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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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TRANSPORTATION SCIENCES CENTER ACCIDENT RESEARCH GROUP

Calspan SRL Corporation Buffalo, New York 14225

CALSPAN REMOTE AIR BAG FATALITY INVESTIGATION

CALSPAN CASE NO. 94-32

VEHICLE - 1993 FORD CROWN VICTORIA LX

LOCATION - STATE OF

CRASH DATE - 1994

Contract No. DTNH22-94-D-07058

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Washington, D.C. 20590

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The crash investigation process is an inexact science which requires that physical evidence such as skid marks, vehicular damage measurements, and occupant contact points are coupled with the investigator's expert knowledge and experience of vehicle dynamics and occupant kinematics in order to determine the pre-crash, crash, and post-crash movements of involved vehicles and occupants.

Because each crash is a unique sequence of events, generalized conclusions cannot be made concerning the crashworthiness performance of the involved vehicle(s) or their safety systems.

TECHNICAL REPORT STANDARD TITLE PAGE

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Washington, D.C. 20590		14. Sponsoring Agenc	ry Code
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16. Abstract A single vehicle crash involving a 1993 of a two lane undivided unlighted road The vehicle traveled down an embankr roof. The air bag system did not deplo	way during night time hours. The weat nent and rolled over at least six quarter	her condition at the time of	of the crash was raining
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The driver was found by rescue suspen year female, was not injured in the cra	nded by his manual lap and shoulder belish.	lt. The unrestrained right i	front occupant, a twenty
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CALSPAN REMOTE AIR BAG FATALITY INVESTIGATION

CALSPAN CASE NO. 94-32

VEHICLE - 1993 FORD CROWN VICTORIA LX

LOCATION - STATE OF GEORGIA

CRASH DATE - 1994

This investigation was initiated in response to a notification received from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) that the driver of a 1993 Ford Crown Victoria LX was fatally injured when his vehicle left the roadway, traveled down an embankment, and overturned, coming to rest on its roof. The focus of the investigation was to determine if the air bag system should have deployed the dual air bags and if the deployment would have mitigated the severity of the driver's injuries. The sources of information in this case investigation were limited to police reported data and an autopsy report.

SUMMARY

A single vehicle run-off roadway crash occurred in 1994 during the nighttime hours on an unlighted rural two lane, left curve, undivided roadway in 1994 during the nighttime hours on an unlighted rural two lane, left curve, undivided roadway in 1995. A 1993 Ford Crown Victoria LX (Vehicle #1), equipped with a dual air bag Supplemental Restraint System (SRS), was traveling south in the rain on a recently resurfaced asphalt state roadway. The driver failed to negotiate a left curve and departed the right side of the roadway. Vehicle #1 traveled down an embankment and rolled over coming to the final rest position (FRP) on its roof.

The 47 year old male driver was reportedly wearing the manual 3-point lap and shoulder belt restraint system at the time of the crash. He sustained severe head injuries and was pronounced dead at the scene. He was subsequently transported to a local medical facility where an autopsy was preformed.

A twenty year old female relative sitting in the right front passenger seat was unrestrained at the time of the crash and was not injured. She indicated to the police that the vehicle was traveling at an estimated travel speed of 48 kph (30 mph) prior to the crash.

The police report indicated the roadway had a "defective shoulder" which may have been the result of resurfacing activity. It was likely Vehicle #1 drifted off the right roadway edge onto the shoulder surface which may have been at a lower height. This may have been a contributing factor to the roadway departure.

The vehicle traveled down the embankment and according to the police accident report rolled over in a clockwise direction. The exact number of quarter turns was not reported by the police, however, the vehicle came to rest on its roof. The injuries to the driver's head, particularly the comminution of the entire calvaria with many bony fragments missing above the level of the eyebrows suggested that the driver's upper torso may have been partially ejected during the rollover sequence and that his head may have contacted the ground. The police reported that the driver was suspended by restraint belt at the FRP.

Given the police reported a clockwise rollover configuration, Vehicle #1 would have had to complete at least three quarter rolls in order for the driver to have contacted the ground with his head. The vehicle would have executed at least six quarter turns in order to have come to rest on its roof.

Rescue personnel responded to the crash in approximately 15 minutes. He was pronounced dead at the scene. He was taken to a local medical center where it arrived approximately 1.2 hours after the crash. The body was found to be a suitable candidate for tissue donation and as per the protocol for tissue donation. A complete autopsy was performed. The driver suffered multiple injuries of the head and face which included: bilateral periorbital bruising and abrasions on both sides of face in the area of the cheeks; comminuted fractures of the maxillae and nasal bones; comminuted fracture of the entire calvarium; comminuted fracture of the entire anterior cranial fossa; and the cranial cavity was exposed with decomposing brain matter extruding from it.

CRASH DATA	
Location:	Two lane undivided state route
State:	State of Sta
Area/Type:	Rural
Investigating Police Agency:	State Police
Accident type:	Single vehicle run-off road and rolled over
Air Bag Vehicle Driver Injury Severity:	Fatal (AIS-6, maximum)
AMBIENCE	
Viewing Conditions:	Nighttime, unlighted
Weather:	Rain
Road Surface:	Wet
HIGHWAY	
Type:	State route

Number of Lanes:	2
Width:	6.4 m (21.0 ft)
Surface:	Asphalt/Recently resurfaced
Median:	None
Edge:	Defective shoulders Down sloped embankment
Vertical Alignment:	Grade, direction unknown (police report did not list grade characteristic as being positive or negative)
Horizontal Alignment:	Curve to left
TRAFFIC CONTROLS	
Signals:	Unknown
Signs:	Unknown
Markings:	No marking for defective shoulder condition No passing zone
Speed Limit:	72 kph (45 mph)
VEHICLE #1 DESCRIPTION	
Description:	1993 Ford Crown Victoria LX, 4 door sedan
V.I.N.:	2FALP74W2PX (Serial # omitted)
Color:	White
Engine:	4.6L EFI V8
Active Restraints:	3-point lap and shoulder belt systems, inertia activated locking retractors with continuous loop belt webbing through the latch plate, center front lap belt, 3-point lap and shoulder belts in the outboard rear seat positions, and center rear lap belt.
Passive Restraints:	Driver and passenger side air bag Supplemental Restraint System (SRS) which did not deploy as a result of the crash.
Defects:	Unknown
Tow Status:	Towed due to damage

VEHICLE DATA

The vehicle was a 1993 Ford Crown Victoria LX which was owned by a local private auto rental company. The vehicle identification number (VIN) was 2FALP74W2PX (serial # omitted). The vehicle was equipped with a 3-point lap and shoulder belt system in the front and rear outboard seated positions and lap belts in both front and rear center seats. The vehicle was was also equipped with a driver and passenger side air bag SRS.

The air bag system reportedly did not deploy during the crash. It was assumed that given the lateral rollover sequence there was insufficient longitudinal deceleration force generated during the crash required to actuated the SRS system. The nondeployment of the air bags appeared to be consistent with the anticipated function of the SRS during a rollover event.

DRIVER #1 DATA

The driver of the vehicle was a 47 year old male who was approximately 173 cm (5'8") tall and had an estimated weight of 72 kg (160 lbs). He was a well developed and well nourished appearing male with no evidence of any significant natural disease processes. His occupation was listed as an entrepreneur.

CRASH DATA

Pre-crash

The driver of the vehicle was a 47 year old male who was wearing the manual 3-point lap and shoulder belt restraint. The 20 year old female (relative) seated in the right front passenger was not wearing the belt restraint. They were traveling in a southbound direction on a two-lane, two-way undivided, unlighted roadway. It was nighttime and raining. They were reportedly traveling at approximately 48 kph (30 mph) which was slower than the posted speed limit of 72 kph (45 mph). The terrain was hilly and the road character of the crash scene was reported as "curve on grade". The roadway had recently been resurfaced and the shoulder was reported as defective. There were no warnings posted to indicate that the shoulder was defective. At the crash scene the roadway curved to the left with a down sloped embankment adjacent to the right side shoulder.

Crash

The vehicle departed the travel lane onto the right shoulder at the point where the roadway curved to the left. It traveled down the embankment and rolled over in a clockwise direction at least six quarter turns. It came to the final rest position on it's roof. The SRS did not deploy during the crash.

During the rollover sequence, the driver's upper torso may have been partially ejected through the left front side window with his head contacting the ground surface. This conclusion was drawn from the massive injury pattern described in the autopsy report to the driver's head.

The possibility of roof contact being a contributor to the severity of the driver's head injuries from roof collapse during the crash sequence was considered. However, the driver did not sustain any related vertebral neck injury (e.g., compression fracture of the cervical vertebrae, etc.) which would have undoubtedly occurred had the roof exerted a vertical load on the driver's head. His reported injuries were confined to lesions of the head and face.

Post crash

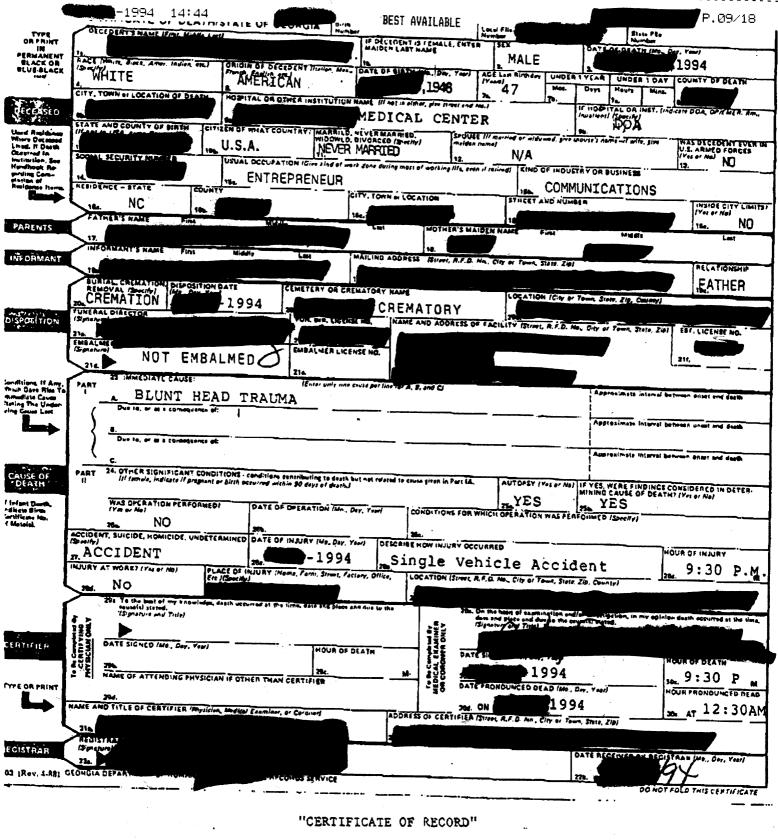
The driver died at the crash scene as a result of his injuries. He was taken to a local medical center where he was found to be a suitable candidate for tissue donation. The nature of his injuries indicate that he was probably partially ejected from the vehicle. The female passenger was not seriously injured. The vehicle was removed from the scene by a wrecking company.

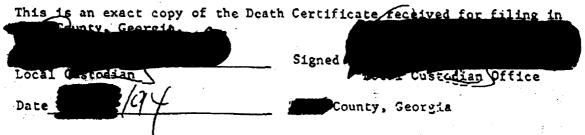
DRIVER#1 INJURY DATA

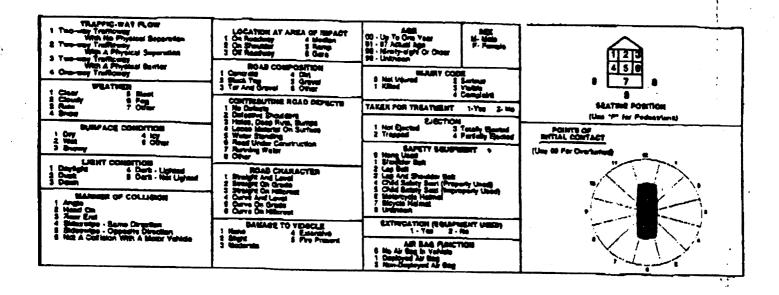
DRIVER INJURIES	INJURY SEVERITY (AIS-90)	INJURY SOURCE
Head crush: The entire calvarium is comminuted and many of the bony fragments above the level of the eyebrows are missing. The entire anterior cranial fossa is comminuted. The cranial cavity is exposed and decomposing brain matter extrudes from it.	113000.60	Possible ground contact
Bilateral periorbital bruising and abrasions on both sides of face in the area of the cheeks: abrasion right cheek abrasion left cheek periorbital bruise right periorbital bruise left	290202.11 290202.12 297402.11 297402.12	Possible ground contact
Maxillae bones comminuted	250800.23	Possible ground contact
Nasal bones comminuted	251004.24	Possible ground contact

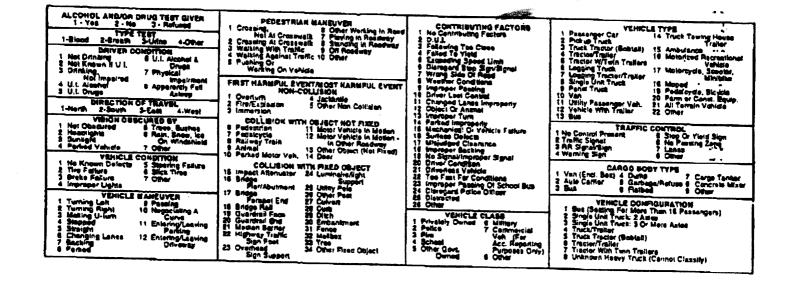
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Forensic, Anatomic, & Clinical
Pathology



INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT TIME OF AUTOPSY:

This 47-year-old white male was the driver of a motor vehicle that crashed. He sustained severe head injuries and was dead at the scene. Further information regarding this incident can be found in the investigative report filed in the County Sheriff's Office.

He was found to be a suitable candidate for tissue donation by the staff of company of Georgia. As per the protocol for tissue donation, a complete autopsy is performed afterward. This examination takes place in the County Morgue on Wednesday, 1994, commencing at 8:00 p.m.

EXTERNAL EXAMINATION OF THE BODY:

The body is brought to the morgue in a white plastic disaster bag and is otherwise unclad.

No jewelry or medical devices are seen on the remains.

ALL INJURIES WILL BE DESCRIBED IN A SEPARATE SECTION.

This is the body of a white male that measures approximately 68" in length and has an estimated weight of 160 pounds. Rigor mortis is generalized and well developed. Livor mortis is dorsal and fixed. No other external decompositional changes are seen. The overall appearance is that of a well-developed and well-nourished-appearing adult white male consistent with the given age of 47 years.

The head hair is dark brown, caked with blood, curly, and averages about 3" in length. The irides are brown. Assessment of conjunctival petechiae is not possible. There is no scleral icterus. Blood drains from both external auditory canals and the nares. The decedent has natural teeth in average repair. No foreign bodies are found in the mouth or the pharynx. The face demonstrates a dark brown mustache.

The neck is symmetrical and shows no external evidence of injury.

Examination of the chest, abdomen, and back reveals no identifying features.



Extending between the tops of the shoulders and the backs of the wrists are recently-sutured surgical incisions, each measuring approximately 25" in length. The fingernails are closely trimmed and intact. No evidence of parenteral drug abuse of the upper extremities.

Extending between the lateral aspect of the hips to the tops of the feet are recently-sutured surgical incisions, each measuring approximately 36" in length.

The external genitalia are those of a circumcised adult male with descended testes.

The skin of the body from the neck to the feet has been painted with a yellow iodine solution.

DESCRIPTION OF INJURIES:

Head:

There is marked bilateral periorbital bruising and abrasions on both sides of the face in the area of the cheeks. The maxillae and nasal bones are comminuted. The entire calvarium is comminuted and many of the bony fragments above the level of the eyebrows are missing. In addition, the cranial cavity is exposed and decomposing brain matter extrudes from it.

The remaining brain tissue weighs 1090 grams. There is pulpefaction of the frontal lobes. No evidence of subdural, epidural, or subarachnoid hemorrhage is seen. Coronal sectioning through the cerebral hemispheres reveals an intact cortical gray ribbon, and no evidence of contusion, intraparenchymal hemorrhage, infarct, or neoplasm. The substantia nigra is normally pigmented and no brain stem hemorrhages are seen. The cerebellar sections are nonrevealing. The dura is reflected from the base of the skull, and the entire anterior cranial fossa is comminuted.

REMAINING INTERNAL EXAMINATION OF THE BODY:

Neck:

The skin of the neck is dissected up to the angle of the jaw, and there are no signs of soft-tissue trauma to the lateral neck compartments or the major airways. The hyoid bone, thyroid cartilage, and cervical spine are intact. No obstructing foreign



bodies are found in the trachea. The thyroid gland shows no gross pathology.

Chest and Abdomen:

The skin of the chest and abdomen is opened with a Y-shaped incision which shows no soft-tissue trauma to this area. The bony thorax is intact. Physiologic amounts of clear yellow fluid are found in the thoracic and abdominal cavities and the pericardial sac.

The thoracic and abdominal organs are examined in situ and then removed by the Virchow technique. Individual organ examinations are as follows:

Heart:

The 400 gram morphologically unremarkable heart shows a few focal areas of minor atherosclerotic narrowing of the coronary arteries. No thrombi are found in these vessels. The myocardium exhibits no signs of acute or healed infarct. There are no valvular abnormalities. The major vessels arise from the minimally atherosclerotic aorta in their expected locations.

Lungs:

The right lung weighs 500 grams and the left lung 400 grams. Both exhibit slight dependent congestion. No endobronchial lesions, emboli, or consolidation is seen.

Urinary Tract:

The kidneys weigh 160 grams each. The capsules strip readily. The cortices and medullae are distinct. The parenchyma is pale. The collecting systems are patent from the calyces to the dilated urinary bladder which contains about 100 cc of cloudy, dark yellow urine. The urinary bladder is free of neoplasia. Sectioning of the prostate gland reveals no gross abnormalities.

Gastrointestinal Tract:

The stomach and esophagus are free of mucosal ulcerations and empty. The remainder of the intestines are opened from the duodenum to the rectum and show no signs of ulceration, neoplasm, or infarct. No gross abnormalities of the vermiform appendix are seen.



The 1500-gram liver has an intact capsule and slightly softened parenchyma. The gallbladder contains a few cc of bile. The extrahepatic biliary tree is patent.

Spleen:

The 120-gram spleen has an intact capsule and "dry" parenchyma.

Pancreas and Adrenal Glands:

No abnormalities are found.

Lymphatic System:

There is no significant lymphadenopathy at any point.

Axial Skeleton:

No traumatic or arthritic deformities are noted. A section of vertebral bone is grossly normal.

MICROSCOPIC DESCRIPTION:

Heart: A sections of the coronary artery shows minimal atherosclerotic change. The myocardium is free of inflammation, fibrosis, and infarct changes.

Lungs: No inflammation or neoplasm is seen.

Kidneys: No significant glomerular, tubular, vascular, or interstitial pathology is found.

Liver: The hepatic architecture is preserved. No hepatitis is seen.

Pancreas: There is severe postmortem autolysis but, as best can be determined, no microscopic abnormalities are observed.

Adrenal Glands: No signs of cortical lipid depletion or medullary hemorrhage are found.

Thyroid Gland: The follicular epithelium is active. No inflammation is seen.

Spleen: The sinusoids are relatively devoid of blood. The white pulp is benign.



Lymph Node: Marked fatty replacement is seen. Primary and secondary neoplasm are not found. There are active germinal centers.

Vertebral Bone: The bone marrow is approximately 50 percent cellular. Orderly maturation of the erythroid and myeloid series is seen.

Brain: The meninges are clear. Sections of the generic cortex and cerebellum show no significant histopathology.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

- 1. Blunt head trauma resulting in:
 - A. Multiple facial abrasions.
 - B. Bilateral periorbital bruising.
 - C. Multiple facial fractures.
 - D. Extensive comminution of the calvarium.
 - E. Pulpefaction of the frontal lobes of the brain.
 - F. Comminution of the anterior cranial fossa.
- 2. No evidence of any significant natural disease processes.
- 3. Status post harvesting of selected tissues and the eyes.

OTHER PROCEDURES:

- 1. Blood and urine for toxicology.
- 2. Documentary photographs are taken.
- 3. Sectioned organs are forwarded with the remains.

CAUSE OF DEATH:

Blunt head trauma.

MANNER OF DEATH:

Accident.



COMMENT:

This 47-year-old white male was involved in a single vehicle car accident. He sustained massive head injuries.

The autopsy revealed the above-described head trauma. No evidence of neoplasia or infections infectious disease processes was found.

GTG/bjb

Dictated: Transcribed: Finalized:

