

(ESTABLISHED JAN. 1, 1914)

TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1956

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There Is More To Do Than Drive On School Buses

Drivers Have Many Duties

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There's a lot more to driving a school bus than just piloting the big yellow vehicles through the streets.

Any of the 17 drivers in the Torrance Unified School District has to know a lot more than how to drive a bus. In fact, while transporting some 800 students to and from school each day, the driver has to act as teacher, policeman, and even confidant. He is charged with the responsibility of seeing that the youngsters get safely across the street, and if anything happens to the children while in his care, he may be held legally responsible.

2500 Students Carried

More than 2500 students are carried to and from classes each day by school buses. Students at both Torrance and North High School who live more than two miles from school are transported from their classes daily.

At 12 of the district's 19 elementary schools, elementary students who live more than one mile from school are also carried back and forth by buses. Included in this list are students at Carr, North Torrance, Arlington, El Nido, Madrona, Fern-Greenwood, Torrance, Wood, Meadow Park, Sepulveda, Newton, Riviera, and Torrance Elementary Schools.

In transporting 1,300,977 students to school last year, school buses in Torrance traveled 218,000 miles, using 47,910 gallons of gas and 1912 quarts of oil. Maintenance for the equipment cost \$14,235, of which more than \$1000 was spent for the giant tires for the buses.

Juggler Needed

Scheduling the 17 buses to take children to 14 schools requires considerable juggling on the part of John Mock, who has headed the school bus operation for the past five years. Drivers begin picking up youngsters for the city's two high schools about 6:55 each morning, getting the students there a few minutes before their 7:45 classes. Drivers then head out to nearby elementary schools to begin shuttling youngsters to their buildings. Elementary schools begin classes between 8 and 9 a.m., allowing time for the drivers to move from school to school.

Situation Reversed

In the afternoon, the situation is reversed, with kindergarten children getting out at noon, first and second graders about 2 p.m., and the rest of the children at about 3.

Double sessions, however, complicate the situation, since elementary students go at 8 a.m. and get out at noon. The second group of students must be to their schools by 1 p.m. and get out at varying times, sometimes as late as 4:50 p.m.

Further complicating the intricate schedule are field trips and other special events in which school children participate. These are generally scheduled between 9 a.m. and

2 p.m. so as not to conflict with the regular class schedules. Bus drivers may take children as far away as the Southwest Museum, Los Angeles Museum, or Los Angeles Harbor.

Special Events

Buses also are provided for special athletic events, such as the North High trek to Ventura for a football game last week. Athletes are transported to track meets, baseball games, and many other special events. If the game schedule conflicts with regular transportation of youngsters home from school, buses sometimes must be chartered from bus rental firms.

Youngsters being what they are, drivers often have to keep one eye on the road and another cocked at the mirror to see what their mischievous charges may be up to. Youngsters scuffling in the aisles or pulling the hair of the girl in front are among the most common problems, as are the perennial initial carvers.

On the high school level, Mock thinks he has found a solution to the problem of youngsters who like to scuffle or otherwise cut up. For the first time this year, high school bus riders are required to have passes. If Junior makes trouble on the bus, he may lose his pass until disciplinary action is taken.

Trouble Reported

The bus driver may report the trouble to the principal who decides whether the parents should be called in to discuss the trouble. Repeating offenders may find themselves walking to school.

To meet the problem of youngsters who like to carve their initials on anything at hand, the \$18,540 buses now are almost entirely of stainless steel inside, resisting even the most sturdy pocket knives. Seat cover repair, necessitated by the cutting tendencies of students, costs the district about \$350 a year. To date, no solution has been found to this problem.

Despite the pleas of children, animals are forbidden on all school buses.

One driver who was fearing the route from another driver, found himself stuck with a spider monkey which one energetic youngster proposed to take to school. The lad had borrowed the monkey from a neighbor who had left her house. The driver finally managed to locate the woman and give her her monkey back.

Snakes Popular

Snakes also rate high in popularity among pets on school buses, especially since little boys like to sneak the harmless garter snakes aboard to frighten little girls. During the past year, countless snakes have been confiscated by bus drivers.

Drivers report that children generally are not much trouble in the mornings, since they are apparently too sleepy. After a day in school, however, youngsters release pent-up emotions on the buses and have to be held in check.

All of the district's 17 bus drivers are men, since officials feel they are better equipped to handle both the heavy equipment and mischievous youngsters.

However, the district also has four women drivers for cars which transport youngsters to classes, both in Torrance and to other cities which cooperate in holding classes for handicapped children. Officials feel that wom-



BACK IT GOES . . . John R. Moore and Harold Vaughn put some of the giant wheels back on a school bus after checking it over for repairs. The buses, which hold up to 79 children, receive periodic inspections, both by drivers and by California Highway Patrolmen to insure their safety. Maintenance is provided at the local shops.



A FULL HOUSE . . . The growing school population keeps the school buses filled to capacity most of the time. Here, complete with 79 children from Newton School, is the interior of one of the school district's 17 buses. The huge vehicles are lined with stainless steel, to discourage the perennial initial carvers.

Torrance School Bus Driver Wayne Branum Wins Honors in State Tourney

For the past two years, a driver from the Torrance School District, Wayne Branum, has copped second place in the State School Bus Road-co, com-

peting with drivers from other districts. Winners are judged upon ability to drive and knowledge of safety rules.

John Mock, who supervises the school bus program here, tells his drivers, "There's five vehicles to look out for when you're driving—your own, the one in front, the one in back, the one on the side, and the one you can't see."



THE LINE-UP . . . Eleven school buses line the front of North High School twice a day to transport a large proportion of that school's 1700 students to and from classes. After ferrying the high schoolers to and from North High, the drivers carry elementary school children to their

respective schools. In between times, the drivers take youngsters on field trips, athletic events, and to and from shop and home economics courses. More than 2500 children are transported by bus each day.



KEEP AN EYE ON THESE . . . That's the warning issued by Driver Jim Hobbs, Karen Koester, and Martha Shidler, as they point to the flashing red lights on the school bus. They remind drivers that when these lights are flashing, drivers are required by law to stop, since the lights indicate that children are crossing the street. Drivers who fail to do this face a stiff fine and/or jail.

Flashing Red on School Bus Means Stop-- or Else

en generally are better able to deal with such children, especially in small groups.

There are also some problems with persons who have bus stops in front of their homes and quite naturally object to having groups of noisy children gather there, perhaps trampling yards and flowers. Wherever possible, the district has tried to locate bus stops in front of vacant lots or other places where neighbors will not be disturbed.

Those flashing red lights on the back of a school bus mean stop—or else.

Or else what?

There are two possibilities if a motorist fails to stop:

1. He may hit a child or children at the front of the bus, since the flashing red

lights mean that the driver is taking or about to take some children across the street. The red lights are used only when children are going to be crossing the street. Judges and juries usually aren't sympathetic with drivers who hit children.

2. If a policeman happens to be handy, the motorist who speeds by a bus with flashing lights will get a ticket. He is therefore liable to a fine up to \$500 and/or six months in the county jail. Many judges are apt to throw the book at offenders of this type.

Drivers Should Stop

If the highway is a four-lane thoroughfare, the drivers in the inside lane—one lane away from the bus—do not have to stop, but those immediately next to the bus do. On a two-lane highway, all cars going in the same direction as the bus must stop.

Torrance bus drivers report many narrow escapes as the result of drivers failing to heed the red warning lights.

Before they are hired, each driver must take rigid physical examinations to insure that they are capable of handling the large 79-passenger busses and take stiff safety rule tests. Licensing of drivers is handled through the California Highway Patrol, which conducts periodic checks of both men and equipment in the school district.

Arrests for certain types of traffic offenses—reckless or drunk driving—will automatically cost a driver his job, under state law.

Driver Responsible

The driver is responsible for the safety of the children and in the case of smaller children, must act as crossing guard for the youngsters if they have to cross the streets. He is also responsible if a child is injured while crossing the street if he neglected to act as guard, even though the bus is a block away.

Rules about wrestling and moving about on buses must be strictly enforced because if the driver is forced to stop or swerve suddenly, youngsters may be thrown down and injured.



JUST BEING CAREFUL . . . Driver Harold Vaughn and four of his young charges peek around the corner of one of the school buses before crossing the street. Although the law requires drivers to stop when flashing red lights indicate that children are crossing the street, many ignore these warnings.