

THE TWENTIES

WILL ROGERS ADDRESS TO TRAFFIC CHIEFS

Transcript of sound recording
 recorded June 2, 1923, New York City
 78rpm vinyl record, RCA Victor 45369
 audio in American Jukebox, Library of Congress
<http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/9321/>



Mr. Toastmaster, Traffic Chiefs from all over the world—

I am here to represent what is left of a vanishing race, and that is the pedestrian. Now while you birds have been, eh, directing traffic in all of our big cities, I know more about it than the whole mess of you do. I've been *dodging* it. Why, you even have towers built up in the air so you won't get run over yourselves.

That I am able to be here tonight is not any thanks to you. I owe it to a keen eye and a nimble pair of legs. But I know they'll get me someday. I'm not as young as I used to be, and, uh, they're missing me closer every day. Just yesterday I had to run in a store and shut the door in the driver's face to keep him from gettin' me. Another chased me into a building, and I hopped into an elevator. That's all that saved me. Now in my younger days I could have stayed on the sidewalk and dodged these fellows fairly.

Taxicab drivers nowadays are the same fellows who run the submarines during the war. They duck down and they don't come up for three or four blocks.

Some towns have the streets all marked off with white lines. It's a sort of a game. If a feller runnin' a car hits you while you're inside those white lines, it don't count; he's got to come back and run over you again.

Before we had traffic officers, there was not near as many people killed outright as there is now. But there was more *hurt*, which proves that by having a traffic officer to properly direct you, the driver can finish his victim, where in old days he could only hurt him. So I think your association can well report progress.

Prohibition has helped the pedestrian a little, as the drivers are afraid to run over just anybody—it might be a bootlegger and they would get the tires all cut up.

Here are a few rules which I want you to adopt.

- Eliminate all right- and left-hand turns. Make everybody go straight ahead.
- Rule Two: Eliminate all streetcars from the streets. They only get in people's way who are in a hurry walking home.
- Third, to speed up traffic, have a man hired by the city in each block to do nothing but crank stalled Ford cars.
- Four, nobody is to drive on Sunday but just the weekend drivers who don't drive any other day. Then all they can hit is each other.
- Have everybody going east go on Mondays, everybody going west go Tuesdays, and so on.

That's the only way you will ever make the streets of the United States safe for democracy. At the present rate, in two years there will be no pedestrians left, so where will you birds' jobs be?

I see the sign is up to go, so so long.