

'Contests' Make Roads Bloody Arena of Death

By JERRY BENNETT
Battalion Staff Writer

There are contests every day in the United States that rival in primitive ferocity even the bloodiest days of the Roman gladiators.

But the winners receive no prizes or public acclaim. And the losers' penalty is death.

The arena for these games of chance is the nation's highways. The players are motorists who, through discourtesy, ignorance or just plain stubbornness, place childish competition above violent death, life-time injuries and broken homes.

One group of contestants is made up of American teen-agers. Their auto games have added new words to the vocabulary of useless mechanized tragedy.

Take "drag racing," for instance. Two cars wait side by side for a traffic light to change. Each speeds up his engine. When the light turns green the autos try to pull ahead of one another. Both are going at high speed.

There's always a winner. But many times there is a loser who wasn't even in the race.

Examples include the car which happens to be in the middle of the intersection when the light changes. Or the small child who darts innocently across the street as the green signal starts to flash. A broken, lifeless body is the winner's trophy for his skill at foolishness.

Then there's a deadly little game called "Chicken." A bunch of kids pile into the front seat of an automobile. The driver speeds the

car on the highway. There's just one catch. Nobody's hands are on the steering wheel. The idea is to see who grabs the wheel first. He is called "chicken."

Some kids play another way. Two cars are used. They are placed several hundred yards apart facing each other. At a signal the drivers roar down the highway in the same lane. The first one who swerves to avoid a head-on collision is the "chicken."

Doesn't Deserve

The teenage group doesn't deserve all the blame for deadly highway sports. Adults gamble for stakes just as high. Every highway has its driver who swears by automobile advertisements and a car dealer's sales talk.

If his auto is supposed to have the best pickup or fastest speed, then pity the poor guy who happens to pass him on the highway. It's just like a slap in the face, a challenge to a duel involving two hulks of top-speeding steel.

Immediately he takes every chance to get ahead of the other car. A coroner's report, burning wreckage and cards of sympathy are mute evidence of the game's outcome.

Then there is the driver who doesn't take any chances. He isn't going to be passed to begin with. As soon as he sees a car pull out to pass him, he speeds up. Possibly he doesn't realize that the truck coming in the opposite direction is too close for the passing car to move back into the right lane.

Stop to Help

Unless he wants his name broadcast over every police radio in the state, he had better stop to help pull bodies from the mangled steel.

The driver who refuses to dim his lights at night for an approaching car is dangerous. But if the other driver turns on his bright lights for revenge, the highways are marked for death.

One driver's refusal to dim his lights has been a challenge to the other. It's an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth with such a needless honor to fight for.

When questioned by police, both drivers swear they were "blinded" and never saw the group of evening hikers walking along the highway's edge. They're telling the truth. They couldn't see anything. The pedestrians never will.

Last year's National Safety Council figures show someone was killed every 14 minutes on the nation's highways. An average of 2 persons a minute were injured in auto wrecks. Property damage totaled \$10 million a day.

Killed In Car Wrecks

More than 27,429 persons have been killed in car wrecks this year.

Some of these deaths were caused by mechanical failures. Others resulted from carelessness. But many can be chalked up as box office proceeds from the sport of fools—four-wheeled rivalry on the nation's highways.

Twenty five per cent of all drivers involved in fatal auto accidents in the U. S. last year were under 25 years old.

And A Broken Home . . .



'You're Walking Yourself to Death'

By BOB HENDRY
Battalion Staff Writer

You're walking yourself to death, buddy.

Yeah, buddy, I mean you. I mean you and 8,649 other pedestrians just like you, if this year is anything like the last one. And if you don't brighten up fast, it will be.

I know, buddy, you're no more careless than the other guy. I know pedestrians who have said the same thing. I know lots of them. They all have one thing in common—they're dead.

They died needlessly and painfully because, like you, they didn't pay attention to just plain common sense rules of safety.

I remember the man in Amarillo doing his Christmas shopping. He liked what was displayed in the store across the street. The corner seemed to be a long way off and the store didn't. So across the street he went—half way that is.

I remember the rather chubby lady in Houston who walked into a busy street from between two parked cars. You wouldn't think such a round lady could be squashed so flat.

I remember the pedestrian in San Antonio who always waited in the street for the signal to cross at the intersection. No matter what people told him, he wouldn't wait on the sidewalk. I guess he would still be waiting in the street if the ambulance hadn't hauled off what was left of him.

I remember the man in Waco who didn't believe in obeying traffic signals when crossing streets. "I don't have to obey them," he said. He was right. They don't have them where he went.

I remember the lady in Fort Worth who crossed streets diagonally instead of using the crosswalks. I'm bragging when I say

this. Actually there wasn't enough left of her to remember.

A man in El Paso obeyed nearly all the rules when crossing at an intersection, except he never looked to the right or left. All he saw was where he would have gotten if the car on his right hadn't failed to stop for the signal.

I remember the man in Corpus Christi who use to take his nightly walk beside the highway. He always walked on the right side of the road instead of the left, and never wore anything white. I thought the black suit he wore in his casket was very appropriate.

Yeah, buddy, they walked themselves to death just like you are doing. Each of them violated only one of eight commonly over-looked safety rules.

They didn't consider themselves reckless. Many of them didn't realize they were even taking a chance. They just didn't think.

Care to take a walk, buddy?

Student Accidents

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In regard to the narrowness and inadequacy of campus streets, Garrett said the planning of A&M's founders was done at a time when the automobile was still a dream. Later streets were planned while the automobile was still a creeping infant.

Better traffic control would improve campus traffic conditions, said E. B. Middleton, committee member and professor of chemistry.

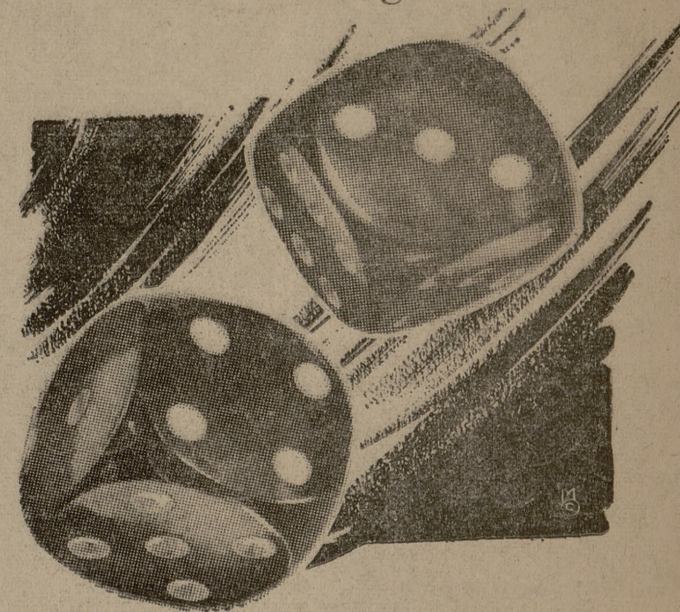
The campus security officer posted at Spence St. and the veterinary hospital during rush hours is an improvement, Middleton said, but he was just recently assigned.

Perhaps if temporary one way streets were employed during rush hours, that is make main arteries two-lane one way streets during the time of heaviest use and divert other traffic, bottle-neck conditions wouldn't result as often, Middleton said.

Lt. Col. Robert L. Melcher, coordinator of counselors for the basic division and a committee member, received reports from most of the safety officers in the corps of cadets spotting hazardous conditions which they have observed.

"I don't think there is a particularly dangerous area on the campus," Melcher said—"A man can be injured or killed by any hazardous condition."

The odds are never good . . .



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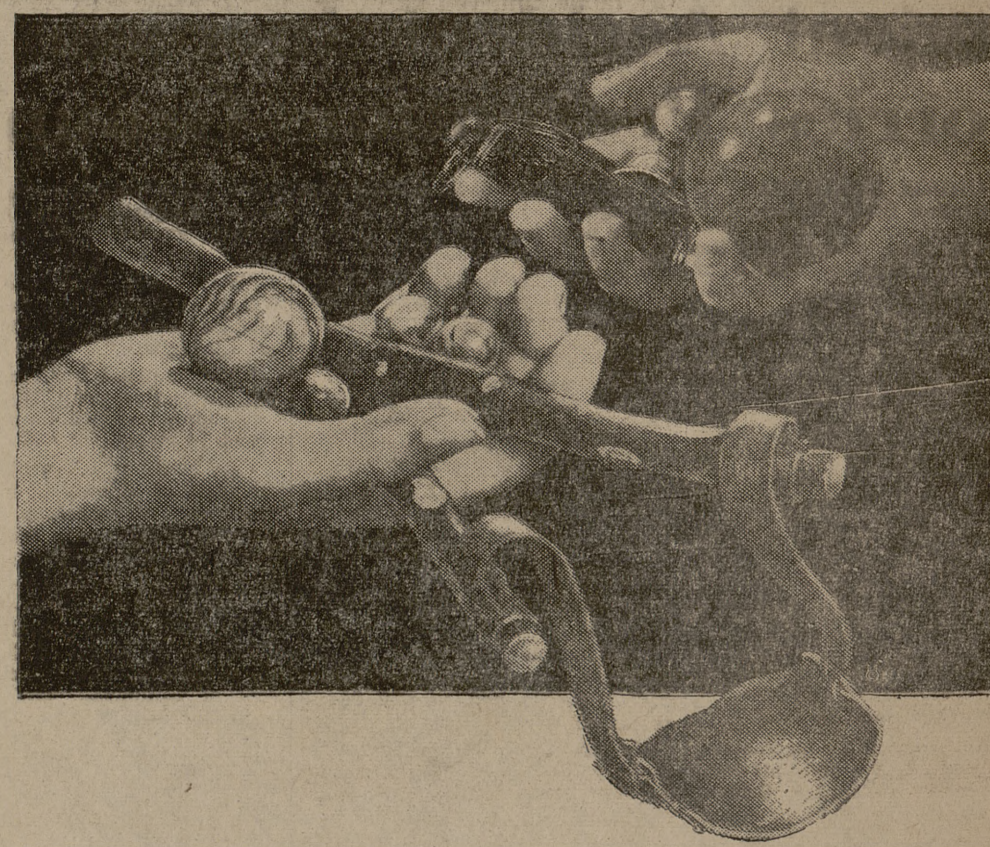
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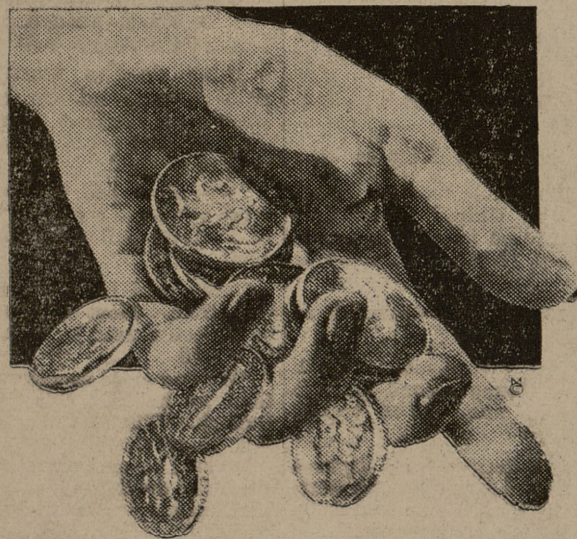
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