

OTHER DRIVERS!

My Great Grandfather was a very strange chap - which might explain a lot when you think about it! In fact he went rather senile in his old age - something my beloved often reminds me of!

A wonderful story about him relates to a time in the fifties when he was having lunch in a hotel with other members of the family. He always wore a trilby - even apparently at mealtimes – and at one point excused himself to visit the "gents". He returned a few minutes later, with water pouring off the rim of his hat, muttering that he couldn't understand these "new fangled toilets". According to him, there was no real urinal, no seats, and when you flushed the toilet you got soaked. He must have been the first (but maybe not the last!) person to have used the shower as a toilet!

He once needed a loo whilst driving a group of Ladies to an event, and stopping the car, excused himself, walked towards a very large tree, circumnavigated it three times, ending up in full view of everyone before relieving himself with a look of total satisfaction on his face!

He was a very short man, and used to drive an Austin Somerset. In fact, he was so short, that rumour had it he couldn't see properly out of the side windows, so when he approached a cross roads, he had to stand up to see if anything was coming! I later found out that the bit about being too short to see out of the side windows was true – but the idea of him standing up to look out of the side windows wasn't - he just shut his eyes and accelerated whenever he came to cross roads! Perhaps it was a good job that in those days, there was very little traffic!

But don't you sometimes wonder whether many people who learnt to drive in the 30's and 40's should be thinking about retiring from being behind the wheel? I'm not suggesting that no one older than their mid 60's should be allowed to drive - many older people have adapted very well to modern driving conditions - but many haven't.

I overheard a conversation the other day between four senior citizens. They were talking about their ailments. The first one said, "The arthritis in my arms is so bad these days, I can hardly hold a coffee cup," to which the second replied, "I know what you mean - my cataracts are so bad I usually miss the cup when I pour the coffee!"

At this the third person said, "My problem is my neck - I can hardly turn it at all," and then not to be outdone, the final member of the group said, "You ought to try high blood pressure like I've got - the pills make me all dizzy!"

Then the first member of the group smiled, and said, "I guess this is the price we pay for getting old - still - it's not all bad, we should be thankful that we can all still drive!"

It makes you wonder, doesn't it?

But older people are not necessarily the worst drivers - far from it. I sometimes wonder how some people ever passed their test - or whether they have ever read a copy of the highway code - or even if they have the faintest idea how to drive.

I think if you have a real interest in cars, generally, it perhaps gives you a chance of being a better driver. Most men have some interest in the cars they drive, but for many women, (and some men) it is nothing more than a means of getting from A to B without getting wet. You can always tell them - they are the ones who, when you ask them what sort of car they have, they reply "a red one!"

Now I am not suggesting for one minute that men are better drivers than women – I wouldn't dare – life is too short! I'm just suggesting that if ALL drivers, regardless of sex, took a little more interest in their vehicles, we would get an improvement in the general standard of driving.

A friend was helping me at church last week (in fact, don't tell anyone - I can't afford to lose any more "street cred" - but he and I were washing up!), when his wife came back, in some distress, saying that the car wouldn't start.

It transpired that it was an automatic, and she was trying to start it in "Drive"!

"Is it a new car?" I asked innocently.

"No," he replied, "we've had it nearly 3 years now!"

Then he went on to tell me that a couple of weeks ago she claimed reverse "wasn't working". Yet it worked OK for him. Then he realised that she hadn't lifted the collar on the gear stick, like you have to on that particular model. One wonders how she has managed for 3 years without reverse!

But then, the very same weekend, I was driving beloved's dog-mobile (an estate) when I commented that I had needed to adjust the wing mirrors, and she would need to adjust them back to how she wanted them.

"How do you do that?" she asked!! She's only had the car 4 years!!

But even people who don't care what they drive are not the worst drivers. Nor, in fact are those people who really annoy me by insisting on overtaking in whatever lane they can use, even though it is the wrong lane, just to get one car further up the queue, and even if that means cutting me up to do it.

I used to block them out, and was quite happy to stand my ground, wave fists, mouth obscenities etc., until one such driver decided we should sort it out OUTSIDE of the cars. Now I'm not a small man, and I'm quite happy to be macho, like the rest of us blokes -

but mainly from inside my locked car, and on the move - not eyeball to eyeball with someone who could be yer actual nutter! There are too many road rage reports already, and I don't want to become another statistic. So, I decided that discretion was the better part of valour - and high tailed it as quickly as possible out of harm's way!

You can call me a coward if you like - well - go on then!.

These drivers still annoy me - but I let them get on with it now.

No - the worst of all drivers are not the oldies, nor the women, nor the arrogant wallies - but the young men who have just passed their test - I know - I used to be one!

I used to be a real show off - you know the sort - pull away from the lights as fast as your car will let you - overtake everything in sight, just to prove you are faster - and a sports car in front meant driving just that bit harder to make sure you overtook it.

In my earlier cars all of this meant building up the power (what little there was!). If I wanted to overtake something I would take a run at it - get as close to the back bumper as possible as I built up the speed - then pull out at the last moment - until the time I got too close!

It also meant that I really enjoyed the time when the exhaust blew a hole - great sound! Made me think I was driving something much faster! The ultimate was the "straight through" exhaust - wonderful! I was a real show off. If I was young today, I would be driving a Nova, with sports exhaust and large spoiler on the back - and of course I would be wearing the obligatory baseball cap! And my ambition would be to pass all the flash gits in their TVR's!

I'm so glad I've grown up! My driving is much more *refined* now! (please read the word *refined* in a posh accent!) So I'm now a driver who doesn't get up everyone else's noses like these young 'uns!

Actually, my beloved has just reminded me that I still pull away as fast as possible from the lights, especially in the Griff - but now I do it a heck of a lot faster! Well, you have to really, don't you?

She also reminds me that I still overtake everything in sight and I have a car with a sound that is much lustier than a straight through exhaust. This too is true of course. I could argue that the sound is incidental, but then how do I explain the need to rev it regularly?

Finally, she has reminded me that I DO wear a baseball cap - a TVR Car Club one!

Oh well! Never mind - they do call them big boy's toys! Guess I never did grow up. Now, where's my dinky model I bought yesterday.....

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