

The Fourth Knight



Department of Transportation
NHTSA – National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration
Washington D.C., United States

Dedicated to my NHTSA family.

In this office, we tell the automobile industry, what's next!!!

Well, here I am working for Uncle Sam as one of the regulators in the automotive industry. I had gotten the chance to work for NHTSA due to my experience in the automotive industry, having worked for the Japanese at Toyota Motor Corporation in Kentucky.

At the DOT, I had met quite an assortment of great colleagues and friends. First was Evan Frings, a graduate from his Ohio Buckeyes, smart as a whiz. I've always told Evan that he should work in Hollywood as he knew this game as his own backyard. To me, the greatest gearhead in an Agency of gearheads; while some know a whole lot about cars, these guys breath, eat, and talk about cars, including the ladies. Evan is 6'2", as tall as me, and very bulky, like a football player, and a fanatic supporter of the football team from his alma mater. The Scarlet Knights from my alma mater had made it for the Big-Ten, (I know nothing about football!!), so I told Evan, that the Ohio Buckeyes were in trouble. Evan said that there was not a chance, I told him that he doesn't know the Scarlet Knights; that I will show him one day. We were destroyed by the Buckeyes, every time by more than 20 points or so. It was embarrassing!

Next guy, was another gearhead, Will Geoffrey, tall as Evan, and me, and a graduate from Indiana University. This is the typical cowboy, handsome, always shaved, and short nicely combed hair, with a lower grasp voice in order to signal who is in command, getting all the ladies at the DOT (with some exemptions) and got his game into how to manage people. Sometimes he would come with his cowboy boots to the office, "man, who is he trying to dig? I said - we are in D.C".

Next in line was Andrew Magaletti, Italian and the son of an FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) agent from New York, a soccer fanatic like me and the one that I call the noble man. He is smart' from Florida, skinny, bearded, and sometimes talking to us about sailing in his boat at the beaches in Florida. There was also Ed Chan, another gearhead, Asian descendant from Virginia Tech and the silver medalist at gearhead talk in the Agency and the man who put together The Capital Driving Club - a bunch of fanatics of automobile race enthusiasts in the tri-state area. There was also Angeles Leroy, typical whiz in computers, and knowing how to do everything, he is from the Philippines and a graduate from Virginia Tech, an asset to the office. Bernie Hardgrave, he had thrown a Halloween party in his house, it was off the hook. He had dressed as a pilot from Albuquerque, New Mexico; the enchanted land man! He and Stu Siegel are the motorcycle guys for the office. There was Neil Thurgood the genius, a gifted-genius guy from an under-privilege family but somehow managed to get a stellar college education, a prodigy, a self-taught music rock artist from Pinson, Alabama, long hair, long bear, long mustache. I'm talking 'bout Duck Dynasty type of guy who had majored in Economics at the New College of Florida, and there was me the outcast and the hidden, champion underdog.

The ladies: first one in line was a Floridian, Phd. Abby Morgan, from either Duke or Purdue but I'm not quite sure; she went on to work back to Florida with her husband. Then we had a model, she had modeled in NYC and lived in Soho, Manhattan (I had to tell all these country folks what that meant); her name was Gabby, but she only stayed with the Agency about 7 months. She knew a whole lot about cars but somebody had offered her a better paycheck. And then, we got a British whiz named Natasha a graduate from some British University in England with experience working at Range Rover, with a well-spoken British accent and the water bottle challenges and talking to us about knights and dames. We also got Paloma Lampert, Floridian, and Spaniard, now this lady is marriage material type and from John Hopkins to make things a bit the nature way. There was Jordan from Chief Counsel Office, a lawyer lady from Birmingham, Alabama.

She was from Auburn University. I might have gotten the university wrong, as I thought this girl has got to be from the most prestigious law school in entire Alabama; this girl would know how to properly talk English. I mean you can put this woman in New York City, Boston, Chicago, or Los Angeles; we might as well take this girl to Great Britain and tell the British this is our best specimen on spoken language. Dee Williams, skinny model type, the only exception when it came to Washingtonian dress code in the entire office. She must have been coming from a New York City fashion office type, always wearing high heel shoes, and modern fashion cut dresses. On Fridays, she would wear colorful high hills, yellow, blue, red, you name it. Her friends are all the top guns of the office. At her office, are words displaying “Kick some ass, wake up next day, repeat”. Amina Dines a lady with dreadlocks and a charming personality. This girl would contribute everywhere she went, at baby showers, parties, and cake houses; that’s why she always got the award, 1st or 2nd place usually. Our Chief, Claudia Covell from Johns Hopkins; I am the most unfortunate fool. Very conservative and brave at times as she would come with polka-dot type of dress code. Her shoes were from a colorful European fairy tale from the ’60s. This is the girl that kindly gave me the recommendation letter to get into the Business School. She would always go by the book, whether it was the CFR or the standard, or the historical interpretations, ay, ay, ay, caramba!!!

Credits: Greg Magno, church type of guy and knew how the Agency works top to bottom. David Hines a Chief in Rulemaking very clever and smart and had visited all baseball stadiums in the USA, except one, when I had visited him at his office. LuAnn Sawyer, this girl would remind me of the artist Janis Joplin. Chief Michael Cole had done all the autocross there was. Bruce York all family pictures in his office, with a dart board and pictures of 18-wheeler trucks. David Simmons, this guy is a fan of Obama and the person who hired me with the affirmative decision of Ross Rosen. Sashi Gupta, a rulemaking scientist with a whole lot of awards on display in her office. Mary Sommers a fine lady that I wished I would have worked with. Tom Healy, a lawyer at Chief Counsel in litigations; he is a 6’4” and a football player type. David Friedman, military guy, always exercising. Jeff Giuseppe the retired Chief who always handed accolades at the Administrator’s awards. Josh (another genius) from Cornell, he would come to the office with fisher hats, and this man had the most nicely placed, disorganized office in the entire NHTSA. This is the go-to-man, as he is taking care of the new standards for autonomous vehicles. Director Otto Matteke a lawyer who has been in the Agency for more than 30 years and who is a fan of Star-Trek’s character Spock. Hidden treasure, the dean at the Business School had recommended that in business, we must portray a Spock type of behavior or personality, thus I had turned to Ralph Waldo Emerson to confirm his argument. Waldo said, “that is old school, from now on it is the same as Spock”; if Waldo said it, I’m all for it. Secretary Anthony Foxx, a lawyer and previous mayor of Charlotte in North Carolina and Obama’s pick. Sometimes he would exercise and workout at the gym at 7 am. Secretary Elaine Chao, this lady is Trump’s pick, Washingtonian type of dress code and conservative, modest, medium high-hill shoes and always with her diplomatic statue. This Secretary is kind of different as her portray at the Department’s halls is the only one from all the Secretaries in the history of the Department not painted in oleo. My guess it was her choice, this woman must have said to Trump, I want this portray this way!. The picturesque portrait with her entire family, including Mitch the Kentuckian. This Secretary said to me “You are a good one!”, handshake gesture, photo taken.

At lunch time, the conversations were out of this world. We had called Trump, the Orange Sex-appeal in our conversations and there was no hiding the political agenda, everything counted on this lunch table.

So, at the Agency, they had given me this enormous project nobody in the Agency wanted to tackle. It was a project directed into saving fuel for automobiles, with the potential of reducing greenhouse gases all over the globe, and the potential to saving millions of dollars for taxpayers here in the US. The only problem was that no one in the world had attempted such project. The closest ones that had done it were the Europeans with the collaboration of six to seven different

countries, and many experts in the field but only on a virtual standpoint. So only the Gringos – in this case the Feds- and everyone at the Agency was bailing out but Abe (Little they knew, who they have given this project to, a total hidden, champion underdog nobody knew)

At the time, they had assigned for the project a statistician; he was a young man, pretty much like me about 34 years old, and he had a master's in mathematics, Nathan Greenwell. He was going to do the job of crunching the numbers with the statistical data. What a fanfare this was, the young man left after working a year into the program (so another upset for me, one more person bailing out on this project) to work for the FDA (Food and Drug Administration). This time, I had requested when asking them to assign another statistician – “give me somebody that is going to do this project to the finish line!!” I had mentioned to NCSA- from the office of statistics. This time, they gave me an experienced breed, an Asian Phd, he was excellent, Dr. S. After we were done, he invited me, my wife, and my kid for dinner at his house. He is an alumnus from Georgetown and lives in Georgetown, in D.C. We had finally finished the project -after extensive punctuation corrections from Claudia - that would support a Rulemaking that a fantastic lawyer was preparing for years.

The head of the Agency - the Administrator - was David Strickland an Afro-American descendant with a degree from Harvard University, and appointee from Obama's cabinet. He went on retirement, and had a baby afterwards, working for a law-firm in D.C. and for a little less than a year the Agency was looking to fill the position of the Administrator. Finally, the Agency found someone, Mark R. Rosekind. The gentleman had experience working as a safety Director for NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board), as well as Director for NASA (National Aeronautics Space Administration.) The man was as tall as me, very well spoken, excellent superb-orator, and his tone was speaking truth, his voice was an aggressive type, firm and to the point. So, when I saw these qualities, I took a look at his credentials.

As I was working with the industry, which took about four to six years to complete, Rosekind was highlighted to Congress - little less than 8 months into his job - due to the apparent recalls from the Takata, a Japanese company, airbag incidents. It was the highest recall in NHTSA's 50 years history as an Agency. The honorable Rosekind was grilled in almost every single hearing before Congress, because lawmakers in Washington were very disappointed in the Agency; as the Agency and Administration was admonished with the words “not doing enough with the powers it had”. However, Rosekind is not much of a soft talker and he had put together with his team a total of 17 recommendations for tackling and handling the Takata incident. The man of his ranks is from Stanford, Brown, and Yale, and every time he went on that podium to respond to Congress, his affirmative well-spoken tone served as a backhand response to those lawmakers in Washington; more like Andre Agassi's backhand to that of Pete Sampras, if you know what I'm saying. Later Rosekind was named man of the year from an Automobile Magazine, usually a title given to automobile CEO's and a well-deserved prize for somebody working as a regulator.

My work went up the streams into the ranks of NHTSA including the top stellar lawyer. A fine lady name Mary Versailles from western Massachusetts with an undergraduate degree from the University of Maine, and master's and law degrees from the University of Wisconsin. Her work was magnificent, impeccable. I had to always be guessing where the heck she got her education!! She had a bunch of minions at her desk office, maybe the damn minions were helping her all along. I had the privilege of working with her on an NPRM (Notice of Propose Rulemaking) a legal document, she had prepared, and attempting to establish a new rule in the CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) to implement this program. She works under a fine gentleman named Ryan Posten, the Associate Administrator for Rulemaking and the man that takes care of what the entire automobile industry needs to comply with in the entire world, that's why he is the man. Well, my work was highlighted to Dr. Rosekind somehow, probably due to the spectacular results it was having. To this date, I don't know who told Dr. Rosekind about my outstanding performance. Who is going to brief this hidden, champion, genius underdog?

Trump was elected president in 2016. What a baffling show these gringos had put now, this meant to me nothing but trouble ahead; much later Trump had my support and Obama -including all of his cabinet- needed to retire as the republicans took their seat in the White House and Rosekind needed to give up his seat as well. The morning of December 2016, an e-mail routed into the entire Agency and everyone's inbox. The honorable Administrator, Dr. Rosekind, was giving his challenge coin to everyone in the Agency before leaving office. It was an opportunity for everyone, including myself, to stretch his hand and say a few words to him before his departure. He gave me his challenge coin with the Traditional Handshake and to my astonishing eyes, a photo was taken; he said to me, while I was walking away, "I'm going to be watching", I responded to him giving him my thumbs-up "O.K." without turning my head or torso, while all the audience was watching and a surprise in their face. Quite honestly, to me, I was just wanted to shake his hand. There was Angeles Leroy waiting for me and asked me how did it go, I said it was good, soft handshake like real gentlemen do.

Dr. Rosekind, the man of his ranks, or The Fourth Knight retired as he went up to move into a start-up name Zoon.com; you should do your homework on Zoon but these gentlemen have already developed the first Autonomous Vehicle. They are based in San Francisco, California, where Dr. Rosekind was born.

I've been notified by a Special Agent from the NSA(National Security Agency); let's call her the artist Sophie B. Hawkins just to keep her identity intact because the Agent looked just like her. Well, Sophie added, here is another one, gave me the Traditional Handshake, and another photo was taken. What in the world?, I said; I could not believe this at this point. So, I said lovely, this is my lucky star. In conclusion, Sophie commemoratively added that I could have my own challenge coin with my name embedded on it. So, only six had received the Traditional Handshake; and I've been giving them to family and friends.

Best,
Scarlet Knight,
Abe Diaz