OTTO MAYA

What About Seat Belts?

Airplanes and racing cars have had them for years. Today they're dramatically proving their worth in protecting family-car riders

BY CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY

As recently as two or three months ago, if a neighbor had stopped to pick you up and you had seen that her car was equipped with seat belts, they would probably have struck you as something of an oddity. But today seat (or safety) belts, buckled across the laps of driver and passengers alike, are becoming quite the accepted thing.

Why this aroused interest?

We haven't had any drastic increase in the number of automotive accidents, which is fortunate, for it is bad enough. And we haven't, overnight, taken to driving at much greater speeds or under more trying circumstances.

Two things have changed our attitude toward seat belts. First, impressive evidence has piled up to prove that seat belts are a great protection to anyone, driver or passenger, inside a car involved in an accident. Second, seat belts are widely available this year—either as optional equipment on new cars or as "kits" that may be installed in the automobiles you are now driving.

Evidence of lighter accident injury, or even no injury, to those who use safety belts is convincing. For a long time most safety thinking was dedicated to the dream of preventing accidents. This is fundamental and should go on unceasingly. But new thinking now adds the practical (if somewhat pessimistic) idea that, since we shall never be able to wipe out all accidents, we should do everything we can to protect the people who ride in the cars that get into trouble.

Seat belts do help—in skids, in minor or major crashes, even in sudden stops. A rider held in place is less apt to be tossed against the windshield, less likely to pitch into something sharp or hard on the dashboard. (Automobile designers are also rounding the edges or entirely removing the sharp and hard objects in car interiors.)

Even more important, seat belts keep the rider inside the car. Not long ago, on the New Jersey Turnpike, a car pulled out of a turnoff to enter the main road. The driver did not wait for a good opening, and another automobile, coming fast, sideswiped the car. The car itself was not badly damaged, but on the impact all four doors flew open and three people were thrown out and hurt. Of course we can't be sure they would have been unharmed if they had stayed in their seats, but since the car was (*Continued on page 181*)

The Bands Are Back

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orchestra lies in instrumentation: Bands use only wind instruments (wood and brass) and percussion instruments. No violins, no harps, no cellos. They can play Weber's *Euryanthe Overture* as well as "The Stars and Stripes Forever." They can play *The Thieving Magpie Overture* of Rossini and "The Procession of Bacchus" by Delibes. The two stand-bys of the repertoire are Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, with all-out effects on the percussion, and Rossini's *William Tell Overture*, without which no college band could operate.

The University of Michigan claims, with justice, to have the finest symphonic band in America. Its band does a good deal of traveling and has become renowned in states far from Michigan. Other excellent symphonic bands can be heard at the University of Illinois, of Wisconsin, of Miami, and at Purdue. Purdue is a school for engineers, it has no music department, still the band is there.

An offshoot of the college symphonic band is the varsity band. This is a smaller group, of about 35, which plays for sports events and rallies—the rah-rah and "Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay" stuff.

It has been estimated that as many as 60,000 high-school bands perform in our country, with about 6,000,000 students taking part. Even if we discount these figures some for exaggeration, it is clear that this is an amazing force of music. It is also an amazing force *for* music. Surely such wide-spread participation must lead to greater interest in *all* music! Rivalry between schools exists, bands are graded for excellence, and information is exchanged among schools. A good player is not only assured popularity within his school, but he (or she—40 per cent of the players are girls) may even be "discovered" by a scout from some college that's anxious to improve its band. Scholarships or partial scholarships are offered to the talented.

The popularity of band music is not restricted to schools. Almost all of a sudden band records are selling again, especially those of Paul Lavalle, whose Cities Service Band of America is pre-eminent. Lavalle started the band in 1948, eight years ago. He's been on the radio ever since, and has traveled up and down the land, playing not just "El Capitán" and "Boola-Boola" but *Summer Day Suite* by Prokofieff, or *Western One Step* by Robert Russell Bennett, or *A Folk Song Suite* by the modern British composer Vaughan Williams. He plays in arenas, school auditoriums, stadiums, exhibition halls, Air Force bases; he charges and gets admission for his concerts. He's a stocky, bushy-haired man with a missionary light in his eyes. Any time he's asked he'll leave his professional band and run off—to a strawberry festival in Buckhannon, West Virginia, or to the Music Educators National Conference in Chicago—to conduct a school band or plead with the P.T.A. He has often talked to me of the emotional lift and sense of belonging youngsters get from being part of a band. Recently he was in Chattanooga, Tennessee, conducting a band festival, and he noticed five girls sitting in the clarinet section. The girls had only one clarinet among them and they took turns playing it. They wanted to play so much that all five combined on one instrument.

Learning to play a band instrument is not easy. Lessons are needed, practice is required. School instruction must be supplemented by private lessons. Schools don't have enough money to buy instruments and hire teachers. They do as much as budgets permit—and that has proved to be a lot.

The most popular band instruments are, in order of popularity, the drum, the trumpet, the saxophone, the clarinet, the trombone. A new trumpet may be bought for from $100 to $300, a good sax costs about $250, a trombone in the neighborhood of $200. A decent clarinet can be had for about $150, a bass drum from $50 up, a snare drum from $35 up. These are prices for *new* instruments. A lively market exists in secondhand instruments, which are much cheaper. Sometimes they can be found in pawnshops! It goes without saying that you shouldn't buy a secondhand instrument without a musician's advice. Generally the easiest band instrument to learn is the drum. The bass drum is easier than the snare drum. Then (in order) the saxophone, the trombone, the trumpet. The French horn is the most difficult.

Band music is a very American form of music (of course other countries have their bands too), which has a tradition rooted in the small town. It was Patrick Gilmore, who, during the Civil War, first brought this music into popularity. After him came a better musician, the son of a Portuguese father and a Bavarian mother, who wrote America's marches. John Philip Sousa is to the march what Johann Strauss is to the waltz. No other marches compare to his best dozen, among them "Semper Fidelis," "The Washington Post," "El Capitán," and "High School Cadets."

After Sousa's death in 1932, band music fell out of fashion, although Edwin Franko Goldman's concerts on the Mall in Central Park, New York City, did enjoy fame and popularity. To a lot of people, band music was just something for a parade or a football game or The Salvation Army—until the schools got going. Today band music is very much in fashion. It satisfies the do-it-yourself desire. More lung power to it!

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moving slowly and was only bent and scratched, this seems a fair surmise. The statistical fact is that accidents double in severity if anyone is thrown from the car. (This means that better door locks are important too.)

Sometimes what might be a minor accident turns into a real one if the driver is thrown out of normal position and temporarily loses control of the car. Seat belts help prevent this. *Additional benefits* that in the comfort as well as peace of mind safety belts bring. Many people who fasten belts on

before long drives say they feel less tired and tense at the end of a trip. The gentle support of the belt holds the body from swaying and slipping. There is no need to brace yourself as the car turns corners and no feeling that you must push against the floor to prevent sliding on the seat. Women sometimes find the tendency to slide is increased by silk or nylon lingerie, and constantly trying to regain a comfortable position can be annoying.

Children are protected by seat belts. Any adult who has driven with a two- to twelve-year-old wiggler (either sex) alongside knows well that familiar, instinctive gesture of putting out an arm to steady the child, especially when you brake the car suddenly or swing around a curve. Children are light; they bounce around as a car moves. As someone has said, "You wouldn't ship an egg loose in a big box." It seems likely that mothers and fathers would drive better, with less diversion from the job at hand, if seat belts held young passengers secure.

Standards for seat belts have been set. The usual qualifications are the same as those determined by the Civil Aeronautics Administration for commercial airlines. Among other things, an approved belt should withstand 3,000 pounds of pressure, the buckle must be easily fastened and unfastened, the belt webbing should be two to four inches wide.

No belt is stronger than the way in which it is attached to the car, and this is a point to consider when buying seat belts for cars now on the road. Belts should be fastened directly to the frame of the car; the two straps should be parallel and, when fastened, form an angle of 30 to 60 degrees to the floor of the car. They should pass over the passenger's lap. (More elaborate belts add a shoulder harness.)

Seat belts are appearing in various colors, designs, and at many prices. Good ones need not be expensive. However, the buyer should make certain that they conform to safety standards and are properly anchored to the car.

Will people really use them? Whenever seat belts are discussed, this question arises. I have talked to people who have had them in their family cars for some time, and many say they always use them automatically. Others report that they use them, but guests don't. For most of us, the whole idea is so new that it will take time and education before it becomes a habit.

I believe women can do the biggest job in convincing their families that using seat belts is the wise, sensible thing to do. Tell your children that most racing-car drivers use them. Take them to an airport and let them know that no plane takes to the air until all seat belts are fastened.

Seat belts are not a panacea; their final value is still under examination and will be for some time. However, if seat belts, fastened for every trip—to the corner store as well as on a long day's touring—continue to reduce the likelihood of small accidents becoming serious ones, the day may come when a car without them will be the real oddity.

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We Like Our Parents

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University last June.

MARGARET: "They're flattering me. I had to study hard and just squeaked into Phi Bete. I wanted to make it for Dad's sake. He went to Ohio Wesleyan, where he is now a trustee, but when he was in college he wasn't a big wheel, and his grades weren't very potent either. I knew it would make him proud if I did well. But he phoned me just before finals and said, 'Don't worry, Margaret. Just do your best. That's all that matters to me.'"

Maggie is a good athlete, was a basketball star in high school, played leads in school plays, and last year was senior representative to the women's student government and a senior adviser to freshman girls. After living some 20 years in the hectic Peale household, Maggie is a pretty unruffled girl, but the thought of taking the job of personal adviser to 30 freshmen threw her. She talked it over with Dad. He told her, "If you stand still and never take advantage of opportunities, you won't get any place in life. Have the courage to accept the position, and God will make known to you the reasons behind it."

Maggie took the job, and today she thinks she learned more from it than any other experience in her school life.

John comes next. Like all of us, John went to grammar school at Friends Seminary, a Quaker school in New York City. Maggie stayed on at Friends during high school, but John went to Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts. Now he is a sophomore at Washington and Lee University and is pre-enrolled at Princeton Theological Seminary.

JOHN: "Dad never said a word to indicate that he would like me to be a minister. But I know that that decision made him prouder of me than anything I'd ever done. Actually it was the hardest decision of my life. I made it one night during Christmas vacation in 1952, when I was a junior at Deerfield."

When John was ten, Dad promised him $2,000 if he wouldn't smoke or drink before he was twenty-one. The money seemed like a terrific goal. But what John didn't realize then was how curious a boy gets as he grows older and sees his friends enjoying smoking and drinking. Eventually he tried both. And when he came home for Christmas vacation his junior year, he was very upset at having failed his objective. He decided he was not going back to school until he had made up his mind what he was going to do, both about smoking and drinking and about his life plans as well.

One night during that vacation he woke Dad at two thirty in the morning, and they talked until daybreak. First they talked about John's forfeiting the $2,000. Dad assured John that he did not think drinking and smoking were evil in themselves, but simply that he thought both habits had caused a great deal of unhappiness and grief and that he himself, in his position, did not want to have anything to do with either. He also told John that a great many young people didn't really have any desire to drink, but merely went along with the crowd, and sometimes these were the ones who got into trouble; but if one strong person in the group—perhaps someone, like