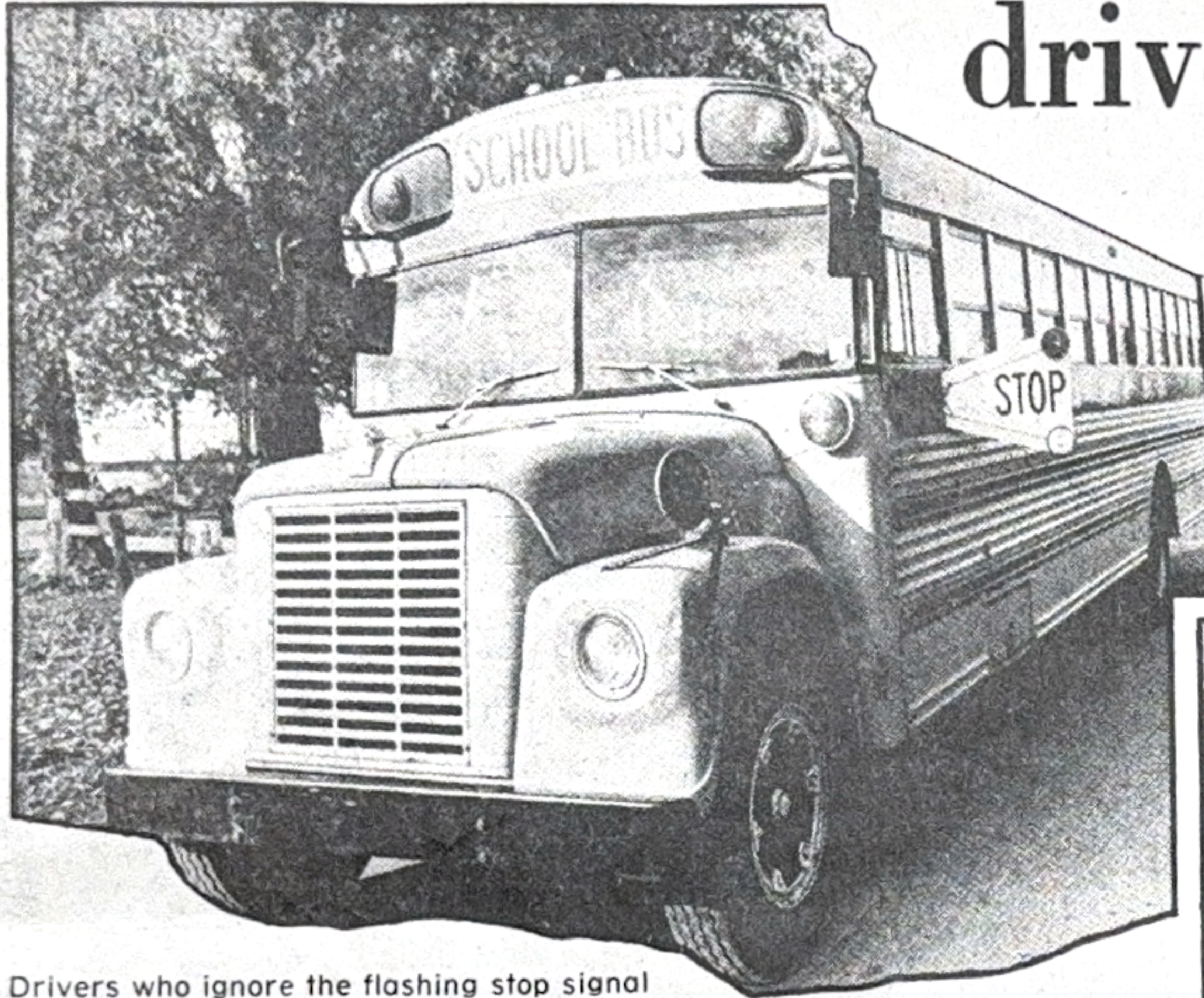


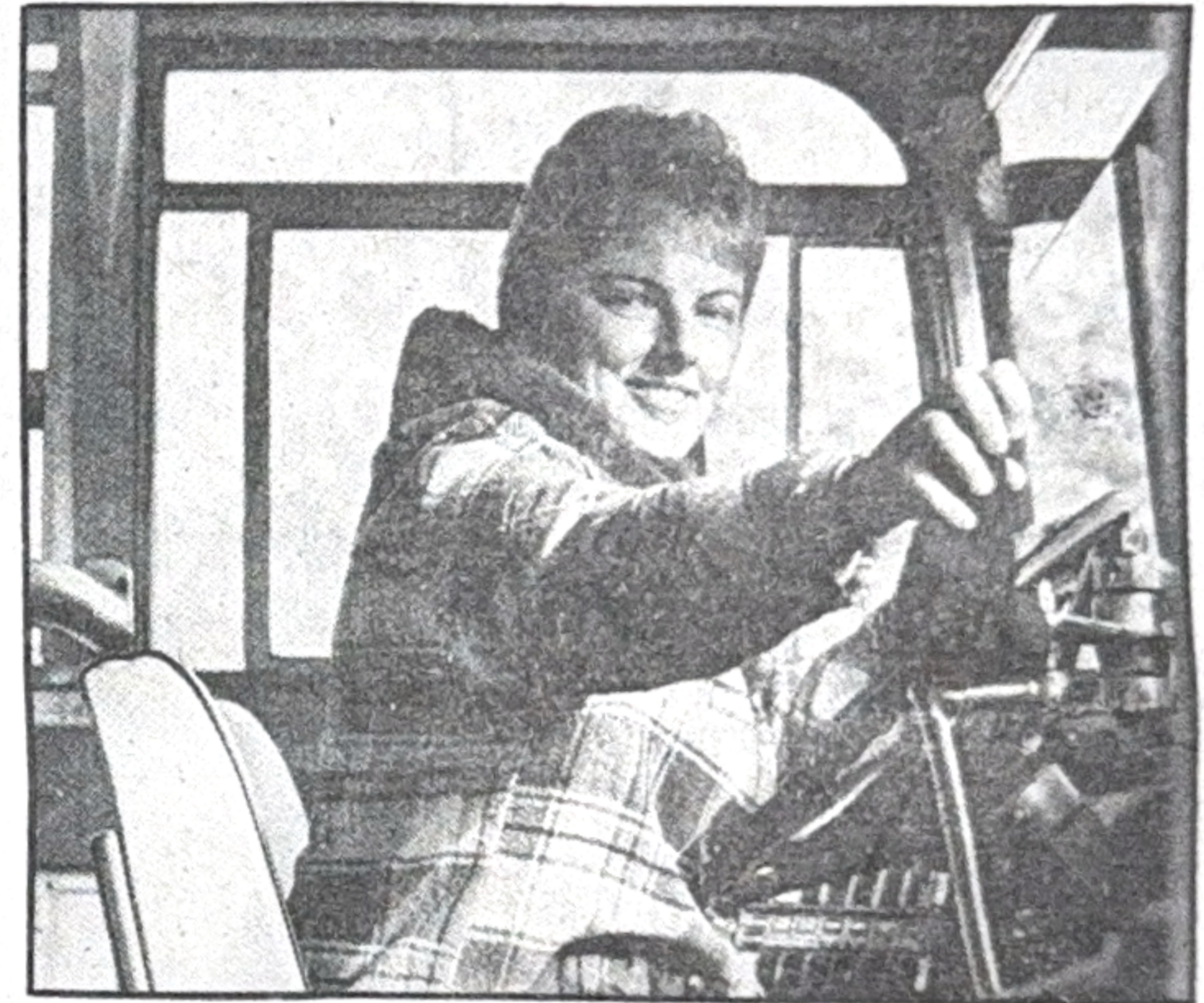
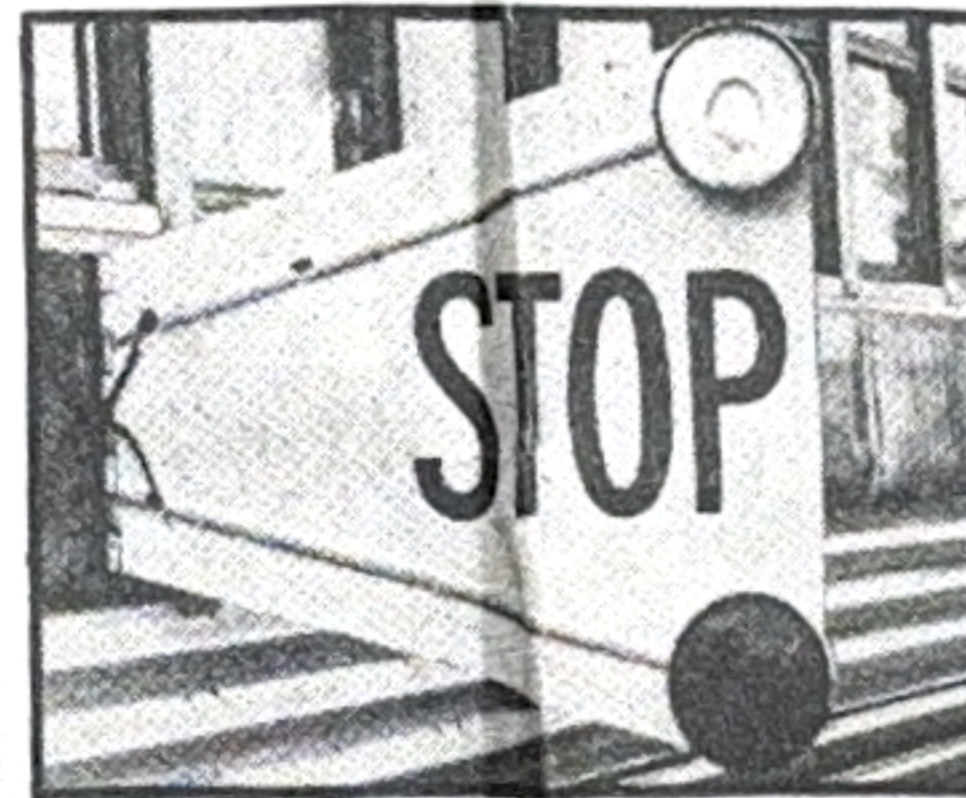
A school bus driver's plea: Stop!



Drivers who ignore the flashing stop signal may endanger the lives of children getting off the school bus

Citizen photos by Robin Nelson

'Every year children are killed by cars going past the flashing stop signals. The bus drivers are aware of it, but the public isn't aware of how frequently this happens.'



School bus driver Connie DeWell

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Mrs. DeWell is a bus driver for the Crown Point community schools.)

By CONNIE DeWELL

I have been a school bus driver for eight years and my husband has driven school buses for 14 years.

A problem has been occurring more frequently each year and we wonder what we can do about it.

Cars have been going past the red flashing lights and stop arm, in some cases narrowly missing a child getting on or off the bus.

The day I decided to write this letter I had one car go through in the morning and three that afternoon (one came quite

close to the child) — and I drive only one bus in one township!

It is such a helpless feeling when there is not time enough to give the child warning. The only thing the bus driver can do is lay on the horn — hoping to get the driver of the car's attention and warn the child.

I realize that at the time school buses are on the road citizens are also on their way to work and it is annoying to get behind a school bus. However, the seconds you lose may save a youngster's life. Perhaps we could make some kind of allowance by leaving earlier or taking a different road.

I also realize that sometimes drivers feel it is unnecessary to stop when chil-

dren are not crossing the street.

Why stop?

Because you do not know when one kid may be late and run across the street without thinking. Also, because the little ones may see something on the other side of the road they want to pick up — and they never look.

That is why it is a general law: stop any time a school bus has its red flashers and stop arm out.

I believe you will find most school bus drivers are concerned about the other traffic and will, whenever possible, slow down and move over to let cars pass between stops.

Occasionally this is impossible — such as on a road with many curves or hills.

The bus driver is looking out for your safety by not letting you get around when a curve, hill or another car is coming up.

At bus drivers safety meetings we discuss this hazard every year. This year the police showed us a movie which had cases of children killed by cars going through the stop signals. The problem is the bus drivers are the ones that are aware of it, but the public is not aware of how frequently this happens.

When I lay on my horn to get the attention of drivers going through my stop arm I get various responses — a blank "What did I do?" look, a startled "Oh, my gosh, a bus!" look, or a nasty "Who do you think you are?" look.

In a few cases timing is such that you

can stop a driver or alert a child — but too often there isn't time.

If a school bus's red flashers are blinking, that means it is coming close to a stop. Start stopping immediately. When the arm is out the law reads, "You Must Not Pass."

There are times when you may be making a turn and think you need not stop. However, you can never tell which direction a child is liable to come from. Take a few seconds and wait anyway!

There are times that you need not stop for a school bus. If it has its yellow emergency caution lights blinking it is probably stopping for a railroad track, the bus is not operating properly or the driver has

a severe discipline problem which cannot wait. When you see these lights just proceed with caution.

But whenever the red flashers on top are on and the stop arm is out you must stop and wait until the lights have gone off and the bus is in motion before starting again.

Won't you try to help by waiting for the bus a minute or two, and also by making other people aware of the hazardous problem we have?

Remember, these are your children or grandchildren, or maybe just a nice neighborhood youngster. Give them a minute of your time. Stop for the school bus!