

ENGINEERING—PSYCHOLOGY

"Crazy Drivers" on the Road May Be Literally Insane

May Have Grandiose Ideas, Thinking Themselves More Important Than Others, Be Suspicious or Even Faint

THE "CRAZY driver" who whizzes by you at 70 miles an hour may be insane—literally.

Probably the most vicious group of dangerous drivers on the highways are the mentally ill, Dr. Lowell S. Selling of the Psychopathic Clinic of Detroit's Recorder's Court, told the National Safety Congress meeting in Chicago.

"Even in cities where there are a number of highly developed psychiatric and mental hygiene clinics," he said, "are individuals who are suffering from mental diseases. Some of them have never been sent to a doctor and in many cases their own families do not know that they are insane.

"The average layman does not recognize symptoms of insanity unless the patient's behavior is extremely bizarre."

Some of the mentally ill have grandiose ideas. They think they are more important than other people and that they can pay for any amount of damage they might do to life or property with their cars. Some are nervous, unstable, and excitable so that in an emergency they "blow up" and do the wrong thing.

Sufferers from the mental disease dementia praecox, or schizophrenia, are likely to include the type of person with violent suspicions and false ideas that he is being persecuted by the police or mysterious organized groups. Such a person may interpret a gesture of a pedestrian as being a sign to some conspirator in a plot and deliberately run his car into the pedestrian to kill him in what is imagined to be "self protection."

In almost all mental disorders which are due to actual destruction of parts of the brain, the sufferer is likely to be bewildered or confused, Dr. Selling said. Such a person may have an accident because he really doesn't know what he is doing.

Cases of organic brain diseases, like epileptics, may lose consciousness at the wheel. And there are other types of persons subject to such spells of fainting, Dr. Selling pointed out. It may happen because of an overdose of sedatives

or pain-relieving drug, syphilis of the brain, sleeping sickness, kidney disease or heart disease, or improper use of insulin.

The question of whether feeble-minded persons should be permitted to drive is a difficult one, Dr. Selling said, and should be decided individually. There are very low grade individuals who obviously cannot drive a car, they can't read road signs, understand driving regulations, or even manipulate the controls of the car. But between these very low grade defectives and the normal in intelligence there are many dull persons about whom it is difficult to decide. If these persons have excellent attitudes toward the rights of others, if they are physiologically in good condition, if they can learn by rote the rules of the road, they may be safe drivers.

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Chained To Machines!

DEFENSE workers are being chained to power press machines by the wrist—but don't be shocked, because it's no galley slave hardship, but the latest in modern safety.

The Posson guard, name of the new wrist device, was described before the National Safety Congress by F. E. Frederick, director of safety for the International Business Machines Corporation. A pull cord attached to the machine prevents the worker from getting hand or arm under the punch, drill or shear when in a cutting position.

Yes—the operator can remove the pull cord from his wrist and walk off, any time.

Science News Letter, October 18, 1941

Dated Dynamite

DDATED dynamite is now recommended by E. D. McNeil, Jr., of the Hercules Powder Company. Fresh explosives are highly important to safety and efficiency of mining operations, he said.

Safety measures in mines should include strong respect for lightning, he

also pointed out. It is dangerous to handle explosives during electric storms even deep in the ground, as lightning may use the steel in the shaft to enter the mine.

Science News Letter, October 18, 1941

Predicting Safe Driving

TRUCK drivers who give other motorists the "bird" and take wild chances can be kept off the road by a new testing method reported by Prof. Amos E. Neyhart of Pennsylvania State College's Institute of Public Safety, who described the new test plan before the National Safety Congress.

"In these days of national tension and industrial speed-ups, it is more than ever important that the drivers put upon our highways be trained, normal, and responsible persons," Prof. Neyhart declared.

A truck driver applying for a company job, put through the new tests, must drive over a standard route long enough to show up bad driving habits. He must park, back, pull out, and stop quickly, while a checker "deducts" for every slip in judgment or skill or temper. But before the prospective truck driver gets a chance at the wheel, Prof. Neyhart explained, he is put through tests of traffic knowledge and psychological and physical tests. If he shows a faulty attitude or some limitation that cannot be overcome, he is disqualified, thus saving the company the expense of a driving test, and perhaps the greater expense and trouble of serious accidents on the road.

Weak spots in driving of old, experienced truck drivers for a company can also be detected by many of the techniques for selecting new drivers, the safety expert pointed out. By retraining some of these men, a company can reduce accident hazards, with their train of economic losses and injuries.

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AGRICULTURE

White Blackberries Found Wild In Florida

ALARGE wild colony of white blackberries has been discovered near Gainesville, Fla., by W. A. Murrell of the University of Florida, who plans to experiment with the wild berries in the hope of improving them for local use. White blackberries previously discovered have never been suited to Florida's climate.

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