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Living Life Without a Life Vest

Most of us wonder how we've ever survived some of the "questionable" things we have done in our lives and have reached the point that we have grown children and multiple grandchildren (with some in college). Many times we recall the "wow" moments of life and simply thank God for letting us get through experiences even though at the time we never thought about how someone had to be looking out for us.

I remember as a kid charging down hills on my bike with total abandonment. Once I even had my bike thrown into the trunk of a police cruiser and was taken home for a parental session (not fun). I had several accidents, one resulting in nearly losing a leg. After growing older, I went auto racing on the Iowa SCCA circuit. I also visited Italy and drove a friend's Lamborghini at 203 mph. That remains the fastest I've ever driven on the ground. (You can't count my years of flying in the U.S. Air Force and the bliss of supersonic.)

I have fond memories of dirt biking with my young son and daughter, teaching them to first drive and then race go-karts. I loved seeing the absolute exhilaration on their faces and sparkle in their eyes after having just completed a challenge and having all of their senses alive.

Speed elicits a rush of emotions on many levels, no matter the instrument of deliverance or the circumstances. Whether we're taking risks or not, it's important just being in lockstep with the moment and the vehicle. During my boat ownership years, I enjoyed one moment

just after dawn on a summer morning on the Lake of the Ozarks (one of America's little-known gems) of getting my boat to its upmost plane and going across the totally still water at 74 mph—the fastest I had ever been on the water in any vessel. I thought there was no better feeling.



Run the Risk

That specific rush has stayed with me since 1987, and it came up again recently while visiting with friends on Broken Bow Reservoir in Oklahoma. It was getting close to sunset and virtually no one was on the lake; the water was glass. I was asked if I would like to take a ride in a custom offshore racing boat. My only thought was, "Do bears sleep in the woods?" I knew it would be a great ride, in a lovely area, with good friends. I knew it would be fun. What I never would have guessed was that halfway through the ride we would reach 186 mph! What a thrill and an experience.

When I told my friends, they said, "Are you totally nuts?" Associates said, "We understand maybe thinking about doing it if you were 22, but not [we won't go there]." My son said, "How great was that? Wish I was there." And my daughter said, "Were you wearing your life vest?"

I told her I was not and said that at 186 mph on water, nothing like that matters if something goes wrong.

Why does one do something like that? It must be the fact that when a moment of opportunity that you know will happen only once presents itself, you just have to go for it, knowing that it is the right thing to do.

I had that very feeling just the other day while visiting a new retail facility that had been open only a few days. It's a project with which our company had been very involved and that took the retailer more than four years to develop. All of the retail assets of this company are of the highest class and perform at extremely high levels. Was this a monumentally expensive project? You betcha. It required an extremely high level of risk. This company recognized the long-term value in assuming that risk. Where so many others had looked at the mere land, this company envisioned all of the possibilities that land presented, and the success that could be realized.

We have been involved with many projects in support of our customers that have been difficult and arduous for them, some requiring several years to bring to life. It is the fewest of the few that step up, hold up, put up and finally produce a platinum class of facility that serves their employees, customers and community.

There are risks involved with nearly every project undertaken by members of this industry, and no life vests are handed out. Go ahead—get in that boat and have the ride of your life. ■