

Truck Traffic's Effect On Highways Call For Impartial Investigation

BY BRUCE BLOSSAT

The nation's governors believe big trucks are seriously damaging U. S. highways. They blame "deliberate overloading" for much of the harm.

At the recent governor's conference they got support for their views from Thomas MacDonald, U. S. public roads commissioner. He has long charged the trucking industry with consciously violating state laws limiting truck loads.

This whole issue is confused by the conflicting claims of truckers and highway engineers. The Association of State Highway Officials recommends 18,000 pounds per axle as the safe weight for ordinary highway pavements (weight per axle is the critical figure).

But the truckers say the recommended limit is too low. They argue that poor engineering, weathering and other factors have more to do with highway damage than overloading.

They declare further they will abide by the findings of impartial tests bearing on the effect of heavy truck loading.

Right now the U. S. Public Roads bureau is conducting a series of such tests. Bureau officials insist they are strictly down the middle and have no wish to favor one side or the other in this dispute. But it isn't clear that the truckers will accept their tests as sufficiently impartial.

Yet, if they do not rate them satisfactory, it would seem fair from the public's standpoint that they devote their energies to arranging for suitable experiments.

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GETTING ACQUAINTED—Snowflake, an eleven-day-old fawn, nuzzles its new playmate and protector, Lady, a German shepherd, at the Maine State Game Farm, Dry Mills, Me.

And it would seem proper, too, that they wait until such tests have been made before lobbying in state after state for higher weight limits. Evidence is definite that truckers have already been successful in such a campaign in many states. It is hard to reconcile these activities with their expressed willingness to accept scientific, impartial findings on weight limits. What if sound tests show that 18,000 pounds per axle is a wise ceiling?

Furthermore, there can be no justification for any deliberate jousting of the load limits, as governor after governor has charged. No one anywhere is questioning the role of the truck in the U. S. transportation economy. No one wants to rule it off the road—not even the big truck.

The average American, who probably drives a car and almost certainly pays some of the taxes that build U. S. highways, merely would like to be sure that his roads are not abused. He would like to feel that the highway laws in the 48 states reflect the scientific facts about highway damage. Until those facts can be determined, all legislative action relating to weight limits ought to be suspended. This is MacDonald's advice to the governors, and also the urging of the Council of State Governments. Let's hope the

Three Killed, 7 Hurt

HAMDEN, Conn., July 6.—(AP)—Lightning striking unexpectedly Tuesday out of a sultry but almost cloudless sky killed three persons and injured seven.

The victims, gathered around a large tree in the back yard of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Dorman's farm home, were holding a holiday picnic and birthday party when the tragedy occurred.

Killed were the Dorman's daughter, Arthurina, 16; her brother, Otis, 22, and his girl friend, Elizabeth M. Lyons, 18, of Hamden.

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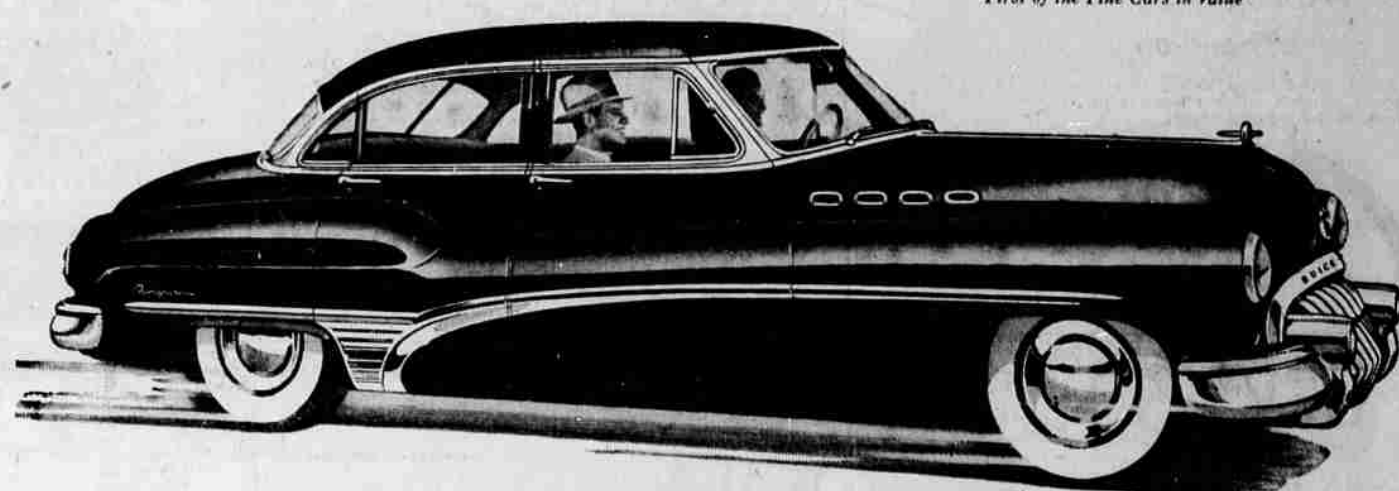
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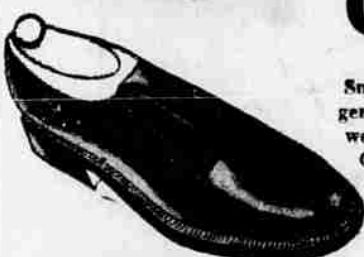
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