

Exam week comes early for professors

by Dawn Lerohl and Pat Kiernan

Students aren't the only ones experiencing pre-exam stress. For University of Alberta professors, teaching evaluations by the students provide some equally anxious moments.

"If you come into the coffee room during evaluation period, they (the professors) don't always look happy. It's very stressful, just as stressful as exams for the students," said Dr. Peter Smy, chairman of Electrical Engineering. He adds that the evaluations "really mean something" when judging the quality of a professor.

Student completing evaluation forms in any faculty should not be afraid to say what's on their mind as the forms are strictly confidential. The marks are held by the department until the term ends. The comments are typed by department staff to avoid recognition of hand-

writing.

"The instructor shouldn't be able to identify the student and it (the evaluation) should not influence the instructor's marks," said Bente Roed Cochran, coordinator of the Office of the Committee for Improvement of Teaching or Learning.

Professors take into consideration the comments of students to varying degrees. "Good teachers will really look at the students suggestions," said Cochran.

All faculties place a high degree of importance on the evaluations received from students. But few faculties go so far as Engineering which assigns a grade on the nine point scale to rank teaching skills of the professor.

my explained that this method is in response to a past concern that teaching was not sufficiently emphasized when evaluating professors. Under this system, the teaching

skills are scored and considered in conjunction with the number of research papers written by the professor. He explains that, "teaching scores mean as much as research scores."

Once a numerical grade has been assigned to both the teaching and researching aspect of teacher evaluation, the top 25 percent in each department are considered for pro-

motion. Smy adds that it is theoretically possible for a professor to be fired if he consistently scores low on teacher evaluations. However, this has not yet occurred and he cautions that the department would be careful to examine the professor's teaching record before taking such drastic action.

Evaluations are important yet they are not the only type of feedback

expected by the professor. Cochran stresses that students should feel free to talk to their professors about teaching problems.

Rather than waiting until the evaluation forms are distributed at the end of the term, "it is important that students take some responsibility. If, during the term, things are ineffective, they should approach the professor," said Cochran.

Driving skills shouldn't be taken for granted

Going through the motions

by Randal Smathers

I'm driving along a city street with a carful of people. I accelerate hard from a stop, climbing to 3,500 r.p.m. in first gear as I try out the shiny new Mercury I'm driving.

A block away, five preschoolers start across the street, without waiting for their teacher, trusting a crosswalk to provide safe passage.

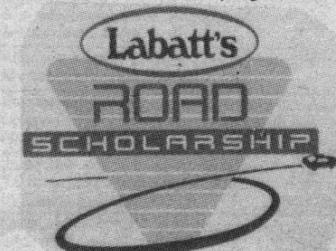
I pop the car into second gear, flooring the gas to get all the pickup I can with three passengers to slow me down. I check the speedo—just hitting 50 k.p.h. now—then glance over when the front passenger starts to fiddle with the radio. I look up just in time to see the children in my lane. I freeze, foot hovering over the brake, knowing that I can't stop in time. I've got about 40 yards.

The children suddenly see the danger, and also freeze. Perhaps one screams. Their teacher, coming out of nowhere, is running towards them, but in so doing, he has blocked the right lane. I've got 30 yards.

I hammer the clutch with my left foot, bracing myself into a solid position, and hit the brake at the same time, knowing I will have to shed my speed. The brakes lock as I

start skidding on some ice. Twenty-five yards to go.

I stop looking at the people in front of me, and find an open space in the opposite lane. At the same time, I release pressure on the brake pedal until the front wheels begin to turn, so that I can regain control of the car. I've got ten yards. I fight my ingrained habit of pumping the brakes, trying instead



to maintain steady braking pressure.

As the front wheels unlock, the car jerks left, into the oncoming traffic. I pass the children, who exchange horrified stares with my passengers as we roll by, missing by inches.

I have perhaps three car lengths before I will hit the oncoming car, which is now stopped. I fight to get the wheels around to the right. The

car starts to respond, but by the time it does, I have fixed my attention on the front corner of the bumper I am hoping to avoid. I slide inexorably into the car, hitting exactly the spot on the bumper where I was looking. In another eight feet I have stopped.

Fortunately, this situation never happened. Instead, we were on the parking lot of Northlands Coliseum, taking part in a crash-avoidance seminar, and nothing more valuable than a pylon was damaged.

The course was the practical end of a two-part seminar on driving skills being offered by Labatt's and Ford, called "Road Scholarship." The first part involved about 200 students in a video seminar on Thursday afternoon. The second part was in-car training for 96 lucky participants, which happened throughout the weekend.

It is too easy to imagine what could—and indeed what does—happen if an untrained driver gets into such a situation. They would likely lock up the brakes and, unable to stop in time, plow down the children. Add five statistics to the annual highway massacre.

Unfortunately, as chief instructor and long-time performance driving instructor Gary Magwood points out, not enough emphasis is placed on driving skills in current driver training programs. Instead, students are taught the laws and basic vehicle control, and are then turned loose to survive, or not, by themselves.

Even a couple beers will hopelessly impair your chances

Many drivers are not taught how to sit in a car correctly, let alone how to keep their eyes on the horizon, in order to spot trouble ahead of time.

The training also reinforced the drinking/driving message. After going through even a few runs, it is obvious that even a couple beers will hopelessly impair your chances of avoiding a collision.

This kind of training is almost guaranteed to improve everyone's driving skills, at those times when we need them the most. Yet there is no program offered as part of our driver training which teaches these skills. It will require either legislation or lower insurance rates to encourage more people to participate in such courses.

Until that time, Labatt's, Ford, and the volunteers from local sports car clubs—who spent their weekend standing in an icy parking lot to help pass along their skills—should be highly commended for trying to get at least some people out of Model T driving techniques and into the same era as our cars.

Library a safe place

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Campus Security will then make recommendations for changes. Teskey said he will welcome the recommendations, but does not want to go overboard in securing the library. Too many safety measures can make the library an intimi-

dating place to study in.

"I'm not prepared for video cameras. Hopefully it won't come to that," said Teskey. "It would be detrimental to the use of the library. We can do different things to make people feel more secure in the library."

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Beating the Christmas rush

Rod Vidal (left) and Marvin Babiuk (right) decided to take some of the load off Santa this year by wrapping up fellow Business student Chris Kershaw and sending her off. We're not sure who the lucky recipient is, or if Babiuk survived the trip down HUB to the mailbox.