France begins safety campaign

Drivers stopped for alcohol test

United Press International

PARIS — On the vacationer-clogged highway between Paris and Orleans, 179 motorists were flagged down by police on one recent afternoon.

Each was led into a truck labeled "Alcohol-test" and asked to blow into a little white balloon.

France has unfurled a new campaign to reduce one of the world's highest highway death rates. Police stop motorists at random and ask them to blow into a balloon. If a capsule at the mouth of the balloon changes from yellow to green, the driver must take a blood test.

If the test shows more than 0.80 grams of alcohol per 1¾ pints (one liter) of blood — indicating the driver has had about three drinks — he loses his license for one to three years, even though no accident occurred.

The test is the third step in France's fight against the soaring highway death rate.

In 1975 France headed the list of major developed nations in highway deaths with 29.7 per 100,000 inhabitants. Next came Canada with 29.5, followed by Australia 29.1, the United States 26.4, West Germany 26.3, the Netherlands 23, Italy 19.5, Japan 17.6 and Great Britain with 14.7.

In 1976 the French government made seat belts obligatory and clamped on a speed limit of 55 mph on country roads, 68 mph on four-lane highways and 80 mph on major freeways.

The death rate has dropped 5 percent over five years, from 16,600 in 1972 to 13,104 in 1977.

France's new highway safety committee studied how Japan, with a death rate formerly the world's highest, had more than halved the toll. One measure was alcohol tests — before accidents. Officials say 41 percent of French traffic deaths involve alcohol.

The French parliament in June approved a law allowing police to test motorists' alcohol intake. A committee spokesman, Michel Herr, called the law an achievment in itself "considering that the deputies who passed it came from the Burgundy, Champagne, Loire and other great wine-producing areas."

Battalion photo by Lee Roy Leschper

Having lunch on the lawn

This rodent resident of the hedges in front of the Reed McDonald Bldg. on campus scurried from cover just long enough to grab a snack—and was hardly noticed by passing students.

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Mexico's peasants moving from rural areas to cities

United Press International

MEXICO CITY — Antonio Martinez awoke at 6 a.m. and went into the kitchen to re-heat some of last night's coffee. The rest of the household — his wife Guadalupe, five of their six children, and the infant son of a widowed cousin — still slept in the four-room brick house.

Across a narrow patio, shaded by a pine tree and filled with rosebushes and pink-flowering azaleas planted in empty tin cans, the Martinez's eldest daughter, Irma, 22, and her husband Manuel are asleep in their tiny room.

While the coffee boils, Antonio washes up in a bucket of water in the narrow bathroom, which has a toilet but no sink or shower.

Handsome at 44, with thick black hair and a sweeping mustache, Antonio drinks the coffee black, with two teaspoons of sugar, and leaves the house for his job as doorman in an elegant downtown restaurant.

It will take him about 45 minutes and cost 1.50 pesos (about 7 U.S. cents) to get to work by bus. But he is lucky.

Many of the other men in Colonia Providencia, a newish workers district on the eastern fringe of the capital, will spend as much as two hours crossing the crowded city to their jobs in factories in the western industrial suburbs.

At 7 a.m., Guadalupe wakes up and starts to prepare breakfast. She is 43, slender and diminutive, her black hair worn in a braid down her back in the style of Mexican-Indian women.

Guadalupe has borne six children and now has a seventh child to care for — 6-month-old Felipe, whose mother, a cousin of Antonio's, died in childbirth. She will care for him until his father marries again.

Antonio and Guadalupe Martinez are representative of a growing phenomenon — the rural-born, city-absorbed, upwardly-mobile working class. About 60 percent of Mexico's 64 million people live in cities and by the year 2000 demographers expect the proportion to rise to almost 80 percent.

The Martinezes are among the more than 5.2 million of Mexico City's 13 million people who migrated to the city from the country in search of better jobs and better lives.

Antonio and Guadalupe were born in Santa Marta, a village of 3,000 people about 85 miles northwest of Mexico City. Their parents were farmers and both completed three years of primary school, slightly less than the national average.

They were married in 1957 and Antonio worked the farm, helping his father plant corn and beans. But there was not enough to do on the 10-acre plot for Antonio and his four brothers.

So in 1959 the family came to Mexico City and Antonio found work washing dishes in a restaurant. He moved to his present job in 1962.

The family has come a long way in two decades of city life. Nine years ago, they had saved enough to buy a small lot in Colonia Providencia — it cost them about $3,500 — and gradually built their own house on it.

The rooms are cramped and the green paint is peeling from the walls. The drab concrete streets, close to the dusty remains of Texcoco Lake, is not as pleasant as the green semi-tropical village where they spent their childhood.

But they live better than they did in the country. And their children have educational and work opportunities unknown in Santa Marta.

The family eats better too — meat or chicken twice a week, eggs every other day.

"On the rancho, it was mostly beans," Guadalupe said. "Meat only once in a while, eggs once in a while, hardly any milk, just coffee."

The Martinezes have managed to save enough to buy a number of appliances: a gas stove, television set, record player, radio, iron, blender, and a sewing machine.

Increased prosperity is changing their social attitudes as well. Although Guadalupe became pregnant right after marriage, her daughter Irma has been married two years and says she does not want to have a child yet.

Guadalupe is making "sopes" for breakfast this morning. These are corn tortillas made thicker than usual, spread with chile sauce and sprinkled with cheese.

After breakfast, with the children gone to school and jobs, Guadalupe leaves the baby with Irma and goes to the neighborhood public market to buy food for the day's main meal. The family has no refrigerator so she must shop daily.

Today will not be a meat or fish day. Beef costs almost $1.50 a pound, fish is even more expensive, almost $2 a pound. Lunch will be rice cooked in tomato sauce, beans, and eggs, with papaya — which is in season — for dessert.

Antonio eats a big breakfast of ham and eggs at the restaurant, where wealthy businessmen lunch expensively on canellonis Rossini and imported trout.

They will spend twice as much on one meal as Antonio earns in a day. He gets the minimum wage of $5 and picks up another $3.50 in tips for parking customers' cars.

Sometimes Antonio does not return home immediately after work but goes to visit his "casa chica," the "little house" where his lover Carmen lives with their child.

Second families like theirs are still common at all social and economic levels in Mexico.

Carmen works as a sales clerk in a small neighborhood grocery to support their child. Antonio helps with some money fairly regularly but the demands of his "casa grande," the "big house" of Guadalupe and the children, are too great for him to support Carmen too.

Guadalupe suspects that the relationship exists, but she understands machismo and is resigned to it. She probably will not complain as long as Antonio continues to support her and the children.

Like most working class Mexican women, Guadalupe spends much of her time at home and has few social contacts outside her family.

After lunch, she takes a short siesta with the baby and then sits down with Irma to watch their favorite "telenovelas" — soap operas. Juan Carlos and Rosa do their homework in front of the set while Benjamin plays soccer in the street.

Tomorrow is Saturday and Antonio will work a full day at the restaurant. On Sunday the family plans a picnic in Chapultepec Park for the day.

Antonio used to own an old car and was able to take his family farther afield for Sunday outings. But repairs became too costly and he had to sell it.

He is saving money for another car, however, and hopes to have enough for a down payment when he gets his Christmas bonus — a month's pay under Mexican law.

Antonio still takes his family to Santa Marta for vacations, but he wouldn't want to go back there to live.

"We're really just getting by, but it's better here than on the rancho," he said.

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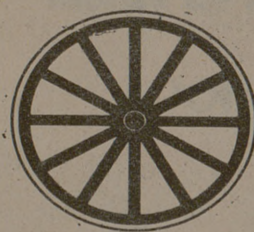

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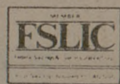

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