

Cornell Researchers Study Causes of Injury, Death in Automobile Crashes

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of five articles on auto accidents, safety and prevention. Writer Robert Serling did research work in New York and Washington in preparing the series.

By ROBERT SERLING
United Press Correspondent

New York — (U.P.) — At 12:02 a.m., Oct. 18, 1956, a 49-year-old Virginia farmer became a corpse in a county morgue and a statistic in the nation's traffic toll.

He died when his 1952 four-door sedan hit a telephone pole. The accident was typical of a lot of others. But the way it was investigated was different.

About four days later, a large envelope was delivered to 316 E. 61st st., New York City, addressed to the division of automotive crash injury research, Cornell University Medical College. It was signed by a Virginia state policeman. It told simply and graphically how the man died.

The contents included six photographs of the death car, two interior, three exterior and a closeup of the dead driver. Also supplied were road conditions, make and body style of the car, a complete description of damage to the vehicle, whether doors opened on impact, and a detailed report from the doctor who examined the victim.

accompanied by a report on how it was sustained.

Item:
"Crushed chest from contact with steering wheel hub after collapse of spokes and lower rim."

"There was a four inch laceration of forehead of victim caused by contact with flying windshield glass."

"Abrasions on left leg from contact with emergency brake handle."

"Large puncture in the right leg, like a gunshot wound, from contact with control dial on car radio."

All these items were fed into humming statistical machines. The grisly details of a human tragedy became impersonal perforations in little cards, to be studied by the project's experts.

Since 1953, the auto crash injury research program has compiled such studies of more than 8,000 accidents, most of which involved injury or death. It is the only program of its kind, on such a large scale, in the United States.

Help From 12 States

The sources are state police accident investigators and doctors in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Indiana, Connecticut,

Minnesota, Arizona, Texas, Vermont, California, Pennsylvania and New York, plus the city of Minneapolis, Minn. They send in their reports on special forms supplied by the project.

From the data collected in these 8,000 accidents, Cornell researchers have learned that:

Your chances of getting badly hurt or killed are greater if you are thrown out of a car than if you stay inside.

The modern automobile is a reasonably strong container for its human occupants; most injuries or deaths are caused by the occupants getting tossed around inside or hurled completely out of the container.

Conclusion
The Cornell research is not concerned with what causes an accident. Its emphasis is on the accident itself and how its injury producing effects can be lessened. Here are some of their conclusions:

1. A seat belt, because it helps prevent both ejection from a car and violent movement within a car, can save lives and reduce the frequency and severity of injury.

2. Safety door locks, when engaged, will prevent doors from opening in crashes and will

greatly reduce injuries.

Both seat belts and safety locks were introduced in the automobile industry in 1956. The project has been putting special emphasis on accidents involving 1956 and '57 cars equipped with these features, comparing them with similar crashes of cars without belts or safety locks.

Compiling Other Data

"We try," says technical supervisor Boris Tourin, "to compare accidents of equal intensity occurring under almost identical conditions, items as safety belts and door locks."

The project also is compiling data on recessed steering wheels, and padded instrument panels and sunvisors. It is just beginning to delve into a controversial topic involving automobile structural design — whether the so-called "hardtop" styling is as safe as conventional two and four-door sedans.

In tomorrow's article, Serling discusses safety door locks and seat belts.

There are more than 2,000 varieties of tulips, according to Dutch experts. Approximately 98 per cent of these spring-blooming flower bulbs come from Holland.

Union Financial Records Missing

Washington—(U.P.)—Robert F. Kennedy, counsel for the Senate Labor Racketeering committee disclosed Friday that financial records of the Teamsters Union are missing from files of the union's Portland office.

The assertion by Kennedy came on the heels of a warning that a year in jail may await anyone who destroys union records which the Senate committee has subpoenaed.

Earlier Kennedy and Committee Chairman Sen. John L. McClellan said that financial records of deals between Teamster Union President Dave Beck and one of his top lieutenants were missing and apparently destroyed.

McClellan said some records which the committee wanted have vanished from the files of the Western Conference of Teamsters in Seattle.

A union attorney in Chicago answered that they had been inadvertently destroyed when the basement of the union headquarters was being cleaned out.

AN OSCAR CANDIDATE?

Hollywood — (U.P.) — "Jasper" was the most difficult actor to film when his scenes in "The Spirit of St. Louis" were made. He required 4,200 stand-ins, some of whom gave their lives on the job. "Jasper" is the hitchhiking horse fly which accompanied Lindberg on part of his historic flight.

Four Bodies Found In Plane Wreckage

Seoul — (U.P.) — Four more bodies were recovered today from the wreckage of a crashed U. S. Air Force C124 Globemaster, bringing the official death toll to nine in Friday's crash.

Thirteen persons still were missing and presumed dead for a total of 22 dead and missing.

The huge plane crashed Friday night on a Han river sandbar with 159 passengers and crewmen aboard. Two of the 137 survivors were taken of the critical list today at the 121st Evacuation hospital. The others escaped with minor injuries.

Silver is found to be the best conductor of electricity.

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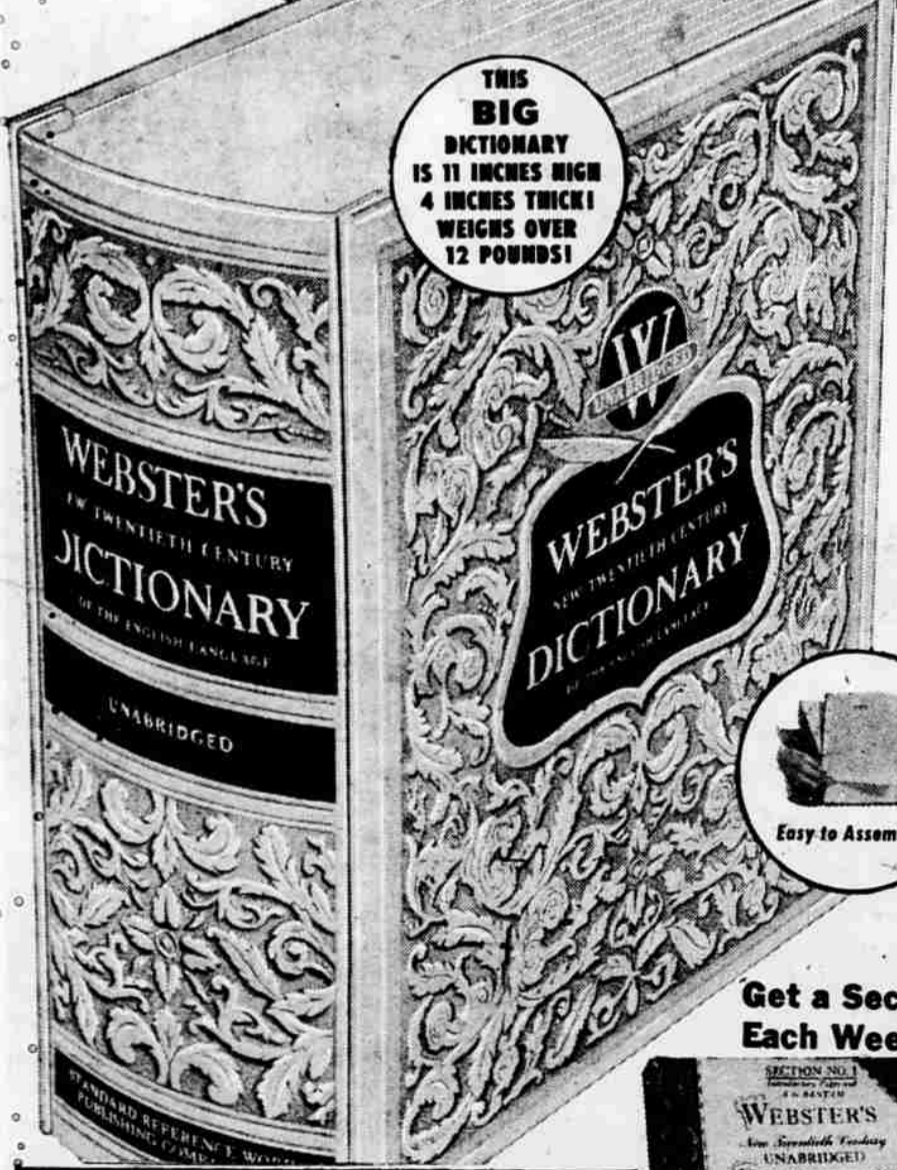
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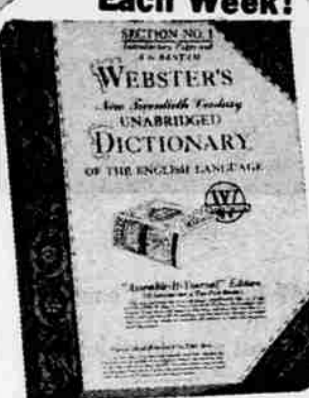
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