



Dawson roared past them and went on to win. Dawson lives in the record books, but DePalma lives in legend as a man who wouldn't give up.

As you go on—200 miles . . . 300 miles . . . 400 miles—you know that money alone couldn't drive you to this. You ache all over yet feel nothing. You seem numb to everything but danger, and danger rides like a ghostly presence on your tailpipe. It offers the eternal choice of the 500: opportunity or disaster. The winners of the 500—the live ones—are the men who can seize the first while skirting the second.

Back in the days when the cars still carried mechanics, Wilbur Shaw was driving a huge old Dusenbergs in the 500 when he found four men between him and the lead—just as he was entering a turn. Suddenly he felt the car give four little prancing sidesteps, then spin around like a top. Shaw and his mechanic dived "into the basement"—the space under the steering wheel where drivers could seek refuge when their cars turned over. The Dusenbergs crashed over the wall, sailed 25 or 30 feet through the air, tore down some telephone wires, and landed on its wheels. Shaw staggered away from the wreck with only cuts and bruises; his mechanic was hospitalized.

When he got back to the pits, Shaw was asked to take over as relief driver in an identical Dusenbergs. A few minutes later he found himself going into the same turn with the same four men separating him from the lead. The closest one, Shorty Cantlon, took one look, thought he was seeing a ghost—no driver knew that Shaw had survived the crash—and promptly closed his throttle to let the Dusenbergs pass. So did the next driver, and the next, and the next. Again Shaw careened into the lead and again he heard the warning "eee-eeee-eee" of the tires as they skidded on the turn. The car began to fishtail and Shaw's new mechanic slid quickly into the basement. But this time the car missed the wall by a full quarter-of-an-inch while Shaw stayed at the wheel and fought to regain control. When the car was straightened out, the mechanic came out of the basement, his face chalky white.

"If you think that was bad," Shaw yelled, "you should have been here the first time!"

After the race, Cantlon met Shaw and inquired about the St. Christopher medal given him by an admirer. Shaw, not a religious man, admitted quietly that he'd carried the image of the patron saint of travelers during the race. Cantlon—later killed in another 500—said urgently: "Wilbur, I wouldn't crowd that saint too much. I don't know how much he can take."

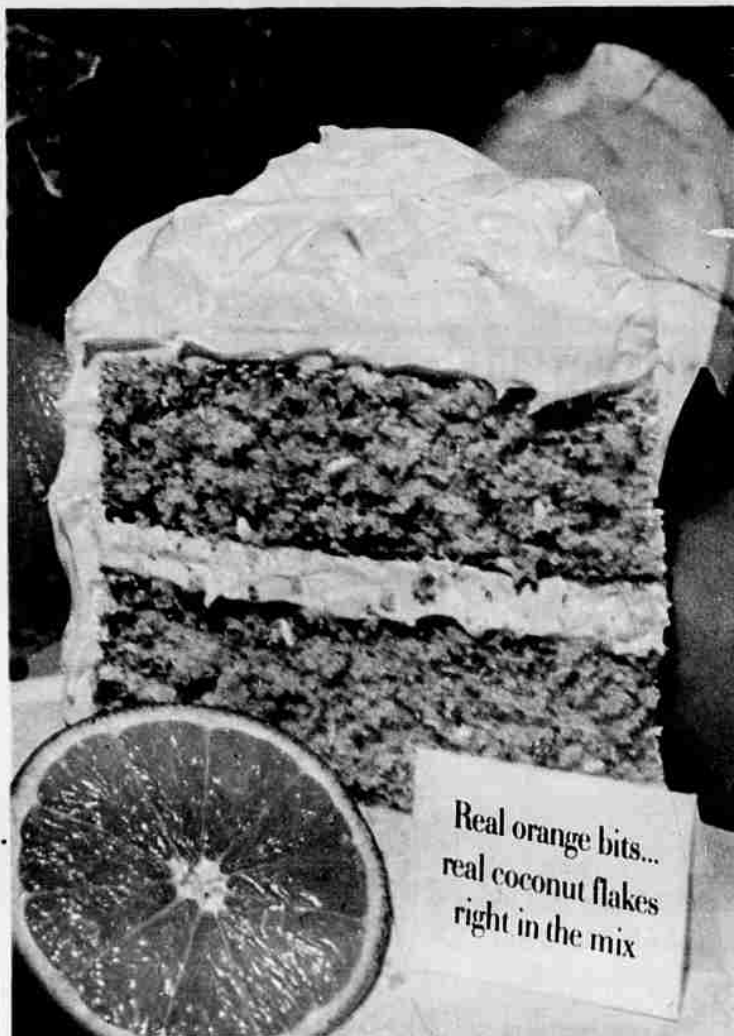
Neither do you. By the end of the race, you're not anxious to crowd anyone. A score of drivers have been killed in the 500, and 15 mechanics with them. You don't want to join them. You've learned about the 500 and you've learned what it takes to be a good race driver.

"In the first place, you are a guy with a colossal ego," said Tommy Milton, a two-time winner of the 500. "You've read the papers and you know that Joe Doakes and Charley Potatoes were killed, but you say to yourself, 'Well, they were stupid or they wouldn't have been killed.' Once it penetrates your consciousness that it is dangerous, that you are apt to get torn to bits, you are all through as a race driver."

Well, maybe you are through as a race driver. The 500 can teach you many things about yourself in those few tortured hours. The most important is something you can use profitably on the highway as well as on the Speedway: humility. It may save your life.



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