It's In Your Mind

By BARBARA SEAMAN

Who sits on seat belts? A beautiful college girl was going to a party. Her fiancé was a careful driver, and the ride was a short one. She did not want to crush her party dress, so she did not wear her seat belt. Another car ran through a stop sign and hit their car. Her fiancé, who was wearing a seat belt, merely bruised his knee. The girl went through the window and ruined not only her party dress but also her beautiful face.

Dr. Donald Huelke, of the University of Michigan's Highway Safety Research Institute, told me this true story. Dr. Huelke is deeply concerned because many people who have seat belts do not be permitted in the front seat of a car anyhow. "Tell your readers that if they had been the dead babies I have seen—after minor accidents—they would never put a baby in the front." General Motors has devised a special safety seat for children that will be on the market soon, one that Dr. Huelke does approve.

At Boston University, they are also worried about the neglect of seat belts. A recent report there says, "There is little hope that many people can be induced to use seat belts just because it is the sensible thing to do." People of good education and income are most likely to wear their seat belts, and married women are especially careful. Women admit that they like the "peace of mind" seat belts give them, but men are likely to deny the dangers of automobile driving. A photograph of a wrecked car with a body lying beside it "grabs" a woman, but it does not seem to convince men.

People are most likely to "buckle up for safety" when they are on a long trip, especially if they are driving on unfamiliar roads. A smaller number of people use seat belts for traveling to work, and very few use them for neighborhood errands. These are foolish distinctions because, as the Boston researchers point out, long trips account for little of the total mileage that American drivers accumulate each year.

Big Man for a Dime:
Your telephone may ring some day, and a man will say, "I'm taking a survey. Do you think minors should be allowed into gay movie houses?" Or he may ask about obscenities at you. Or he may even threaten physical violence to you and your children.

Obscene telephone calls are terrifying, and they are a growing problem. Starting last year telephone companies in many regions set up "Anonymize Call Bureaus" to try and keep them in check. Here is some further advice by Dr. Russell Nadler, a New York psychiatrist who has studied the men who make such calls.

The caller dials numbers at random until he finds a woman who responds with sufficient enthusiasm who will answer the phone. Hang up immediately. Local callers who make repeated calls do so only when they have drawn some response.