

Murder on the Highways

Ken Spraetz

THREE years ago I was a reckless and wild driver who might have harmed some innocent little child forever. In 1953 a close friend of mine who has been a state trooper for five years came to see me one bright, sunny afternoon. I thought he wanted to visit, but he did not. He had something on his mind—something terribly important. Being blunt and coming right to the point as most troopers do, he told me that I was a maniac behind the wheel, a criminal in disguise, and that I would not remain his friend unless I corrected my driving manners. He went on to say that there was only one cure for anyone who drove as I did, and he showed me what that cure was. He asked me to accompany him on a few investigations which he had to make, and to be a witness to “murder on the highways.”

That afternoon we had only one investigation. It was enough to cure me for a lifetime. It actually was what he called “murder” on the highway. A man, his wife, and their four children were driving in a car that had a blowout. The man pulled as far to the right as he could and, with the help of his sixteen-year-old son, began to change the tire. An automobile going nearly ninety miles per hour came zooming along that road, hit the man and his son, and carried them one hundred fifty feet across the center esplanade.

I saw those two corpses. The young boy's intestines had been torn from his body, and the man's head was crushed. The driver of the car which had hit them had spent the evening in a bar—and wound up with a prison sentence. What happened to the widow and her three other children? They also received a sentence from which there was no parole. They lost that which cannot be replaced, a husband and father and a son and brother. Death is inevitable, but to see people killed as a result of one's carelessness is no joke. Driving a car is a job which requires many things; most of all it requires a clear mind and enough intelligence to drive correctly. That fine sunny afternoon I learned a lesson, one that I shall never have to learn again. I was a witness to murder on the highways.

Humility

Anne Laughlin

IN August of 1955 my parents and I took a trip to Maine, where we visited a distant but very dear cousin of my mother. I cannot say that anything I did or saw during my stay near Bar Harbor effected any great change in my life. However, I derived one bit of wisdom from my experience there.

I regarded my family's idea of a Maine vacation with something less than enthusiasm; I thought that I was a little too grown-up for

a family vacation, and my parents knew that I was quite a bit too young to be left alone. The plane ride, the people I met, my cousin's home, and Maine in general are relatively unimportant in this venture into enlightenment. I shall begin my story on a rocky, irregular Maine beach.

The family had gone to Cascades Park, and I had miraculously been allowed to remain alone at home. When the car disappeared down the dusty gravel road, I ran the quarter of a mile to the shore. It was a beautiful afternoon, and the tide was in. Even now I can remember the feeling I had as I pushed off in the little rowboat. I felt very daring and extremely excited for the first time since I had been informed that I was to accompany my parents on their vacation. I had put on blue jeans, a sweatshirt, and tennis shoes; fishing equipment and lunch were in the bottom of the boat. The rowing began.

The small whitecaps churned around the tiny boat—not angrily, but definitely unconcerned with my welfare. When I put my sore, blistered hand into the cold water, the rhythmic swirls paid it no attention. They swam over and around it to their goal. I had seen the ocean before, but with unromantic eyes. Now, suddenly, I wanted to know it. I looked to see where the foamy waves were going. When I saw them lift from the water, float for a short distance, and then sink once more to the ocean, I turned my attention to the shoreline. On my right was the mainland, rugged and strangely beautiful, but on my left I saw an island. If the distance between the home shore and the island had not been so great, I would have gone to it; but I was afraid to try. Knowing approximately how far I could swim, I knew that the chance would be too great. Also, darkness was approaching rapidly, and my lightheartedness was turning to weariness and uneasiness.

The azure sky grayed and deepened. The solitary thatched isle changed from cool green to forbidding blue-black, and the once pale water around me became an inky pool. The chill of the ocean came from its depths as the sun lay down behind a giant pine for the long night. I put off my return to my cousin's pier for a few minutes, as I watched the transformation of the marine world. One thought kept running through my mind. Here was something that was truly great. Never in my life, either before or since that time, have I ever felt so utterly insignificant. Perhaps it sounds ridiculous to compare oneself with the ocean; but in my case it took this comparison to illustrate the truth that no individual person is extremely important in comparison to nature. No man, however powerful he becomes, is unsurpassed. Everything has its better, finally ending with the strength of God, as was illustrated to me by His creation, the ocean.