

Fatal Hit and Run On Trafalgar Road In London Not Good Mix With Road Depression

It is reported that an elderly pedestrian was struck and killed last night on Trafalgar Road between Crumlin Road and Shaw Road in London, Ontario. I looked at the site this afternoon and here are my thoughts.

There was an obvious, large and long trail of blood that indicated the pedestrian travelled eastbound after being struck. But to the west of that point I observed what you can see below.



My vehicle is parked on the south shoulder to the west of where all the blood is. Beside my car I laid down a carpenter's level in the eastbound lane of Trafalgar. I should not need to show you the next photo because you should be able to tell just by looking at

the shadow of the carpenter's level that "Houston, we have a problem". But look at the next photo anyway.



My carpenter's level cannot span the complete depression so the 6 centimetres of depression that is showing is actually slightly more. Now, I do not know if the depression is in anyway related to the fatality, but it complicates things. If someone is charged for killing someone and they are looking for a defense, this is a pretty good one. Let's look at the rest of the story.

Below you will see the long blood trail viewed looking east and the body came to rest in the background near the centre-line but in the westbound lane.



There are some tire marks in the background of the westbound lane that you may not be able to see very well but I am not going to discuss them for now. The point is that this is a lot of blood and a long trail. When a pedestrian is struck while upright this does not happen. Let's look further toward the body's rest position.



In the photo above you should be able to see the end of the blood trail where the body came to rest toward the centre-line of the road and then you should see some blood dripping off toward the north shoulder due to the crown of the road. Now, as I said a normal impact of an upright pedestrian causes the body to flung, often in the air, and the blood does not have time to escape from the body in that short time of travel to rest. When you get this amount of blood then it suggests the body has been struck before and was struck again, or something like that. The prominent portion of the blood trail was about 33 metres long so that is quite a long distance. Normally, if we simply used a tumble number (1/2 g) to represent the rate of deceleration of the body you might think the speed of the body at the start of the trail would be in the range of 65 km/h. But was the body tumbling or was it dragged? A dragged body might have a higher deceleration rate. But if the body was still connected to the vehicle that struck it then all of this would be nonsense.

Anyway, back to my point about the road depression. I investigated a loss of control event on this road a few years ago where a motorcyclist complained that a road depression caused the problem. I noted the depression at the point where the event occurred. But when I travelled eastward to the area where the present collision occurred I found an even greater depression - actually much worse than what you see in my

photos. I did not take photos or measurements but I recall the depression was about 9 centimetres. The surface was in major trouble. But it was eventually repaired.

So today I return and see this depression. Interestingly, there were signs posted everywhere "rough road" but when were they installed? Before or after the collision? Will that information become available in the general media? Generally no.

I am not saying the depression is related to whatever happened, but like I said before, it complicates things. The City of London could get involved in a law suit over something that might be totally unrelated to the road. But we don't know.

UPDATE: MARCH 22, 2010 1735 HOURS

It has been noted in the news for several days now that police have charged a 46-year-old woman, Darcee Barbosa, with leaving the scene of an accident resulting in death. Barbosa lived on Trafalgar, apparently close the accident location. The official news release indicated "Police continue to investigate and believe that an additional vehicle or vehicles may have struck the pedestrian after the initial collision". Interestingly, before finding this woman who was driving a Hummer, police reported that they were looking for a 1996-1998 Mercedes S Class sedan, Aegean blue in colour.

Meanwhile persons have been writing into the London Free Press with all sorts of opinions, as one might expect. Similar to recent news reports, these persons have expressed very strong opinions, sometimes suggesting physical harm to the persons apparently at fault for these events. It is indicative of the mob mentality of that exists, with no real cure.

With respect to this collision, police acknowledge that it happened in darkness, on an unlit road, where the pedestrian was wearing dark clothing, and was likely on the road when struck. I have not seen anything at the site to dispute that synopsis. But further they have located parts to a Mercedes and they confirm that there could have been other vehicles that struck this person. There is a lot unknown in all of this. Certainly deserving of a "let's wait and get the evidence before we hang'em" type of approach. But not for many.

Unfortunately I have investigated collisions like this before where the result of the investigation was not pretty. An investigator eager to convict someone went way beyond the evidence, and way beyond his own experience, training and knowledge to suggest that the height of blood splatter on the vehicle must indicate that this was the first vehicle that struck the pedestrian, never mind that all the evidence and physics proved otherwise. Even though his own police colleagues, including a seasoned police sergeant tried to tell him that he was wrong, he went along with his theory because he was a "trained reconstructionist" and the seasoned sergeant should stay out of the field as he was not a trained professional. Well, turns out the untrained and seasoned sergeant was right. And at the expense of his own career this sergeant went beyond his superiors only to be scolded by those superiors for damaging the possibility of a

conviction. I raise a glass to that sergeant, for having the courage to stick by his convictions. This was a true police officer.

Anyway, I hope they get this one right. Just because there is blood evidence on a vehicle does not mean that the person "left the scene of a fatal accident". You have to look at the facts closely.