Tryon Daily Bulletin, Mon., June 16, 1980

Law For Laypersons (Written by Charles C. Lewis, Assistant Professor of Law, Campbell College School of Law for the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers and distributed as a public service.)

HIT AND RUN Part I

Would you know what to do if you suddenly found yourself in a motor vehicle accident? Assume that no one was injured, but your car and the one you collided with were pretty badly damaged. You might think of calling a policeman, particularly if you knew the accident was not your fault. You would also probably find out who owned the other car and where the driver lived. On the other hand, you might be so shaken by the accident that you would do nothing at all.

A motor vehicle accident, even one not involving injury to a person, is a serious thing, and North Carolina's General Statutes provide exactly what you should do. GS 20-166 first states that you should immediately stop your vehicle at the scene of the collision and then give your name, address, operator's license number and registration number of your car to the driver of the other vehicle. The other driver, of course, should give you the same information. If you did not stop as required by law to provide this information, you would be a "hit and run driver", about which you occasionally hear in the news.

What about calling a policeman? Usually in a two car accident, one party will call a policeman, but North Carolina General Statutes GS 20-166.1 requires that you must report the collision to the police by the quickest means possible if the total property damage done to the vehicles is \$200 or more. The policeman must then investigate the collision and file a report with the Division of Motor Vehicles which will tabulate and analyze the report so that it can polish statistical information based on the number, cause and location of highway accidents. The policeman may, of course, also charge you or the other driver with the violation of North Carolina's traffic laws.

The penalty for the "hit and run driver" who fails to stop as required by law is very stiff. He may be fined or imprisoned for a period of not more than two years, or both, in the discretion of the court. The failure to report the accident to the police if the total property damage is \$200 or more is another offense, which is punishable by a fine or imprisonment, or both.

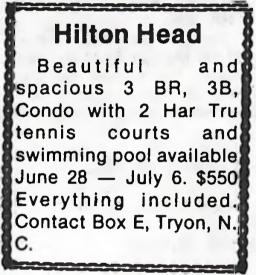
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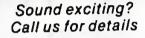
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