

Citizens Must Not Violate Law. Swear Falsely

By ALBERT COATES
(Editors Note—This is the fifth of a series of articles by Mr. Coates, director of the Institute of Government, on traffic laws, traffic law enforcement, and traffic law observance.)

It is useless to expect safety to come to the streets and highways of North Carolina as long as we the people (1) cavalierly violate the laws they have elected representatives to make, appointed personnel to administer, and hired officials to enforce; (2) turn with wrath upon the officers who dare to caution or arrest them for violations of the laws that citizens are required to observe and officers have sworn to enforce; (3) go into court and swear on the Bible they were going twenty to twenty-five miles an hour when the impact from a head-on collision was terrific enough to knock the engine halfway under the body of the colliding car, or that they had taken only a little liquor "for the stomach's sake" when they were too drunk to strike a match to light a cigarette, or recognize their driver's license card, or stoop and pick up a bunch of keys; (4) and then put pressure on solicitors to nolle prosequere or change the warrants to make out a lesser charge, plead with judges to suspend a sentence, or maybe fine them but never send them to jail or take away their driver's license, and turn the heat on hearing officers to restore as a favor a license revoked for cause.

It is useless to expect safety to come to the streets and highways of North Carolina as long as jurors picked at random from the people turn loose violators of the traffic laws in the face of facts so clear and convincing that a judge in open court calls off all other traffic violation cases before that jury for the rest of the term; as long as we the people feel as the witness on the stand the other day, convicted of reckless driving on the day before, denying he had ever been convicted of a crime, because "everybody knows that reckless driving ain't

no crime;" as long as we the people feel that assault and battery by automobile is not quite as serious as assault and battery with fist or knucks, that aggravated assault and battery with an automobile as the deadly weapon is not quite as serious as assault with the deadly weapon of knife or gun, that manslaughter or murder committed in a burst of reckless speed is not quite as serious as manslaughter or murder committed in a burst of recklessness and passion, and that loss of property by collision with an automobile is not quite as serious as loss of property by robbery with firearms.

To illustrate my meaning: A judge of the Superior Court tells the following story of traffic violation cases in a recent term of court in North Carolina: "In a recent term of criminal court the usual number of motor vehicle cases appeared on the docket: drunken driving, reckless driving, manslaughter, speeding, and so on. The evidence convinced me that the defendants were all guilty as charged, but the jury acquitted every one. One defendant was charged with operating a car under the influence of liquor. He had no lawyer; he put on no evidence; he never cross-examined a witness; he didn't make a speech to the jury. He simply came to court, pled not guilty, and sat there. Two officers testified that the defendant's car passed them at 75 to 80 miles per hour, that he left his side of a three lane highway, ran over into the extreme left lane and into the side of a truck, going in the opposite direction on its side of the road; that he turned over twice and when they got him out of the wreckage he was . . . blind drunk, reckless with alcohol, and unhurt! The jury stayed out ten minutes and returned with a verdict of not guilty. This happens over and over again."

No better law was needed in these cases. No better testifying officer was needed in these cases. No better solicitor was needed in these cases. No better judge was needed in these cases. Twelve good men and true, drawn by lot from the rank and file of we the people took the law into their own hands and in successive verdicts nullified all of the work of the lawmakers, investigating officers, and prosecuting attorneys, and left the judge in the position of a bright and beautiful angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain. It is useless to expect

safety to come to the streets and highways as long as "crowds can wink and no offense be known since in the other's guilt each finds his own."

EXPERIENCE KEEPS A DEAR SCHOOL

"Experience keeps a dear school, yet fools will learn in no other." Benjamin Franklin said a hundred and fifty years ago. Experience came too late last year for a thousand men and women who were killed in the act of acquiring it, and too late for hundreds of others who were crippled for life. It came too late to avoid the pain and suffering of fifteen thousand men and women injured in its acquisition. It came too late to avoid the time they lost from productive work and the money spent in hospital care and doctors' bills. It came too late to save a hundred thousand men and women from the time and money swallowed up in giving bond, attending trials, costs of court, and lawyers' fees.

Experience may be the best teacher, but is it the only teacher? Is there no other way to learn? Does the visible experience of a thousand friends and neighbors killed, fifteen thousand injured, and two hundred thousand called in court teach us no lesson that can interrupt the treadmill path? Must we of necessity repeat in 1952 the 1951 performance? In this new year's beginning no one of our million six hundred thousand and licensed drivers know he will not be among those killed, or injured to the crippling point, before the stroke of midnight in December opens new books for 1953; and therefore every one of us might note the pointed words of John Donne's warning: "Never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

The prophets of old found out that "thus sayeth the Lord" was not enough to effectuate the Lord's Commandments. And we are finding out that "therefore, be it enacted" is not enough to guarantee obedience to the laws of the General Assembly; that "thus sayeth the Law" is not enough to enforce the rules of the road; and that lip service to the traffic laws is not enough as long as men will drive seventy-five miles an hour to get to a safety meeting on time, join in resolutions damning speed law violators, and violate the speed law going as well as coming in the effort to get back home before dark. We are finding out that efforts to bring safety to the streets and highways of North Carolina cannot stop with mass meetings blowing off a surplus steam in pious resolutions full of sound and fury signifying nothing, or with committee meetings of "the crowd of such who think too little and who talk too much." We are told in the Book of Kings that "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah, but Jehovah was not in the wind; and after the earthquake a fire, but Jehovah was not in the fire, and after the fire a still small voice." The Kingdom of Safety, like the Kingdom of God, is not in the committee, nor in the mass—it is in you. And the keys to the kingdom are in the hands of every driver at the wheel. Here is the court of last resort, open all the time, with judgement handed down in every turning of the wheels.

TEACHING TRAFFIC LAW OBSERVANCE

The necessity of teaching traffic problems, traffic laws, and traffic law observance to every driver at the wheel was born with the automobile at the turn of the century, brought forward with the rules of the road in the years that followed, born again with the drivers' license law in 1917, and comes to a focal point in every application for a driver's license. In the race between education and catastrophe on the streets and highways of North Carolina, the Institute of Government is carrying its traffic schooling program beyond police and sheriff and patrol with their warnings, tickets, and arrests; beyond solicitors and judges of the lower courts with their prosecutions and their judgments; beyond examiners and hearing officers with the give and take of licenses; to the million six hundred thousand drivers with a license granted by the state and the rank and file beyond them.

DRIVERS GUIDEBOOK

The Institute of Government is starting on this schooling venture with a brief and pointed guidebook of facts and factors every driver at the wheel should know by heart—in the belief that the time has come to throw down the gauntlet, not to throw in the towel or the sponge; in the effort to get under the driver's skin and into his mind and conscience with the notion that responsibility goes with freedom to the point it finds expression in his reflex action at the wheel.



WILD WEST RODEO TO HIT TOWN—Monday and Tuesday evenings at 8 o'clock, Kings Mountain Jaycees will sponsor the Cherokee Ranch Rodeo at Plank Showgrounds on Grover Road. Tickets are now on sale by Jaycees, who retain 50 percent of advance sale tickets for the club's recreation fund. Among the acts in the Rodeo are the ever-present clowns and circus acts, lower left; wild bull riding, steer wrestling and bronc riding, lower right; some of the nations prettiest and all round champion cowgirls, upper right; and Verna Jo Waite, "the Blonde Bombshell" of Goree, Texas, upper right, one of the girl bronc riders.

Funeral Conducted For Wilson Child

Funeral rites for Edward Eugene Wilson, two-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Wilson, route 2, Kings Mountain, were held Tuesday afternoon at 3 o'clock at Antioch Baptist church, interment following in the church cemetery.

The child, a "blue baby," died Monday night at 11 o'clock. Surviving, in addition to the parents, are two brothers, Henry and James Wilson, and five sisters, Betty Sue Wilson, Hazel Wilson, Bobbie Wilson, Bessie Wilson and Virginia Wilson. Curled dock in small grain can be controlled with 2, 4-D.

Mountaineers Hit Tri-High At Park Friday, Last Home Game Tuesday

Kings Mountain high school's baseball team is slated to wind up the 1952 home season with a two-game stand at City Stadium, facing Tri-High here on Friday afternoon and playing hosts to Lincolnton on Tuesday afternoon.

BASEBALL SCHEDULE

May 2—Tri-High	Home
May 6—Lincolnton	Home
May 8—Lincolnton	Away
May 9—Cliffside	Away

(all games at 3:30 p. m.)

day afternoon forcing the first postponement of the season. The game has been rescheduled for next Tuesday at Lincolnton, with the final set for Cliffside on May 9. Coach Art Weiner's crew had an open date Tuesday and the weather break last Friday has served to rest the Mountaineer mound corps. Righthanders Ken Dalton and Charles Painter are both set to go Friday, with Jim Crawford and Dean Smith also available for duty. Loss of Righthander Harold Pearson to the team two weeks ago has seriously weakened the

hill staff and the trio of contests next week is going to put a big strain on the pitching guys. The Mountaineers have improved steadily all season but still lack that run-making punch, leaving too many runners stranded on the sacks when the third out comes up. The next two games will mark the end of several player's high school careers. When ice floats in water, the portion of the ice below water level is the same volume that would be occupied by the water resulting from the melting of all the ice. Personal income in December was at an annual rate of \$257 billion, slightly above November total of \$256 1/2 billion.

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