

**Our highway planners have  
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vision to the designing  
of roads to reduce  
traffic accidents**

## *Better Roads Are Safer Roads*

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**R**ECENTLY, metropolitan newspapers carried glaring headlines about the head-on collision on Highway 54 of an automobile driven by a U.P. professor and one driven by a P.C. officer, resulting in the instantaneous death of the professor and serious injuries to four others. This accident is almost a daily occurrence on our highways. The accident reports from traffic enforcement agencies all over the country that trickle into our Office indicate that our fatality rate of 15.5 persons per one hundred million vehicle kilometers of travel has not diminished.

In 1952, traffic accidents took a toll of 378 human lives and

incapacitated or injured 3,893 persons in 5,605 accidents of all types. This trend from 1952 up to 1956 showed an increase in the number of accidents of about 1½ times with a slight increase in fatalities and injuries. During 1956, 457 died; 1,148 were seriously injured and 4,490 were slightly injured. This means that ten Filipinos daily sustain injury in traffic accidents and that three persons die every two days all over the country from the same causes.

Compared to progressive nations in the world, particularly the United States, where the fatality rate is only from 2.2 to 4 per cent of every one hundred million vehicle miles on their

freeways and from 6 to 12 per cent of every one hundred million vehicle miles on their state and rural highways, our fatality rate is fearfully high. This is a very bad condition that the government — the Motor Vehicles Office, the Bureau of Public Highways, the TRAFCON unit of the Philippine Constabulary and local traffic officers — should share in the responsibility of reducing the toll in human lives and in the loss of millions of pesos paid in property damage and insurance. We cannot be complacent in the face of this utter waste.

I WOULD like to point out the three primary "E's" in traffic safety. These are Education, Engineering and Enforcement.

Education means instructing the driver, pedestrian, and the general public on traffic laws, codes, rules and regulations, along with the widespread dissemination of traffic safety information that will materially help in minimizing traffic accidents and in re-awakening the motorists to a conscientious observance of the rules of the road. Driver education may start in the schools or through actual experience but it behooves the driver-licensing agency to place, apply more strictly the accepted methods of examination before any new driver is given the authority to sit behind a steering wheel.

The written, physical and actual driving examination should be thorough and comprehensive. And there should be no leniency in denying the privilege of driving to those who are physically, morally and mentally unfit because to do otherwise is to endanger human lives and forfeit valuable property. If we are appalled at an airplane crash, we can no less be horrified by daily tragedies on our highways.

The engineering phase of traffic safety concerns the incorporation into highway planning such features of design and construction that would minimize, if not actually prevent, traffic accidents. The Bureau of Public Highways is working along progressive lines, incorporating into road designs such features as extended no-passing lanes, divided highways that preclude head-on collisions, grade separators at intersections, speed zone indicators, uniform signs and signals to reduce intersection difficulties, wide shoulders to provide safe refuge for disabled vehicles, marked cross-walks for pedestrians, channelizations, and many other improved engineering devices.

Our highway planners have geared their thinking and vision to the planning of such highways that will contribute immensely to reduction of traffic accidents. They now propose

to make studies of the eventual construction of modern controlled access roads in our highway system, possibly to give priority to those portions which have a heavy volume of traffic. But on less important roads they propose to apply the same plan, with the eventual incorporation of those operating features of the controlled access type of highway. Which means that both as a national project and as regional public works, our road construction program is geared to new and progressive planning.

In this impartial way, we in the department of public works and communications will aim eventually at relieving traffic congestion everywhere, whether in a short section of the Manila North Road from the Balintawak Monument to Tabang, Bulacan, as a modest beginning, or in a scale bigger than that.

The present project is not a super-colossal job, by the way, as may have been misrepresented through over-glamourized newspaper reports, because we do not intend to construct right now the whole 168-kilometer diversionary route from Manila to Pangasinan. Our section of this road, consisting of only about 25 kilometers, because there is no other road in the whole country with its main trunk route as heavily congested as this particular section of the Manila-North Road.

If other roads in the national system, be it in the Visayas or Mindanao or on any other island, or region, should need this or other type of improved highway, our highway planners who are constantly appraising statistics of our road needs, would certainly design similar or approximately similar types of highway. And because this is, as I emphasized, only a modest beginning, no region or province or island need therefore be sacrificed when it comes to allocation of national funds.

THE LAST E of traffic safety promotion is enforcement, and it is here that police traffic enforcement comes into play. Without the last E, the two other E's are neutralized. We may have all the laws, rules and regulations governing the use of the road, driver behavior and the movement and control of traffic, but without rigid and judicious enforcement of these rules and regulations, our efforts would be negative.

On this score, let me relate a very interesting experience of some engineers, the driver of whose car was apprehended by a TRAFCON patrol of the Philippine Constabulary on the Manila-North Road. The officer politely waved them to a stop and in the most courteous way said: "Sorry, gentlemen, but please understand that your driver is endangering your lives; I am

apprehending him because he was overtaking at an unnecessarily high speed on a non-passing zone."

If the engineers in the car had ever the faintest notion of interceding on behalf of their driver, this approach changed their minds because the TRAFCON officer was not only convincing but reasonable, which is a far cry from the ordinary run of police officials. This is one of the many facets of traffic enforcement that properly strengthens the policing of our highways.

The TRAFCON unit of the Philippine Constabulary and many local traffic officials should be commended for their efficient and knowledgeable enforcement and control of traffic laws on our highways. There should be no relaxation of efforts. On the other hand, it is sad to note that there are a few police officers who appear easy prey to venality. What we need is an organization of more dynamic force, composed of dedicated police officers with a high sense of duty, civic consciousness and selflessness.

There are other traffic problems worthy of study, specially among urban and suburban police traffic divisions. I refer particularly to the conditions in Manila which are interlaced with the problems of nearby suburban areas. The traffic problems of Manila have become

their problems too. The traffic difficulties in urban Manila are reflected in the type and volume of transportation used by suburbanites, in the pursuit of business and in their private motoring. There is need therefore to integrate police functions among areas of heavy traffic activity that overlap certain jurisdictions. The responsibility of traffic police can no longer be limited by boundaries.

**I**N THE concerted effort to create ideal conditions on our roads and minimize the daily toll of human lives from traffic accidents, there should be uniformity in the interpretation of the rules of the road and more cooperation with the Public Service Commission, the Motor Vehicles Office, the TRAFCON and the Bureau of Public Highways.

To achieve better coordination, more and serious training of police recruits is needed. The uniformity and regularity of maintaining and forwarding to a central agency traffic accident reports will come in handy, too. If a person is sick, he can only be cured if there is a proper diagnosis. In the case of traffic analysis, experts in my department are hampered in their search for corrective measures by the incomplete and often incorrect data furnished us, or

sometimes the total lack of data.

While the Motor Vehicles Office has a compilation of traffic accidents, I am not too sure that all accidents investigated by local traffic officers are properly reported and properly compiled, such that they will be of value to our traffic analysts. All local police officers should therefore make their re-

ports carefully and transmit them as regularly as possible. And we shall do our part in correcting the physical and geometric deficiencies of our highways to the end that we will have highways that will give the motoring public a guarantee that the road they travel is safe, that as long as they do their part in observing traffic safety, they need never gamble with their lives.

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### Lonely Cats

*In Los Angeles, Matt Weinstock tells about a lady who loves cats who was dining with her husband in her apartment one night when she fancied she heard a cat meowing a floor or two away. "I'll bet that pussy is lonely," she remarked to her husband, and playfully meowed back.*

*To her surprise the cat answered her! She repeated her meow, this time putting extra feeling into her performance, and there then ensued the darnedest cat conversation ever heard in that neighborhood. It continued for a full half hour, while the husband marveled.*

*The next day her triumph was deflated when a neighbor dropped down to borrow some sugar. "The funniest thing happened last night," said the neighbor. "I meowed at a cat and he meowed back — and we must have kept it up for forty minutes!"*

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