

# 'Deathwatch' Predicts 176 Violent Fatalities

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

## Garrison Warns Aggies 'Don't Relax Going Home'

Tomorrow at noon, Christmas recess will officially begin at A&M.

By that time, however, many Aggies will have already made the long trip home, or at least be well on their way.

The odds are against the Aggies though. With 176 violent deaths forecast for the Christmas holidays—90 of these the result of highway traffic accidents—Agiess on the road seem to be playing a grim game with Death, and the cards are stacked!

In an exclusive telephone interview yesterday, Col. Homer Garrison, Jr., director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, offered motoring A&M students this advice:

"Many Texans, particularly students such as you, will be heading homeward on the highways this weekend, preliminary to the opening of the Christmas and New Year's holiday season. Our Texas highways will probably be more crowded than usual, the weather could turn bad and add to the hazards of driving, and the expectations of Christmas parties and festivities might cause some of you to relax your usual attentiveness.

"Your Texas Department of Public Safety urges all of you who will be making trips, particularly long trips, to exercise even greater care than usual during this time of year. It might help avoid tragedy during this holiday season.

"Our records prove without a doubt that legal driving is safe driving; that in almost every fatal accident at least one traffic law violation is involved. And even if you should not be involved in an accident, law violations can be a costly and unnecessary holiday expense throughout the year.

"Statistical information from our department indicates that 90 persons will be killed in traffic crashes during the holiday period, extending ten days from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Dec. 23, to 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 2. We hope that Texas drivers will prove we estimated too high.

"In addition, we will do everything in our power to prove this prediction is wrong by having every available patrolman on duty, as well as all radar units, in order to remove dangerous and illegal drivers from the highway."

Here in Bryan, Highway Patrolman O. L. Luther has promised "round-the-clock" patrol action to help prevent holiday accidents.

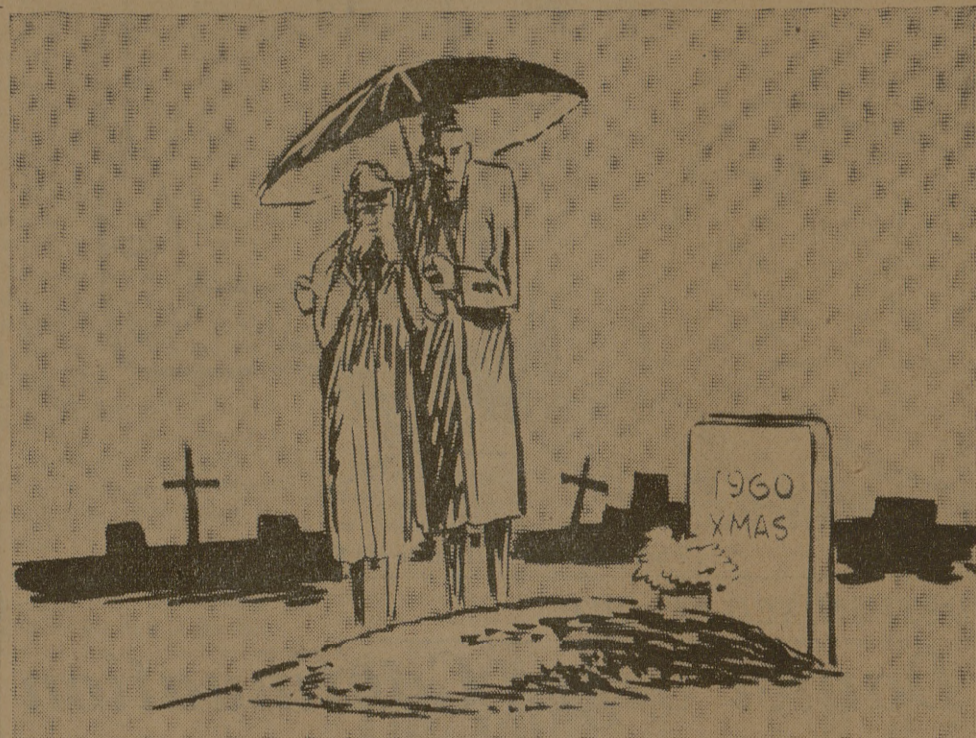
In a Christmas message directed to Brazos County motorists, Luther said.

"Most of us can look back at Christmas and New Year's holidays with happy memories, but to some, Christmas is only a reminder of the loss of a loved one.

"The Department of Public Safety found a traffic law violation in 71 of the 72 fatal accidents last Christmas.

"Please drive within the limits of the law this year. Don't drink and drive. Allow yourself plenty of time going and coming, to permit you to drive at a safe speed.

"Having your visit cut short a few minutes is better than having your life snuffed out in a traffic accident."



It Could Happen To You  
... why?

## Stats Indicate 90 Traffic Victims

"Operation Deathwatch" may see 176 persons die violently during the Yule holidays.

That was the prediction today of the Texas Department of Public Safety of expected violent deaths in traffic, murder and suicide, and other fatal accidents during the 10-day period embracing the Christmas-New Year holidays.

Col. Homer Garrison, Jr., department director, said experience in previous holiday periods and other statistical factors indicate 90 persons will be killed in traffic, there will be 46 homicides and suicides, and 40 persons will die in fires and other non-traffic accidents.

He announced that "Operation Deathwatch," a grim tabulation of holiday deaths, will be in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Dec. 23-11:59 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 1.

"We hope our prediction is too high, and through the most concerted and coordinated effort in history this year, we will be doing everything in our power to hold down traffic deaths, particularly during the holidays," Garrison said.

"Our Regional Commanders have been instructed to have every available man on duty and all radar units working during this period in an extra-special effort to maintain the existing reduction in traffic fatalities effected so far in 1960.

"We hope to wind up this year with approximately 170, or about seven per cent, less fatalities if we can hold the trend which has apparently been established.

"Operationally, department personnel will attempt to achieve the most effective enforcement program possible during the period, and through a coordinated, statewide public information program an all-out effort will be made to keep the public advised of and aware of the special hazards of holiday driving and the need for legal driving at all times. Experience has shown without a doubt that in most fatal traffic accidents, at least one violation of the traffic laws is a causative factor."

Garrison said participants in this program include the Governor's Highway Safety Commission, the Department of Public Safety, the Texas Association of Broadcasters, the Texas Council of Safety Supervisors, the Oil Field Haulers Association, the Associated General Contractors, the outdoor advertising media, the Texas Highway Department, the Texas Safety Association and the press, radio and television media.

## Safety Issue To Be Entered In Contest

This issue of The Battalion is devoted to promoting highway and holiday safety, particularly to students of Texas A&M embarking on the Christmas recess.

Today's Battalion, consistent with the past 11 years, will be submitted to the annual contest sponsored by the Lumberman's Mutual Casualty Co. in Chicago.

The contest was originated in 1948 and has prompted hundreds of journalists to promote safety for the fatality-marred holiday season.

This year, cash prizes are being offered by the firm to college newspapers entering the contest with awards presented in both overall and separate categories.

Divisions include college daily, non-daily, editorial, feature, cartoon and photograph.

Since the advent of the contest, The Battalion ranks second among college newspapers with awards won in the contest, placing nine of eleven years. This record is second only to the University of Southern California's Daily Trojan.

Last year's winners in the college category were The Daily Trojan at Southern Cal, The Daily Universe at Brigham Young University and The Daily Illini at the University of Illinois.

## SPECIAL SAFETY EDITION



# THE BATTALION

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## Odds Again Against A&M Motorists

Odds are against A&M motorists again this year.

Figures tabulated by the Texas Department of Public Safety clearly show the odds are against all college students on the highways of the state are poor.

The college student age group, the kind of cars driven by most college students, the type roads the students will use and the days they will be on the highways—all of these were among the highest in accident ratings in Texas last year.

The 1959 statistics show the age group from 18-24 were involved in 24.3 per cent of the state's fatal accidents and 18.1 per cent of the non-fatal mishaps. In 1958 this same age group was involved in 15.5 per cent of all fatal accidents.

Also many of the men of Aggie land will be on the highways between the hours of 4-8 p.m. today and tomorrow.

Statistics show 25.5 per cent of all fatal accidents occur in these hours, with 6.8 per cent between 6 and 7, 6.3 per cent between 4 and 5, and 6.2 per cent between the hours of 5 and 6 and 7 and 8.

During this same time period, the Department of Public Safety report shows 29.5 per cent of all injuries due to traffic mishaps are incurred.

Weekends are also listed as the worst time period for accidents, with the three days of Friday, Saturday and Sunday accounting for 55.1 per cent of 1959's fatal traffic accidents.

Broken down, the statistics show 21.2 per cent of the mishaps on

Saturday, 19 per cent on Sundays and 14.9 per cent on Fridays.

The figures also show most motorists will be unable to blame auto defects or poor weather for any accidents they may have.

In 1959, 86.7 per cent of all fatal accidents and 81.5 per cent of all accidents occurred in clear weather. Also 96.6 per cent of last year's traffic accidents occurred in cars that were apparently in good condition.

Motorists, however, have been warned to be extremely cautious on the state's highways after the recent surge of bad weather and poor driving conditions that has engulfed practically the entire state.

Most observers have predicted the clearing-up that occurred yesterday and continued today will be an encouraging aspect for the traffic out-look.

Just because a person has a new car does not prevent him from accidents, either, the report shows. In fact, in 1959 the reverse proved true. Cars only one year old were involved in 25 per cent of all accidents, while two-year-old vehicles were involved in 14 per cent of the mishaps.

Three-year-old cars were involved in 13 per cent of the accidents and cars over four years old

accounted for the remaining 48 per cent.

The major causative factors in accidents last year were: exceeding the speed limit, 43.1 per cent; driving on the wrong side of the road, 15.9 per cent; driving off the roadway, 12.1 per cent.

Recklessness, 11.9 per cent; failure to obtain right-of-way, 11.2 per cent, and various minor causes, the remaining 5.8 per cent.

An insurance company booklet has summed up the traffic situation by saying:

"In 1959, more than 2,900,000 Americans added their names to the nation's roll call of senseless slaughter, an increase of almost 50,000 over the previous year.

"They were added despite the pleadings and warnings of those who try in vain to halt the carnage of highway fatalities.

"Each year the grim reaper emerges victorious, his Dishonor Roll growing ever longer with the names of men, women and children, drivers and pedestrians, the careless and innocent alike.

"Since the first automobile chugged noisily down cobblestone streets, more than 62,000,000 killed, crippled and maimed Americans have inscribed their names on this Dishonor Roll.

In other words, fellow-Agiess, what more could be said to urge extreme caution on the highways over the holidays?

## A THOUGHT, A PLEA

## Gala Holidays—But Not For These



Sgt. O. L. Luther  
'... two evils'



Mrs. R. Ballard  
'... all be busier'



Amil Matura  
'... it's pretty rough'

(Editor's Note: How do people who are chiefly concerned with automobile accidents feel about the coming Christmas holidays, knowing they will probably be called on to work late and hard. Here are the views of four of them—a highway patrolman, a nurse, an ambulance driver, and a doctor.)

**Sgt. O. L. Luther**

"We usually have one or two fatal accidents in Brazos County during the Christmas holidays," said Sgt. O. L. Luther of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

"Usually these accidents are a combination of two evils—drinking and speed.

"Where you find drinking, you usually find speed, too; they don't make a very good couple," he added.

"Besides wrecks, we are also called on to investigate other types of accidents, like those resulting

from fireworks, burnings, and drownings. We arrange to keep pretty busy all the time, but during the Christmas holidays, we put an all-out effort to control careless driving in our five-county area.

"Starting Dec. 23, four police patrol units will be working 'round-the-clock to help prevent holiday accidents."

**Mrs. R. Ballard**

"The part of the car that causes the most accidents is the nut behind the wheel," is the feeling of Hillier Funeral Home ambulance driver Amil Matura.

"Sometimes it's pretty rough to pick up what's left after a wreck when the Christmas presents are still in the back seat. A lot of presents never get delivered that way."

"It's just no Christmas for many people because of this," added Ed Guillard, another driver for Hillier.

"We are on call 24 hours a day here; I just hope we don't get one of those 2 a.m. calls this Christmas."

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mas. They usually result in some pretty sad experiences."

**Dr. Truman Melcher**

"Some trying days are ahead for the people who have to take care of the results of carelessness that pour into the hospital every Christmas," was the prediction of Dr. Truman Melcher of the Bryan City Hospital.

"On the schedule of events for the Christmas season, I imagine we will have a shooting victim, and maybe someone who has been stabbed.

"I'm hoping there won't be any bad traffic accidents this year. Those are really tragic," he said. "We see a lot of damage from fireworks, too. Burned hands, eyes, ears—quite a few of them. Last year we had a little boy whose Christmas was spoiled because he couldn't hold a Roman candle correctly. His hand was very badly burned because of this."

## 'Death's Night Before Christmas'

(Editor's Note: The following poem was written by Sgt. Gene Brewer of the Texas Department of Public Safety. We believe that this work of Brewer, who worked

with the Department of Public Safety in the Dallas area, is an excellent example of the haphazard driving prevalent on highways, particularly during the holiday season.)

### 'DEATH'S NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS'

By GENE BREWER

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the room,  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a bloom;  
The caskets were lined by the fireplace with care,  
And the fragrance of flowers covered the air.  
Loved ones were gathered with tears in their eyes,  
While the silence was torn by heartbroken cries.  
Dressed in the gifts of our children so sweet,  
Were Mamma and I in eternity's sleep.  
When up with the dawn we had jumped in the car  
To visit with Grandma, a distance quite far.  
Away through the country, we'd sped like a flash,  
Tore down the highway, a death-dealing crash!  
Our blood on the crest of the hilltop so high,  
Gave a silent reminder for those passing by,  
That out in the darkness of a cold winter's night  
Stood a grim, cloaked figure, ready to smite.  
He was dressed all in black from his foot to his head,  
And his clothes were all tarnished with blood from the dead;

A long curved scythe he had flung on his back,  
And he looked like a devil about to attack.  
He was skinny and gaunt, a right vicious old elf,  
And I screamed when I saw him, in spite of myself.  
A blink of his eye, and a twist of his head—  
Soon gave me to know I had plenty to dread;  
He spoke not a word but went straight to his work,  
Adding us to his roll of nitwits and jerks.  
More rapid than autos his coursers they came,  
And he whistled and shouted, and called us by name:  
"Now, Speeder! Now, Careless! Now, Honker! and Creepy!  
On, Passer! On, Weaver! On, Drinker! and Sleepy!  
To the top of the hill, to the end of the curve!  
Now, dash away, dash away, show you got nerve!"  
And then in a twinkling, I saw in my lights  
The tingling, spine-chilling, most awesome of sights.  
As I drew in my head, and was turning the wheel,  
Through the windshield and dash came the grinding of steel.

As dry leaves, that night, the wild auto did fly,  
When we met with another to mount to the sky.  
The stump of my pipe, it broke off in my teeth,  
And the smoke, it encircled my head for a wreath.  
So hear as I speak from death's darkened sill:  
Slow down, my friend, pass not on that hill,  
For he waits there ahead, omnipotent, cold,  
For the drivers, lax, in his arms to enfold.  
Escape him you can't, if you must take the chance;  
Death is my head, and was turning the wheel,  
For I heard him exclaim, ere my eyes dimmed of sight,  
"Careless driving to all and to all a good fright."

## A Warning: 'This Is God's Country'

"This is God's Country. Don't drive through it like hell." So goes a sign at Hondo.

How many supposedly "safe" drivers will heed that warning? Last year during the Christmas holiday period 97 persons met death on Texas highways.

In today's age of speedier more powerful cars there is always present the tendency to go a little bit faster. Especially during holidays, common sense may be shoved aside by the thoughts of getting home or seeing loved ones.

Up until Nov. 18 there were 1,837 traffic deaths in Texas. 103,000 persons were injured and there were 251,000 crashes. Compared to 1959 totals there is a seven per cent reduction in deaths, an eight per cent reduction in injuries and crashes are down eight per cent.

Are Texas motorists planning to make up for the death and injury deficiencies over the holiday period? This bright little note remains to be seen.

as traffic history, there were 2,611 persons killed. 111,000 were injured in a total of 229,000 crashes. In that year 40.1 billion miles were traveled by Texans' 3,949,000 licensed drivers.

1957, the fourth worst year in Texas traffic history, saw only 2,539 killed, 122,000 injured and 261,000 crashes. In that year 42.4 billion miles were traveled by Texans' motorists.

1958, the ninth worst year in Texas traffic history, yielded 2,342 Texas wayfarers to the grim reaper. There were 127,000 injured and 304,000 crashes that year.

Last year was listed as the sixth worst year in Texas traffic history with a total of 2,453 killed.

In 1956, the worst year in Tex-

## 'Where You're Going Will Still Be There'