

# Polio patient heads driving class

By Pat Story

If a woman driver teaching a defensive driving class sounds unusual, how about a woman driver in a wheelchair teaching it?

Cathy Adkins, a personnel assistant here, is in charge of the noncredit course, developed by the National Safety Council, next offered in January.

"It's basically a course in how to drive to stay alive," said Ms. Adkins, who took the Placement Office course here last July. About 350 people have taken the course from Ms. Adkins since August.

A polio victim at 3½, she was a student here in 1963-64 and attended East Texas State in '65-66. She attends

night classes working on here B.B.A. degree.

Struck by the polio epidemic of the late '40s, she has hope of walking some day. A total knee replacement resulted in her being able to stand on and walk with her left leg, an impossibility before.

"I could stand on it immediately after the operation, even before I got the cast off. I had problems stretching the muscles where I could bend my knee, but within four months, it was operational. Since my whole knee's stainless steel, I sometimes click."

The operation, mainly done on arthritic patients, was improvised to fit

her needs. As far as she knows, she is the only polio patient to receive it.

"I wish more people who have had polio knew about the operation. These remarkable Arlington doctors could probably help them.

"After surgery this month, I hope I'll be able to get rid of my wheelchair. It's an experience I'm really looking forward to."

Though handicapped, Ms. Adkins, nominated for state handicapped worker of the year, considers herself qualified to teach the defensive driving session. She took an instructor's course in Fort Worth and she encounters the same terrifying traffic experiences as everybody else.

"I get just as panicky as anybody in those situations, so I know what it's like," she said.

"I started driving about eight years ago, as soon as I found out about hand brakes. Oh, I did some driving in the country before that but I didn't venture any city driving because my reflexes are one-fourth slower than the average driver."

The 8-hour course is conducted through lecture, the use of films, maps, a workbook and a driver's handbook. No driving is involved.

"We also get into some of the legal aspects of traffic rules and regulations. That's just a sidelight to the whole thing. No matter how legal the situation, you can be in the right and still be killed.

"Our main object is to show the participants how to prevent accidents. With the films, we put traffic accident cases before the people and see if they can determine how to prevent them."

To secure the 10 per cent insurance credit, good for three years, the principal driver of each passenger car must successfully complete the course. Other family members are eligible only if they, too, finish the session.

Participants must contact their insurance man regarding a discount.

"Because companies have different policies," she said, "they handle the discount differently. I've even heard of one allowing a 20 per cent credit, but that was a rare exception. Most all agencies are very cooperative in handling it."

A \$2 fee per person covers cost of the materials and the cost of applying for a 10 per cent discount on automobile insurance through Austin.

"The \$2 fee is a small price to pay. Most places charge \$8 to \$12," said Ms. Adkins.



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