

A Day in Court . . . Teen Type, That Is

PHOTO STORY BY JULIE CANDLER

Not a single defendant has objected to the penalty imposed upon him by the Birmingham teen traffic court, which began holding sessions last October.

So successful has Birmingham's new court been, that several neighboring communities have copied it. At a session held last week, Grasse Pointe Woods officials were on hand to observe the new court's operation.

The court's expenses are underwritten by the Birmingham Exchange club. The service club's members are cooperating with Sgt. Robert Schaule, Birmingham police juvenile officer who organized and supervises the operation.

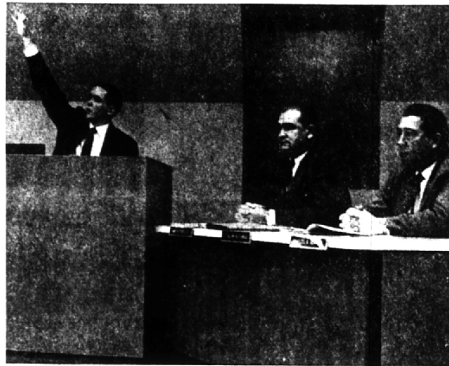
SCHAULE HOPES soon to establish a night-time driver clinic to which young offenders will be "sentenced" to study Michigan traffic laws and sportsmanlike driving.

Students who serve at the court are briefed on traffic laws and correct courtroom behavior and procedure by Birmingham high school civics instructors Robert Richards and George L. Miller, both of whom accompany the jurors to the monthly court session.

Defendants may appeal decisions to circuit court. Penalties can range from theme writing and compulsory driver clinic attendance to license suspension for no more than 29 days.

Most defendants leave court feeling they have done something wrong, but have learned something from it.

If the court's aim is accomplished, they'll be safer drivers in the future.



Even the judge raises his hand to ask a question in connection with a teen traffic court case being tried recently. Judge here is Dave Ritchie. At his left is Birmingham police juvenile officer, Sgt. Robert Schaule, and a representative of the Oakland county prosecutor's office.



Waiting his turn to be called before the jury, a defendant is glimpsed from the corridor just outside the committee room where all defendants and their parents report on teen court day.



The bailiff pauses at the door as he prepares to escort a defendant and his father or mother to the courtroom across the hall. William Gilbert is the bailiff.



Watching his pupils with pride is Robert Richards, Birmingham high school civics teacher who escorted the jury to court. Jury members and court officers are chosen from civics classes. Teachers do not participate.



Interested spectators are Marit Maaren, of Norway, and Yukie (Yukinobu) Nomura, of Japan. The pair are American Field Service exchange students, attending Birmingham high school for the year as members of the senior class.

From their seats in the combination courtroom and commission room in the municipal building, the two watched the court proceedings seriously.



Standing, Ron Morrow looks on as he expresses his views on a just penalty for a 16-year-old girl who failed to stop when the car ahead of hers stopped. Seated around Ron are other members of the jury.



Juror's-eye view of teen traffic court. Dave Muhltner (standing) acts as jury foreman, calling on jurists who raise their hands with a question or an opinion on a case. Foreman also takes the jurists' vote.

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