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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20591

27-S-70

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE AT THE AAA GOLD LIFESAVER MEDAL AWARDS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AUDITORIUM ON THURSDAY MAY 7, 1970, 3:30 P.M.

This 50th Anniversary of the partnership established by the AAA and the school safety patrols is one of the great dates in the story of our progress toward a safer America.

In the years since the safety patrols were established and promoted on a systematic basis by the Chicago Motor Club, hundreds of lives have been saved by young volunteers who give some of their free time to help ensure the welfare of others.

The safety patrols have grown to more than one-million members in 50,000 schools in every State in the Nation.

It is most gratifying to know that since 1935, when records were first kept, the national pedestrian death rate per 100,000 children from ages 5 to 14 has been cut more than 50 percent -- from 10.4 to 4.7. This achievement is largely due to the patrol boys of America and is especially remarkable when you consider that the number of cars in this country has increased 10 times since the early 1920s.

But those who have served on the patrol -- and there have been over 20-million of them in the last 50 years -- have contributed even more than raw figures would suggest. By being safety-conscious and talking about it with their parents they have helped to make adults more safety-conscious. And when they grow up they become more responsible themselves.

For many patrol boys during the last 5 decades, assisting with traffic control was their first position of leadership in a motorized society. They have developed sterling traits of alertness, dependability and concern for others. Many of them have gone on to become famous business men, community leaders, scientists, generals and even astronauts. One of them is with me here today -- Doug Toms -- our outstanding Director of the National Highway Safety Bureau.

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Perhaps some of the youngsters you boys have saved from almost certain death and mutilation will grow up to achieve great things of their own. Any one of them might become the Neil Armstrong, the Michaelangelo or the Einstein of tomorrow. So you have played a part in bettering the future of the human race. I wish all adults would take as much of an interest in safety as you boys have.

We are losing 150 people in traffic accidents every day, many of them pedestrians who still do not respect the power of 2 tons of steel rushing toward them. You boys know and respect that power -- what it can do for good and for evil.

It takes real courage to dash into traffic and rescue an errant child and you fellows have shown that kind of courage when it really counted. For you, heroism isn't just a word. For you, heroism means laying it on the line when the chips are down.

And I want to assure you that we in the Department of Transportation are doing everything in our power to make your job easier and less dangerous. Highway safety is a 3-part program here. First, we have to make cars a lot safer. Second, we have to modernize our highways to eliminate danger spots. Third, we must do everything we can to make sure we become a nation of better drivers.

The success of this 3-part program depends upon many people -- highway engineers, auto designers, public officials, drivers and not least -- the man in the street -- that is where you come in.

I have had the privilege of reading the reports on your individual acts of heroism, and I am tremendously proud of each one of you. We are delighted to participate in this awards ceremony, and to extend the government's wholehearted congratulations to you all.

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