



• *Princeton, Mass. (AP)*—The major attraction among the 125 old cars up for auction here is the 1934 Ford in which bank robbers Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow died.

The 39-year-old sedan has 160 bullet holes, blood-stained seats and a shattered windshield. Owner Ted Toddy of Atlanta says he wants at least \$150,000 for it.

The notorious couple were ambushed in the car in Arcadia, La.

It suddenly hit me. Necrophilia, the love of violence and Automobile Worship all rolled in one are a dynamite combination. There's hardly a minute goes by on prime time television when somebody isn't getting shot, just has been shot, or will be shot momentarily. These scenes of gunfire are interspersed with endless shots of cars alternately crashing into each other, rolling over cliffs, or bursting into flames . . . and often all three simultaneously.

There are endless variations of the two themes. Sometimes a guy is shot as his car bursts into flames. Occasionally he will leap from the car as it rolls over a cliff and then get shot—this latter is often accompanied by a helicopter. And all while millions sit glued to their sets in avid enjoyment. Good clean family fun.

It is my opinion that CBS, a network which at times has moments of sanity, is the all-time leader in the nightly car-crashing competition. ABC specializes in bodies, mostly male, sometimes female and occasionally both, being hurled, flung, or simply blown through windows. NBC, on the other hand, has chosen the Occult, wherein often a ghostly murderer returns to the scene to do in Barbara Perkins. NBC has a thing on knives wielded by ghosts.

Given such an atmosphere, it is natural that a new art form should emerge, and I am, in this broadside, being the first, as far as I know, to define and put into public print this new phenomenon. It is no accident, in my opinion, that the sight of automobiles being bashed to pieces has become a ma-

jor element in American showbiz. I suspect it is because to many, the death of an automobile is more exciting these days than the death of a human being, which is far more commonplace. After all, a human being is just another man and we've got billions of those, but a Cadillac Eldorado convertible plowing into a Mark IV Lincoln and exploding is something else again.

The connection in our country between lethal violence and the automobile is total and complete. Since we obviously love violence in our day, it then follows that we must honor machines that have been involved in it. This will open a whole new field for collectors and museum curators. We have been edging toward it for some time now. The Museum Of Modern Art occasionally shows a monstrous Harley-Davidson or a plastic machine gun with a big price tag. I have felt for a long time that what the rubes pay to see, usually with guilty expressions on their faces, usually winds up being accepted and in fact applauded by the so-called Avant-Garde writers and critics, who then make it official. For a long time now, yahoos have been lining up to see "death cars" such as the Cadillac that Hank Williams died in and the bulletproof Lincoln owned by Al Capone. Can Truman Capote be far behind? He will simmer his way onto a late-night talk show and pretend that he has made another cosmic discovery.

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of Gruesome-nalia  
”

"You have no idea, Johnny, how exciting it is to look at the actual car that John Kennedy died in!"

It will then be in, and official. After that we can expect to see the asthmatic Olds that went into the drink at Chappaquidick on display with an added attraction of the Land Cruiser that Joseph Kennedy, Robert's son, rolled at Nantucket.

I can see a whole museum filled with Gruesome-nalia (I just made that one up) of this sort. Can you imagine the actual barber chair that Tony Anastasia got his in, blood-bespattered and bullet-pocked, with even a fleck of Burma Shave still on the headrest?

And then, of course, there will be the problem of counterfeits, which probably already exists. Someone will have to come up with an actual Hudson used by Dillinger and Baby Face Nelson in their famed getaway from the Clinton, Iowa job. The Mercedes staff car that Rommel was riding in when he

was strafed to death in Normandy would make a great exhibit. How about the one in which Patton was killed, along with signed photographs of George C. Scott and scenes from his next picture? The art of Automotive Macabre is ready to be sprung on the waiting world. It is a natural.

Then, of course, there are the Showbiz spin-offs. The blue Lincoln Continental that Cannon, the detective, rides around in can be sent on a nationwide tour. Believe me, people will pay to see it, especially if it is accompanied by the LAPD Plymouth squad car driven by Marty Milner in "ADAM 12." Already the Aston Martin used by Sean Connery as James Bond in "THUNDERBALL" was a smash nationwide personal-appearance success.

Then, naturally, given the nature of things, the collectors will begin to refine and specialize. After the violence and death cars are all snapped up and the Showbiz exhibits have been bought and displayed, there will be the development of really subtle specialties such as Political Scandal vehicles. The Porsche owned and driven by John Dean III as he drove to his office at the White House every day during the Watergate era would make a hell of a show for the more politically-inclined yahoos. Maybe, for good measure, the actual briefcase that held the Howard Hunt papers which Dean transported in the Porsche could also be shown as an added attraction. Martha Mitchell's car, probably equipped with a private phone, could be a desirable item, not to mention *anything* ever driven, owned or even rented by Spiro T. Agnew.

Let's face it, we're all fascinated by notoriety, violent death and their byproducts. I can remember one time being taken as a kid by my Old Man to a side show at a county fair in Indiana where there was a car on display that had been owned by FDR. I don't know if it really was, but nobody questioned it. I guess everybody wanted to believe that it really and truly had been owned by the President. I've heard somewhere that the ancient Renault that had been owned by Manfred von Richtofen, the dreaded Red Baron, is still in existence somewhere in Eastern Europe. There are more than a few who would pay to see that baby. By the way, I hear rumors that Clark Gable's gullwing Mercedes 300 SL is still around, the very car he was driving the day he died of a heart attack. There could be dozens of others. Every figure who in some way touched the public consciousness owned at least one vehicle which would bring it all back to the paying crowds as they filed through the Museum of the Automotive Macabre. It would be a guaranteed attraction.

What an eerie museum that would make, row after row of bullet-pocked blood-splattered historic machines. Bonnie and Clyde right next to JFK; Dillinger next to George Patton. One day that museum may exist, and the people will come and stand quietly and in awe.