



Florence Lawrence

Florence Lawrence, often referred to as “the first movie star,” was so successful that she was able to purchase her own car in the early 20th century. This was a rare luxury at the time, particularly for women. In 1914, she developed a mechanical “auto signaling arm” that, with the press of a button, elevated or lowered an arm with an attached flag on the car’s rear bumper that signaled to other drivers the direction the car was going to turn. Lawrence subsequently devised a similar brake signal system, where a driver pressed on the brakes and a “stop” sign lifted up from the back bumper. Unfortunately, Lawrence never patented her ideas so she never received the credit (or compensation) she deserved.

June McCarroll

Former nurse and physician, Dr. June McCarroll, came up with an ingenious and life-saving idea that now may seem obvious. After she was nearly killed by a truck in 1917, she came up with the idea to have painted lines on roads to distinguish separate lanes. After the near-collision in her Model T, she shared the idea with the Riverside County Board of Supervisors in California. Unimpressed with her idea, the board shot her down. Dr. McCarroll was not deterred. She took it upon herself to personally hand-paint a white stripe down the middle of what is now Indio Boulevard. In 1924, California became the first state with mandatory centerlines, and in 2002, the state officially designated a stretch of Interstate 10 near her original white stripe as “The Doctor June McCarroll Memorial Freeway.” ■

Photos this page (clockwise from top): Bertha Benz; June McCarroll; Florence Lawrence (last two photos)

