

# SEAT BELTS in a Model A?

by Marian Blaydes, Springville, California

**M**ANY purists might ask, "Why put something on the Model A that was not there in the beginning?" May I suggest that in the matter of seat belts, it is an excellent idea. My husband, Carson, and I are alive today, because he, at my encouraging, installed lap belts in our "A" just a week before our Great Adventure.

On May 6, 1992, we were very excited about starting what we hoped would be a 10,000 mile excursion in our 1928 Sport Coupe. Our plan was to leave our home in the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada range, travel on the "Loneliest Road in America," Highway 50, to Dodge City, Kansas, then start southward toward Pascagoula, Mississippi. It was there that Carson was to meet his Navy buddies for a reunion.

The "A" performed in an excellent manner, even carrying us safely, and in relative warmth through a snow storm on Colorado's Monarch Pass (11,312 feet in elevation). It was a new experience

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for me to ride in a car that had the windshield obscured with snow. The windshield wiper system on the Model A is for the driver only, as most everyone knows!

Our only problem, in so far as the mechanical performance of the car, was to experience a flat tire, the right rear. Somewhere along the

way we had picked up a sliver of metal, which punctured the tube in three places. We found one is never short of help when working on a vintage car while on the road. Immediately, a rancher who was returning home from moving cows from one pasture to another, offered his help in mounting the spare tire. Part of his conversation was, "I had one just like this, only it was a Fordor." Within minutes we were on our way again.

We took 10 days to reach Pascagoula. The reunion was wonderful, full of renewing old acquaintances and seeing the christening of the new LHD-3, the third ship in the United States Navy to wear the name USS Kearsarge, the ship Carson and his buddies were on in the 50's.

After leaving Pascagoula, we started what was to be a leisurely meander through the panhandle of Florida and up the east coast of our land, with our ultimate destination being Dallas and the MAFCA National Convention - we didn't get that far!

Just after lunch on that beautiful sunny day, we were traveling at our usual 45 m.p.h. and had just commented on the speed at which we observed most of the other cars traveling. Practically as soon as that observation had been made, the most horrendous explosive sound occurred. The next few moments in time are somewhat blurred in memory, but our speed had increased approximately 15 m.p.h.! We had been struck from the rear by one of those speeding modern cars. The impact burst and

shredded both rear tires, which was the explosive noise. The offending vehicle buried the front half of its length under our Model A past the rear axle. We were no longer on a horizontal plane. Our car had been launched like a rocket, more than slightly off kilter. We were flipping end-over-end through the air, and rolling from left to right while traveling approximately 350 feet after the impact. On one bounce the right front wheel was severed from the axle at the king pin. Before it reached its final resting place, the Sport Coupe skidded backward for about 50 feet in the sandy Florida soil. The car ultimately rested on the passenger side with the door folded back to the hood. Our projected tour of 10,000 miles was cut short to only 3,019 actual miles!

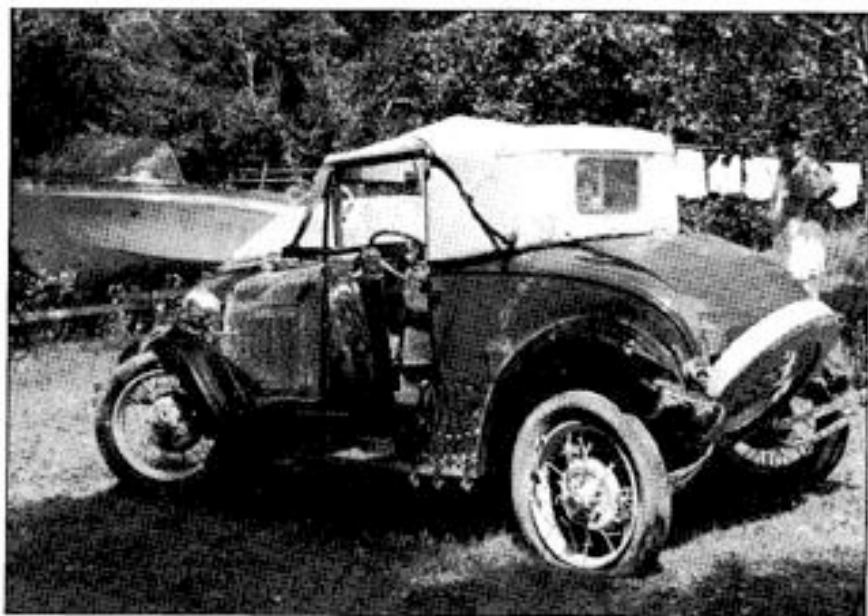
The point of this whole article is to laud the use of seat belts. If belts had not been installed before our trip, we, like the entire contents of the car, would have been thrown out. For that is exactly what happened to all the contents of the car including Thermos jug, purse, spare parts, maps, etc. There was nothing in the interior of the car but us!

We and the occupants of the other car were basically unhurt, for they too, had their seat belts secured.

After flying to our home in Springville, CA from Florida, and after resting and recuperating from our ordeal, we felt able to attend the 1992 MAFCA National Convention in Dallas, but made the journey in a modern car.

Our experience has not "turned us off" Model A's; in fact, already, much effort has been expended toward restoring a 1929 Town Sedan purchased just before the start of the fateful trip. Hopefully, with seat belts installed, we will be traveling to Tacoma in 1994 for the combined MAFCA-MARC Meet.

We thank God for His ever-vigilant care, Henry Ford for making such a wonderfully well-built car, and I especially thank my husband, Carson Blaydes for installing the seat belts. Without them, I am convinced this story would never have been written!



*The Blades' Sport Coupe after flipping end-over-end at 60 m.p.h.*