

Woman at the Wheel

City Traffic Not as Bad as It Looks

By OLIVE DICKASON

Perhaps the most confusing experience of all for the neophyte driver is the first sortie into city traffic. As if she isn't having a difficult enough time just handling her car, she also has to keep her eyes open for traffic signals, jaywalking pedestrians, boys on bicycles, traffic jams. And perhaps worst of all, there's always the feeling that you really oughtn't to be on the road at all with all those experts dashing in and out of traffic around and about you.

The day will come, however, when that car coming down the

street will be approaching you, not rushing AT you. And you will find to your surprise that city traffic, for all its apparent confusion, is really under rigid control, and that the dangers of a serious accident are much less than on the open road.

That brings up the first rule:



Stick within the speed limit. Don't let yourself be rattled by impatient drivers tooting their horns at you. If you're moving too slowly for the general traffic, get over into the right lane and travel at the speed at which you feel safe. If the traffic threatens to become too much for you, pull up to the curb or turn off into a side street and stop for awhile to let yourself relax.

Remember: you have as much right on the road as anyone else, provided you are driving within the rules and regulations.

Watch traffic lanes, and keep in the correct one for the direction in which you want to go. If you are going straight ahead or will want to turn right, then stick to the right lane; if you will want to turn left, then ease over into the centre lane before your turn.

Be sure to signal turns—but don't take it for granted that because you've signalled you've automatically got the right of way. Watch for traffic coming from other directions. And above all, watch and obey traffic signals.

A red light means stop; a flashing red light calls for a full stop, going forward only if traffic conditions permit; flashing yellow signals caution, while the yellow between the red and green lights mean that the intersection should be cleared. A yellow light has as much purpose as the others: Do not try to beat it.

Use your judgment as to what to do if your approach an intersection just as the light turns yellow. If you are going too fast to stop quickly enough, if another car is coming too close behind you, or if the streets are too slippery for a stop in the space available to you, and if no traffic is coming along the cross street, then it might be wise to proceed.

U turns have been outlawed on many busy streets as they slow up traffic and do present a danger. This is worse when it is necessary to back up in order to complete the turn. It is folly to make a U turn on a road just beyond a hilltop or on a curve. About the time your car is across a road a speeding car comes over the hilltop and there is a broadside crash. It is the responsibility of the driver to avoid all manoeuvres on streets or highways where the road is obscured by a curve, hilltop, trees and shrubbery, or buildings.

Never have your headlights turned on high beam in the city . . . in some large centres it is against the law to use more than parking lights for travelling along well-lit streets.

It's always wise to keep a reserve of both space and time . . . the space means keeping a good distance from the car ahead, and time means not being in a rush.

For much of the information we are using in this series we are indebted to Charlotte Montgomery's Handbook for the Woman Driver (published by Vanguard Press, New York).