

Friendly cops lend air of authenticity to Safety City trip

By KAREN ROGERS
Battalion Staff

It could have been a Houston thoroughfare. Bewildered drivers were ignoring the traffic lights and signs and forgetting to signal their intent to turn.

But, unlike Houston, there was a policeman on hand. The "violators" were third graders riding pedal-powered cars and the scene of the crimes was Safety City in College Station.

Safety City, located on Timber Street, is a miniature city complete with regulation traffic lights and signs, streets lined with businesses and a landscaped park.

The facility began operation in December and since then more than 2,500 children are expected to participate in the 45-minute session where College Station police officers explain the meaning of traffic signs, lights and the use of arm signals. They then guide the children through the course and point out their mistakes and how to correct them.

"We've seen a tremendous improvement in what they know and how they react to it," Glenn said. "The teachers and principals say they've seen the kids using their arms signals when they ride their bikes to school."

Safety education units are taught in the classrooms with the trip to Safety City being the goal the kids work toward, Glenn said.

A curriculum guide for grades kindergarten through fourth was drawn up by teachers with the aid of agencies such as the Texas Office of Traffic Safety and the National Safety Council. Songs, puzzles, plays and films are used to illustrate the safety rules.

Teachers have the option of inviting the two police officers to the individual classrooms or an assembly for the entire grade level to explain the traffic laws, what Safety City is and what will be required of them there.

At the city, the officers explain to the children through the use of pictures what traffic signals and signs mean and how it affects drivers and pedestrians.

There is obvious fidgeting in the audience as volunteers of the Neighborhood Advisory Council ready the cars for the eager drivers. Armed with whistles, Kapella and Kennedy stand on opposite sides of the city and announce that when the children hear the whistle, "the Gumball Rally begins."

Kennedy warns the children that "every law you violate in Safety City, you violate everyday when you ride your bicycle."

Each time a child makes a mistake, one of the policemen blows his whistle and stops all traffic so that all the children will benefit.

"Use your left hand to signal," Kennedy told one startled youngster. "If you use your right hand, it would be inside the car."

Few of the children got very far without being corrected. Some ran red lights, a few went the wrong way down a one-way street and there were some close calls for pedestrians.

After a few minutes, traffic began running more smoothly. The "whistle-stops" were fewer and the children were making a concentrated effort to obey the rules.

At the end of the session, Kennedy asked the children if they had learned anything at Safety City and whether there were going to use these rules when they rode their bicycles.

He was answered with a chorus of enthusiastic yeses.

Safety City was made possible by a combination of state and city grants.

The College Station City Council appropriated \$15,000 for the initial development of the facility and also supplied a part time Safety Officer. There are also plans to install a flashing warning light, donated by the city.

The A&M Consolidated School Board donated the Timber Street property and the little red schoolhouse.

The Texas Office of Traffic Safety provided \$1,778 for the purchase of all the regulatory and traffic signs used in the facility.

The Community Education Neighborhood Advisory Committee and the College Station Police Department were instrumental in getting the project off the ground, Glenn said. "Without them, there would have been no Safety City. The buildings and cars were donated by individual businesses. Each has an identifying placard."

The construction and landscaping were done by volunteers, from sororities and fraternities to the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Glenn said.

"I also can't say enough about the policemen we've worked with. I am happy to see the kids getting along with the police." The police have been more than cooperative, he added.

He said that when a city hall is added to the facility, he hopes to have a policeman there after school to talk with the children and to answer any questions they may have.

"I'm sure a lot of things will develop out of this program," he said.



Laura Williams, front, and Clinton Van Etten of College Hills Elementary School ride pedal-powered cars at Safety City, on Timber Street in College Station. The miniature city, complete with traffic lights and signs, enables students to practice bicycle and pedestrian rules.
Battalion photo by Lynn Blanco

Satellite finds quasars; new cosmic tale?

United Press International
CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. - A satellite has discovered quasars, believed to be the most distant objects in the universe, more than 10 billion light years from Earth, Cape Canaveral Air Station officials said Tuesday.
The quasars, starlike bodies emitting X-rays with enough energy output per second to

meet all of Earth's energy needs for a billion years, were detected by the High Energy Astronomy Observatory No. 2. It was put into orbit around Earth last November to seek X-ray sources from deep space.

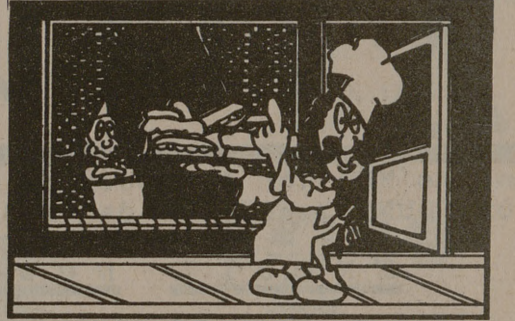
Scientists said the discovery could have major implications for theories of cosmic evolution.

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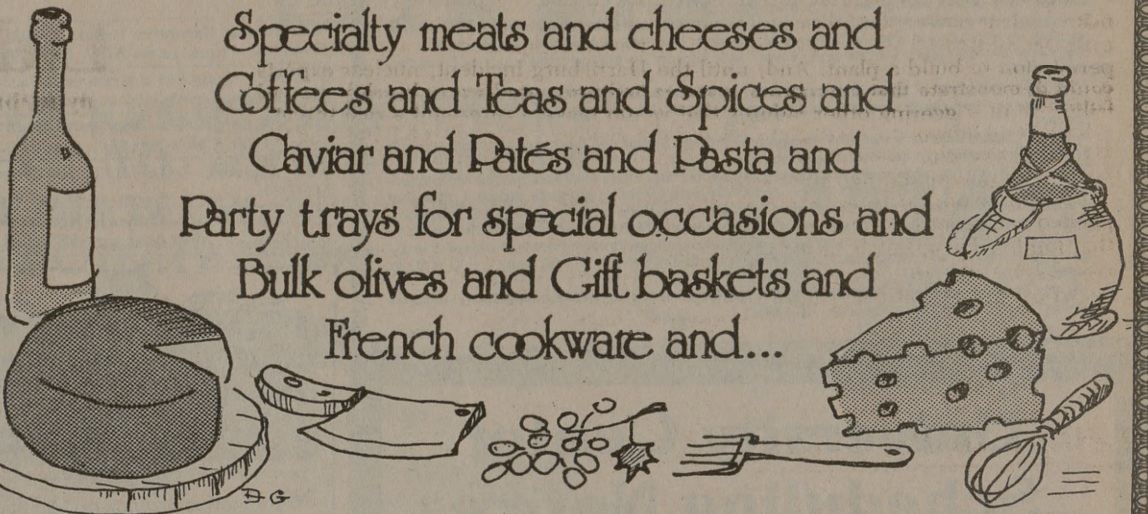
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