

S.T.O.P. speeding

Ticket leads to traffic class, spoils Saturday fun



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OK, I confess. I got a speeding ticket.

I was traveling an entire seven miles over the legal limit, but I had just sat through all nine hours of the "Titanic" behemoth, and after averaging one pop an hour, let me tell you, you need to go.

Seven miles! On a dark road! While a quintuple homicide was going on in the background! And a nun was doing the killing! With a crucifix! And they stop me! Seven stinking miles!

And for those of you who have seen my truck, it makes the Flinstones' car look like Mario Andretti's personal race car. How I was speeding could only have been the direct act of some God in effort to distract the officer from the crusade going on behind me.

Those darn omnipotent deities. Oh well, I'm not here to rant and rave about getting the ticket, but rather what I had to do after I got it, so let's just skip forward to that ranting and raving instead.

Once you get a ticket, they offer you the opportunity to take a class, referred to as the S.T.O.P. class., to remove the ticket from the record. It sounds easy enough, and it just takes up a day of your time to do it. For those of us whose insurance would fire through the roof, we don't really

have any other option.

So, I figure, hey, I'm up for the idea, and my roommate gets a speeding ticket just a few days later, so heck, he and I can go through this horrid process together.

The first step is to register for the class itself. To do this, you have to go to this special building. The building is over the river and through the woods, then first star to the right straight on until morning. After delving deep into the maps of the phone book, you get an inkling of an idea where you're going.

You're wrong, of course, but at least you tried.

Some 70-year-old guy saw us driving around near the prison and offered us directions in exchange for us not noticing his bright orange suit. What a sweet old coot.

Next, after we paid them for the class, we have to go down to the courthouse to have the ticket waived in exchange for taking the class. By far, this sounded like the worst portion of the job, and believe you me, it was.

As we walked into the office, we walked up to the desk attendant. She handed me a stack of papers as thick as my leg and an empty water cooler jug. "Fill these out and fill this."

My eyes widened as I looked at the jug, thinking to myself "Those things hold like fifty gallons, don't they?" I looked up at her, my face almost uncomprehending. "With what?"

"Whatever fluids you can spare. Blood, urine... anything'll do."

"Is there someone else I can talk to?"

"No, now you better get busy."

After a few hours, we had filled one jug between us, and eight other guys who were waiting and I had filled out most of the paperwork. "Here ma'am. Now can I get the ticket taken off my record?"

"We have to process the paperwork first and get an attorney for you, so have a seat. It'll be a little bit."

"How long is this going to take?"

"My grandkids should have you out of here before the end of the next century."

While I had hoped she was joking, sure enough, here were her descendants coming to let me know that the paperwork was processed and they told me that their grandmother had told them all about me. We'd actually killed and eaten one of the other guys in the lobby by then, but hey, Darwinism at its finest, man.

The attorney came out, shaking his head, holding out a contract to me. They could have told me I had to sign in blood, and I would have, if it would have gotten me out of that damn lobby. "I wish you the best, lost soul," he told me.

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Finding the building was another great adventure. Who plans city zoning in Lincoln, M.C. Escher? It, like the other building, was hidden in the backwaters of the city, buried underneath a sign that said "Beware of the Ocelot."

Our instructor's first sentence was "You all did something to get here, so we'll have no cop bashing today."

I swear, the guy behind me said, "What, I brought this bat with me for nothing?"

As she started the first video, which was originally made in 1947, we knew this whole class was going to be utter and total hell. The video droned on and on, the sound waver-

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ing up and down as we watched a Model-T crash into a train, over and over again. Back and to the left. Back and to the... wait, that's Kennedy.

Did you know Model-T's had airbags? Me neither.

After we were told about the joys of airbags and how no modern or ancient or even Stone Age car should be without them, we moved on to the topic of speeding.

Speed kills. No, seriously, that's what they told us. Speeding results in more deaths than anything else accident-related other than drunken driving. So after they spent an epoch on speeding, they moved to drunken driving.

We got to watch video after video of crash after crash, played in slow motion and then backwards. Like I said, this film bore more similarities to "JFK" than anything else. We had to watch, from all angles, videos of drunk people acting stupid, videos of the smart people who stopped their friends from driving drunk... I could talk as long as these videos ran, but you haven't got all day, and I don't want you to suf-

fer what I went through.

As the day slowly wound down and I prepared to run as fast as humanly possible from this damn class, I had to watch a video about how to control my "road rage." I know, you people think I'm making this crap up, but I'm tellin' ya it's so.

"Road rage," they told me, is when people get angry and suddenly tailgate, or stop to discourage tailgaters, or yell at people who swerve, or run lights, or slam into a busload of schoolchildren. That's just another day for me behind the wheel, so why it's considered bad I don't know.

In closing, I'd like to offer one final bit of advice to those select members of the law enforcement community who are reading my column in hopes that I will support getting rid of the nation's idiots, like I did some months ago.

Please, the people you should be going after aren't the speeders, they're the tailgaters, the swervers, the people who cut and weave through traffic and, above all, those people who drive miles and miles with their turn signals on.

Ticket with mercy, huh? Some of us just gotta take a leak.

Play fair

Good sportsmanship gets the shaft too often these days



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Sportsmanship—in American society circa 1998, is it alive and well, or is it as dead as MC Hammer's career?

I can't tell you just yet; if I did, this column would be awfully short.

Johnny Webster's Dictionary defines sportsmanship as the qualities and behavior befitting a sportsman, who is a person who can take loss or defeat without complaint, or victory without gloating, and who treats his opponents with fairness, generosity, courtesy, etc.

In today's society, it seems like these traits are few and far between, and when they do make an appearance, someone is there to cry foul.

The latest instance is an incident involving Nykesha Sales, the Tommie Frazier of the University of Connecticut women's basketball team. Just a point short of the school's all-time scoring record, Sales went down with a ruptured Achilles' tendon, ending her career on a decidedly sour note.

As a way to reward Sales for her years of service to the team, her coach

Geno Auriemma arranged to have Sales break the team scoring record in their game against Villanova. He got the consent of Villanova and the woman who previously held the record. So at tip-off, UConn got the ball and Sales scored her two points uncontested and was helped off the court. When Villanova took possession of the ball, they scored a freebie and with the game tied 2-2, the teams got down to business.

For the last month, debate about Sales' record has taken place in every form of media possible, except for the telegraph. Four-hundred-pound sports radio hosts have harangued on and on about sports being forever tainted because of the way she broke the record. Sportswriters with blood that resembles the secret sauce to a Big Mac have issued 1,000-word diatribes about the hoax that is women's college basketball. And just last week, ABC's Peter Jennings got into the act with his view.

So what's the big deal? The only reason I even knew of the incident was because of all the windbags complaining.

It wasn't like Coach Auriemma threatened Mafia style harm to Villanova if they didn't let Sales score the record breaking basket. What happened was a display of sportsmanship that hasn't revealed itself since the days when pro tennis players wore white pants.

One of the biggest complaints from the wannabe athletes in the media is that Sales' record isn't a true record. It's like serving Mark McGuire a big fat meatball of a pitch so he could break Roger Maris' home run record, they

whine.

I couldn't disagree more. Records are made to be broken. In a few years the record will be broken again and Sales will be forgotten. Besides, it wasn't like a national record. It was a school record. Tom Osborne wouldn't have done it, but what Auriemma wants to do with his team is his prerogative.

An example of an athlete receiving assistance happened during the 1995 Ironman Triathlon. Laid up in a drug-induced state after having my wisdom teeth pulled, I witnessed perhaps one of the most dramatic moments in sports history. After swimming 2.4 miles, biking 112 miles, Paula Newby-Fraser began the 26-mile run with a commanding 11-minute lead. Suffering through the intense Hawaii heat, Newby-Fraser persevered and was well on her way to an unprecedented 8th Ironman victory. Twenty-five miles, 5180 feet into the run, she hit the wall. The banner of the finish line in sight, her body would go no further.

On the ground she lay, trembling in a glycogen-depleted state. Her husband ran to her side as did paramedics. If she was given medical treatment, she would be disqualified. She knew this and refused any help. For several minutes, she stayed on the ground imploring her husband not to call for an ambulance. By the time she was up, the next three competitors crossed the finish line. With some help from her husband and a couple of others, Newby-Fraser crossed the finish line, mostly under her own power, in 4th place—her worst finish ever. Before collapsing on a stretcher, she went over and gave a sweat congratulatory hug to

the winner.

Now why wasn't Newby-Fraser under the gun for being helped to the finish line?

She, as the world's greatest female athlete, should be under more scrutiny than a college basketball player. Like Sales, she was ever so close to her respective goal but needed a hand to reach it. Newby-Fraser wasn't scrutinized, but in the few media outlets that covered the Ironman she was praised for her courageous finish. Perhaps she wasn't scolded because the sportos who are raising the fuss are simple-minded souls who don't follow any sport that isn't played with a ball and stick.

I think the bigger picture is that Sales is the victim of sexism. The majority of the complaints come from men who are jealous of the sportsmanship that prevails in women's athletics. These macho ex-jocks can't handle the fact that women can actually be nice while competing in sports. Why, no men's team would ever do that for a teammate. Even Big East Commissioner Mike Tranhese said that he would never have let men do this, but for women, it's understandable. Oink

oink went the sexist pig.

The answer to my question is yes, sportsmanship is alive and well.

Unfortunately, the sports media realizes they must kill the concept of sportsmanship entirely because without trash talking, fights, bites and other violent outbursts, highlight reels would just center around the sports themselves, not how many photographers can get kicked in the groin in one night.

(Election Epilogue: To everyone who voted, whether it was for me or not, good work. To the 18,000 students who didn't, it's your loss. I'd like to thank the residents of Abel Hall who erected the giant "Munson" signage. I laughed so hard I fell victim to a nasty hernia. Most importantly, I'd like to congratulate Sara Russell, Kelly Hoffschneider, and Eddie Brown for much deserved victories. The best, most qualified, definitely won. Next year, look for Sara to add a dolphin tank to the greenspace, Kelly to add more spice than the Frugal Gourmet to ASUN and Eddie to wow the student body with his keen sense of fashion. Oh yeah, anyone want to help me pay my fines?)

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