

# Escaping Police Also Results in Miraculous Escape From Death

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The stunts performed for action movies tend to inspire driving madness, or so it would sometimes appear. Seeing these faked racing scenes where drivers escape impossible collision situations could make real life drivers believe in their invincibility. Or perhaps certain persons will do insane things no matter what. Whatever the root causes our mission is to report observable facts and the facts that we saw from our recent examination of an accident site simply made our head shake.

We became interested in this accident case because we heard reports that a male driver, fleeing police, was later found to have crashed his vehicle, without any police involvement. It was reported that Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) had become involved to determine if there was any police involvement. It became of further interest to us because the collision only involved the single vehicle and therefore a likely loss-of-control event. Such loss-of-control events have been of particular interest to us.

The fleeing vehicle was reportedly found at approximately 0200 hours on the morning of August 25, 2014. The London Free Press provided the photo in Figure 1 (below) in its article on the incident. The photo shows the vehicle at its final rest position. Most of the front and middle of the vehicle would appear to have been consumed by fire. The vehicle appears to be located on a lawn with no real indication of the location of the road where the vehicle had travelled. Police had the site closed off until almost 1800 hours on that day, presumably to allow the SIU to complete their investigations. We attended the site shortly after it was opened for public travel and documented the following evidence.

Figures 2 through 5 provide Google Maps, aerial views of the site, showing images that are zoomed-in progressively closer to the actual site. The vehicle was reportedly travelling southbound on Vanneck Road, crossed the intersection of Gainsborough Road and then came to rest on the east roadside of Vanneck Road as indicated in Figure 6.

Our examination of the site took us to a point on Vanneck Road just north of its intersection with Gainsborough Road. This is where the vehicle passed through before it went out of control. Figures 7 and 8 show a view looking south from just north of the intersection. There is a small "hump" in the pavement as southbound vehicles cross over the intersection. It is because this vehicle was travelling southward extremely quickly that, as it travelled over this hump it was lifted upward. As can be seen from the opposite direction of Figure 9, Vanneck Road also contains a slight change in direction just as it crosses the intersection.

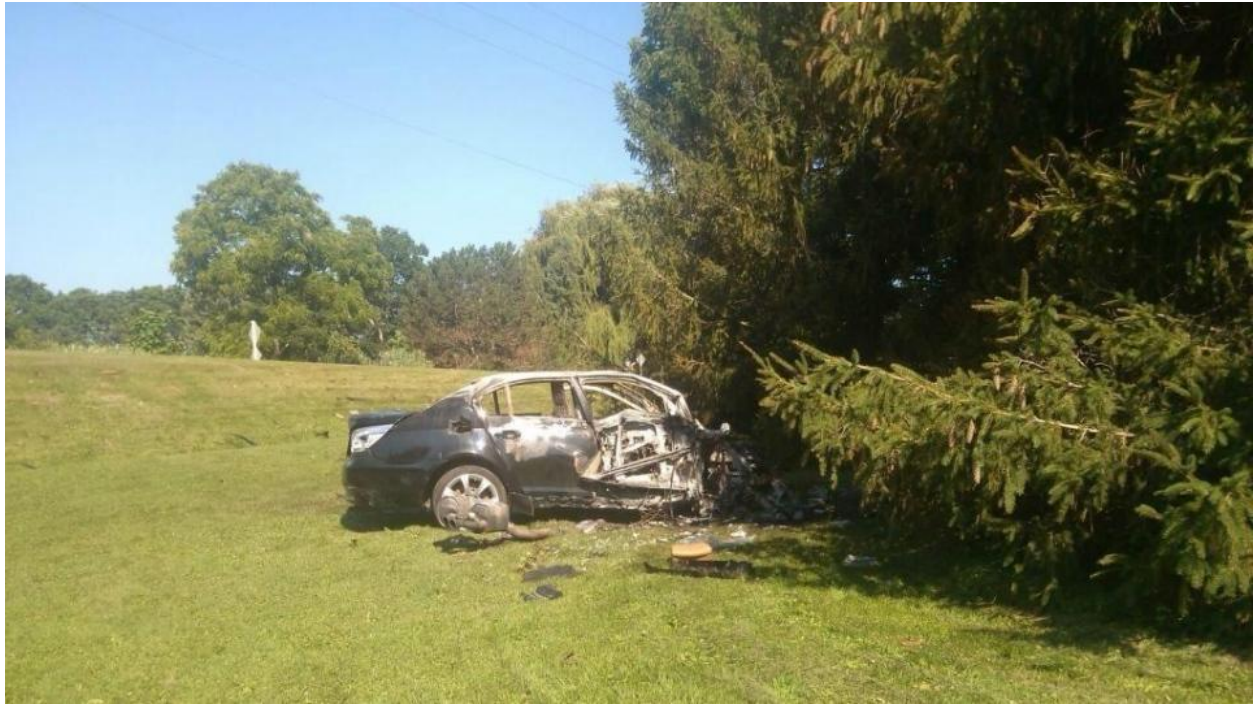


Figure 1: Photo taken by the London Free Press newspaper showing the vehicle at its final rest position.

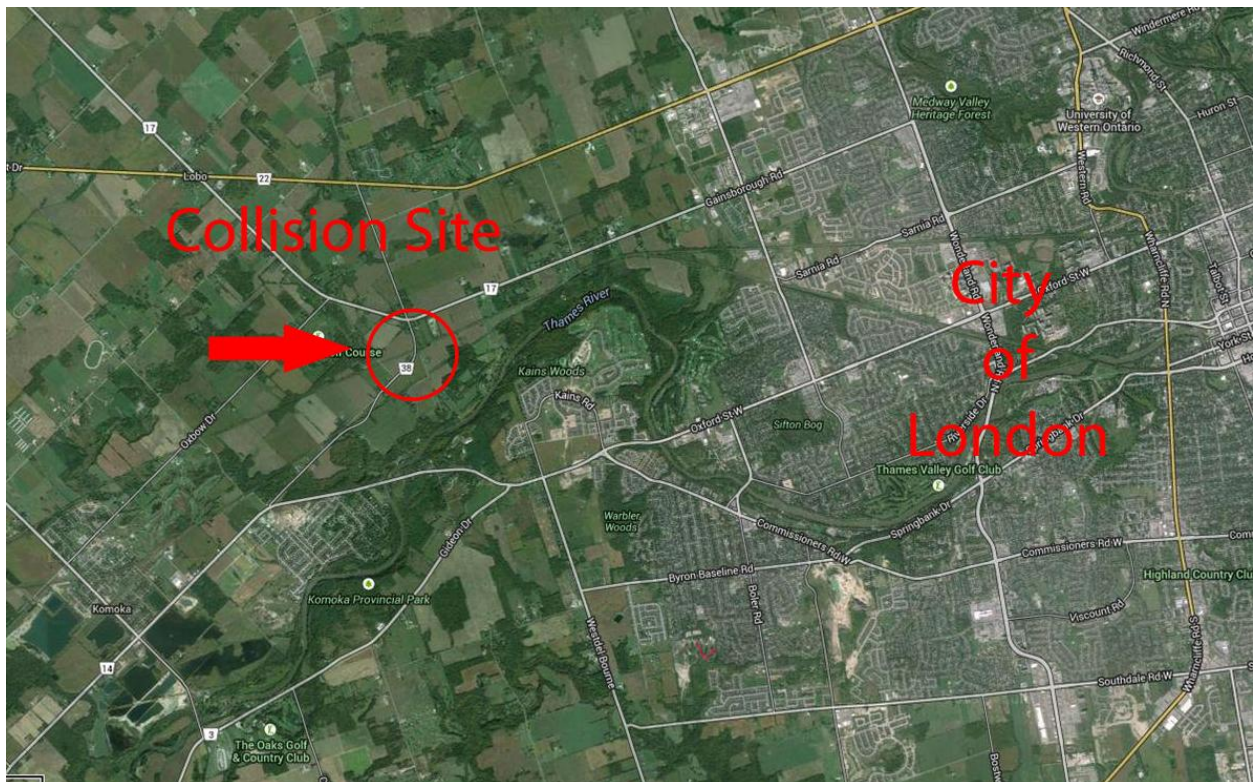


Figure 2: Google Maps aerial view showing site with respect to the City of London, Ontario.





Figure 3: Aerial view of site location.



Figure 4: Aerial view of site location.



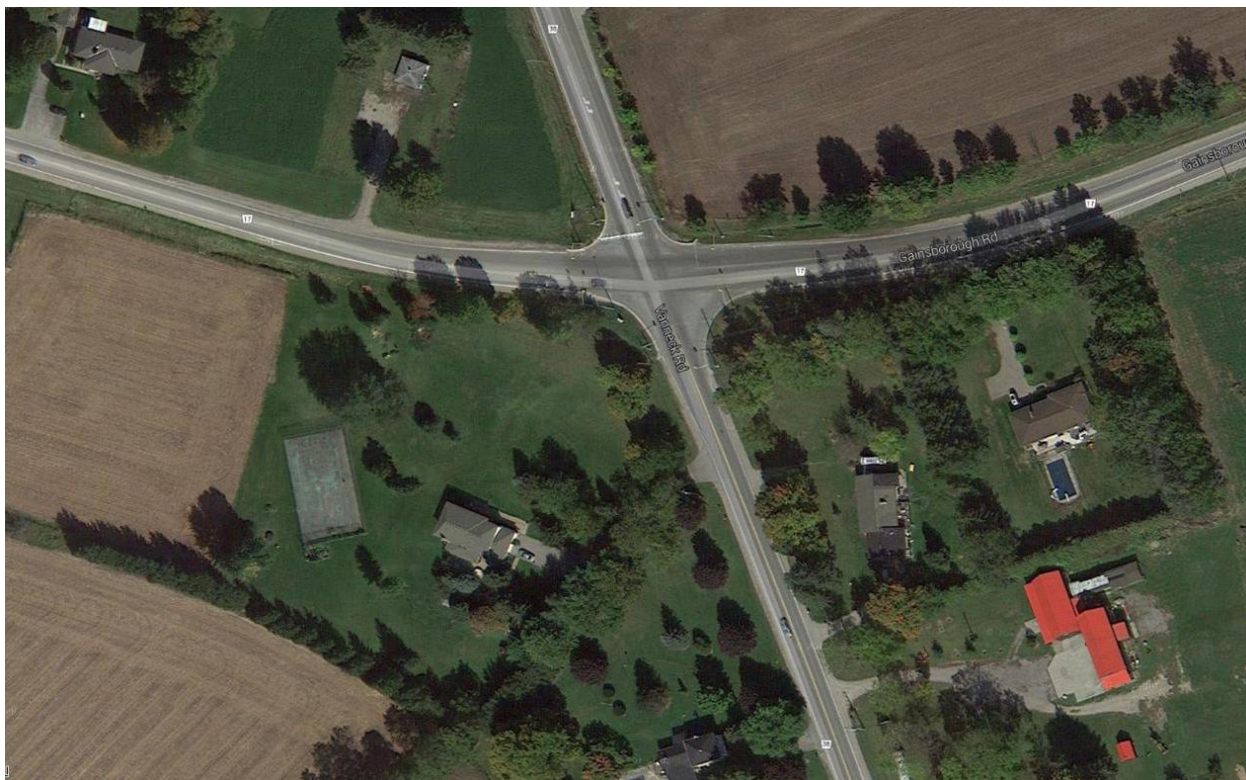


Figure 5: View of intersection of Vanneck Road and Gainsborough Road.



Figure 6: View of final rest position of vehicle.





Figure 7: View, looking south along Vanneck Road from just north of its intersection with Gainsborough Road.



Figure 8: View, looking south along Vanneck Road from just north of its intersection with Gainsborough Road.



So, as the wheels of the vehicle were lifted due its high speed, the driver was no longer in control of the vehicle. A short distance south of the intersection there was evidence that the underside of the vehicle came down hard and produced some scrapes in the pavement, as shown in Figures 10, 11 and 12.



Figure 9: View, looking north along the west side of Vanneck Road toward the intersection with Gainsborough Road.





Figure 10: View, looking south, from just south of the intersection of Gainsborough Road. Fresh scrapes are visible in the southbound lane, in the foreground, where the underside of the vehicle came down after being lifted at the intersection.



Figure 11: Closer view of fresh scrapes in the pavement of the southbound lane of Vanneck Road.



Figure 12: Close-up view of the fresh scrapes in the pavement where the vehicle came down after being lifted at the intersection.

There was a faint, curved tire mark exiting the location where the underside of the vehicle contacted the pavement. In Figure 13 we attempt to indicate its general location in the southbound lane but it is too faint to be detected in the photo. This tire mark indicated that the vehicle commenced to rotate counter-clockwise and was moving from the southbound lane, across the roadway centre-line and toward the east shoulder.

As the vehicle continued to exit onto the east shoulder Figure 14 shows the tire marks that were visible in the gravel. Here the vehicle just missed striking the utility pole however it managed to impact a red mail box whose pieces were strewn across the nearby lawn, as shown in Figure 15.

After striking the red mail box the vehicle continued travelling at exceptional speed down into the east ditch where its underside began to tear up the lawn, as shown in Figure 16.

Eventually the vehicle approached a driveway that crossed the east ditch. A small culvert located beneath the driveway was sided by wooden rails. The vehicle crashed into this culvert and sent the wooden rails flying in various directions, as shown in Figures 17, 18 and 19.





Figure 13: The finger is attempting to indicate the general location where a thin, curved tire mark was present in the southbound lane indicating that car began to rotate counter-clockwise.





Figure 14: View, looking south along the east shoulder of Vanneck Road at the fresh tire marks in the gravel shoulder.



Figure 15: View of the pieces of a red mail box that was struck as the vehicle exited the east shoulder and entered the east ditch.





Figure 16: View of gouges in the lawn of the east ditch caused by the underside of the vehicle.



Figure 17: View of tire marks headed toward a driveway and a culvert that was sided by wooden rails.





Figure 18: View of impact damage to the wood rails along the side of the driveway.



Figure 19: View of one of the wooden rails that was thrown to the other side of the driveway as a result of the vehicle impact.



Upon initially reaching the area of the driveway we looked beyond it toward the south to locate the next bit of evidence which would indicate the continuation of the vehicle's travel path. However we were momentarily confused by the lack of any further evidence on the ground. As indicated in Figure 20, there was a clump of trees straight ahead along the vehicle's path but there did not appear to be any contact to those trees, and there were no tire marks on the lawn anywhere around the trees, as shown in the northward view of Figure 21 which looks back in the direction from which the vehicle came.



Figure 20: View of east ditch just past the driveway showing no sign of any markings on the grass or any signs of impact to the trees that were in a direct line with the path of the vehicle.

After a short while we confirmed that there were car parts still strewn throughout the area and we eventually began to examine other parts of the trees. At this point the vehicle's actions became apparent as we looked into the branches of the trees, as shown in Figures 22 through 25. The vehicle had vaulted so high after its impact with the culvert that it rose into the branches of these trees and broke them.

To gain an appreciation of the height of this tree damage, we stood next to the first tree with our arm raised, as shown in Figure 26. The tips of our fingers were at a height of about 7 feet 8 inches (about 2.34 meters). The damaged branches are much higher.





Figure 21: View looking north toward the driveway in the direction from which the vehicle came. There are no signs of any tire marks on the grass yet the vehicle had to have passed through this area.



Figure 22: View of first tree along the vehicle's path. Looking up into the branches there was evidence of some fresh damage.





Figure 23: View showing evidence of fresh damage to the tree branches of the first tree along the vehicle's path.





Figure 24: View of second tree along the vehicle's path and the indications of fresh damage to its branches.





Figure 25: Close-up view of fresh damage to the branches of the second tree along the vehicle's path.



Figure 26: View of investigator standing next to the first tree with his arm raised to indicate the height of the tree damage.



Fate determined that this vehicle did not strike the stems of any of the trees and therefore did not sustain a major deceleration from such a tree impact. The striking of the branches only managed to reduce the vehicle's velocity by a much lower degree.

However, as the saying goes, what goes up must come down, and so the next exercise was to locate the touchdown of this airborne jet. The point of touchdown was near the base of a large evergreen as shown in Figure 27. There was a long and narrow gouge in the earth at this location.



Figure 27: View of point of landing of the vehicle near the base of a large evergreen tree.

Even at the location of this hard landing the driver benefited from the fact that the vehicle also struck the branches of the evergreen and therefore this provided a softer landing.

The vehicle then broke through the branches of the evergreen and came out the other side, as shown in Figures 28 and 29, where it came to rest and caught fire. Even with the occurrence of the fire the driver must have been able to escape the vehicle as he was reported to sustain "non-life-threatening injuries".

This is a very lucky result as similar collisions that we have investigated have resulted in fatal injuries. It is not a matter genius, or something to brag about, but one of fate and luck, like rolling a pair of dice with the stakes being your life.





Figure 28: View of burned out grass at the final rest position of the vehicle.



Figure 29: View looking back northward showing the vehicle rest position and the roadway along the left side of the photo.



It was reported that Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) became involved, possibly to determine whether a police chase had taken place. It is not our place to say whether we agree or disagree with these developments. However, from the viewpoint of studying the physical evidence there are two further points that we want to add.

First, a set of skid marks was present in the southbound lane, in the general vicinity of where the vehicle struck the red mail box, as shown in Figure 30.



Figure 30: View of skid marks present in the southbound lane adjacent to the struck, red mail box.

The left side tire mark was across the roadway centre-line. The marks were about 18 metres long and would result in a speed loss in the general range of about 56 to 68 km/h. One would want to know who produced those marks and why.

Secondly, as we have mentioned in several previous articles, gravel shoulders will reveal the presence of tire marks that may not be visible on a hardtop road surface. Thus even a vehicle that coasts on a gravel shoulder will produce residual evidence. The actions of vehicles and their drivers in the vicinity of the crash site can be deciphered if the fragile evidence is not destroyed and if an investigator is experienced enough with interpreting such markings.

As an example, Figure 31 shows some tire marks on the east shoulder near the vicinity of where the vehicle initially exited the road. These tire marks are from vehicles



tracking through the gravel as opposed to performing emergency actions. If investigators found such evidence it could be interpreted and perhaps additional questions could be answered about the activities of vehicles and drivers, some of which might originate from the time when the vehicle left the road. It is a source of additional evidence with which few investigators have sufficient training and experience.



Figure 31: Example of tire marks on the east shoulder that could be studied.

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London, Ontario, Canada

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