

Which Road Do You Take Home?



Death-Scarred Highways Await 105 Holiday Victims

Nineteen persons are giving themselves for Christmas this year on Texas highways. That's the estimated Christmas eve traffic death toll from Homer Garrison, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

And a total of 105 Texans will use our highways to go out with the old year. That's Garrison's estimate of traffic fatalities during the period from 12:10 a. m., Dec. 23, through midnight, Jan. 1.

Of these traffic deaths, 40 should occur in urban areas. Another 65 tragedies will have a rural setting. Of the doomed Texans, says Garrison, 80 are males and 25 are females.

Suicides, homicides, and other accidents will kill 106 more Texans in the 8-day period to raise the violent death toll to 211, if predictions hold true.

The foreboding prediction, well above last year's totals, are in keeping with the rise in traffic tragedy this year. All told, 2,400 persons are scheduled to die this year. Only 1,957 victims were claimed by Texas traffic last year.

A&M students heading home for

the holidays this year have one advantage over those who made the trip last year. They should be there long before highway accidents hit their yearly peak on

Christmas Eve.

The shocking jump in highway disaster, though, may all but remove this advantage.

Probable causes for the wreck-

stren holiday highways will be those normal aspects of careless driving—speeding, road-hogging, passing in restricted zones, etc.—plus the added dangers of crowded highways and over-indulgence in Yule "spirits."

Commercial transportation, running a heavier-than-usual schedule will add to the crowd-strained highways. And that last minute Christmas rush will mean even more than the average amount of excess speeding, deadliest highway practice.

As in every holiday period, local and state law enforcement agencies will be working overtime to protect Texas citizens. Their efforts, however, will be to no avail without the cooperation of those they try to help.

With death shrouding the holiday atmosphere, every motorist has been asked by the Department of Public Safety to take three protective guests home for Christmas—Courtesy, Cooperation and Common Sense.

Everyone that utilizes these highway life-savers to the utmost will be aiding in the drive to make safety a fact instead of a slogan.

A Word from Homer Garrison

Austin, Dec. 15—(Spl.)—Declaring that the tremendous increase in Texas traffic deaths this year is due to indifference on the part of motorists, Colonel Homer Garrison, Jr., Director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, today directed a friendly word of warning toward the State's college students.

"In 1949," Garrison said, "only about 12% of the population of Texas were of generally accepted college age; yet this group accounted for approximately 17% of the rural motor vehicle traffic accidents during that period."

He acknowledged that, of course, all within the age group were not students in institutions of higher learning but that the pattern made obvious the fact that the 18 to 22 year olds displayed an accident proneness far in excess of their actual number.

The Safety Director's suggestion to college youths for an improvement in their driving safety record called for a combatting of the apparent indifference that now exists. "This can be accomplished," Garrison said, "by an increased observance of the traffic laws both on and off the campus."

"Let us not forget," he added, "that the most important lesson we have to learn is to learn to live!"

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Ten Times As Many As Died on Iwo Jima . . .

7,100 Teen-agers Killed, 320,000 Injured

By HERB O'CONNELL

7,100 killed, 320,000 injured— all teen-agers.

If the evening papers contained such a headline, every reader would be so affected by the tragic news that he would contribute everything within his power to prevent such mass murder.

Yet, this was the actual tragic toll of youngsters between the ages of 15 and 24 killed in automobile accidents last year. And nobody seems to be moved enough by the figures to do anything about it.

Every two minutes, some mother somewhere sobs over the fatalities or injuries suffered by a son or daughter who "was just a baby" or who falls into the under-25 age bracket.

Bloodier Than Iwo Jima

This rate totals more casualties than the United States forces suffered at Iwo Jima in the late war—ten times as many, according to Ralph Wallace, author of "Kid Killers at the Wheel," which appeared in the May 28 issue of Collier's.

Numerous factors enter into numerous causes of the accidents that plague our highways each hour of each day. According to Dr. Norman Damon, vice-president of the Automotive Safety Foundation, the majority of all automobile

accidents are caused by poor driving habits and driving faults such as driving too fast, bad judgment, driving while drinking, bluffing at intersections. Lack of knowledge of good driving practices, carelessness, and the minority—the deliberate disregarding of rules, signals, and markings—also contribute.

Teen-agers are subject to possessing these faults as well as anyone else, but with the other foolish practices intermingled with these faults, such as clowning, speeding, and dreaming, the accident rate among teen-agers in recent years has rocketed to a new high.

Deadly Teen-Ager Sport

An example of clowning is the comparatively new craze, "chicken," a game that has become quite popular among the teen-agers of larger cities.

The game involves piling some six or seven youngsters into an automobile, holding the car to a speed of something like 60 miles per hour, and releasing the steering wheel. The first of the gang who touches the steering wheel or brake is—you've guessed it—"chicken." Like "Russian Roulette," "chicken" has the advantage in that if you win, you take one or all of your friends with you. Another such sport is having

three teen-agers crouching on the floor to operate the brake, clutch, and the accelerator at the command of the navigator who is operating the steering wheel. This is known as "spider."

Clowning in a speeding automobile sounds as if the driver has the combined mentality of a cobra and a cockroach—even to a 15-year-old. Yet older operators than 15-year-olds have frequently been gathered up in "gunny sacks" as a result of playing "chicken" or "spider."

Youngsters "Show Off"

Although these games cause only a fraction of the total teen-ager accidents, they perfectly exemplify the probable reason for more accidents among the 15-25 age group than among other age groups—too much energy or the tendency to "show off."

The article—"Stop Highway Teenicide"—in the June 20 issue of Look, proves that these young drivers get the majority of their driving habits from their parents or whoever teaches them to drive. And, in their young and energetic stage of life, they will tend to stretch the rules of safety taught them by their teacher.

Good Example Needed

For instance, if the instructor drives 50-miles-per-hour, the student, in the presence of the instructor, will also drive 50 miles

per hour. But, when he gets behind the wheel without the instructor sitting by his side, he, in his adventurous age, will invariably increase his speed to a more satisfying 60 or 70.

This holds true in other habits as well. Therefore, a parent, when teaching Junior to herd the family vehicle, will not find it advisable to slip by a stop sign on the sly or get by with going 40 in a 30 mile zone.

Good Teen-ager Drivers, Too

There is no doubting the fact that there are good teen-ager drivers on the highways today. But, there are also many "goats" or poor drivers intermingled who do not only endanger their own lives but also those of the good drivers.

Our laws governing the possession of firearms are rigid indeed; but our laws governing the possession and operation of perhaps an even more dangerous weapon—the automobile—are contrarily very lax.

Few people of today are unfamiliar with the causes of excessive automobile accidents in the 15-25 age group. The problem that has to be contended with now is the finding of a combination of remedies that will cut the number of automobile fatalities down to an unavoidable minimum.

There is a nationwide safety campaign currently being conducted by newspapers, schools and many civic organizations who have ultimately realized the need for safety measures on the highways.

It has been proven in experiments by the American Automobile Association, that maturity and judgement in driving can be taught just as Math 101, ballroom dancing, and politeness can be taught.

Consequently, the most prominent of devices stressed in safeguarding the motor vehicle operator is the proper training of young drivers. Many schools have taken up a behind-the-wheel training course which teaches the students the elements of safe driving.

Classes, under well-qualified instructors, show teen-agers that there is no room for horseplay on the highway. They learn to watch out for the other guy as well as themselves.

Testing Devices Used

Testing devices help the student realize that he is not capable of mastering all situations the first time. And they check for other deficiencies such as color-blindness and lack of depth perception.

Later comes the actual road-work in a car with dual controls. This is where the student finds out that there is more to driving an automobile than merely steering

and shifting.

These courses have cut down the teen-ager accident rate as much as fifty per cent in the localities where they have been taught and practiced. But, in a recent poll conducted by Gordon C. Graham, Supervisor of Safety Education, Detroit Public Schools, only 8,000 of the 29,000 high schools in the United States offer such courses.

'What Can I Do'

In a leaflet published by the National Commission on Safety Education in cooperation with the National Committee for Traffic Safety which was sent to each of its millions of members, there was the question, "What can I do?"

The answer: "We can stop accidents or allow them to continue. If we want to stop them—and we do—we must cut them off at the source. Since driver error is the cause of most accidents, proper training of the driver while he is young is a big step toward solution of the traffic accident problem. It is a task in which educators and the public alike have a stake."

Solution Dependent on Everyone

This problem will not be solved if left entirely in the hands of the high schools, newspapers, and social groups.

The solution is dependent upon a combination of the driver course (See TEENICIDE, Page 8)

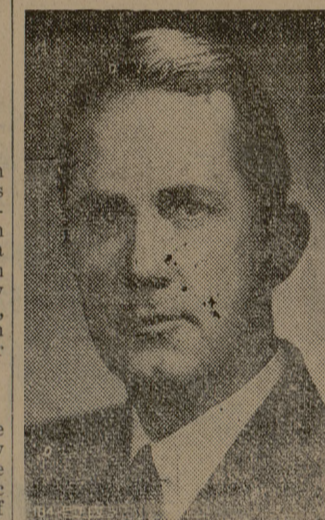
Keep Yourself, Christmas Spirit Alive—Gov. Shivers

PLEASE let me congratulate The Battalion upon its plan to publish a special safety edition on December 15. The safety program sponsored and promoted at Texas A&M College by your fine newspaper undoubtedly has contributed greatly to increased safety on the highways and streets used by your readers.

It is my feeling that only through an increased awareness on the part of the public of traffic dangers and appropriate safety measures are we ever going to approach a real solution to this urgent problem. Campaigns such as yours will help.

It is especially appropriate that your special safety edition appears just before the Christmas holidays. The holiday season is the peak period of the year for traffic accidents, and it calls for extra caution on everybody's part, driver and pedestrian alike.

As governor of Texas, I urge the wholehearted cooperation of all citizens with our law enforcement officers in this safety campaign—the only purpose of which is to save lives. And remember—the life you save may be your own!



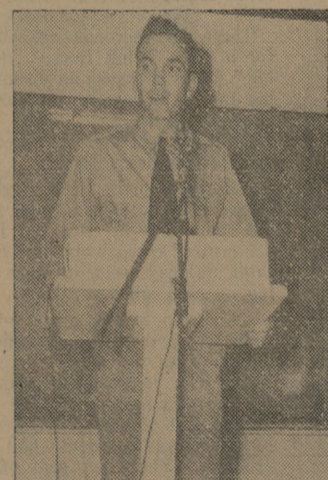
Allan Shivers
Governor of Texas

I earnestly hope that each resident of our state, each visitor and especially the young people going home for the holidays will assume individual responsibility for avoiding accidents. If we do this, we really can keep the Christmas spirit—and all of us—alive this year.

Allan Shivers

Governor, The State of Texas

Texas Patrolmen Learn Highway Guardianship Well



Meet the man who guards your highways—your Texas Highway Patrolman. Through the cooperation of the Highway Patrol Division of the Texas Department of Public Safety we present a pictorial narrative of the fashioning of a guardian of Texas highways.

The tale really begins in Wills Point, Jacksboro, El Paso, Dallas or Bryan, when a young, energetic, alert and healthy Texan fills out and submits an application for entry into the famed Texas Highway Patrol. Appearing for an examination at a designated place in the State, he is joined by numerous other applicants in struggling through a three-hour maze of queries ascertaining his qualifications and potentials as an officer. A selection board of Patrol officials scrutinize and orally quiz him. Next comes an exhaustive character investigation. Notification that he has been found acceptable for training leads him to his first step of actual

training at the Austin Headquarters of the Texas Department of Public Safety (first picture).

Here again he is checked—this time physically (second picture) to see that he meets the height and weight requirements and is able to withstand the rigid training course. Heart, respiration and blood pressure get a check here.

Then comes class work (third picture) which touches on many and varied courses. Note taking is essential. As a Highway Patrolman he will be called upon to address civic and school groups. Public speaking training (fourth picture), therefore, is another essential.

Of course, there's good food to compensate for the long, hard hours of training. And he makes short work of it (fifth picture). His training includes everything from the many art of self-

defense to the proper use of fire-arms (sixth picture). Some of the nation's best experts instruct in marksmanship. He even gets a session with a motorcycle. Though seldom used by the Patrol, the "critters" are mounted by each student-patrolman who learns to man them well.

Seven weeks, 376 hours of instruction, several strained muscles, and some pounds later he receives his commission. Experience on the far-flung maze of Texas highways will make of this "rough-hewn product" in the months and years to come a competent and polished police officer.

His primary duty of enforcing the Uniform Traffic Code of Texas will keep him busy. Texas has an enviable record in this enforcement.

This job of protecting lives and property of Texas citizens took the

more than 400 members of the Patrol the incredible distance of 35,548,599 miles in two years during which they effected 230,000 arrests and 683,000 warnings. Apprehension of traffic violators and criminals is only part of the Highway Patrolman's job. He will make on-the-scene investigations of rural accidents. In that same two year period officers gave information and rendered assistance to motorists over two million times. Above and beyond the call of duty tasks may find him removing highway obstructions, rendering first aid, teaching first aid classes, giving blood transfusions and organizing school patrols or rescuing disaster victims.

"Courtesy, Service and Protection"—this is his motto. And he lives up to it well in the honorable and exacting task of saving and protecting the lives and property of the people of the Lone Star State.