

The convertible B-47 is thought to be the world's first jet-powered aerial tanker. All production Stratojets are being equipped for refueling in flight. A demonstration of the aerial tank filling maneuver was given in Dayton at the National Aircraft Show.

Science News Letter, September 12, 1953

## GENERAL SCIENCE

## Fundamental Research Pledged to Agriculture

➤ MORE ADEQUATE support for research in the fundamental sciences upon which all of agriculture rests is advocated in a policy statement issued by Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Benson.

Such basic research has been the foundation of all the really big advances in agriculture, it is stated, and new research will be the source of new principles for the further improvement of our soils, plants and livestock.

The statement called for the strengthening of American agriculture through research and education. The system of co-operation between the U. S. Department of Agriculture and land grant colleges must grow to meet the growing demands of modern agriculture, it is emphasized.

Better organization and a more adequate extension program are contemplated. While improving marketing efficiency and gearing production to markets, it is planned to study more intensely the uses for millions of tons of agricultural products left on the farm and in marketing channels as waste, the statement said.

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## PUBLIC SAFETY

## Auto "Bug" Deflectors

➤ STATE LEGISLATURES are beginning to rule against the use of "bug" deflectors on automobiles on the grounds that they obstruct vision.

Connecticut motor vehicle authorities have outlawed the hood-mounted devices outright. New Jersey law says they are illegal unless completely transparent. Furthermore, they must not be larger than seven inches long and four inches high. Minnesota legislators enacted a law this year restricting the deflectors to a 50-square-inch-transparent area.

Other states may follow suit on the gadgets which are said to throw insects over the car so they do not splatter on windshields. The American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators favors restrictions similar to those of New Jersey.

Opaque "bug" deflectors mounted on the hoods of cars create blind spots. This is particularly true at night. Although the devices themselves may not be large, they obstruct vision in an ever-expanding cone as the driver scans the road ahead.

In this "dead" area of vision, a child may

## VITAL STATISTICS

## Biblical Lifespan Seen

➤ THE BIBLICAL lifespan of three score years and ten (70 years) will soon be the average lifespan in the United States, statisticians of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company predict in New York.

They base their prediction on the record high longevity achieved by Americans in 1950 and the 21-year gain in average lifespan during the first half of this century, as shown by records of the National Office of Vital Statistics.

In 1950, the average lifespan of the American people reached 68.4 years. White girl babies born today can expect to live, on the average, 72.4 years. For white boy babies the figure is 66.6 years.

All white women 21 years old or older can expect, on the average, to live to be 75 years old before they die.

Among non-whites, expectation of life at birth is much lower. For males in 1950 it was 59.2 years and for females 63.2 years. Length of life on the average for non-whites in 1950 was practically identical with that for whites in 1937, the statisticians point out.

Further figures showing the improvement in longevity during the past half century are given as follows:

With the mortality conditions of 1900, only 66 out of every 100 newly born babies (without distinction as to sex or color) could expect to live to age 40. Their remaining lifetime then averaged 28.3 years.

Under mortality conditions today, the newborn baby's chances of survival to age

40 are 92 in 100 and expectation of life at that age is 33.1 years. In other words, those that survive to 40 years can expect to live another 33.1 years.

The chances of living from age 40 to age 65 have risen to 74 in 100, and those aged 65 now can expect, on the average, to live another 14.1 years instead of the 11.9 years they would have had ahead of them at the turn of the century.

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dart into the street after a ball, or some careless driver may step out of his car on the busy street side instead of the sidewalk side. The National Safe Drivers Association, which promotes safe driving courses in high schools, commercial driving schools and on military bases, condemns the "bug" deflectors vigorously.

"Any object that reduces the panoramic view of the driver is detrimental," O. W. Boblitz, director of the association, emphasized. "Automobile manufacturers have gone to great expense to increase driver vision. Since the war ended, this has been the major safety improvement in cars.

"The two-piece windshield was replaced with a more costly one-piece glass. Door posts have been made smaller. Engine hoods have been redesigned to give the driver a better look at the road near the front bumper.

"All this has been done to improve vision. If 'bug' deflectors really were worth their salt, automobile manufacturers would put them on cars at the factory."

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