

ANY FOOL CAN DRIVE FAST

By - Sidney J. Harris

This is an open letter to a boy about 18, who forced me off the road while cutting in sharply and passing me on a hill yesterday afternoon:

Dear Son:

You may think you are a good driver and perhaps you are. But I'd like you to keep in mind that most of your "skillful" driving is due to other motorists. Anybody can whip along the road as fast and as carelessly as you were going. There's no trick to that - the new cars are loaded with power and pickup - too much so, I'm afraid.

Just remember that it was my alertness that prevented an accident on the hill, not yours. And the driver who was approaching us also had to brake suddenly and swerve in order to save your life and his.

It is not your courage or dexterity that has kept you alive as long as this, but the prudence and politeness of other motorists. You have been trading on our good will and sense of self-preservation. I wish it were possible to point out to you that your kind of driving is nothing but bad manners - it is not heroic, or adventurous, or manly.

Suppose you ran down a crowded street, pushing people out of your way, knocking packages out of ladies' hands, and kicking children into the gutter. What would be so heroic or manly about that?

Nothing of course. Then why do you suppose that having 2,000 pounds of steel under you makes it any better? There's nothing to be proud of in driving fast - any fool can do it. It's a form of cowardice to threaten other drivers, not courage.

Suppose you beat me at the getaway, or up the hill? What does that prove? Nothing, except that the car you bought is faster. You didn't make it; it's a commercial product. Anybody can buy one like it - and anybody can drive with a maniacal disregard for safety.

So don't take any pride in your deadly accomplishment. A real man is considerate and polite - and takes chances only when it counts, when his honor and conscience call out for it. On the highway, most of all, it's easy to tell the men from the boys - for the men have to save the boys from the consequences of their foolish and needless bravado.