

NEWS

▼ DANGEROUS DRIVING

# Texting at the top of distractions when behind the wheel

If British Columbians were polled, I expect that we would put texting at the top of the list of dangerous driving activities.

I don't know if scientific studies have been done to compare the distraction of that particular activity with others such as eating, putting on make-up, programming an address into the navigational computer, or that activity my wife wrote a letter to the editor about



ACHIEVING JUSTICE

Paul Hergott

"road head."

Whatever the science, there is not one British Columbian who would disagree, with a straight face, that texting while driving is near the top of

the dangerous scale.

In fact, I bet that if any political party wanted to score extra points leading up to election day, they could do so by announcing severe penalties for texting while driving.

No one would stick up their hand and say, "Hold on, there. That's unfairly harsh," like what occurred to some extent with the .04 alcohol roadside penalties.

Good friends of ours were recently over for

dinner at our house. The husband, like me, is a recent convert from BlackBerry to the iPhone.

An operations manager, he has researched, experimented and worked with a number of very interesting applications, or apps as they're called in the smart phone world.

My buddy does a lot of driving. The latest app he shared with me is one that allows him to send and receive text messages using voice commands.

How brilliant is that! You take one of the most dangerous activities imaginable and make it safe with a simple app.

It's like cell phone use while driving. Recognizing how distracting it is to hold a cell phone up to your ear, our provincial government banned handheld cell phone use while driving in 2010.

By doing so, the provincial government endorsed having cell phone conversations while driv-

ing with the use of a hands free device, which of course is much safer.

Regular readers of this column will notice the sarcasm dripping down the page.

Thanks to a grant from the United States Department of Transportation, a scientific study into the distraction of texting, by hand as well as by using voice commands, has been recently completed by researchers at the Texas Transportation Institute.

I would be pleased to e-mail anyone who asks a link to the April, 2013, report.

The study, conducted in an actual driving environment, concludes that a driver's reaction time is doubled when distracted by reading or sending a text message.

The study demonstrates how texting drivers are less able to react to sudden roadway hazards, and finds that texting impairment is even greater than many experts believed.

The "actual driving environment" was a closed course, the driving complexity minimized by using a straight-line course that contained no hills, traffic or potential conflicts other than construction zone barrels.

"It is frightening," the researchers wrote, "to think of how much more poorly our participants may have performed if

the driving conditions were more consistent with routine driving."

The kicker—the study found no difference in driver distraction between manual texting and texting using voice commands.

Imagine that. Imagine the problem with texting being more about the brain being occupied and less about holding the device.

Ge, I wonder if that is another nail in the coffin of the obvious conclusion that you are just as distracted by a cell phone discussion whether or not your hand is held up to your ear.

Is it any wonder that the news reported early this year that the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles was unable to prove that the hand held cell phone ban saved any lives? Of course it hasn't.

All the ban did was cost British Columbians a lot of money to install hands-free devices.

If anything, it increased the dangerous behaviour of cell phone use while driving by endorsing the hands free method. I feel like a child—screaming and stomping my feet but nobody is listening.

*This column is intended to provide general information about injury claims. Paul Hergott is a lawyer at Hergott Law in West Kelowna.*

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## A ROSE BY ANOTHER NAME

Sunday, May 12, 2013, is Mothers' Day. On occasion, a bouquet of flowers from me on Mother's Day would evoke memories of my childhood in my mother. I was about three years old at the time. I had made a connection between showing love and the giving of floral arrangements. Whenever I could escape mother's watch, I would sneak into a neighbor's garden and pick some of their flowers, which I would present to my mother as a token of my love and affection. At first it was charming; however, it got old after a while and had to stop. It seemed that the more she tried to dissuade me, the more determined I was to get yet another bouquet of flowers for her. Our neighbors first thought it cute too but my floral petty larceny eventually lost its charm and humor for them as well. Embarrassment turned to exasperation for mother. What was she to do? The next time I came to her with a bouquet of flowers, she grabbed a hank of my curly locks and pulled. "Ouch!" I screamed. "You see," mother explained, "When you pick the flowers it hurts them the same way. You should only look at the flowers and smell them." I did not pick flowers for mother again. I was not going to hurt the flowers.

As the years passed, I learned that picking flowers did not hurt them. On Mothers' Day and other occasions, I would get my mother flowers. I learned that my mother loved roses. From time to time, I would give her a floral gift that kept on giving. I would get her an exotic rose plant for her garden. She always planted and then lovingly cared for them. Over the years, I came learn that the roses my mother loved have been used as symbols for the life of faith.

In his Christmas carol entitled, "Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming," theologian and pastor Martin Luther used a rose as his image for infant Jesus. The hymn declares that the Old Testament prophets predicted the coming of this rose. The prophet Micah promised that the babe would be born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet Isaiah promised that a baby would be the Son of God and also the son of a human being. Jesus the Messiah was described by Isaiah as a branch that God caused to grow from the stump of Jesse, the family line of the great King David. The carol declares that Jesus was a miracle

baby. Luther described His Immaculate Conception and miracle Birth through the Virgin Mary, as a rose that bloomed on the coldest night of winter. The hymn declared that this bloom, our Lord Jesus, came to save us from our sins.

"Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming," is one of my favorite Christmas Carols. Its words bring an image to mind: the image of a stump in the middle of a dark forest pine forest. Snow lies all around the stump. It is bitterly cold. Yet, that stump produces a single thorny branch and, at the top of the branch, a most resplendent bloom. The rose bloom is red. I see Good Friday and Easter Sunday in that branch and bloom.

The red rose points us to Good Friday. The rose bloom sits atop a thorny wooden stem that points to the old rugged cross upon which our Savior hung and suffered and died for our sins. The red color of the bloom points to the blood that was shed on the cross. The thorns point to the nails that pierced Jesus' hands and feet. The thorny stem also points to the scourge the soldiers used to whip Jesus and the crown of thorns that the Roman Soldiers placed on Jesus' head. The nails and thorny crown points to our sins that pierced and scarred His body; the sins that He took on as His own, that He bore like a crown. The red petals of the bloom point to the royal robes the Roman Soldiers placed on Jesus' bloodied body as they mocked Him and beat Him mercilessly.

The same red rose points us to Easter Sunday. God took the wood of the old rugged cross, the nails and the thorny crown and turned them into a life-giving wooden stem. The new stem bears new life each spring. It produces green leaves which stretch out like arms from the stem. God placed a bud at the head of the stem. The bud points to the tomb in which Simon of Cyrene and Nicodemus placed Jesus' dead body. God changed the bloodstained robe they used to mock Jesus into the petals of a beautiful bloom that bursts forth from the bud in the same way that Jesus burst forth from His tomb on Easter Sunday.

God took all the ugliness of the first Good Friday and turned it into something beautiful: resurrection and new life on the first Easter Sunday. Jesus promises to take the ugliness of suffering and

death and transform it into resurrection. It is written in the Bible: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" (John 11:25-26)



Sunday will be the first Mothers' Day I will spend without my beloved mother Jean. I have now joined the ranks of those who have lost their beloved mother. I can't give her a red rose on Sunday or tell her I love her or thank her for being the best mother ever! She passed away Saturday May 4th, 2013, at the Kelowna Hospice House 32 days short of her 82nd birthday and 19 days short of her 60th wedding anniversary. She was surrounded by her husband, sister and three children (I am the oldest) as she passed quietly from this life to the next. Her body succumbed to ovarian cancer, which she battled valiantly for more than three years. However, I can pray to God and thank Him for her and ask my Lord Jesus to relay the message and hug her for me. I would encourage all my sisters and brothers who have lost their mothers to do the same.

To my son Jon, my nephew Noah and all of you who still have the unfathomable privilege of speaking to and even being with your mother on Sunday, I offer this prescription: if you can't be with your mother, at a minimum call her, confess that you have taken her for granted, tell her that you love her and that she is the best mother ever! If you can be with her, hug her, and give her a red rose.

Come celebrate Mothers' Day at Grace Lutheran Church at 9:00 AM and 10:30 AM.

In Christ,  
Pastor Ed Skutshek



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## Airport links to Yukon through Air North

Non-stop seasonal flights from Kelowna International Airport (YLW) to the Yukon will begin June 6 and run until Oct. 15.

"This is great news," said YLW airport advisory chair Kelowna Mayor Walter Gray.

"We have the opportunity with Air North to make the Yukon more accessible and to bring the Yukon to the Okanagan. We each have two amazing regions, rich to explore."

The city of Whitehorse lies in the traditional territory of two First Nations—the Kwanlin Dun and the Ta'an Kwach'an—and boasts a vibrant arts and cultural community.

From May to September the Yukon enjoys round-the-clock daylight, giving long days to experience the Yukon's legendary wilderness.

"We've made travel between the Okanagan and the Yukon so much simpler," said Allan Moore, director of commercial development for Air North.

"It's a great combination of our amazing in-flight service, affordable fares and the convenience of a single flight. We hope to see passenger demand increase this to year-round service."

Flight bookings can be made on-line at www.flyairnorth.com.

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