

ECHOOPINION

THE news that Cork tops the league for drivers banned from the road because of their penalty points total is not good.

Five of the 15 motorists who have accumulated the maximum 12 penalty points are from Cork city and county.

They have all lost their driving licences for an automatic six months as a result.

It's a personal tragedy for each of those people and will impact on their lives — but it could be a lot worse for them.

WE SAY

The Echo's viewpoint

Six months off the road is not pleasant. It may jeopardise their work lives as they will have to make special transport arrangements.

It will cost them money in increased insurance charges in the future.

But it's a lot better than some of the other possible consequences of ex-

Obey road rules, don't be foolish

cessive speed, dangerous or careless driving and other bad driving practices.

These consequences include thousands of people left dead and injured and thousands of families mourning.

The gardaí are doing an excellent job in policing road safety and in trying to impart the message of: 'Belt up, slow down, don't drink and drive.'

All of us have a responsibility to

adapt our driving habits to make the roads safer for everyone.

We cannot afford to tolerate people breaking the law relation to driving, which puts all of us and our families at risk.

It is good news that the gardaí intend to allocate further officers to traffic duties and to set up a national traffic corps — good news for safety, that is, bad news for those foolish enough to disregard their own safety and that of other road-users.

TALKING HEAD

FORTY years ago today one of the main characters in the story of the 20th Century passed on. Winston Churchill was 90 when he died and he packed quite a bit into those nine decades.

His first career was as a war correspondent for newspapers and he cut his teeth reporting from conflicts in Cuba and Sudan before he made a name for himself back in Britain with his daring escape from captivity in Pretoria during the Boer War in South Africa. His colourful account of the escape appeared in the *Morning Post* on January 24 1900: "How unhappy is that poor man who loses his liberty ... Before I had been an hour in captivity I had resolved to escape ... For a month I thought of nothing else."

Winston wasn't content to sit on his laurels and wait for something to happen; he was a man of action, and when the opportunity arose, he leaped over the prison wall to freedom and spent the next few days making his way back to friendly territory on foot and by rail: "I resolved to sleep, nor can I imagine a more pleasing lullaby than the clatter of the train that carries you at 20 miles an hour away from the enemy's capital."

Once back in Britain, Winston turned his hand to politics.

He recovered from a setback in the First World War, when as part of the War Cabinet he backed the disastrous Dardanelles Campaign, and by the time the Second World

Leader who was good for a quote

War came around, the country turned to him after the unsuccessful appeasement policy of Neville Chamberlain had failed to halt a resurgent Germany's gallop.

In his first year as Prime Minister, Churchill led a country that stood alone as a major power against the Nazis who were over-running Europe.

He rallied the British people to stand firm and never surrender and orchestrated the alliance with Joseph Stalin and Franklin Roosevelt that would see the Axis powers crushed.

"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it," was something Churchill said after the war.

He did and it has been, and in 1953 his six volumes of war

memoirs won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Churchill was partly right when he contended that history is written by the winners and we are lucky that someone as eminently quotable as Churchill was on the winning side.

But the defeated also write their accounts — it's just that an alternative present and future would be needed to make their stories not seem ridiculous.

Such is the case with Shichi Yokoi. For Yokoi was one of the great losers of the Second World War.

"We shall fight on the beaches.

"We shall fight on the fields, and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender."

When US forces retook Guam in 1944, rather than surrender, Sergeant Yokoi went into hiding with around nine other Japanese soldiers.

"This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

Or in Sergeant Yokoi's case, not even the beginning of the beginning. On January 24, 1972, exactly seven years after Churchill's death, the conflict came to an end for the Japanese sergeant. He was found by two local fishermen.

"Never in the field of conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Japan officially surrendered on the *USS Missouri* in 1945.

Even after Yokoi's surrender in 1972, Hiroo Onoda and another few stragglers were still defending the Emperor in the Philippines.

"Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened."

In 1952, Yokoi found a leaflet dropped by the Americans some years previously that said the war was over. Yokoi was not fooled.

Lady Astor to Churchill: "If you were my husband, Winston, I would flavour your coffee with poison."

Churchill: "Madam, if I were your husband I would drink it."

To ensure the water table had not been contaminated by the enemy, Yokoi, naturally suspicious, boiled his water before he drank it. When he was found, other than a deficiency in salt, doctors declared him to be in perfect health.

"I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, sweat and bamboo."

For many years Yokoi lived with two other soldiers in a hole under a bamboo grove. They moved away when food was running out, but Yokoi often went to visit them on the 'eastern front'. He found them dead of starvation eight years before he was found.

I think what we have learned today is that it is not just the victors who write history.

Sometimes journalists who struggle to come up with a topical opinion every week do too.

YOU SAY**We built this city on rock**

● THE wonderful part rock 'n' roll played in the lives of a generation must be celebrated in Cork City of Culture during 2005.

I suggest April be set aside for Cork to rock, with four Saturdays at City Hall, Imperial Hotel, Metropole and Juries jumping to Dickie Rock's *Candy Store Man*; Joe Dolan's *Goodbye Venice*, and pride of Leeside Joe Mac with his ex-Dixies colleague Brendan O'Brien giving it holly and of course the wonderful *Jerusalem* sung by Brendan Bowyer, lifting the rafters!

The supporting bands of the 1960s, the Dukes, MusicMakers, Kestrels, the beautiful Kelly, Della Heslin, etc, should be joining the party.

Ladies of that era must 'walk Pana' on a Saturday afternoon in stilettos, mini-skirts, and hair in curlers, with the guys dressed to kill.

See you there, guys and dolls, in the ballrooms of romance in April 2005!

Keep rocking babe!

Neil O'Donoghue, Cork.

● MY NAME is Pat King. I live in New Zealand. My father came from Longford in Ireland.

His mother's name was Mary Farrell. To the best of our knowledge his father's name was Joseph Clyne. They had children, John (my father), Mary, Colleen, Michael and Annie. One now lives in the States we think.

Can you help me in finding any surviving relatives. There is a medical reason for this.

Pat King, 230a Main North Road, Christchurch – 5, Redwood, New Zealand, Douglas.

● All letters must include a full name and address, which may be withheld on request. We reserve the right to edit letters. Our contact details are at the foot of the page.

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THE LAST WORD

"A coward turns away, but a brave man's choice is danger."
Euripides (484-406 BC)