

Gorski Consulting Website

Archived News - 2013 - October

October 30, 2013

The Final (?) Exoneration of David Camm For Murder Should Scare Us More Than Any Halloween Sequel

Ok, we have seen the movie “Halloween” numerous times and understand that bringing the knife-stabbing monster back on numerous sequels in big business. But there is such a thing as real life...real consequences...real people. On two occasions David Camm was convicted in the State of Indiana for the brutal killing of his wife and two small children. But courts of appeal kept giving him another trial. Everyone appeared to have made up their minds...guilty, why put up all this lost money on an obvious murderer.

I did not hear about this case until recently when, having dinner with an associate, he expressed his frustration about the case in which he was to testify as an expert witness. He went on at great length to explain how the prosecution had performed unconceivable acts to attempt to hide information at trial in order to convict David Camm of the murder of his family. While I sympathized I was also not naive to such facts as I too was involved in trials that were unspeakable. But the facts of the David Camm case should truly frighten all of us.

It was with great satisfaction that I heard from my colleague a few days ago that, finally, David Camm was determined by a court of law to be innocent. But it raises the question: At what point do we allow our society to prosecute an individual with public funds even though, an examination of all the evidence in totality would cause anyone with any common sense to realize that the prosecution is wrong? Why do we not examine the details of this case? Why are the news media not bringing this case directly into everyone's face?

Apparently, according to my colleague, some of the U.S. media will be doing just that...presenting documentaries about this case. As the public is so quickly distracted it needs the professional skills of program developers such as 60 Minutes, 20-20, and all those others to bring the matter down to its essentials. But even so, these important matters are so difficult to bring to our society's attention. Nice story but where are my crunchies and where is that sports program or soap opera that I was waiting to see? It is only when people are directly affected by injustice that they suddenly want it to be known but their voice falls into that deep dark hole.

Two Additional Incidents of Motorist Drownings in South-Western Ontario Yet Everyone Turns A Blind Eye

Yesterday, October 29, 2013 a driver died when his vehicle was found submerged in the St. Clair River about halfway between Wallaceburg and Sarnia, Ontario. Police can only said that the vehicle was southbound and it entered the water for unknown reasons.

In another similar incident a 55-year-old female driver's vehicle rolled into a water-filled ditch on Highway 23 near Atwood at approximately 1020 hours on Saturday, October 26th. Luckily two motorists pulled the woman out of the vehicle and revived her while she still remains in hospital.

It is not too long ago that we uploaded an article to our Articles webpage discussing the problem of vehicle occupant drownings and the lack of proper roadside protection to prevent these incidents. Yet we have not heard a single, quiet chirp from anyone out there who recognizes the danger these incidents pose. If drivers were falling off 500 foot cliffs next to a roadway we have no doubt that there would be a public outcry. Yet, a simple ditch that is filled with just two feet of water can be just as deadly, and it has been demonstrated in a number of recent cases that it is just as deadly as that 500 foot cliff.

October 29, 2013

Hit-&-Run Death of Cyclist Michael Sullivan Reported as an Accidental Fall But Unclear if Related to Hit-&-Run Impact

If we have the story straight, Mr. Sullivan reportedly died because, on July 29th, 2013 he fell off his bicycle and sustained a life-threatening head injury. But we find the Toronto Star explanation around this death confusing. This may not be the fault of the Toronto Star but just that the reported facts are confusing. For example part of the article reads:

“...he (Sullivan) momentarily stopped and spoke with some individuals, police said. These unknown individuals then relayed their conversation to the driver of the Ford truck, who misinterpreted the information, police said. The driver proceeded to pursue Sullivan, cornering him into the rear parking lot of 927 Barton St. E. (Hamilton) at approximately 2:55 p.m., colliding with the bicycle. Police said Sullivan then fell off his bicycle, and was hospitalized with a life-threatening head injury. The driver failed to remain on scene.”

To us the information sounds suspicious. The only conclusion we can gather from this description is that it came from a witness, or witnesses who provided their descriptions to police. Anyone who has performed any sizeable amount of motor vehicle reconstruction should develop the cautionary observation that witnesses are very often imprecise, inaccurate and, frankly, capable of lying. While this may sound as though our thoughts are prejudiced, they are not. This comes directly from conducting many reconstructions and comparing the objective facts to what persons say.

Are we sure this was not a deliberate act to cause Sullivan injury and not just an accident? In most instances the cause of death would be described as impact-related and not from “falling off a bike” even if, subsequent to the impact, the cyclist struck his head on the ground. To us the wording would make it sound as though the impact was not the primary cause of the cyclist’s death.

Normally it would be difficult to exclude the impact with the truck as the cause of a head injury because impacts between vehicles are usually more severe in terms of speed-change (and harmful accelerations) than a cyclist’s fall to the ground. Although every collision is unique one would want to ask further questions about the interpretation of the evidence in a case like this.

October 26, 2013

Ten-Year-Old Boy Clinging To Life in Hit-&-Run Collision on Wexford Ave in East London, Ontario

News media are reporting that a 10-year-old boy was struck by a vehicle on Wexford Avenue in East London, Ontario about 1900 hours yesterday evening. The striking vehicle left the scene and police are looking for “an older-model black or blue Chrysler Intrepid or 300, with after-market rims”. It is believed the boy may have been on the sidewalk and was accompanied by his bicycle and perhaps another individual. The driver of the striking vehicle may have lost control of the vehicle which veered off the road and onto the sidewalk before fleeing.

As of Saturday morning, October 26th, the boy's condition has still not changed.

UPDATE: OCTOBER 27, 2013; 2100 HOURS

It is being reported that the hit & run vehicle and driver have been located by police. Toby Van Lieshout, 34, of Ingersoll was reportedly the driver of the vehicle. Police have also laid charges against the owner of the vehicle, Rebecca Van Lieshout, 39, also of Ingersoll.

Residents are canvassing persons in the area to sign a petition calling for speed bumps and artificial illumination on the road which is presently non-existent. The lighting is particularly important because it was reported that a car was parked on the outside of the curve and just beyond its terminus. Therefore a vehicle travelling in night-time conditions would not illuminate the location of the parked car until a very short distance ahead. It is apparent from the tire marks left on the road that the driver of the car veered sharply to the left, likely to avoid the parked car and entered into a yawing motion before exiting the road and striking the 10-year-old boy.



Google Maps view of site showing a white car parked just beyond the curve. At night-time and with no artificial illumination the headlights of a vehicle would be the only illumination that could help the driver detect the parked vehicle.

UPDATE: OCTOBER 28, 2013; 0750 HOURS

We attended the collision site yesterday afternoon to examine the collision evidence.

In the photo below we have outlined the path of the yaw marks produced by the southbound, hit-&-run vehicle just as it exited the left curve of Wexford Ave.



Southerly view, showing the tire marks produced by the hit-&-run vehicle as it came southbound around the left curve of Wexford Ave.

The photo below provides a view further southward with the tire marks of the vehicle marked out in chalk. The two curved tire marks were caused by the right-front and right-rear tires.



Further view of loss-of-control tire marks produced by the hit-&-run vehicle as it rotated counter-clockwise toward the east sidewalk where the 10-year-old was reportedly riding his bicycle.

The whiteness of the tire marks suggests that the road surface was not dry at the time of the collision as tire marks produced on a dry surface would normally contain black transfers from the sliding tires.

Apparently police reconstructionists have been instructed to define yaw marks in a narrow way such that, looking at the above two photos they would conclude that these are not yaw marks. They believe that yaw marks can only be defined as so if they contain specific characteristics that can be used to calculate the speed of a vehicle at the inception of the marks. In fact the more broadly educated analyst will understand that "yaw" is a much broader term simply referring to rotation of a body about its vertical axis. When we see two tire marks like those in the above photos we recognize that the right rear tire is not tracking the same path as the right front and therefore at some point previous the vehicle has rotated about its vertical axis, or has attained a certain yaw velocity.

In calculating speed from yaw marks it is correct to examine specific characteristics of the yaw marks to determine whether the assumptions on which the critical speed calculation is based have not been violated. So matters such as a noted continuing reduction of the radius of curved travel of the vehicle must be evaluated. Making sure that the chord, or length of tire mark being evaluated, is long enough, say more than 20 metres, is another consideration. Making sure that the chord is taken at the “break out” point as the tire marks begin their separate paths is another consideration. And making sure that there are no other external forces acting on the vehicle other than those assumed for the calculation is another consideration. So all these cautions must be adhered to. We sometimes come across analysts who hold rigidly to the definition they have been taught rather than understanding that it is not the strict definition that is important but that they understand the fundamentals of what they are calculating and why the calculation is valid or may be invalid. When discussing specific definitions those in the know have referred to a book by Thomas W. Gillespie entitled “Fundamentals of Vehicle Dynamics”.

Witnesses claimed that a car was parked against the west curb and that the hit-&-run vehicle tried to avoid it and barely missed making contact. Obviously we do not know the specific location of this parked vehicle but were provided with a general indication. Considering the range of possible positions it is our observation that there is a problem with that evidence as the hit-&-run vehicle’s tire marks would be too close to such a parked car to avoid contact.

October 25, 2013

Three Questionable Police Cruiser Crashes in Two Days

In south-western Ontario there have been three police cruiser collisions discussed in the news media in the last two days that raise questions about their circumstances.

Yesterday, October 24th the news media reported that St, Thomas Police released a photo of a collision between one of their police cruisers and a passenger car that took place on October 18th, at the intersection of Burwell Road and Dennis Road in St. Thomas. The driver of the passenger car was charged with “left turn fail to afford reasonable opportunity to avoid collision”. As persons who reconstruct collisions on a daily basis we recognize the uncertainty that befalls such incidents as the driver of a left-

turning vehicle is often not at fault, particularly when the driver of the on-coming vehicle is travelling too quickly. Given the propensity for police officers to speed, claim that they are responding to an emergency and then blame the public when they interfere with their unusual actions, one should not take what is being reported in this instance at face value. Particularly when it is the police who are investigating the actions of a member of their own force.

In a second incident, a Grey County OPP cruiser went out of control on Highway 10 north of Markdale, Ontario yesterday while reportedly responding to “another call”. Investigating police were reported to say that the cruiser “caught the shoulder before it rolled over” and that this was the result of the road conditions. Many responders to the article on the CTV News website were skeptical of the police investigation’s conclusion that it was not the officer’s fault. Again, when police investigate their own it is not unexpected that this negative perception would exist.

In a third incident that occurred yesterday, a Wellington County OPP cruiser collided with another vehicle while the OPP officer was “responding to a different crash”. Apparently the crash occurred on Wellington County Road 124 in the Township of Guelph-Eramosa, at approximately 1655 hours. It was reported that the police cruiser was driving westbound on a paved shoulder with its emergency lights activated when a 65-year-old female driver who was travelling eastbound made a left turn into a private driveway and collided with the cruiser. Again, the fault for this consequence is not exactly clear. Just because the police vehicle had its emergency lights activated does not mean that its position and intended motion were available to be detected. While in some instances police use lighting and sirens because they want to draw attention to their presence they fail to understand that those warnings are both attracting and distracting and those conditions are often not helpful in avoiding conflicts with other vehicles on the road. With local police being the only persons who make that determination it sparks of inappropriate conflict of interest. Perception is half the problem.

October 24, 2013

Beyond the Next Kilometre, Wander Where You Please

There is a reason why signage throughout North America is standardized. A quick reaction is sometimes required and a message needs to be clear and comprehended quickly.

During these lovely days of autumn the maple leaves in north-eastern North America turn to bright colours and we marvel up at them as we take a pleasurable drive down a country lane such as the one pictured below.



Wonderful trees, but what does that tiny sign say in our peripheral vision?

But what does that sign say in the periphery of our wandering eyes?

“Keep Right For 1 kilometre”.

Hmm..., but wander anywhere you please after that? Is that what it means?

Indirectly, it probably means that the standard stopping sight distance that is available is not available on this stretch of road and the driver may encounter something ahead that he or she may not be able to avoid in time because they are travelling too fast for the road conditions. In Ontario, a rural roadway posted with a maximum speed of 80 km/h must afford the visibility of an object on the road that is 38 centimetres tall, 138 metres ahead of the approaching vehicle. But, as shown in the photo below, as a vehicle approaches a road feature such as a hillcrest on this stretch of road, the driver will not be able to see far enough ahead to detect something that may be present on the road.



Is there something beyond this hillcrest that the driver will need to avoid? This is why a standard stopping sight distance is required to protect us from unseen dangers.

The problem might be taken care of by posting a maximum speed sign of 60 km/h or less. But then many drivers ignore such signage while not realizing why the speed reduction is required.

So enjoy this autumn's colourful display, but pay attention to those unusual signs that need your deeper understanding.

Small Aylmer Express Newspaper Raises Awareness of Why A Car Should Catch Fire After Impacting a Deer

A photo taken by Craig Bradford of the Aylmer Express Newspaper caught our attention when the title of the accompanying article read “Crash with deer causes car fire”.



Photo taken by Craig Bradford of the Aylmer Express newspaper showing the result of a fire that consumed the front end of PT Cruiser.

The Aylmer Express indicated that this incident occurred yesterday, October 23, 2023 on Talbot Line southwest of New Sarum, Ontario. This incident was not reported by any of the mainstream news agencies and this is typical of what we would expect. But this result is very important.

Vehicles should not burst into flames from an impact with a small-mass object like a deer. Clearly manufacturers should have plenty of opportunity to prevent such a result. But when an incident like this does not reach the public's eyes and ears, or that of Transport Canada, we are in danger of the next incident not coming to the same lucky result. Imagine the tragedy if this vehicle had been occupied by two children in infant carriers that required their removal by an adult and what if that adult was unable to reach them, and the fire could not be put out in time. Can we not imagine the tragedy if these children perished in the resulting fire? It is not an alarmist's warning or improbable possibility. It just requires the wrong set of circumstances.

As government deficits continue to erode the ranks of government employees, investigations by agencies such as Transport Canada are naturally stretched to the limits. Even in our days of contractual work for Transport Canada there were only about a dozen defects investigators to cover the whole of Canada. Now our information indicates that that number has diminished. The bottom line is that Transport Canada cannot be left alone to search out all the problems that may exist in the total population of collisions in Canada. It requires that other official agencies and the public itself understand that they need to be proactive and make sure that potentially dangerous detects be properly brought to Transport Canada's attention.

It helps when independent newspapers such as the Aylmer Express continue to exist and provide unique news stories that may not be covered by the main stream media.

October 21, 2013

Fatal Mazda 3 Rollover on Kitchener's King Street Brings Out Homicide Investigators

It is being reported that the driver who died in a single-vehicle, Mazda 3 rollover collision on King Street in downtown Kitchener, Ontario shortly after midnight on Sunday, October 20th, has brought out homicide investigators in what is being

described as “suspicious circumstances”. It is reported that there was an earlier altercation between the driver of a black car and two pedestrians and that those two individuals may have entered a vehicle and possibly pursued the black vehicle.

Although the scene at the final rest position of the Mazda looked spectacular with the vehicle lying upside down, the severity of the collision in terms of speed loss from impact was less so. In the final seconds before impact the northbound Mazda veered across the road to the west roadside where it struck a lamp standard, likely with its left front end. Since that light fixture fell over it is most likely that the Mazda’s mass was ramped up the angled post of the fixture and this is what caused the vertical force resulting in the Mazda being catapulted into the noted rollover. This however was not a fatality-producing impact in most instances and the rollover was also survivable had the driver being properly restrained and remained in the vehicle. The “greenhouse” area of the occupant compartment was essentially intact at the Mazda’s rest position. So the fatal injuries are questionable, but not necessarily suspicious.

There are instances where the striking of a small obstacle such as a curb can bring a driver’s body forward toward the steering wheel hub just as a secondary impact (i.e. the light fixture) causes the air bag to deploy resulting in massive head injuries and possible death. These “out of position” (OOP) events were common in the later 1990’s when aggressive air bags and lack of tethering of the bag were factors. Without further information such a mechanism cannot be discounted.

A second possibility is that the driver was not wearing a seat-belt and was partially ejected from the vehicle and was thus crushed by his own vehicle during the subsequent rollover. This is a very common mechanism. The existence of a larger quantity of blood pooled on the road beside the curb and next to the resting place of the Mazda could be either the final rest position of the driver’s body or a position after someone pulled the driver away from the vehicle in an attempt to revive him.

A third, less-probable possibility exists that the driver was somehow injured during the pursuit from sources unrelated to a motor vehicle collision (gunshot wounds for example). Obviously such facts cannot be known from the minimal information that is presently available.

It is most likely to us that police are searching for the two other men because it is possible that they were involved in some sort of pursuit and therefore this could cause police to interpret that they were the indirect but also principal instigators that led to the eventual death of the Mazda driver. Thus the reasoning for the involvement of the homicide investigators.

One caution is that motor vehicle deaths are not the same as other homicides and, while homicide detectives may be experienced in collecting and evaluating a variety of evidence in widely-varying settings, they cannot be specialists in motor vehicle collision evidence to the degree of someone who examines it on a daily basis. This is often the problem that police detectives do not have long histories of intimate involvement with the specialized evidence of a motor vehicle collision. Even as collision reconstructionists their tenure can be limited to a maximum of 10 years before they are transferred to another area. This limited time commitment is often a liability when it comes to understanding more complex events where an intimate knowledge of physical evidence from motor vehicle collisions becomes almost a necessity.

UPDATE: OCTOBER 21, 2013; 1400 HOURS

News agencies are now reporting that second degree murder charges have been laid against two men, 45-year-old Stephen McNaney and 18-year-old Martin McNaney of Wellesley, Ontario as the deceased did not die from injuries sustained in the crash but from an stab wound to the torso at another location on Harold Avenue in Kitchener, Ontario.

The deceased has been identified as 38-year-old Anton Radisic of Oakville.

There are complications in this matter as there will be arguments posed whether the collision contributed to the injuries of the deceased and therefore the driver would not have died if the collision had not occurred. Not only does this require some knowledge about the survivability from injury from a medical point of view, but it also requires some knowledge about the dynamics of the collision, what forces were applied to the driver and whether those forces contributed to the stab wound consequences.

October 20, 2013

Minor Injuries of Two Cyclists in Byron Suburb of London, Ontario – So Why Three Police Cruisers?

The London Free Press has reported that two cyclists sustained minor injuries when they were struck this morning, October 20th, 2013 at the intersection of Reynolds Road and Springbank Avenue in the Byron suburb of London, Ontario. The LFP article indicated that there were three police cruisers still present at the site. One of the commenters to the article wrote:

“3 cruisers for one little accident with non life threatening injuries? no wonder London police want a budget increase of 4.2%”

But having reviewed the site on Google Maps and comparing it to the LFP photo accompanying the story it is clear that there are tall hedges on both sides of the intersection that improperly block the view of drivers/cyclists on either road. The City has to be aware of instances like this where a “daylighting” triangle of visibility is required equaling 3 seconds of warning for the driver on the main road so that the driver has an opportunity to attempt to avoid a collision. Clearly that visibility triangle is not available at this intersection.

Now, did this visibility obstruction have anything to do with this accident? We don’t know and presumably the author of the LFP article would be unable to recognize the problem and investigate it further for the public’s benefit.

But what about the police investigation. If there was this visibility obstruction that affected the collision, will they report it to the news agencies and therefore the public as well? Why would they have such a large police presence at such a minor incident, as noted by the commenter? Is it because the City could be held liable? Will the police be involved in hiding such a defect from public knowledge? We only need to wait and observe.

Review of Questionable Safety Improvements on the Glanworth Curve

A neighbourhood outcry came from residents along the Glanworth Curve on the southern outskirts of London, Ontario, Canada, shortly after the double fatal collision of a Ford Escape SUV with a tree on February 11, 2012. Residents, and others, claimed that the curve was unsafe and proposed a number of solutions including a guardrail that was expected to prevent wayward vehicles from striking the noted tree. In response representatives from the City of London argued against the guardrail but were not specific about what they would do, if anything. After 18 months have passed we have observed what changes were made to the curve and we have to state that we are bewildered. As such we have prepared an article to discuss these questionable improvements and this is available on the Articles page of this website.

October 17, 2013

Road Workers Attacked by Guard Dogs Not a Laughing Matter – But Sometimes It Is

The subject matter of this site is often not a laughing matter. But sometimes we need a good laugh.

We acknowledge that on occasions when we are conducting collision site examinations we are confronted by aggressive dogs that feel a rightful responsible to guard their families' homes. But we had to have a good chuckle a couple of weeks ago when a fellow co-worker was being mauled by the aggressive mutt shown in the photo below.



The 10 ounce guard dog with attitude.

As our co-worker attempted to work near the mutt's driveway we had to laugh when this brave fellow twirled around and barked from the relative safety of the edge of his driveway.



View of brave mutt "dancing" in his driveway.

Suffice it to say that, when it came to an actual fight or a good petting, our mutt chose the latter, preferring the gentle hands of my friend over his important responsibilities of guarding his home.



View of the monster mutt receiving a good petting from our co-worker.

Sometimes site work has its rewards, mutual to both man and mutt.

October 16, 2013

Retirement of “Controversial” Durham Police Chief Will Not Resolve The Principal Issue of Continual Police Misconduct

It is not naive to think that there are still good men and women out there who chose the profession of policing for altruistic reasons. In our lectures to new recruits at the Ontario Police College near Aylmer, Ontario we saw many of those good people. No attitude, no negativism, and a lot of honesty. While those lectures occurred almost three decades ago we have no reason to believe that those persons no longer exist. Even as we interacted with regular police officers on various investigations there were many

positive experiences. On rare occasions when there was police misconduct we saw quick and appropriate action taken to correctly resolve the problem. Sadly, we cannot say this in recent times.

For instance, a few years ago we observed how a elderly female driver was totally victimized by a conviction in a traffic accident involving an unmarked police cruiser stationed out of Elgin County OPP. The impacting cruiser was one of two that came speeding over a hillcrest at tremendous speed from behind the elderly driver's vehicle. My reconstruction would have demonstrated that this elderly driver could not reasonably avoid the collision that occurred. But that reconstruction was never allowed to be brought into evidence during the trial. It was disgraceful. Simply put, everyone involved acted improperly down to the judge and the Ontario Attorney General's office that would not look into the issue. We will never look at any of these entities in the same way.

So when we began reading of the continual problems at the Durham Police Force it was disturbing to see how each problem was handled. Misconduct after misconduct. Where were those honourable police who should have been placing things in order? A uniform does not make a police officer. A clown suit does not make a clown. A priest's garments do not make a priest. It has always been that the person within is what matters. Who are those officers at the Police Durham Force and is it fair to group them together and not single out those bad apples that give its badge disrespect?

The Toronto Star newspaper has reported that the Chief of Durham Police Force, Mike Ewles will retire as of next May. He was described in their article as "controversial". What does that adjective mean? Was he somehow responsible for some of the problems on his force? How would we ever know? The problem is that we do not know, and we are unlikely to ever find out. If Chief Ewles is not the problem it would be a shame to end a long career on that negative tone. But the issue is bigger than just one person.

The problem as we see it, is that there is a lack of transparency. Lack of transparency is an issue that we seem to come back to in many issues that we address on this website. How can we know what needs changing when all we get is fog, fog, fog? Whenever a problem develops we want to hide it rather than face it square on. Lay the cards face up on the table and work with a clear head. Is that so difficult?

We will never deal with police misconduct properly until we are prepared to change how we deal with it.

October 15, 2013

Lynedoch Road Fatality in Norwich County – Another Indication That What is Reported Is Not The Total Truth

Yes, we can confirm that a vehicle was eastbound on Lynedoch Road in Norfolk County, Ontario, when it left the right side of the road and struck a grouping of small trees. And we will not dispute the reports that this impact occurred roughly at 0221 hours early this morning. But the official reports that the single occupant of the vehicle died after striking these trees is not exactly complete, and therefore does not provide a reasonably informative service to the public.

The vehicle had been eastbound along a straight portion of Lynedoch Road when signage would have informed the driver that a stop sign was ahead. However, the road made a sharp left turn before reaching the stop sign. To counter this problem, an oversized checker-board warning sign had been erected with an arrow pointing to the left. Thus, one would think that this would be reasonable warning to any driver. But that may not be exactly so.

Yes, the checkerboard sign was directly in line with the centre of the eastbound lane of Lynedoch Road. And the roadway was quite straight and level, except for the last 25 metres before the checker-board sign – and this is the issue. Not only did the roadway curve sharply to the left, but it also increased in elevation in those last 25 metres. The other important fact is that the bottom of the oversized sign was about 186 centimetres (about 6 feet) above the ground and its centre would have been about 276 centimetres (about 9 feet) above the ground. Furthermore, while the road was level, in the last 25 metres to the checkerboard sign there was an average upgrade of about 1.3 degrees.

To a driver travelling in nighttime conditions, objects ahead become illuminated principally by the headlights of the vehicle. Depending on whether the low or high beams are used there will be different intensities of light disbursed ahead of the vehicle and to its left and right. But, generally, manufacturers have attempted to maintain that light close to the ground so as not to blind drivers of on-coming vehicles. So when a

warning sign is placed too high it may not receive the full degree of light thrown on its surface and it might not reflect sufficient light back to the driver's eyes so the driver can detect the meaning of the sign in sufficient time/distance to avoid a hazard. This is partly what may have occurred at the present site.

Additionally, the official news reports made it sound as if the driver died from striking the trees. That may not be exactly true. There were no pre-impact tire marks on the road to indicate that any action was taken until the driver exited the road. Furthermore the physical evidence at the tree impacts suggests that the impact was of moderate severity. Certainly, unless the driver was unlucky, the collision might have been survivable. So why was there a fatality? We know the vehicle caught fire and we have further information that the deceased was found in the burned out vehicle.

So did the driver die from the impact or did he die because of the fire? This is not an unimportant issue. We should not expect to be involved in moderate severity impacts and then be trapped in our vehicles and die from a fire that is ignited after the impact. There are federal safety standards that manufacturers must adhere to but the feds cannot test every vehicle and therefore it is important when a fire takes place in a collision that this information be reported to the feds so it can be logged and tracked. Similarly, if we continue to mis-inform the public about what actually takes place in a fatal collision the public does not know enough to realize that changes are required.

Despite the fragility of thinking in the general population we still believe that a properly informed public can be the stabilizing factor that puts things in order because the general public carries no biases or special interests. When the truth is hidden from the public by special interest groups our society suffers.

Further Interpretations of Loss-of-Control Tire Marks on a Gravel Shoulder

At Gorski Consulting we continue to monitor loss-of-control collisions. A majority of these occur on two-lane, rural highways with gravel shoulders. In a majority of these instances vehicles commence their loss-of-control when travelling onto a gravel shoulder with their right side tires. There is little research or understanding of the physical evidence that exists in such events. For this reason we have been gathering data on loss-of-control tire marks on gravel shoulders. A specific site has been selected for a majority of these observations which is located on an S-Curve of Clarke Road, just north

of Fanshawe Park Road in the north-eastern outskirts of London, Ontario. In 2013 we have presented several articles on this webpage which focus on interpretations of the tire marks on the gravel shoulders at this site. In continuance with this work we have prepared another article discussing our interpretations of another set of tire marks at this site. You can review the full details by visiting our Articles webpage.

October 9, 2013

Reported Single-Vehicle-Rollover of Food Truck On Oxford County Road 8 Not A Precisely Correct Description

To suggest that a food truck collision on Oxford Road 8, north-east of Woodstock, Ontario on Tuesday, October 8, 2013 was “a single vehicle rollover”, is a bit of a stretch, based on the photo provided in the Woodstock Sentinel-Review newspaper yesterday. The driver of the truck reportedly sustained minor injuries and this would appear to be a rather non-event. However, the photo of the vehicle at its rest position, upside down in the middle of the highway, showed clear evidence of a major, narrow, frontal impact that also progressed rearward along the left side of the vehicle and into the left-rear wheel.



Photo from Woodstock Sentinel-Review newspaper article showing vehicle upside down at its final rest position.

A quick review of the roadway via Google Maps indicates that the area of impact might have been near a bridge that contained both guardrails and a post-and-cable barrier. So where did this narrow frontal impact come from? Did the vehicle penetrate through the installed barriers or did it strike the rail or abutment of the bridge? Otherwise, the only other explanation would have to be that it struck something on the road – which reportedly did not occur. But clearly, this was not just a “single vehicle rollover”.

October 8, 2013

Annual Fall Increase of Collisions With Farm Harvest Vehicles

It is as predictable as the falling leaves, but every fall season there is an increase in the number of impacts with farm harvest vehicles. Many of these vehicles are over-sized and slow-moving making them a hindrance to the faster-moving traffic on our rural highways. These farm vehicles are also often much taller than regular traffic making it difficult to see beyond them to determine whether it is safe to pass.

A temptation occurs when a farm vehicle takes up only a portion of the travel lane giving the passing driver the opportunity to perform a passing motion even though the line of sight ahead might be limited. The belief develops that, the roadway appears to be clear and therefore it should be safe to pass.



Waiting until the roadway markings indicate that it safe to pass an over-size farm vehicle is a good safety practice.

What is not understood is that the centre-line markings are not only indicating whether there is a sufficient visibility distance ahead to make the passing motion. Instead, those centre-line markings may be indicating it is not safe to pass because there is another danger present such as an upcoming intersection. A driver on the intersecting road who sees the approaching farm vehicle pulls into the intersection in the belief that the slow-moving farm vehicle will take a long time to reach the intersection. Instead, the vehicle passing the farm vehicle enters the field of view after the driver on the intersecting road already commits himself to enter and a major collision becomes highly probable.

In other instances, some farm vehicles are simply too wide to be travelling on rural road alone and must be escorted. Unfortunately the cost and bother of obtaining an escort vehicle is too much for some farmers and they attempt to travel the roads unescorted with the belief that the chance of encountering a problem is remote. Take for instance, the situation below where a very wide combine is being driven toward a narrow, rural bridge.



View of a very wide combine approaching a narrow, rural bridge.

The slow speed of the combine means that it will take a long time to pass the confines of the narrow bridge. Given the speed of many vehicles on rural highways it is not unreasonable to expect that a vehicle travelling at high speed could enter into the

combine driver's field of view after that combine driver has already committed himself to make the crossing over the bridge.



View of approaching combine which is too wide to pass the bridge without interfering with opposing traffic.

Note below how the combine takes up the full width of the bridge.



View of combine completely blocking the access to the narrow rural bridge.

In many instances the concrete bridge abutments on these narrow, rural bridges are not protected by guardrails or other barriers. Thus, in an attempt to avoid the combine, a fast-moving vehicle driver may steer into the non-yielding bridge abutment. Whether the impact is to the combine or into the concrete abutment the result can be fatal. Even if the fast-moving driver is able to steer off the road surface his vehicle may rollover into the creek or river at the bridge and the possibility of drowning also becomes real.

So it is important, particularly at this fall season, to consider that unusually wide and slow-moving farm vehicles may be traversing our rural highways and lack of attention to this fact can prove fatal.

October 7, 2013

Likely Fatal Tractor-Trailer Collision on Veterans Memorial Parkway and Bradley Ave

Witnesses report a transport truck is on fire at approximately 1500 hours at the intersection of Veterans Memorial Parkway and Bradley Avenue. More details shortly.

UPDATE: OCTOBER 7, 2013; 1625 HOURS

Upon hearing of this incident we drove by the site. It is apparent that a tractor-trailer is stopped on the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Veterans Memorial Parkway (VMP) and Bradley Avenue, as shown in this screen capture from our video as we travelled northbound on the VMP towards the intersection.



View, looking northeast on the northbound approach to the intersection of Veterans Memorial Pkwy (VMP) and Bradley Avenue. The burned out front end of a transport truck can be seen on the west roadside at the southwest quadrant of the intersection.

The fire appears to have been prominent at the front end of the vehicle. Below is another view of the truck as we progressed closer to the intersection.



Another view of the burned out TT on the west roadside of the VMP.

The views that are available cannot provide an indication whether the truck fire was caused following a collision in the intersection. However we noted a trail of fluid and/or debris leading from the intersection toward the truck's rest position and such a trail would often occur if there had been a collision. In that case it would likely involve a westbound vehicle on Bradley Avenue and the southbound truck.



View showing a white trail of absorbent placed over top of some kind of trail of possible fluid suggesting there might have been an impact in the intersection before the fire began.

Below is another view of the site looking west from the east side of Bradley Avenue.



View of site looking west from the east side of the Bradley Avenue looking toward the VMP.



View looking west from the east side of Bradley Avenue toward the rest position of the tractor trailer at the left side of the view.

A witness suggested there was most likely a fatality in the cab of the truck however that may not be so. It is possible that this incident is simply a vehicle fire and the driver was able to escape the cab before it was consumed. Although, the presence of the trail of fluid/debris along the path of the truck is suspiciously suggestive of a collision at the intersection. Given the short time since its occurrence we expect further official word shortly as to the what occurred.

UPDATE: OCTOBER 7, 2013; 1820 HOURS

The London Free Press is now reporting that indeed this was a collision of the truck with another vehicle but the truck driver escaped with no injuries and the female driver of the other car sustained only minor injuries.

This is one of those events that simply gets passed on, without comment or concern, as a non-event. However this reaction is totally wrong.

The fact that the female driver of the car sustained only minor injuries indicates that the severity of the impact was not that large. So why was there a fire on the truck? Imagine that this truck was hauling some hazardous materials, like lethal chemicals or explosive materials. Would we be happy to see a fire commence on such a vehicle from just a minor collision? Obviously not. Yet, just by pure luck, because no one sustained serious injuries or the material on the truck was apparently not hazardous, everyone walks away without another thought. Bad logic. This is what happens when there is a serious collision involving multiple fatalities that occurs sometime in the future because there was some vehicle defect that started a fire and we did not do our homework when we should have.

SIU Reportedly Involved In Investigation of London Police Cruiser Impact on Adelaide & Oxford Streets

The London Free Press is reporting that the Ontario Special Investigations Unit is now involved in an investigation of the Sunday morning collision of a London Police cruiser and another vehicle that resulted in two pedestrians being struck and injured. We found it unusual that the injuries suffered by the pedestrians were being reported as “minor” yet, they were transported to hospital and the windshield damage on the Toyota looked suspiciously similar to impact damage with a pedestrian. Now that the SIU is involved it

heightens our suspicions about the original reports. It now being reported that one of the pedestrians, a 23-year-old female, still remains in hospital. This information does not sound like she sustained “minor” injuries.

Of course, the impetuous for claiming that only minor injuries occurred is to prevent the SIU from becoming involved. If injuries are of a lesser nature then London City Police can claim that they have the mandate to investigate the collision internally and not call in the SIU. This is one of several problems inherent in the present system of police oversight.

October 6, 2013

London City Police Cruiser Collision at Adelaide & Oxford Streets in London , Ontario – Reported Minor Injuries Appear Unusual

Reports that only minor injuries resulted in this morning’s (Sunday, October 6th) collision of a police cruiser with another vehicle is surprising considering the windshield damage visible on the black Toyota passenger car that collided with the cruiser.

This is so because that Toyota reportedly struck two pedestrians after the initial collision with the cruiser. There are two areas of damage visible on that windshield that might suggest that they were related to the pedestrian impacts. When a pedestrian impact is so high that the windshield is involved it typically indicates a higher speed impact and therefore a collision that is more severe. Granted some of this windshield damage can also be caused when a right front air bag is deployed but the single photo shown in the CTV News article does not provide a good enough view to determine if that air bag deployed.

CTV News is reporting that the police officer is in hospital with undisclosed injuries. This is also somewhat unusual as the southbound cruiser appears to have relatively light damage to its front end and therefore the officer should have been fairly well protected from the impact.

From our observations, the number of collisions that occur when police are responding with their lights and sirens activated, or sometimes when no such devices are activated, is too high. But it is also not surprising since we often see cruisers travelling through the

City of London at very high speeds. Yet there is no independent examination whether these speeds and collisions pose an unreasonable risk.

October 4, 2013

OPP Cruiser Rollover – Finally A Reasonable Explanation – Perhaps

The London Free Press (LFP) has reported that OPP Constable Thomas Vanboven has been charged with Careless Driving with respect to the September 28th, 2013, rollover of his cruiser on Courtright Line. Initially the explanation of how this occurred was vague at best. However the LFP has now added a more detailed explanation:

“Police say Const. Thomas Vanboven was responding to an urgent call around 9 p.m. when he took evasive action to avoid a farm vehicle pulling a wagon without rear trailer lights on Courtright Line.”

Without a reasonable explanation we had examined the physical evidence and came to the belief that the Constable had lost directional control of his cruiser primarily due to the road surface conditions. A detailed discussion of that analysis can be found in the Articles page of this website. However this new information provides a new twist to those conclusions.

We take exception however to the comments that continually accompany the news media reports, providing rude and unjustified conclusions about what happened. Although it was not helpful that the original media reports were vague and that persons were justifiably critical of them, we find it unfair that the Constable has been found guilty in the public domain without an opportunity to explain his circumstance.

The explanation is still unsatisfactory. This was a nighttime collision. The officer reportedly came upon *“...a farm vehicle pulling a wagon without rear trailer lights on...”*. If that was so, why would the officer be charged with Careless Driving? Surely this should have been a case of charging the driver who did not have proper illumination on his trailer. Why is this mystery farm-vehicle driver not identified? If the officer was in his legal right to attend to an urgent call and he encountered the very poor road surface conditions that he did then there could be a justifiable reason why he lost control. Not because of his carelessness but because the road surface conditions changed

dramatically and he may not have been aware that this would occur. Did the investigating police understand the importance of the road surface conditions in this incident? Certainly the road surface conditions are not mentioned in any news reports.

So what is the real story? Throughout all of this police, or the news media, or both, are creating a circus of speculation and most of it is negative. They seem to fail to understand that the resolution of charges against this officer is far less important than the fact they are creating a public relations nightmare to the policing community by not clarifying what actually took place.

October 3, 2013

Vague Official Explanation For OPP Police Cruiser Rollover In Lambton County – A Review of the Physical Evidence

On Saturday, September 28, 2013 it was reported that an OPP police cruiser was involved in a rollover collision on Courtright Line in Lambton County Ontario. It might have been a non-event except for the fact that the official explanation of how it occurred left readers skeptical.

For example the article in the Sarnia Observer newspaper gave the explanation this way:

“Around 9 p.m. the officers were responding to an impaired driver call in Oil City, but had to use an “evasive maneuver” to avoid a traffic situation they encountered en route on Courtright Line, near Gypsy Flats road, police said.”

Rightly so, readers of this strange wording wrote:

“Evasive maneuver” to avoid a traffic situation. Could you be anymore vague? Sounds like their evasive maneuver wasn’t executed very well.”

Although we do not agree with the negative tone of some of comments we agree that the explanation appeared to be mis-leading due its vague wording. We therefore travelled to the site and reviewed the physical evidence. We also conducted some testing with an iPhone-based accelerometer and multiple video cameras. We then prepared a detailed

article of our findings that you are welcome to review on the Articles page of this website.

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