help the older driver and his/her family meet transportation needs
- Ensuring there is minimal disruption to the older driver's personal independence, dignity and feelings of self-worth during this transition process, and beyond

Since sessions between the Beyond Driving with Dignity professional and the older driver are typically conducted in the older driver's residence, your base of operations can be your place of business, your workplace, or even your home office.

To learn more, please [download](#) our free informational brochure!

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Older Drivers and Emerging Vehicle Safety Technologies

Posted on [July 24, 2013](#)



According to the Federal Highway Administration, there are well over 2 million licensed drivers in the United States over 85 years of age, and with the impending “silver tsunami”, that number is expected to grow significantly over the next several years. Seniors are living longer and are more active than ever before. This is the first generation in which almost everybody earned a driver's license during adolescence and has been driving ever since.

Today's 85 year old driver probably began driving at around the age of 15 or 16, which dates the start of one's driving career back to 1943-44, at the height of WWII. In 1943,

the Pentagon was completed and became the largest office building in the world, Franklin D. Roosevelt was president and there were only 48 states in the Union. Gasoline prices rose to 18 cents a gallon, and construction on the country's first interstate highway would not begin for another 13 years. It would be another 26 years before seatbelts would start appearing in cars.

In January, 2013, FoxNews reported on Edythe Kirchmaier, a great-grandmother from California, in an article titled "105-year-old California woman relieved to pass driver's test with flying colors". Mrs. Kirchmaier took her driver's test the day after she turned 105, making her driver's license valid until 2017.

Just last month, New Zealand's Bob Edwards turned 105 years old, and is considered to be that country's oldest driver. Mr. Edwards says he has been driving for 88 years and has "no plans to get out from behind the wheel".

In the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)'s Older Driver Five Year Strategic Plan (2012-1017), they estimate that by 2020, there will be more than 40 million licensed drivers 65 and older.

An Evolution of Vehicle Safety Enhancements

Almost like aviation safety, vehicle safety advancements have made almost unbelievable progress over the past half-century. Many of us remember when cars were not yet equipped with padded dashboards, lapbelts, rounded door handles, hydraulic brakes, automatic transmissions, or emergency brakes.

Most of us remember the addition of new safety features like back-up lamps, hazard flashers, 3-point safety belts, laminated windshields, airbags, smoother dashboards with recessed controls, bumper shocks, disc brakes, a driver's side airbag, antilock brakes, GPS, collapsible steering columns and heads-up (HUD) displays.

Many of today's vehicles are adorned with such advancements as adaptive headlamps, back-up sensors and cameras, adaptive cruise control, a third brake light, traction control systems, electronic stability control, electronic brakeforce distribution, cornering brake control, electronic tire pressure monitoring, advanced navigation systems, hydrophobic windows, crumple zones and safety cells, black box recorders, and *smart* supplemental restraint systems.

Emerging Vehicle Safety Technologies

And now we are entering what I like to call the Paleo-Jetson era. Purchase a new vehicle today and you may be equipped with such advances as intelligent brake lights (brake lights that communicate with other vehicles), smart windshields (augmented reality), night vision enhancement, automated parking systems, lane departure warning systems, crash notification and avoidance technologies, electronic blind-spot detection, back-over prevention systems, fatigue warning systems, forward collision warning *with* auto brake, and now...the advent of self-driving cars.

This is All Good, Right?

There is much debate amongst automobile design engineers, psychologists, industry safety researchers, geriatricians and neurologists, et cetera, on how well the processing abilities of older drivers is going to be able to keep up with the cognitive workload being

required by these new technologies.

For example, most crash avoidance technologies rely on drivers to take immediate action. The effectiveness of these systems depends on whether drivers *accept* the technologies, *understand* the information from the reporting systems, and *respond* appropriately. Often times, in order to be effective and safe, the processing of these new sensory inputs will need to occur in well under a slit-second of time, and that's quick.

Fighter Pilot Information Overload

For decades, the military has been conducting research on the experience known as 'fighter pilot information overload'. This phenomenon occurs when the pilot becomes so inundated with information produced by intelligence gathering technologies within the cockpit that his or her mind loses its ability to properly analyze the incoming data. Worse still, sometimes that overload of information can become so intense and overwhelming, and in such a short period of time, that the results can almost immediately turn disastrous.

As drivers, are we going to find themselves overwhelmed by the bombardment of new technology commands such as audio warnings, alerts, tones, and visual cues, et cetera? Are we entering into an era of 'older driver' information overload?

Who Buys These Technologically Advanced Vehicles?

In a 2013 study by the University of Michigan's Traffic Research Institute (UMTRI), researchers concluded that "Adults under 50 have long been the ideal target group for automobile advertisers, but when it comes to buying new vehicles, older consumers may be a marketer's best bet. The emphasis on this relatively older age group is further supported by the expected continuation of the greying of the population and the consequent continuation of the increase in the number of older licensed drivers."

The automobile industry and the engineers and developers behind these new technologies quickly remind us that these new developments are designed to make vehicular travel safer than it has ever been before, *particularly* for our growing population of older drivers (aka new car customers).

The Real World

As the developer of the "[self-assessment program](#)" for older drivers, I have worked with older drivers that will undoubtedly adapt to these new technologies with ease. They possess the cognitive abilities to handle these emerging technologies without ever missing a beat. I know of older drivers that will bask in this new era and would even serve the rest of us very well as *instructors* for this new gadgetry.

I have, however, worked with just as many older drivers that shouldn't so much as have the AM radio turned on while driving.

I have ridden shotgun with older drivers that did not realize their outside mirrors were adjustable, or that they could unlock their vehicle by simply pushing on one of the key's little black buttons. "Amazing!" one older driver told me after I should him how to unlock the car remotely. There are drivers who do not know how to activate their four-way flashers in case of an emergency, and have always wondered "what that red triangle button was for".

I once enjoyed the good fortune of riding with an older driver that asked me “what is that funny clicking sound...is that your phone making that noise?”

“No ma’am” I replied, “that’s your left turn signal...it’s been on now for several miles.” Acknowledging the error, she promptly turned the left turn signal off and was immediately pleased with herself. Now we were driving down the road with our *right* turn signal on, and she seemed to no longer notice that “funny clicking sound”.

I have spent time with more than one older driver that has become lost while driving blocks from their home of 50 years. When that happens, older drivers seemingly *fall apart* cognitively. On more than one occasion I have been with a lost, older driver who has found himself as the lead vehicle stopped at a red traffic signal. In the mounting confusion, they have sat through the entire green cycle because they were so distracted and confused that they could not process that the signal changed from red to green (this despite the sounding horns from the cars driving around us).

Many older drivers purchase vehicles equipped with in-dash navigation systems to help keep them from getting lost, but have no idea how to so much as turn it on. “They showed me once, but I forget”. One elderly gentleman explained that he gets lost often, so his adult children purchased a GPS unit for his dashboard. He then explained “I don’t use it though; it’s too distracting.”

One has to wonder how this same driver would respond to an emergency audio alert being chirped or chimed from the vehicle’s lane departure warning system.

To say the least, interpreting warnings from multiple systems may be confusing or even completely distracting or overwhelming for some older drivers. For some older drivers, their insurance agent might be well served to actually *raise* their client’s premiums (just joking) if their new vehicle is equipped with these fancy, electronic safety “distractions”.

A False Sense of Security?

When these hi-tech vehicles are purchased by an older (or younger!) adult, what training will that person receive in the use of these modern-day advancements? Will the training be unique to the individual’s cognitive and sensory abilities? To their vision and hearing? To their flexibility and reaction-times?

Will the new car owner be required to train for x-amount of hours in a simulator? Will they receive an on-road demonstration by the salesperson? Or will the new owner simply be told “Be sure to download the video on how to use your car’s new forward collision warning system...*with* auto brake!”

Are these new technologies going to cause drivers to rely on emerging safety systems so much that they will feel freer to look away from the road, lessening their defensive driving skills? Will they give an older driver (and their adult children?) a false sense of security that will encourage driving during weather or traffic conditions that they would not normally subject themselves to?

Successfully Morphing Older Drivers and New Vehicle Technologies

In defense of older drivers, earlier this month the Missouri State University released a

study titled “Study shows seniors navigate assistive technology with ease”. Although the study did not specifically refer to driving, the researchers concluded “Those aged 65 and older are accessing and effectively utilizing technology on a daily basis”. That’s certainly a good start. It is also gratifying to know that engineers from our most respected and trusted automobile manufacturers are very well aware of this interfacing concern and are working diligently to improve our likelihood of success in the world of new automobile technologies.

In a 2009 report by the National Academy of Engineering, researchers explain “New in-vehicle systems create particular challenges for older drivers. Paradoxically, even though older drivers may find it more difficult to use these devices, they are likely to be the first to encounter them, because innovations are often initially introduced into high-end cars, which are usually bought by more affluent (and usually older) costumers. Thus the more mature driver population is often the first to encounter still immature systems.”

It is important to remember, too, that the American Automobile Association (AAA) has informed us that seniors are outliving their ability to drive safely by an average of 7-10 years, that’s with or without *intelligent* brake lights.

Managing the Situation

On January 15, 2009, US Airways pilot Chesley Sullenberger successfully landed Flight 1549 in the frigid, wintery waters of the Hudson River, effectively saving the lives of all 155 passengers and crew members onboard. Since the “Miracle on the Hudson”, Captain Sullenberger wrote the New York Times best-seller *Highest Duty*, which is a memoir of his life and of the events surrounding Flight 1549.

In the book’s chapter titled *Managing the Situation*, Captain Sullenberger writes about the application of emerging technologies in the cockpit. Sullenberger recounts a conversation he once had with Earl Wiener, Ph.D., a former Air Force pilot turned renowned aviation safety expert. Dr. Wiener explained that he was once asked to speak at a conference on “the role of the pilot in the automated cockpit”, and offered the following:

“Whether you’re flying by hand or using technology to help, you’re ultimately flying the airplane with your mind. The question is: How many different levels of technology do you want to place between your brain and the actual control surfaces?”

There appears to be a strong correlation between Dr. Wiener’s assessment of cockpit technology and the recent advances in emerging automobile technologies, and if nothing else, his comments are certainly cause for further consideration.

Proceeding With Caution

Tom Brokaw referred to older American’s as “Our Greatest Generation”, and he was exactly right. Conceptually, the older drivers this article refers to includes individuals that fought in for us in world wars, they ended racial segregation, strategically maneuvered our country through the Cold War, put American’s on the moon, built the steel industry, and brought us the Golden Age of Television.

Members of the *Greatest Generation* includes such icons as Mickey Rooney, Bob Hope, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ross Perot, Jim Nabors, Barbara Walters and Neil

Armstrong, and just as importantly...many of our parents or grandparents. We owe a duty to our older drivers not to leave them behind in the wake of new and advancing technologies. The adaptation of these new advancements need to involve our older drivers from the very early stages of initial concept, to product development, and lastly to successful training, acceptance, implementation and proper interfacing.

These are very exciting times for new vehicle safety technologies. The landscape of in-vehicle technologies is changing daily as new components continue to be introduced. These advances, combined with roadway design improvements, the development of advanced traffic management systems, raised awareness and education, and a better understanding of driver factors will all work together to make our highways and communities safer places to live, work and recreate for the next generation.

The meshing of new technologies with current driver skills and abilities must be handled with care for both reasons of safety, and for reasons of taking care of those that have spent their lives laying the ground work so that we could enjoy the development of these new safety technologies in the first place. We wouldn't be where we are today without the miraculous achievements of "Our Greatest Generation".

In addition to being a published author and an expert in older driver safety, [Matt Gurwell](#) is also the Founder & CEO of [Keeping Us Safe](#), an international organization that provides practical, real-life solutions to older drivers and their families.

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10-Year Anniversary Of California's "Farmer's Market Tragedy" And Now...A Remedy

Posted on [July 24, 2013](#)



It was 10 years ago this month at a crowded farmer's market in Santa Monica, California, that 86-year old Russell Weller committed the unthinkable *older driver* offense; hitting the accelerator instead of the brake pedal and mowing his way through a crowd of families, hurting more than 54 people. CNN's feature headline read "Car plows through market, killing 9". The deaths included that of a 3-year old girl.

Santa Monica Police Chief James T. Butts Jr. told explained the next day in a media release "Weller drove his 1992 Buick LeSabre (at least at a moderate rate of speed) for

three blocks along the market street, which was filled with pedestrians, striking dozens of people. The car stopped *only* after a pedestrian was thrown into the air and landed on the windshield of his vehicle, Butts said.

Two years ago, The Marietta (Georgia) Daily Journal reported “Elderly woman gets 3 years in death of girl, 5”. During her trial, 83-year old Edith Anderson testified that as she approached a stopped school bus with several cars behind it, she took her foot off the accelerator to let the car slow down naturally. Then, as she got closer to the stopped car ahead of her, Anderson stated she went to put her foot on what she thought was the brake, and instead, hit the accelerator. When she realized she was going to hit the car in front of her, she turned to the right to avoid the car.

“I turned to the right and took the only opening I saw to avoid striking the car, which unfortunately was the walkway where the children were descending from the bus,” Anderson said. “And unfortunately, Karla stepped down just as I passed. After I realized my mistake, I took my foot off my accelerator and applied the brake.”

Karla’s mother, Gloria Velazquez said she was just two steps away from her daughter, waiting for her to get off the bus, when she was hit by Anderson’s car.

Unfortunately, similar tragedies involving older drivers with diminished driving skills occur every day across the United States and Canada. Last month in Kansas an older driver hit the accelerator instead of the brake and struck a Panera’s restaurant, injuring two. And earlier this month, the Columbia (Missouri) Daily Tribune headline read “Elderly driver hits 3, kills baby”.

The silver lining to this looming dark cloud is that a new program has emerged to help prevent these types of tragedies from occurring in the future. The “Beyond Driving with Dignity” program is designed to help older drivers with diminishing driving skills make a smooth transition from the driver’s seat to the passenger seat without undue deterioration to their dignity, personal pride or independence.

The program, five years in development, is a pro-active, positive, family-centered approach designed to reduce the likelihood of these types of tragedies from ever occurring again. In the words of Matt Gurwell, founder & CEO of Keeping Us Safe, “This unique program is designed to save lives while simultaneously helping to ease the burden of the family as they find themselves faced with this very challenging issue.”

Gurwell, a retired Ohio State Trooper from Cleveland, Ohio, explains that Keeping Us Safe now has Certified “Beyond Driving with Dignity” Professionals trained and certified across North America, but many more are still needed. “One of our goals” explains Gurwell, “is to make our Self-Assessment Program for older drivers both affordable and accessible to all families throughout the United States and Canada.”

When asked why he started Keeping Us Safe, Gurwell replied “There was never one particular event. It was the result of 20-plus years of holding dying people in my arms at terrible car accidents, and delivering dozens of death notifications to families. I would much rather work with families to bring a peaceful resolve to this sensitive and uncomfortable issue now, rather than have them deal with it when a State Trooper is knocking on their front door”.

To schedule a self-assessment for the older driver in your family, or to learn more about the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” Professional Certification program, contact Keeping Us safe at 877-907-8841, or visit their website at <http://www.keepingussafe.org>.

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