

Bar held liable for drunken driver

Associated Press
A Beverly Hills bar poured the shot that may be heard round the nation.
Alcohol helped cost Claire Cox her life, actor James Stacy his left arm and leg, and motorist Carter Gordon a term in the state prison for manslaughter and drunken driving.
And now, the Beverly Hills bar that served Gordon has been sued successfully for more than \$2 million under a state law that makes taverns liable for the actions of their patrons.
Bartenders around the country contacted by The Associated Press said such rulings are unfair, and are easily exploited by the unscrupul-

ous. They add they always try to cut off the patron who has had too much, although admitting they sometimes aren't too successful.
Bartenders prosecuted
"We'll have to be more careful," said bartender Clem Abbott of the Pasadena, Calif., Elks Club.
"They've prosecuted bartenders before for that — fined them for giving a man too much to drink. But with that kind of money, houses will begin cracking down on their policy."
Drawing attention to so-called "Dram Shop Laws" was a jury's verdict in the Stacy case. The Los Angeles court awarded Stacy \$1.9

million and Mrs. Cox's estate \$400,000. Mrs. Cox was a passenger on Stacy's motorcycle when it was rammed by Gordon's auto in 1973.
Lawyers for the Chopping Block Bar, where Gordon had been drinking, said they will appeal and may ask a reduction in the award.
Insurance costs triple
Norman Manha, Western director of the National License Beverage Association NLBA, says this decision is the eighth or ninth major damage award won against a California tavern in recent years.
As in malpractice insurance, the result has been a tripling of tavern insurance costs. The average saloon

now pays about \$1,200 for Dram Shop insurance in California, Manha said.
Manha, who owns two taverns in the Hayward, Calif., area, said one problem is inherent in such laws. He said motorists stop for a drink in a tavern, then buy a bottle at a package liquor store. But the bar takes the blame.
Illinois is one of the states with a Dram Shop Law. Bill Smith, a spokesman for the NBA in Washington, said it's hard to say how many states have such laws. He said some state courts have interpreted liquor licensing regulations to hold taverns liable in these cases.

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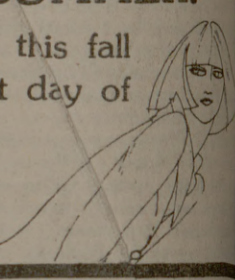
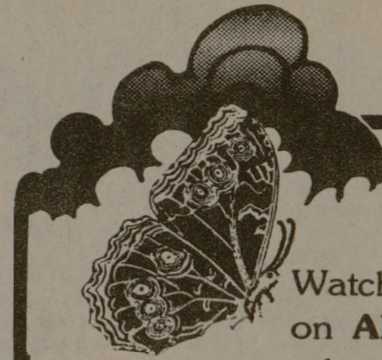
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