

# SUMMER MOTORING

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## Tolerating accidents as social problem

Must a civilized society tolerate thousands of needless traffic accidents every year? Somehow we do—and think little of it unless we ourselves become victims. Here we view the carnage on the road as a social problem. And clear "the other guy" of blame... that equality and fraternity really can exist... In a debate on violence in society in the British House of Lords a few years ago, a member pointed out that they each ran a dozen times more risk of death or injury from auto accidents than from all other forms of aggression. "The remainder was timely" commented The Guardian, "since to talk about violence without mentioning cars is rather like discussing 'Macbeth' without mentioning blood."

It may feel strange to the average driver to have his car thus looked upon as an instrument of aggression, but the fact is that the motor vehicle has killed and maimed more people in its brief history than any bomb or fire-arm ever invented. The yearly toll of blood and tears exacted by unsafe driving is incomparably greater than by murder or any other crime.

So the relentless carnage on the roads may properly be regarded as a critical social problem. It is hardly overstating the case to call it, as a safety official once did, "another manifestation of man's inhumanity to man." For much of the blood on the pavement flows essentially from the refusal of drivers to respect the legal and moral rights of others. Those who would dispute that statement on the grounds that "accidents are bound to happen" should consider the following facts:

Most so-called traffic accidents are avoidable. Most happen in fair weather and under good road conditions. Some accident experts speculate that most occur as a result of people disregarding either the law or well-known safety rules.

In Canada, where traffic accidents take the lives of 1,000 people annually, the use of a car is involved in up to half of these fatal incidents. Accident researchers say that most people who drive dangerously defective cars and trucks are aware of the defects and are gambling often with the lives of strangers and family or friends as passengers — on not having trouble. Mechanical defects are responsible for an estimated 20,000 serious accidents in Canada every year.

It has been observed that in the western world today, there is no longer such a thing as a "motorist." So prevalent has the use of cars and trucks become that traffic is simply the public at large on wheels.

It follows that a person operating a motor vehicle has the same social obligation to keep the peace on the streets and highways as a person in any other public area. The only difference is that one's capacity to inflict injury on others is magnified enormously when one is behind the steering wheel of a potential juggernaut weighing a ton and a half and capable of hurtling through space at more than 150 kilometres an hour.

Yet the enemies of society on wheels are ordinarily rather harmless people. They are the respectable working man who takes a chance on driving home after he has had a few drinks; the housewife preoccupied with a family problem as she tailgates the car in front of her; the young fellow who says, "let's see how fast this thing will go on the straight stretch"; the salesman with thousands of driving hours behind him who feels it is beneath his dignity to signal; the vacationer who sets out on an overnight run to his death

education, and public attitudes. Not until society makes a broad and determined commitment to improve mass driving habits will the needless injury and loss of life cease.

On the legal front, the case is not helped by the seeming reluctance in some jurisdictions to enforce the standing traffic laws. Bearing in mind that the cause of accidents, it is scarcely salutary to see cars whizzing past a 90 km/h speed limit sign at 110 km/h while policemen sit idly in their cars and watch. The argument for such tacit toleration of illegality is that the laws are unrealistic. If this is the case, it is the duty of the governments concerned to render them realistic and then to ensure that they are strictly enforced.

## Busted bodies, lights topping Canadian check of car flaws

A neglected car body rates high among automotive safety factors, according to a report just released by Car Care Council of Canada. The information is based on a survey of inspection records from Windsor, Ontario, where Provincial inspectors examined 809 cars, finding 364 with lighting discrepancies, 216 had headlights improperly

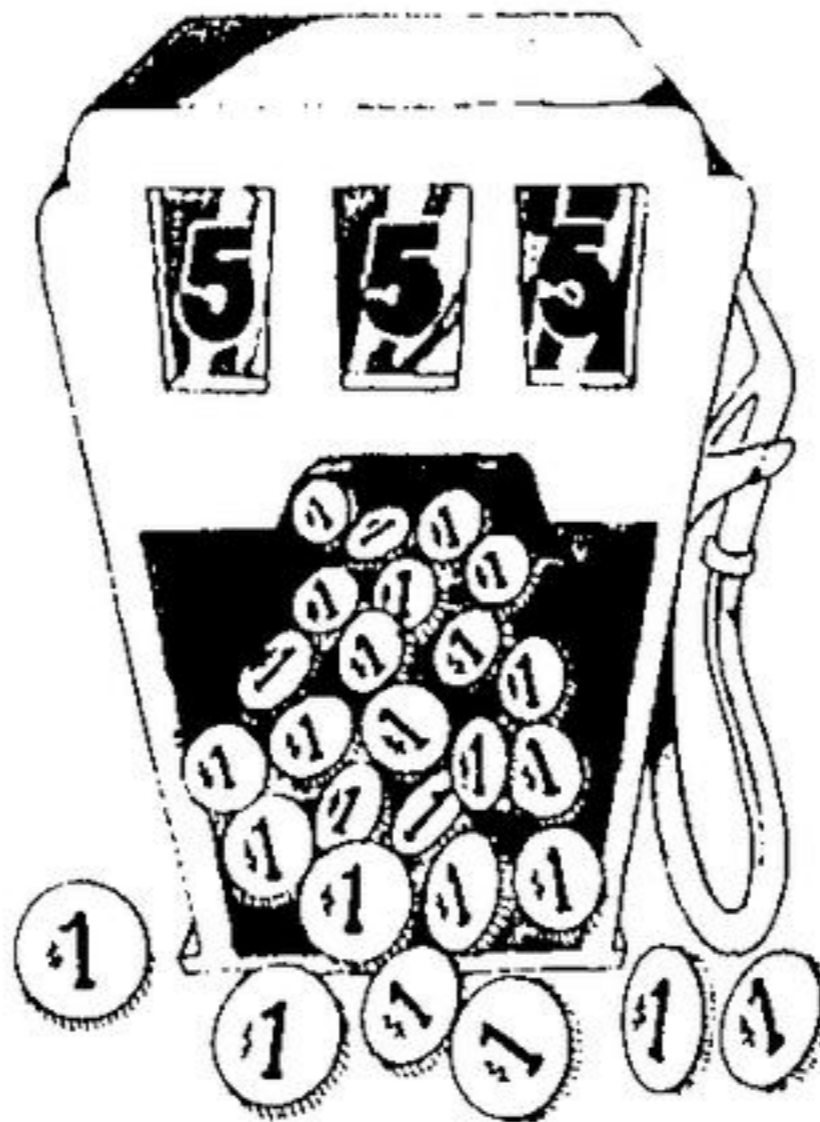
aligned. 357 cars had body conditions which were cause for rejection, 243 were found with braking deficiencies and 211 with problems in steering and suspension. Reasons for rejecting cars for body deterioration included such conditions as gaping holes in floor pans (one opening was large enough for a child

to fall through), rusted and improperly secured doors, bumpers or other parts and damaged glass. Inspectors' concern about body integrity is significant, according to Car Care Council. For years motorists have been aware of the safety hazards of driving with improper lighting, or brakes, and steering that are not up to standard. But a

neglected body presents a threat to life and limb because this is the protective shell in which we're cocooned. Properly maintained, the car's body and frame can maintain the strength necessary to provide such protection in the event of an accident. This maintenance includes repair and painting of sheet metal damage and preventive measures to protect against rust.

### CAR CARE QUIZ

## Pass this test and save cash!



Here's a quiz where there could be a cash payoff if you know the right answers. Sorry, no one is offering prizes for the top scores. But by knowing and following some of the maintenance and driving practices contained below, you could reap sizeable savings in gasoline bills.

- Worn spark plugs waste an average of how much gasoline, compared to newly installed plugs?
  - A. Over six percent
  - B. Nearly two percent
  - C. There's little difference
- An engine in need of tune-up wastes this much more fuel than a newly tuned engine, on average
  - A. Less than a gallon per tankful
  - B. Between one and two gallons per tankful
  - C. Between five and six gallons per tankful
- For best fuel mileage be sure your tires aren't
  - A. Overinflated
  - B. Underinflated
  - C. White sidewalls
- The following is a notorious fuel waster
  - A. Worn windshield wipers
  - B. Leaky battery cables
  - C. Clogged air cleaner
- Brakes can have an adverse effect on fuel economy if
  - A. They are too tight
  - B. They are not properly adjusted
  - C. They are drum and shoe types
- You should use premium fuels only if
  - A. Your car is over three years old
  - B. You have an eight cylinder engine
  - C. Engine does not perform properly without it
- Unleaded fuel is necessary if
  - A. Your car is equipped with a catalytic converter
  - B. You use a four barrel carburetor
  - C. Your engine has a tendency to overheat
- The following is wasteful of fuel
  - A. Driving too slowly
  - B. Driving too fast
  - C. Driving with the windows closed
- According to AAA, "jackrabbit starts" can waste
  - A. 10 percent of your fuel
  - B. 25 percent of your fuel
  - C. Up to 44 percent of your fuel
- To save fuel, when you are waiting at a red light crossing for several minutes
  - A. Keep transmission in neutral
  - B. Put engine in reverse but foot on brake
  - C. Shut off engine

### Kilometers as well as miles on late models

Due to Canada's conversion and pending U.S. conversion to the Metric system, some of the new model speedometers are calibrated to show both miles per hour and kilometers per hour.

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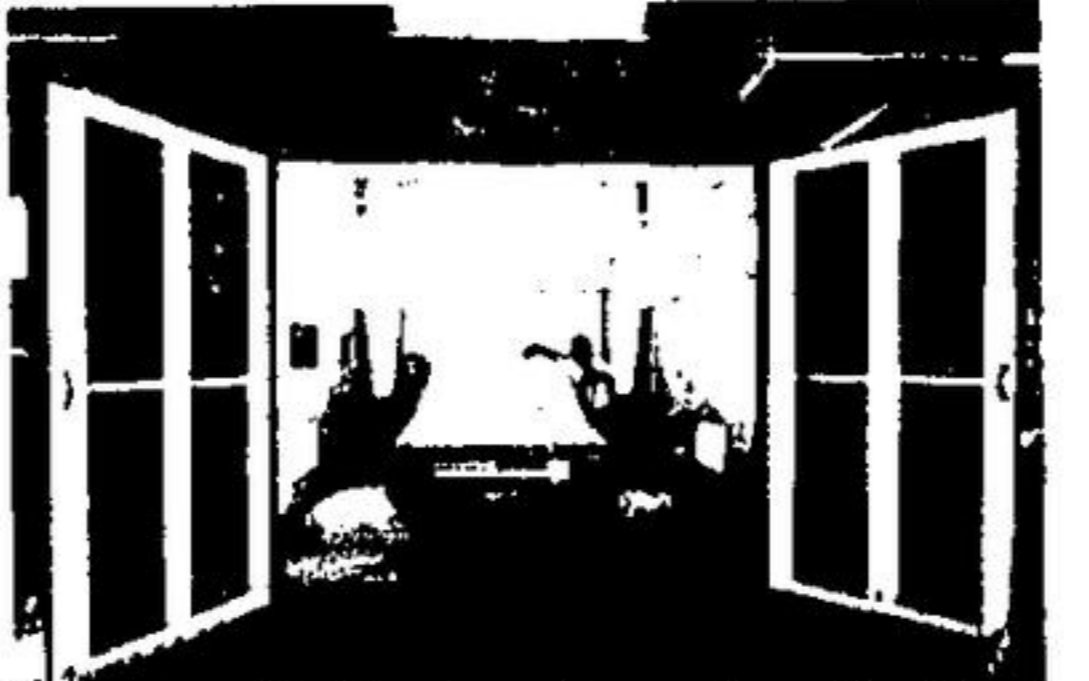
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QUALITY PAYS Among the best investments a motorist can make in making sure his car gets top value on trade-in is attention to body appearance. A quality paint job is a well-equipped shop will likely pay for itself in increased worth of the car. Shop's reconditioning is easy to spot. (Photo: Courtesy of DeVilbiss)

### Do-it-yourself gassers should have maintenance know-how too

The Lord helps him who helps himself. If the above seems to be the motto of a greater number of gasoline retailing outlets, then the facts of life are becoming more apparent. There is a growing trend toward self-service gas stations where the customer pumps his own. Expensive fuel is a little cheaper to buy under the system. But the car owner who has counted on attendants to do simple maintenance jobs is out of luck. Car owners who habitually buy gas at self-serve outlets should make sure they know how to check vital "life signs" of their cars. Then they should check at least weekly. Doing this requires a little knowledge of where to look and what to look for.

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