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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Automobile Crashes Tell Horrible Story

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I SHOULD warn the gentle readers not to read this column, for it is full of open, stark, brutal reality. I'm not apologizing for the language which is so utterly and completely unlike the usual language in this column, or anywhere else I write in this newspaper.

If you drive an automobile, then I urge you to read every line of it. For it might just save you from becoming a horrible statistic like some of the ones this column describes.

I wrote a somewhat similar column some years ago, and at least one young man told me it made him stop and think, and made him drive more carefully afterward.

Last time I wrote from the Readers Digest, from a piece published in that magazine many years ago – it was written by one J.C. Furnas.

### An Islander In Vancouver

THIS TIME I am writing from an article by the same man. This time it was sent as a clipping from the Vancouver Sun by a former Island man who was living in British Columbia at the time, and often wrote to me with items for my column, and sometimes with comment.

His name on the clipping is merely "Dan", but memory tells me that he was Dan MacDonald, and I have not so reliable memory that this is the man who hit a German U-boat captain a hefty right to his jaw and thus escaped capture as he jumped into the sea and swam to freedom. As I say I'm not sure of that.

The date on the old clipping was December 19, 1964, so it has been around a long time. I have not heard from "Dan" for a long time, I fear my friend may have passed on.

In a recent defensive driving course, Mrs. Matheson and I, along with some 30 others, saw head-on crashes photographed at high speed with two automobiles remotely controlled, with dummy figures of men in each vehicle.

### Automobiles Torn Apart

SHOWN IN slow motion we could see the cars being torn apart, saw the front of the car being blasted into the front seat, and farther, slicing and cutting through the figures that were representing the human beings who are in so many crashes.

The language that's used in the piece, from which I am going to reproduce a few paragraphs now, is rough at times, but it's not nearly so savage as the crash of automobiles travelling at high speed.

You feel sorry for those who die; so do I; but I think the ones who are killed instantly are often the lucky ones. The others often survive horribly crippled, yes mangled hopelessly beyond recuperation or repair.

Well, here's a sample of the story I am reproducing:

"An interesting judge now and again sentences reckless drivers to tour the accident end of a city morgue. But even a mangled body on a slab, waxily portraying the

consequences of bad motoring judgment is not a patch on the scene of the accident itself. No artist working on a safety poster would dare depict that in full detail

“That picture would have to include motion-picture and sound effects too – the flopping, pointless efforts of the injured to stand up; the queer, grunting noises; the steady, panting groaning of a human being with pain creeping up on him as the shock wears off.

“It should portray the slack expression on the face of a man, drugged with shock, staring at the Z-twist in his broken leg, the insane crumpled effect of a child’s body after its bones are crushed inward, a realistic portrait of an hysterical woman with her screaming mouth opening a hole in the bloody drip that fills her eyes and runs off her chin.

“Minor details would include the raw ends of bones protruding through flesh in compound fractures, and in the dark red, oozing surfaces where clothes and skin were flayed off at once.”

Last year a state trooper stopped a big red sports car for speeding. Papa was obviously a responsible person, obviously set for a pleasant weekend with his family – so the officer cut into papa’s well-bred expostulations: “I’ll let you off this time, but if you keep on this way, you won’t last long. Get going – but take it easier.”

#### Folded Like An Accordion

LATER A PASSING motorist hailed the trooper and asked if the red car had got a ticket.

“No,” said the trooper, “I hated to spoil their party.”

“Too bad you didn’t,” said the motorist, “I saw you stop them, and then I passed the car again 50 miles up the line. It still makes me feel sick at my stomach. The car was folded up like an accordion – the color was about all there was left. They were all dead but one of the kids – and he wasn’t going to live to the hospital.”

How about this one:

“A wrecking crew pried off the door of a car that had been overturned down an embankment, and out stepped the driver with only a scratch on his cheek.

“But his mother was still inside, a splinter of wood . . . driven four inches into her brain, as a result of her son taking a greasy curve too fast.”

#### Killed Instantly – Skull Shattered

A MONTH later on the same curve a light touring car crashed a tree. In the middle of the front seat they found a nine-month old baby surrounded by broken glass, yet absolutely unhurt. But the baby’s parents were dead on either side of it, killed instantly by shattering their skulls against the dashboard.

“A trooper described one accident – five cars in one tangled mess, seven killed on the spot, two dead on the way to hospital, two more died later.

“A car rolling down a bank, battering and smashing its occupants every inch of the way, can wrap itself so thoroughly around a tree that front and rear bumpers interlock, requiring an acetylene torch to cut them apart.

“In one such crash they found an old lady who had been in the back seat, lying across the lap of her daughter who had been in the front, each soaked in her own and the other’s blood, indistinguishably, each so shattered and broken that there was no point whatever in an autopsy to determine where it from a broken neck or ruptured heart that caused death.”

“You hear tales of how a flying human body will make a neat hole in the windshield with its head – the shoulders stick – the glass holds, and the raw, keen edge of the hole decapitates the body as neatly as a guillotine.