

I Dunno...

Have you ever had a really close shave? One of those rare events where you could have been seriously hurt, even killed? Did you feel, wow, someone up there was looking after me; or did you simply say, gosh, that was lucky? Two different points of view, wide apart as they are, might be summed up as follows:

- a. belief that an entity, perhaps even God, has chosen to keep you from harm;
- b. belief that accidental death or injury is a matter the odds, and if it was a near miss, good luck prevailed.

Simple really, and in the end it's all about what you believe. Or is it really? Consider b., and those odds. Then take an extreme example: if a hundred cars crash and half the drivers are badly injured or killed, then fifty remain unharmed. If those fifty drivers are subject to the same odds again, twenty five will remain unharmed. If this happened six times, the math leaves 1.5625 car drivers untouched. Since there is no such thing as .5625 of anyone, only a single driver will assuredly survive six crashes without a scratch. That's simple odds: a mathematical calculation.

Sooo...how would the surviving driver feel about that?

One can be almost certain he's not looking at the math or the odds. Like most people (if his nerves aren't shattered), he would attribute his miraculous, injury-free survival to God, or whatever power he believes responsible. Strangely enough, he might also attest to how lucky he had been. Which begs the question: is a narrow escape always good luck, or might it be an act divine?

Under far less dramatic odds we can all probably recall times when we *could* have suffered a fate similar to those 99 unfortunate car drivers. Look back on your life. If you have a good memory, you could likely recall six times when you experienced an incident that could have killed or injured you. I can recall that many, and add a quirk to the question.

Of your six incidents, was there at least one that simply cannot be explained, even to this day? This is where the mystery of all this comes in. Why not sit down and think on it? I have, and made a list in chronological order. (I was surprised how many occurred in the first two decades of life).

1. Five or six years old. Winter. Leedham's Pond, a small lake in England. Lakes rarely freeze solid, but the ice was two to three inches thick that year. This is extremely dangerous by anyone's standards. My pal Martin and I start across the lake. The loud, cracking boom of tortured ice begins almost immediately. We are too scared to go back. We keep going. The echo of cracking ice follows us to the other side. We make it. Elsewhere, newspaper reports tell of several other children who did not. Lucky?
2. Seven years old. Britain introduces safe pedestrian crossings: black and white steel poles topped by large yellow globes that constantly flash: Belisha Beacons. Kids are told to cross only at the beacons, where the driver **must** halt. Kids know nothing about stopping distances. I test the new rules, and pause at a beacon. The driver doesn't slow down. Empowered, I step off because he **has to stop!** Deafening screech of brakes. The hood ornament is inches from my left arm. Lucky?
3. Eleven years old. Friend David and I are riding his father's market garden tractor. An eight foot disc drags behind with bricks on top so the sharp, circular blades dig

into the soil. David's dad is looking ahead. David and I fool around on the step behind the driver's seat and on top of the disc. I fall. One leg slides between two disc blades, the other hangs up on one of the tow bars. Tractor rolls on. I scream my head off. After what seems ages (had to be seconds) this registers with David's dad. Brakes are slammed on. My right leg is pointed skyward at a right angle; two disc blades straddle my left leg, high on the thigh. Lucky?

4. Twelve years old, riding my bicycle to school in a thick fog. David and I are pedalling side by side. One of us edges too close to the other. My pedal catches his bike. I tumble. Squeal of tires. I'm squeezed under the front bumper of a car, staring at the front wheel no more than a foot or so away. Lucky?
5. Seventeen years old and now in Canada. I fire a .303 Lee Enfield rifle at a target. Behind is a discarded bulldozer blade, covered in foliage. The bullet ricochets off the rusting steel. It grazes my ear lobe, leaving a barely visible scratch. Lucky?
6. Thirty three years old. I slide open the barn door. A horse stands there, rear end to the door. Startled, it kicks out. I feel the faint touch of a hoof on my right shoulder, and a slight touch of the other hoof on my forehead. The latter leaves a red mark the size of dime. Lucky?

We have all likely been through such close shaves. I would guess that at one time or another we've all considered ourselves either very lucky, blessed, or both. Looking at that first example of the uninjured driver, those terribly long odds are fully explainable—and perhaps readily accepted if those crashes spanned, say, sixty years. He was lucky in the same manners as one of a hundred bingo players might be lucky; and if it were Bingo, it would be foolish to believe a deity was involved. In fact, it would be presumptuous. But does the logic of 'luck of

the draw' always hold water? Are there times when something that can only be described as unexplainable occurs?

That is why I have added a number "7"; a single instance that seemed beyond the odds. There was no near miss such as a horse's hoof tapping my head; nor did an act of silliness clip my ear with a bullet. The question here is: what would have happened if an eerie, unexplainable incident had not taken place?

7. Twenty eight years old. Driving home from work, ten o'clock at night. The journey is 20 miles. It is dark. I make this trip regularly. The speed is always sixty to sixty five miles an hour. The traffic is sparse. I'm driving as usual. I suddenly seem to come out of a trance, yet I had not fallen asleep. For one, I have never done such a thing before; for another, the vehicle has not yawed off its path. It is travelling down the middle of its lane. The speedometer, inexplicably, indicates thirty miles an hour. I am totally unaware of having slowed down. Besides, this would have taken quite some time, yet the vehicle hasn't moved an inch from the centre of the lane. I wonder what is happening. Then, as if watching a film, I see the headlights of another vehicle streak across the highway maybe three/four hundred yards ahead. It has run a stop sign, doing at least sixty. Phhht! It's gone in a matter of seconds. It was as if watching a dream: eerie and weird. I am not tired, nor am I tired on the remaining drive home (who would be?) Later, I distinctly recall that sense of the ethereal. Oddly enough, I didn't give much thought then as to what *could* have happened. I just shook my head, and accelerated. At that age, one takes everything in stride. Would my car have been T-boned? It might be fanciful, but to this day I firmly

believe it would. I was lucky. It was only later in life that the thought crossed my mind that in someway, somehow, someone was looking after me.

There is a significant difference between the first six incidents and the seventh. In the former, each is explainable by the odds, or plain good luck: *hey, it coulda been worse, huh?* In the latter case, however, was a fatal accident avoided due to an event that defied explanation? How does one rationalise something like that? Even if I had dozed off, and I'm sure I did not, why did it happen precisely at that moment? And if you look at the odds, they were not simply a case of missing an accident. The odds were this: what were the chances of unknowingly slipping into a memory-blanked trance, and slowing down moments before a vehicle careens across the road in front you?

There is no answer, of course. Yes, I believe in odds and luck of the draw, but to be honest, if it wasn't for number seven's close call that's as far as such beliefs would have gone. Yet on that highway, there was a sense of detachment from reality. Was someone looking after me? I dunno, and I ain't gonna find out, not in this life. I'll just have to **Wait And See**. After all, the system on this planet appears to take care of such matters in its own inscrutable way, including, *just maybe*, answers to unanswerable questions. There's just one catch: not on this side of the grave. In the meantime, consider...

The Wisdom of W.A.S.

Accept as fact what is plain to see,
We're born with a lifetime guarantee.
Our bodies plod on, and this is no lie,
They'll last us all 'til the day we die.

After that t'is a far different matter,
A topic that stirs a good deal of chatter.
Some have the answer, or so they claim:
Heaven or hell, and both in God's name.

Others, they say death is the finish,
The mind and body simply diminish,
Fading to naught, as once we began,
Nothing left but a dark, timeless span.

So who is correct, and what does it matter?
All said and done, it's just pitter-patter.
Look to the 'system': it's simple as pie,
And once you accept it, t'is easier to die.

Something or nothing is all there can be,
When eyes close at last, and we no longer see.
There are only two options, whatever the end,
No matter how much we like to pretend,

The wisdom of **WAS** stands for **Wait And See**:
Will we know nothing, or will something be?

For...

*...if death is a blank when our eyes finally close,
It really won't matter, for none of us knows.
But if there is more, there's nothing to fear,
We've simply moved on to another frontier!*

