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A DRIVING CODE FOR ALL

(Col. A. E. Powell in the Toronto Daily Star)

Modern highway slaughter is about as great as battle casualties in an old-fashioned war. A few mechanical palliatives are adopted, streets widened, are curves eased, lights are installed, brakes are made more powerful. The all-important human factor is talked about but as far as doing anything really drastic about it — well, you can't change human nature. Or can you?

In a mood of nauseating conceit and sickening smugness, I have concocted a driving code, which I now present to an ungrateful public.

1. Keep down your speed to a minimum — NOT up to the maximum allowed by law. Speed, unsafe in the prevailing conditions, is obviously the main cause of most accidents. Maintain always a very high factor of safety.

2. Let the other idiot go first. Never mind if you have the right of way. Concede it. It is better, and far safer to give than take.

3. I know only two drivers in Toronto who regularly, habitually and always make arm signals. In places such as Los Angeles, every Toronto driver but the two mentioned — and wild horses will not make me divulge their names — would get many tickets every day every week until he or she learned elementary manners — and safety.

4. Never, never, never be in a hurry. You are late already for your appointment? So what? Have you the right to take chances with other people's lives, even those of little children, so that you may keep your no-doubt vastly important engagement?

5. When you see an anxious face at the wheel of another car, trying to get out from the curb, or to make a turn — stop. Give him or her a friendly grin, and wave her or him on. Everybody will think you completely mad. Probably jeer. So what?

6. Never sardine. Keep well behind the car ahead. If you are up close, and the line stops suddenly, you may be telescoped into a sandwich. How many undamaged bumpers are there in Toronto? What do hard knocks do to wheel alignment not to mention bolts generally.

Look out for stoplights far ahead. If red, slow down at once, trying to get to the light as or soon after it turns green. You thus lose no time, save tires and brakes, and make it easier on your passengers.

8. Recognize always, every moment, that a ton or two of metal in movement, plus some flesh and blood, is potentially a dangerous, murderous projectile. Every moment, lives are at stake. Have you the right to take the most minute risk with other people's lives?

9. Recognize that it is human to err. Other drivers or pedestrians may make mistakes. At any moment they may do something utterly silly or dangerous. It may be sheer carelessness or bad manners; it may be worry, absentmindedness, sickness or the crime of being aged and infirm. Be prepared for anything, the most foolish or unexpected act on the part of others. No matter how foolish they may be, have you the right to condemn them to death or mutilation.

10. Always be ultra-kind, considerate and polite to pedestrians. You have 90 or 100 horses to carry you about. They have one pair of legs, more or less sound. Sometimes not even that.

11. Ditto to cyclists. Their lives are full of peril; their courage would excite the admiration of Daniel.

12. Ditto some more to horses. Never hustle or crowd them. Their nervous system is more sensitive than yours. They are models of patient faithfulness. Noblesse oblige.

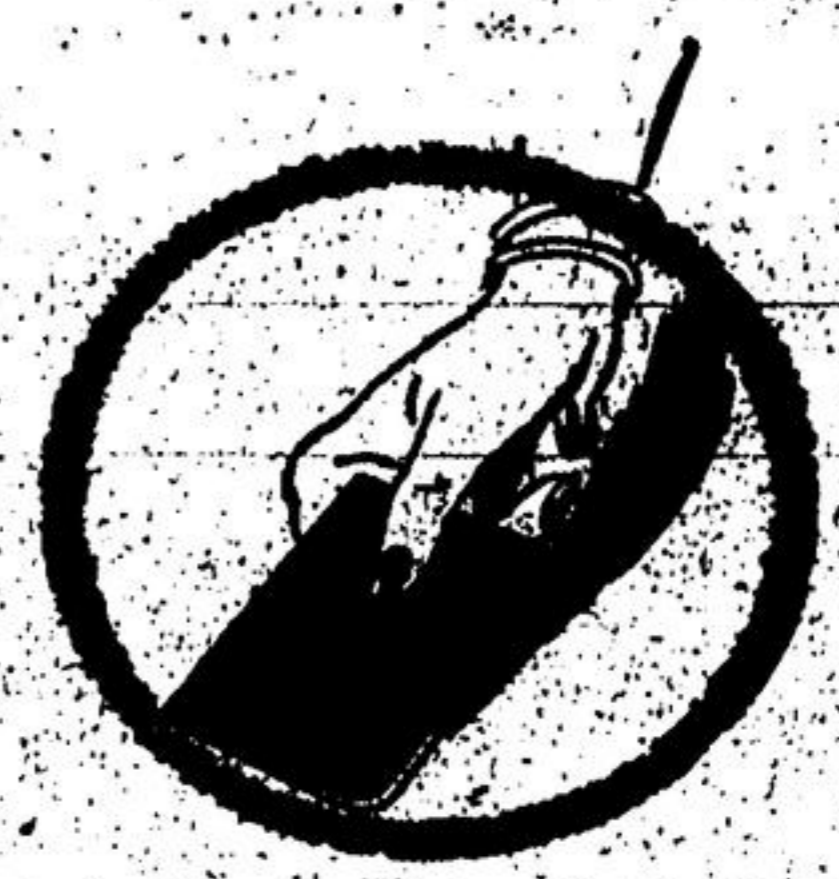
13. If a car is passing you, slow down instantly to make it easier for him or her.

14. Always consider the comfort of your passengers, who have no wheel to steady them. Take curves easily, stop and start slowly.

15. When about to back if you can't see fully behind you get out and look. A child may be there or his toy, or a dog or a cat — or a broken bottle.

This is old-fashioned stuff, so you won't pay the least attention to it. Besides it's easy to surrender your right of way to a stranger, to let some rascal get ahead of you, to go out of your way, in your own time, to help someone else get out of a tight place. In 1948? Revolting. Positively boy scoutish. Slushy. To be deliberately and of set purpose kind, thoughtful, polite to a lot of unmannerly strangers, including even pedestrians, will make you an insufferable snob, a holier-than-thou prig, and so, so smug that you will write to the papers explaining what a gentle, kind, polite driver you are, and everyone will laugh at you and hate you and the editor won't even print it.

Serves you right. Who are you to preach to your betters on how to drive their cars? In Toronto?



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