

OldMagazineArticles.com
LITERARY DIGEST
December 26, 1936

p. 8

AUTO ACCIDENTS: Fatalities on Increase; Yale Survey Exonerates Woman Driver

"A woman driver! You might have known."

Thus the cynical chant of many a male motorist when a woman errs, slightly or seriously, in maneuvering her car.

But the gibe has no basis in fact, according to the report of a university professor who took the trouble to find out. Armed with statistics, he asserts that the female of the motoring species is not nearly so deadly as the male.

Only 6 per cent. of highway accidents involve women drivers, according to Prof. William J. Cox of Yale. Not only that, but "if accidents are to be reduced," he says, "it will be accomplished through women. Men have had the problem for thirty years and have done little with it.

"Development of public opinion toward observance of law with a view to decreasing automobile accidents is definitely a work for women."

Fatalities Increase—If so, they face a colossal job, for all indications are that motor fatalities are increasing steadily.

In 1935, the toll was 37,000. Such slaughter shocked the country. Something, everybody agreed, had to be done. A great campaign was launched to save human lives by making motoring safer. Through courts, police, schools, the Red Cross, newspaper advertising, bill-board displays, lectures, and in a dozen other ways, motor-

ists were advised, entreated, warned.

The result? This year will record a higher motor death-rate than ever before, according to the National Safety Council's forecast. Instead of 37,000, the indicated total for 1936 is 37,500.

However, there are two favorable aspects: the annual increase will be much less (from 1934 to 1935 it jumped 900), and the death-rate measured by gasoline consumption also will show a marked reduction, about 9 per cent.

Findings—In line with the antiaccident campaign, Connecticut officials made an intensive study of motoring habits, published the results last week. Covering a total of 91,044 vehicles, the report shows their average speed was 38.9 miles an hour. Women were found to drive on the average 0.4 mile an hour slower than men.

The survey, directed by Prof. Charles J. Tilden of Yale, President of the Eno Foundation for Highway Traffic Regulation, also showed:

The data indicate "fairly conclusively that, on the whole, the fast driver is less careful than the moderate driver."

The average speed of all drivers is higher in winter than in summer, due, perhaps, to the addition of many slow pleasure drivers during the warm months.

Out-of-State cars traveled about three miles an hour faster than Connecticut cars, probably because the "foreign" cars in a majority of cases had a definite objective.

"There is evidence . . . that persons do not drive quite as fast immediately after eating as they are likely to either beforehand or after a period of an hour or so."