



The AMERICAN ISSUE

THE QUARTERLY NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON ALCOHOL PROBLEMS

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No. 1

DRUNK DRIVING COMMISSION CREATED

PRESIDENT REAGAN SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER

ESTABLISHING 30 MEMBER PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION

"to aid the states in their fight against the epidemic of drunk driving"

JOHN VOLPE, FORMER SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, NAMED CHAIRMAN

ACAP'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PRESENT AT ROSE GARDEN CEREMONY

See details inside

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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

A MANUAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

THE SANDY GOLDEN STORY

ACTION IN THE STATES

WISCONSIN DOCTOR PRESENTS CHALLENGE

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE: How High School Students in Wisconsin and
Massachusetts are Taking the Lead

This Issue has been delayed in order to bring you news of creation of the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving which has been expected. See the 4th quarter 1981 Issue for details of ACAP's efforts to get the Commission.

THE COVER STORY

ACAP's thanks go to Jay Lewis, Editor of THE ALCOHOLISM REPORT (744 National Press Bldg., Washington, D. C. 20045) for special permission to reprint from his April 15th Report the following excellent summary of the April 14th event:

President Reagan signed an Executive Order April 14 establishing the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving "to aid the states in their fight against the epidemic of drunk driving on the nation's roads." He named John Volpe, Secretary of Transportation during the Nixon Administration, Chairman of the 30-member panel.

"We intend to hit hard at the major threat on our highways — the drunken driver," said Mr. Reagan during ceremonies in the White House Rose Garden. He said the Commission was created "to lead this effort and to act as a catalyst for grassroots action."

"For even though drunk driving is a problem nationwide, it can be solved only at the state and local level," the President added. "Yet the federal government has a role to play."

Mr. Reagan coupled the formal establishing of the Commission on Drunk Driving with the announcement of a broad public education campaign to be coordinated by the Department of Transportation (DOT) designed to enhance use of seat belts.

Under the Executive Order, the Commission is to be composed of no more than 26 members appointed by the President, and four members of Congress — two House members designated by the Speaker, and two Senators named by the Majority Leader. Volpe, as Chairman, was the only member to be announced initially. Names of others were reportedly in process of clearance. A fact sheet on the Commission said it would include "representatives of the insurance and alcohol beverage industries, state and local officials, private citizens and local organizations."

The Executive Order, giving the Commission a one-year life until April 14, 1983, charges the panel with these functions:

"(a) heighten public awareness of the seriousness of the drunk driving problem; (b) persuade states and communities to attack the drunk driving problem in a more organized and systematic manner, including plans to eliminate bottlenecks in the arrest, trial and sentencing process that impair the effectiveness of many drunk driving laws; (c) encourage state and local officials and organizations to accept and use the latest techniques and methods to solve the problem; and (d) generate public support for increased enforcement of state and local drunk driving laws."

DOT was directed to provide the Commission with administrative services, funds, facilities, staff and other support services, while other executive agencies are required to furnish information on drunk driving and highway safety issues as well as other support as requested. The Executive Order authorizes the Commission to hold public hearings and use other procedures necessary to carry out its functions.

At the White House ceremony, Mr. Reagan said drunk drivers were involved in half the 50,000 traffic fatalities last year, as well as 750,000 injuries. He continued:

"All of us have heard the tragic stories about the young mother with her new baby, the grandmother out with her grandchildren, or the father and son going to Little League practice killed by the drunken driver.

"Americans are outraged that such slaughter of the innocent can take place on our highways. Our anger and frustration are matched only by the grief of those who have lost loved ones in such accidents. But there are useful preventive measures we can take. The highway safety campaign that we are launching is aimed at the areas where a little prevention can pay big returns in saving lives and reducing injuries." The President said that with the leadership of Volpe and the rest of the Commission, "we will advocate a strong approach to reducing drunk driving accidents across the country." He added:

"What is already heartening about this effort to make our highways safer is the support of organizations in the private sector. Citizens at the grassroots are organizing to help state and local authorities expand their fight against the drunken driver."

Volpe, under whose administration DOT launched the Alcohol Safety Action Projects (ASAPs) in the early 1970s, told the Rose Garden gathering that "the most important element at the state level is the need for a comprehensive approach to the problem."

"By coordinating and improving the ways in which the police, prosecutors, judges and treatment personnel deal with the drunk driver, we have learned how to build on our own experience," said Volpe, former Governor of Massachusetts.

Transportation Secretary Drew Louis said the effort will include a "broad-based public awareness campaign on drunk driving" to run concurrently with the safety belt campaign. "All Americans must join in this campaign to remove drunk drivers from our streets and to urge everyone to buckle up."

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A fact sheet distributed by DOT on the Commission said the panel will conduct public forums "to highlight the drunk driving problem" and "meet with state and community officials to enlist their support, help develop citizen interest and support and encourage local programs to increase drunk driving arrests and the use of more certain sanctions, such as license suspensions and revocations."

The new emphasis on the drunk driving problem, according to the fact sheet, will focus on adoption of a six-point program at the state and local level, including:

1) **General Deterrence Approach (short-term)** — conducting programs to deter the majority of drunk drivers who are never arrested (rather than 'treating' the few who are);

2) **Community Focus** — placing program emphasis and responsibility at the local level;

3) **Systems Approach** — integrating and coordinating enforcement, prosecution, adjudication, education/treatment, public information/education, and licensing functions at the local and state level;

4) **Programs Funded by the Offenders** — assessing fines, court costs, treatment tuition fees, etc., to convicted drunk drivers to defray the costs of local/community programs;

5) **Citizen Support** — generating community/citizen support for comprehensive community programs; and

6) **Prevention (long-term)** — efforts toward changing societal attitudes toward drinking and driving through long-term prevention/education programs."

Some 40 private sector representatives were listed as in attendance at the White House ceremony. They included Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID), the Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. (DISCUS), the U.S. Brewers Assn., the National Safety Council, General Federation of Women's Clubs, insurance officials, and the major auto makers. A number of lawmakers were also on hand, including Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-RI) and Rep. Michael Barnes (D-MD), sponsor of legislation on drunk driving.

William Plymat of the American Council on Alcohol Problems was the only alcohol field representative attending. A DOT official told AR that time constraints had precluded inviting other field organizations, but that the National Council on Alcoholism and other groups "have enthusiastically supported us, and have already been enlisted." No HHS official was identified as present.

The idea of a Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving was proposed in a letter to the President last November signed by more than 300 members of Congress.

A MANUAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

In our last two American Issues we told how the idea of a Presidential Commission was presented to ACAP, how the effort evolved with our support, and how interest spread through the media, the Congress, and the religious community. If there is now sufficient continuing interest on the part of the American people, the end results should be a significant reduction in the number of deaths and injuries to innocent people, in the number of bereaved families, and in the concealed cost in tax dollars to society. It may one day be recorded as an important chapter in American history.

How the idea evolved and bore fruit makes an interesting story. It is in large measure the story of the leadership of Sandy Golden. He is an investigative reporter turned activist. He is 37, married, has 2 children and lives in Gaithersburg, Maryland. But Golden has been concerned about the task of stimulating and developing that continuing interest on the part of citizens.

While promoting the idea of the Presidential Commission, Golden discussed with Dr. James Nichols of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a division of DOT, the expertise he had gained in working with citizen activists across the country. Dr. Nichols suggested that he prepare a manual for volunteers embodying this know-how. Such a manual has now been prepared by Golden and is under consideration for release to the public by NHTSA.

Here is how Golden tells his story:

"My interest in the alcohol-crash problem began in mid-1980 when I was an off-camera reporter for WDCM-TV in Washington. At that time I helped put together a news series about drunk driving. It focused on a baby girl in Maryland who was paralyzed from the base of her neck down as a result of a crash caused by a repeat offender drunk driver. Laura Lamb was five months old when it happened. She was riding to a grocery store with her mother when a drunk driver came over a hill and hit them. Laura is now a quadriplegic and will be confined to a bed or a wheelchair for the rest of her life.

"When I saw Laura I felt out-raged that such a thing could happen in our society and that the repeat offender who caused it was allowed to continue driving in my state and endangering the lives of innocent people.

"I also learned about Cari Lightner, age 13, in California. She was walking home from school in a bicycle lane when a car ran off the road and struck her from behind, killing her. The drunk driver who was out of jail on bail from another hit and run accident didn't even stop to render first-aid.

"Later I learned about Tommy Sexton, age 15, who was killed while being driven home from a fishing trip. The drunk driver who caused that lived in my state, too.

"I saw what was happening near at home in my state was happening all across the country. Innocent children, as well as adults, were being killed everyday. I saw that parents who had lost a child or had a child seriously injured, crippled, or maimed by a drunk driver would suffer forever. They would learn to cope with their grief, but they would never get over their loss. For many it would be an almost impossible burden to bear. And millions of American families were suffering in this way because of drunk drivers. The numbers were staggering, and the continuing toll inexcusable and appalling. And it was all really unnecessary and preventable because there was much which could be done everywhere to stop these tragedies.

"It appeared that while several states were making what appeared to be serious attempts to control drunk drivers and reduce death and injury caused in alcohol-related crashes, not much was being done in most places in the nation.

"I thought about the problem a lot and wanted to do something about it. I felt I must begin a fight for reform. I began to talk to and work with numerous victims, teaching them how to cope with their grief by doing something constructive to change the situation.

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A MANUAL (Continued)

I began investigating more stories of crashes and talking with more victims about how the perpetrators of these terrible crimes were going 'scot free' while they were suffering.

"I developed the concept of the local level task force to combat drunk driving (an idea which is now endorsed by both the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Safety Council). As a result of the television series I did for WDVM, Governor Harry Hughes of Maryland appointed a state drunk driving task force. After this task force was appointed, I left WDVM so I could work full time to bring the drunk driving problem to public attention and to work for solutions.

"During the next 20 months I extended my investigation, which was largely self-financed, throughout the United States in search of solutions and the reason why the problem exists. Altogether I did more than 1000 interviews in more than 20 states.

"During this effort I helped promote extensive and unparalleled national media attention on the drunk driving issue. I helped foster the nationally known MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers) organization and provided the group with its initial strategy and served as its unsalaried executive director when the organization was first set up.

"As I worked with victims of crashes, people like Tommy's mother and father, Laura's mother, and Cari's mother learned how to fight the system and demand reform. And they got it. They were able to help lead the efforts necessary to get laws changed in California and Maryland, and new commitments from their governors and other state officials that the drunk driving problem would be aggressively attacked. Reports of their struggles to get drunks off the roads began to reach the press and helped alert the nation to the problem. Their successes helped inspire thousands of other victims and concerned citizens to begin working for reform in their states and communities.

"These efforts triggered the establishment of local task forces also in Virginia, California and Missouri and other efforts in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

"From the beginning I began to think how much more could be accomplished if the task force idea could receive Presidential support, making it a nationwide effort for reform. I began to promote the idea of a Presidential Blue Ribbon Commission on Drunk Driving. I authored a petition which was reportedly signed by an estimated 400,000 victims and concerned citizens throughout the nation, calling on the President to appoint the Commission.

"After 15 months of trying to get the Commission without results, I met another investigative reporter, Tom Mechling, in Tijuana, Mexico, and told him of my problem. He said there was only one man in the United States I had to talk with to get the Commission. The name he gave me was Bill Plymat, Executive Director of ACAP (American Council on Alcohol Problems). He was right.

"Without delay Plymat invited me to Minneapolis to speak to the annual meeting of ACAP's Board of Directors. At the end of my speech to that group on Sept. 17, 1981, I presented the draft of a letter which could be sent to President Reagan, asking for the appointment of a Presidential Commission. The letter was immediately adopted by the group and was signed by 45

executives of state, national and international organizations and religious groups. Twenty-three states were represented by the signatures on the letter. It was mailed the next day to the White House.

"Then I went to work to arrange a press conference for the public, the media and members of Congress. This was held on October 6, 1981 in a U.S. House of Representatives committee room. Speakers besides myself were Representative Michael D. Barnes of Maryland, Representative James Hansen of Utah (who had experienced two drunk driving crashes in six months with family injuries), Tom and Dot Sexton, and Rev. Richard Taylor of Topeka, Kansas, the President of ACAP.

"The next step was taken by Representatives Barnes, Hansen and Glenn Anderson of California. They took the text of the ACAP letter to President Reagan, made a minor change, wrote the same letter to the President, signed it themselves and then sent it with a "Dear Colleague" letter to all members of both houses of Congress, asking them to co-sign the letter. By November 13, 1981, 55 Senators and 251 House members had signed this letter. It was then hand-delivered in person to the President at the White House by Representative Hansen. The President in turn referred this to Drew Lewis, Secretary of the Department of Transportation.

"While support from members of Congress was being solicited, the idea also began to gain support from various organizations, insurance companies and government agencies. Now President Reagan has just announced the establishment of the National Commission by an Executive Order, and that Former Governor of Massachusetts, John Volpe will serve as its Chairman.

"Early in my work I talked with Dr. James Nichols of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. I told him I thought that what had been accomplished by Mr. and Mrs. Sexton, Mrs. Lamb and Mrs. Lightner could be duplicated in any state, city or county in the nation, but help was needed in some form to give them the kind of insight and know-how which I had thus far gained. I said I was firmly convinced that the general public didn't want uncontrolled drunk driving anymore and would get behind efforts to correct the problem if they could be given the kind of education they needed.

"He recognized the value of promoting the grass-roots efforts by citizen activists, and it was he who conceived the idea of a manual and urged me to write one. He pushed me the most, but members of his staff also began to get the inspiration and helped. Suddenly my work became a team effort with all of us working toward the goal of saving lives and preventing injuries. Without their unselfish help and encouragement, their time and energy, their constant editing, their probing questions, their valid suggestions, there is no way I could have developed the material which went into this manual. There is no way I can adequately thank them for their support.

"And without the loyal support of my wife and my mother I could never have finished the job. I thank them for allowing me to pursue my journalistic instincts in what became a race against death.

"The development of this manual has been a labor of love and the fulfillment of a dream of a large number of people. More than 100 individuals have made contributions — too many to thank publicly, but they know

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A MANUAL (Continued)

who they are, and they have my sincere thanks.

"Much work remains to be done to improve the anti-drunk driving systems in California and Maryland and other states where the work has already begun. And much new work needs to begin in other places across the nation. With this manual it can begin. The methods in the manual have been proven to work and the advice is sound in most situations. It provides a framework on which to build. The future of many innocent children and adults will depend on its use. Your life may depend on it.

"It is my hope that through the use of this manual countless concerned citizens will rise up and make those persons who wish to drink realize they can no longer drink — and drive."

For information about the availability of this manual, write to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 7th St. S.W., Washington, D. C. 20590.

THE MICHIGAN CONFERENCES

On March 31 to April 2, 1982 a National Conference called "The Life Savers" was held in Detroit under the joint sponsorship of the National Safety Council and the U. S. Department of Transportation. The conference was arranged to deal with two important subjects: Occupant Protection, through the use of seat belts by adults and restraints for children, and other auto occupant education; and Alcohol Countermeasures, to discuss methods to combat the needless tragedy of drinking-driving. It was attended by 400 persons representing business, industry, media, health education and rehabilitation, law enforcement, legislative and citizen action, and other areas of social concern.

One of the speakers in the alcohol area was Sandy Golden, the investigative journalist turned activist, whose story appears above. He was introduced by Dr. James Nichols of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and at the conclusion of his talk was presented with an Award for Public Service, signed by Ray A. Peck, Administrator of NHTSA, in these words:

"In recognition of and appreciation for his extraordinary contribution to the cause of highway safety, in particular: By his whole-hearted commitment and deep personal involvement in combatting the continuing problem of the drunk driver, he has helped create effective task forces and stimulated local citizen action groups to help deal with the problem at the local level."

Another cooperative conference called "Strength thru Partnership" will be held May 16-18, 1982 at the Grand Traverse Hilton in Traverse City, MI. This is the third annual conference of the Michigan Coalition on Substance Abuse, which consists of ten organizations in the substance abuse field including ACAP's active affiliate, the Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems (MICAP). MICAP's Executive Director, Rev. Allen B. Rice, is also Vice-Chairperson of the Coalition.

Keynote speaker at this conference will be Cathleen Brooks, journalist, author and consultant to Operation Cork, an organization devoted to education and rehabilitation in the alcohol field. She has appeared on numerous TV and radio talk shows including the "Today Show."

WOMEN OF TEXAS ORGANIZE

Journalist-activist Sandy Golden also spoke on February 25th to the annual meeting of the Board of Directors of Texas Alcohol Narcotics Edn., Inc. (TANE) held at Dallas. Golden, currently a member of the drunk driving task force in Montgomery County, Maryland, reported that there are now seven task forces set up in the Washington, D. C. area. Texas Governor Clements has already appointed a similar committee.

Rev. R. R. Holton, Ex. Director of TANE said part of the purpose of the February meeting was to help TANE women and other women of Texas learn how to set up local task forces. These would investigate the system dealing with drinking drivers, identify flaws and recommend to the Governor and to the Legislature ways to reduce the deadly toll.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION IN THE STATES

Consistent with the increasing public awareness of the drunk driving problem in the nation and the need for reform, a number of state legislatures have recently tightened DWI laws or taken other steps to deal with the problem.

Maryland

In Maryland, which already has a state task force (see the Golden story herein), the Legislature passed a bill raising the legal drinking age to 21 and it is now in the hands of Governor Hughes for consideration.

Alabama

A strong drive was made in Alabama to raise the drinking age back to 21. Although it did not pass, it received strong support from the State Trooper Association and is expected to be brought up again at a special session in July. The State Department of Public Safety joined the Alabama Citizens Action Program (ACAP affiliate led by Dr. D. L. Ireland) in asking Alabama Governor James for a state task force on drunk driving.

Minnesota

Since April 1st repeat drunk drivers in Minnesota have faced both an increased penalty and extended license revocation period, as well as mandatory rehabilitation. Various other improvements in the DWI laws were made, some to take effect July 1st, which would aid in the apprehension and prosecution of more drunk drivers. Governor Quie had made the issue of DWI one of six legislative priorities for the 1982 session and signed the new laws on March 19th. The bill finally passed represented a bi-partisan effort with a significant impact on drunk driving control in Minnesota.

Iowa

The Iowa House by a 97-0 vote passed a new drunk driving bill which one lawmaker called "probably the stiffest drunken driving bill that has ever been before the Legislature." It has passed the Iowa Senate with some amendments which are now up for consideration. The new provisions would increase the penalties for DWI and give police officers authority to immediately suspend the driver's license of anybody with a blood alcohol reading in excess of .10%. Governor Ray is expected to appoint a fifteen member state task force on drunk driving to increase public awareness and compliance with drunk driving laws.