

Social Drinker... a Menace?

(FIRST OF A SERIES)

By TAMMY TANAKA

Chicago — (RNS) — A pilot study conducted by the Chicago Traffic Court has shown it may be the "social or occasional drinkers" — and not the alcoholic as commonly believed — who are responsible for the majority of alcohol-related traffic accidents.

Latest National Safety Council statistics show that of the more than 107 million licensed drivers in the U.S., about 70 per cent of them drink — at least occasionally. About half of the nation's 55,470 highway fatalities in 1970 were attributed to drinking drivers.

The Chicago study revealed that only 20 per cent of persons convicted for driving under the influence of alcohol were "alcoholics."

The majority, 80 per cent, were social or occasional drinkers. It was also indicated that almost all available funds and efforts are being directed

toward the "problem" drinker-driver.

Raymond K. Berg, supervising judge of the traffic court, Circuit Court of Cook County, Ill., one of three directors of the survey, said the study involved 250 Chicago defendants convicted of drunken driving, 100 defendants not found guilty, 50 defendants from suburban courts and 173 cases involving traffic fatalities.

Judge Berg lauded recent legislation which he said will provide "millions in federal, state and private funds... in rehabilitating what is commonly known as the 'problem drinker-driver' or the 'drunk-driver.'"

However, he expressed fear that over-emphasis on the rehabilitation of the "problem drinkers" would divert public attention from the source of what seems to be the major problem — the "occasional drinker-drivers."

Judge Berg reported that the U.S. Department of Transportation has announced an \$18

million 9-state program that "will encompass a number of specific actions to control problem drinker-drivers."

A \$300 million Alcohol Abuse, Prevention Treatment and Rehabilitation Act was signed by President Nixon on Jan. 2. Among other things, it provided for inter-agency collaboration between alcoholism programs of the National Institute of Mental Health and the Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The judge emphasized, however, "In our opinion, the community has taken the social drinker driver too lightly. The people of America must be educated to and must accept the fact that they cannot drink socially and drive."

He suggested that the overwhelming public emphasis on the "problem" drinker-driver was conditioning social drinkers to believe they can drink and drive without accidents — and is leading them to reject responsibility for alcohol-related accidents. ("They're talking about a drunk, an alcoholic, not me!")

NEXT WEEK: Alcohol-related crime among youth.

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Chicago Auxiliary Was Missioner

Washington, D.C. — (RNS) — The first American-born Carmelite to become a bishop, a man who has directed a small band of missionary priests in Peru's Andes mountains, has been appointed an auxiliary to John Cardinal Cody of Chicago.

Pope Paul's appointment of Bishop Nevin Hayes, O. Carm., 49, was announced here by Archbishop Luigi Raimondi, Apostolic Delegate in the U.S.

Bishop Hayes, a native of Chicago, served nearly 20 years in Peru, where since 1959 he had been prelate nullius of Sicuani in the Andes mountains about 450 miles south of Lima. He resigned that post last year because of serious illness.

During his administration in Sicuani, he directed diocesan operations principally by radio and traveled thousands of miles by horse and mule. As prelate nullius Bishop Hayes had all the powers of a bishop, except that of ordination.

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