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## Formula for Highway Safety an Elusive Goal

By VINCENT THOMAS

Assemblyman, 68th District  
A magic formula for highway safety has been sought for half a century, but apparently is still as far away as the proverbial pot of gold. The motor vehicle has shaped our society, and in most respects has been a great boon, but its lethal qualities make it still a major problem.  
It's true that over the years, vehicles have been improved, highway construction stand-

ards raised, safety laws and their enforcement made better. But the killing goes on, so students of the problem continue to explore all avenues for additional worthwhile parts of the total answer. The difficulties involved are well illustrated in the report of the Assembly Interim Committee on Transportation concerning its investigation of proposals for compulsory vehicle inspection as an added safety factor.

THE REPORT traced the his-

tory of state laws on compulsory inspection since the first was enacted in 1929. At present such laws are on the books in 19 states and the District of Columbia. Two states, Connecticut and Maryland, which once enacted them, later repealed them. Bills of various kinds on the subject have been introduced in our Legislature regularly for many years, but none has gone any place.

Emphasized by the report is the fact that though records of

states indicate their inspections uncover a high percentage of serious defects in vehicles — in 40 to 60 per cent of vehicles — there is almost a complete lack of statistics as to the direct causal connection between defects and accidents involving fatalities or injuries. As might be anticipated, faulty brakes and bad headlights lead the list of defects by a wide margin.

Existing California law im-

poses a number of controls on use of unsafe vehicles on highways. For many years, it has enabled a limited voluntary inspection service on a licensed basis. The Highway Patrol is authorized to license brake and light inspection shops, which can issue certificates of condition as to such equipment on cars whose owners pay for the service.

IN ITS deliberations, the committee was assisted by automotive groups, garage owners, service station operators, safety organizations, law enforcement agencies, and many others interested. Some were proponents, others opponents of compulsory inspection. It was indicated that another bill, calling for annual inspection by licensed private shops would be introduced at the coming session.

I want to emphasize again, because it is important, that the Committee could discover no statistics on direct, causal connection between mechanical defects and the overall auto fatality rate. A national authority prepared an exhaustive analysis of the records, and could not come up with an easy answer. Even our own Highway Patrol figures show that defects existed in only 4 per cent of fatal accidents.

THE COMMITTEE took no outright position as to the desirability of enacting an inspection law. It said that certain other possibilities, such as further improvement in driver education, better use of brake and light inspection, some tightening of enforcement, and improved directional signaling, had better be thoroughly explored in advance of action. They could be cheaper, and more effective. If a law is enacted, however, the Committee said it should utilize private facilities, and semi-annual inspections should be required. Annual inspection, it was said, really accomplishes little in the way of greater safety.

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### Support Given On Restricting Sale of Glue

Airplane cement would be classified as a poisonous compound and its sale restricted to adults under a proposal to be supported by the county in the 1963 State Legislature.

"The habit of glue sniffing represents a very potential hazard. In cases where repeated inhalations of small amounts have been carried out, there may result severe and irreparable damage to liver, spleen, bone marrow or other blood-forming organs," according to Dr. Joseph L. Robinson, medical director of the County Probation Department.

WITH HEALTH authorities stressing the dangers of inhaling fumes from model airplane glue, many city councils in the county have gone on record supporting legislation in this field.

In addition to city councils, the Special Youth Committee of the Juvenile Court is also urging regulating laws and has enlisted the support of County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn who says he will continue to support legislation at all levels to control and eradicate glue sniffing.

### Win at Pinochle

Winners of the recent pinochle tournament sponsored by the Adult Club of the Recreation Center were: Emil Weiler and Charley Carlton, first place; Olivia Jones and Odie Casavan, second place; and Daisy Aleock, third place.



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