

Program Seeks To Lower Accidents

Fewer accidents on the nation's highways, streets and freeways may be found in a program under way at Texas A&M this week.

Teacher educators and high school driver education teachers are studying new concepts of training new drivers — and re-training old "accidents" looking for a place to happen — in a Driver Education Seminar.

Space-age electronics and a six-car range on which an instructor can teach six drivers at a time are being used to show driver educators new programs and time-saving techniques.

The seminar co-sponsored by A&M, the Texas Highway Department and Department of Public Safety, Texas Education Agency, Governor's office and insurance firms is putting 48 participants behind the wheel and in the teaching position.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED by three insurance companies — Aetna, Allstate and Farmers Insurance Group — and facilities furnished by A&M and the Highway Department district in Bryan are located at the Research Annex on Highway 21 West.

Instructors and teachers train under special teaching consultants at four stations, rotating each two hours.

In the drivecator, motion picture, filmstrip and audiotape are mixed to acquaint the student with factors affecting driving, rules of the road, basic skills, city, open road and adverse driving conditions, emergencies and defensive driving.

Thirty hours minimum are required for the program, in which 60 students may be instructed and tested electronically, with individual response controls.

TWO SYSTEMS of driving simulator are employed in the week-long seminar. Both utilize movie projectors to give the driving situation. Responses are checked automatically. One system injects the capability of automatic test scoring.

Both the drivotrainer and driver trainer show pictures filmed from the driver's head position. The multi-station simulator will allow one instructor to teach 15 fledgling drivers at a time.

"As pilots learn to fly in the Link trainer, youngsters learn driving skills in the simulator," noted Ralph Jackson, Allstate consultant.

"The hookup matches the individual's response to a driving situation against a programmed response. An incorrect decision flashes a light, and the instructor can make on-the-spot corrections rather than waiting until the end of a film when the error is on the way to becoming a habit," he added.

Jackson pointed out that the system allows for introduction of a variety of high accident potential situations which the student may not get in moving traffic.

"The instructor can talk to the student more in the simulator. In a moving auto, a talking instructor splits the student's attention which is already on a ragged edge anyway," he went on.

Both systems develop perceptible skills and train the student to look and think ahead of his car.

Instruction is alternated between the simulators and driving range, where the student puts into actual practice what he has learned indoors.

The seminar range, marked off on an old Bryan AFB runway, trains in auto starting, backing and stopping procedures. Control, positioning, angle and parallel parking, straight driving, making turns and utilizing merging lanes such as on freeways are included.

The instructor uses a walkie-talkie received through the specially rigged regular car radio. He controls movement of six or more cars from a central point.

The system substantially reduces costs of standard operation, requiring a teacher per student.

"We have two major objectives," commented Lewis M. Spears, state director of driver education in the state education agency.

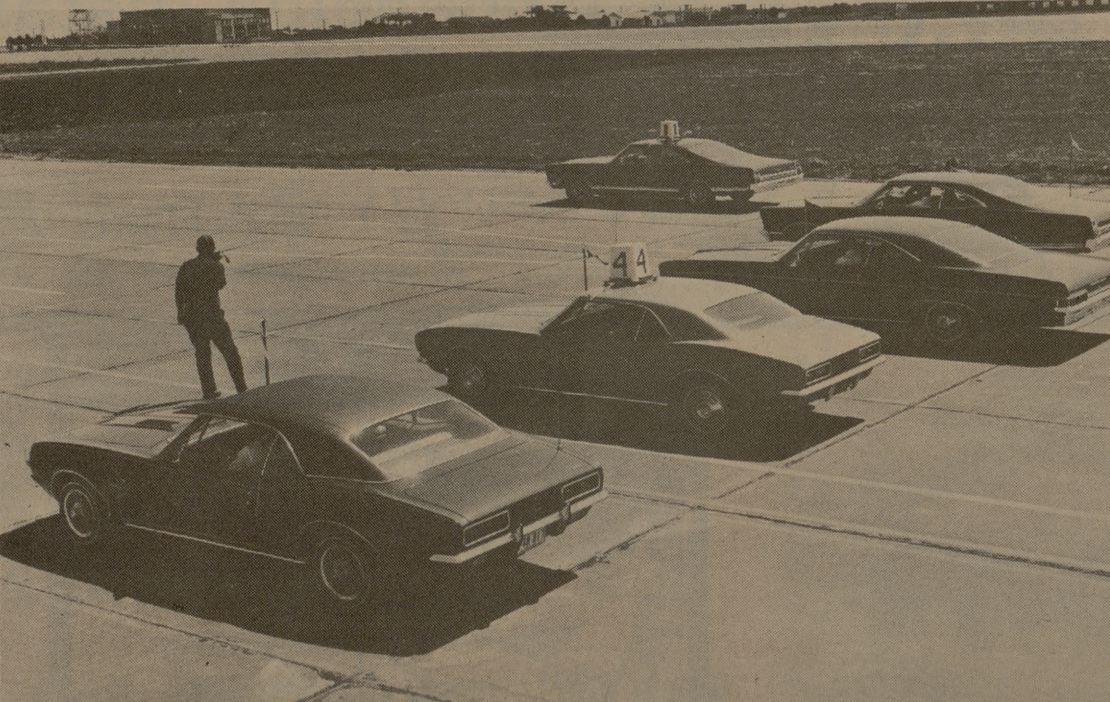
"Leading driver educators of 20 state areas are here to improve

the quality of driver education, through simulation, range and response systems."

"We also hope to prepare teachers, who are training the state's future drivers."

Driver education teachers participating are from Houston, Dallas, Beaumont, El Paso, Tyler,

Midland, Lubbock, Waco, Amarillo, McAllen, Corpus Christi, Wichita Falls, Lufkin and Big Spring school systems. Driver education teacher instructors from Texas Tech, Southwest Texas, S. F. Austin, Abilene Christian, Prairie View A&M, Howard Payne, Baylor, Pan American, University of Houston, Lamar State and A&M are involved.



RADIO - CONTROLLED DRIVERS

Six driving students at a time are controlled by Charles Webb of Panama City, Fla., on a moving auto range of a Driver Education Seminar at Texas A&M University. He uses a walkie-talkie received by the regular car radio, which has been adapted to citizens band frequency. Student drivers find all intersections, turns, highway and street markings on the six-car range.

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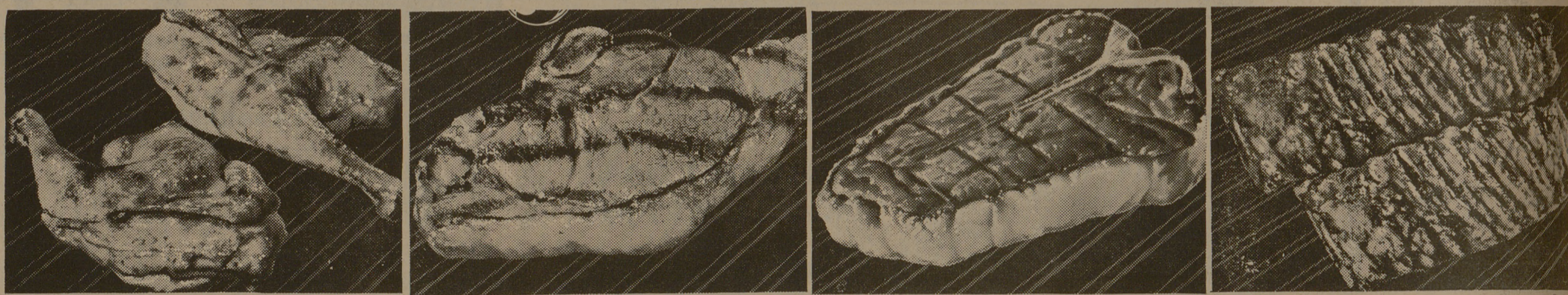
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