

When the Rubber Meets the Road

By Cindy Bridges
Assistant Editor

The night before the deadline for the last issue of the *Pride* I was "almost" a victim of a fatal car accident. I was traveling in my car towards Methodist College to work on the newspaper at approximately seven in the evening. I was on the 401 Bypass when I noticed that the cars ahead of me were slamming on their brakes. "Curious, I thought," since traffic should have been flowing smoothly between Rosehill Rd. and Ramsey St. I stopped my car and looked ahead. Approximately 75 feet ahead of me cars were mangled together, offering a gruesome spectacle to bystanders. Police and medical personnel were arriving on the scene by this time, and I sat in my car wondering what had happened to cause this nightmare. What would have happened to me if I had left home just a few minutes earlier than I did? That could have been me in that twisted pile of metal. Something like this can really bring life into perspective. After police rerouted the traffic, I arrived at work, pale and shaken. That tragic accident inspired this editorial.

There are a lot of idiots on the road. It seems like anyone who is breathing can get a driver's license. Personally, I thought that my driving test was a joke. All I had to do was start the car, drive one block making four right-hand turns, and park in the same parking space that I had previously occupied. Gone are the days of parallel parking, city and interstate driving, and left-hand turns. Driving is a serious responsibility and should always be seen as one. Oh I know that today there are more distractions in the car than ever before. Your cellular phone keeps ringing, your pager goes off, the kids are fighting in the back seat, and to top matters off, those stupid squirrels, dogs, and cats MUST continually dash in front of your vehicle. Your life is hectic, you are a busy person and the last thing that you need is an accident. But every day accidents occur that could have been prevented if people would just slow down, relax, and drive safely. Could the accident that happened on the 401 Bypass have been prevented that night? Probably so.

I have a lot of pet peeves when it comes to driving. I get so angry at people who always seem to be in a rush; these folks left politeness and courtesy at home. If you are late for school, a doctor's appointment, work, or whatever, please remember that you will be even later if you cause an accident -- if you get to your destination at all. You might be on a stone slab at the morgue.

Do you ever wonder WHAT is so important that a person HAS to talk on the phone in the CAR? I do. For goodness sakes, pull over and stop at a payphone to make that all-important call if it is THAT necessary. Car phones are such a distraction to the driver. I have seen these nuts driving along, impervious to what is happening around them, chatting away -- cutting people off, missing turns, braking at green lights and going at red lights! Car phone users, I have one thing to ask. If you cannot part with your car phone, please use the phone BEFORE you take your four-thousand-pound vehicle out on the road!

Another one of my biggest complaints is that most drivers do not use signals when turning or changing lanes. Do you drivers out there not realize that these little "blinkers" are your car's voice? They let other drivers know what you are thinking. Please use your signals when turning or switching lanes -- you'll be surprised at how many accidents can be avoided.

Okay, we ALL know about tailgating. Why do we do it? Either we are in such a rush to get where we are going and Granny ahead of us is taking her dear, sweet old time, or some dumb, rude, @\$%*! has just cut us off and we want to get "even." Now, ask yourself if it is really worth it. If Granny or the dumb schmuck decides to slam on their brakes and you careen into them at 40 m.p.h. -- YOU are at fault. Poor Granny, the schmuck, or even you, could be dead simply because of impatience or revenge. Back off. It could save a life.

This is one of my favorites. Numerous times I have been a victim of lipstick wars. For instance, I drive down the road and have the misfortune to fall behind a girl who is desperately trying to apply her lipstick. She holds the tube with one hand, the steering wheel with the other, and cranes her face towards the rearview mirror to see if any of the pretty pink cosmetic got on her teeth. As she is doing this her car is veering off the road or between lanes, and her speed is constantly fluctuating as she struggles to perfect her "face." Her lipstick was more important than my life and hers. Pleasant thought isn't it? My tombstone would read, "Here lies Cindy. She was the unfortunate victim of a tube of Pepto-Bismol colored lipstick and a careless driver."

Buckle up. Seat belts are there for a purpose. They were not an OPTION that you chose when you picked out your car; therefore, there must be a reason for them, right? Use them. They might be uncomfortable, they might wrinkle your dress, but statistically they save lives. Hmmmmm. Tough call -- a wrinkled dress, or a life. Silly isn't it?

I have taken the time to write about these things because we have all thought about them and many of us are guilty of DOING them. The roadside memorials on the 401 Bypass that I drive by daily on my way to school are a constant reminder of how precious life really is. Two people died in that accident three weeks ago. As a parent I wonder how it must feel to lose a child in a car accident. My daughter is my life and for her to die because someone was not paying attention to the road is unfathomable. Someone's negligence that night caused parents to lose their children. How do those parents feel? Hopefully I will never have to find out.

With the holidays coming I implore you to slow down. In fact, don't be in a rush on the road during ANY time of the year. Take the time to enjoy LIFE. Drive safely and conscientiously. Most importantly, don't drink and then get behind the wheel of a car. Remember what Mom always said, "Make sure you always have on clean underwear in case you are ever in an accident."



CORRECTION

Members of the Methodist College *Pride* staff strive for accuracy and clarity in reporting; however, sometimes errors occur in the news articles. In our last issue, the Barnes & Noble article on page 3 should have stated that Dr. Walsh's book contains 620 pages.

Shots! Your Daily Dose...

Life in the Fast Lane

Like putting the pedal to the metal? Reports show that drivers between the ages of 16 to 20 are 64% more likely to get a traffic ticket than older drivers. Well, most older drivers. A 75-year-old Texas man reportedly got 10 tickets in 20 minutes from four hit-and-runs, driving on the wrong side of the road, and causing six accidents.



distributed by College Press Exchange

brought to you by www.animalhouse.com

