



Driving Freedom

NMA Foundation

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Spring 2013

The NMA Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to finding innovative ways to improve and protect the interests of North American motorists.

NMA Ticket-Fighting Toolbox



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**Driving
Freedoms**

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Cover

"NMA Ticket-Fighting Toolbox"



The NMA Ground Game

by Gary Biller, President, NMA

"I am committed to making 2013 all about our ground game. It is difficult to envision the NMA growing its membership and strengthening its political leverage without creating a more active state and community-based presence in key geographic areas around the country."

Thus began a December 2012 letter I sent to each NMA state activist. It continued:

*"The NMA Board of Directors has approved a program to provide financial resources for our activists to make a more significant impact in their states. I hope to roll out the NMA's **Community Support Program (CSP)** by mid-2013, after we have geared the Spring Legislative fundraising campaign toward funding the CSP initiative.*

"The CSP will enable our activists to effectively tackle community and state-based projects. The initial funding will be modest, but will increase over time as the effectiveness of the program grows, judged primarily by a growth in NMA membership in each state."

Here is the crux of it: The CSP is designed to encourage and support grassroots efforts on behalf of motorists. You, as a NMA member, will be at the head of the line to actively utilize the resources of the program to benefit drivers in your community.

There is a wide range of projects that could qualify for CSP funding. Some examples include 1) organizing local support for a petition or ballot initiative, 2) bringing

in an expert witness for testimony before a city council or a legislative committee, and 3) staging a regional meeting of current and prospective NMA members to build a stronger state coalition for motorists.

I will be sending each of you a kickoff letter for the 2013 NMA Legislative Fundraising Campaign in a few weeks. It will explain in more depth the CSP and the vital role you play in establishing its success. A new kind of sweepstakes will be introduced, one that has never been seen before from the NMA or NMA Foundation campaigns. Sweepstakes winners will have a direct influence on NMA activity in their respective states.

The CSP is designed to increase our collective influence on motorists' issues across the country. Through that process, we have a vital second goal of attracting a new generation of supporting members. Fully 60 percent of our current supporting members joined prior to 2000. While that loyalty is indeed impressive and very much appreciated, the downside is that fewer than one of every four contributing members of the NMA have joined within the past five years. As with any membership-based organization, it is crucial that we ramp up recruiting so that there is a constant influx of fresh new motorists' rights advocates with ideas and energy to match.

Almost three years ago—the May/June 2010 edition of *Driving Freedoms* to be exact—Jim

(Continued on Page 3)

Winners of 2012 NMA Foundation Sweepstakes Announced

The NMA Foundation is pleased to announce the prize winners of its Fall 2012 Fundraising Sweepstakes. All prize winners received cash awards to apply toward a High Performance Driving Experience available through Global Racing Schools or another driving school of their choice.



The Grand Prize, a \$1,500 driving school package, went to William Markowitz (Arlington, VA). First Runner-Up Andrew Pesek (Cambridge, MA) received a \$1,250 driving package. Second Runner-Up Mike Roberts (Kansas City, MO) received a \$1,000 driving package. The final prize, a \$750 driving package, went to Third Runner-Up Vipul Kumar (Old Greenwich, CT).

Sweepstakes winners can select from a number of exciting driving experiences like a Ferrari 458 Track Sensation, taking some laps in a NASCAR or Indy car, or even a rally driving experience.



In lieu of the prizes, Mr. Markowitz and Mr. Pesek elected to have the foundation redirect the proceeds into projects that further the mission of the organization.

Thanks to all those who donated so generously to support the work of the NMA Foundation. ■

Get the Latest NMA News Faster than Ever

The NMA and the NMA Foundation are constantly striving for new ways to stay in touch with you, and the latest social media tools make it easier and faster than ever. A quick visit to www.motorists.org will link you to the services shown below, all at no charge. We work hard to update all of these information platforms routinely so you can stay up on all of the national and regional motorists issues that affect you. Pass on relevant postings to others and encourage them to sign up with the NMA as well.

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You can also update your subscription preferences for our email alerts and weekly newsletter by accessing your NMA account profile via the website. Simply log into the “**Members Area**” and select “**Update Your Member Information.**” While you’re there, please take a moment to review your contact information to make sure everything is current.



NMA Washington Report

by Robert Talley, NMA Lobbyist



America is still behind in infrastructure spending, and Washington is struggling to solve the problem. According to a new report from the American Society of Civil Engineers, America's infrastructure gets an overall grade of D minus. While this is an improvement from the last report card, thanks to recent stimulus spending, it is still a far cry from acceptable.

According to the report, the nation's infrastructure needs \$3.6 trillion in new investment between now and 2020. That is roughly \$1.6 trillion more than planned. While our nation's bridges received the highest score of C plus, in part due to increased investment after a high profile bridge collapse in Minneapolis, our roads received a D.

According to the report, "Forty-two percent of America's major urban highways remain congested, costing the economy an estimated \$101 billion in wasted time and fuel annually. While the conditions have improved in the near term, and federal, state, and local capital

investments increased to \$91 billion annually, that level of investment is insufficient and still projected to result in a decline in conditions and performance in the long term. Currently, the Federal Highway Administration estimates that \$170 billion in capital investment would be needed on an annual basis to significantly improve conditions and performance."

This investment deficit comes after the country spent \$48 billion in Recovery Act dollars on more than 15,000 projects across the country. Since 2008, over 350,000 miles of U.S. roads have been repaired or replaced, but work remains. President Obama in the State of the Union called for a major infrastructure investment initiative, pledging to cut project-approval time in half and advocating for \$40 billion in new spending to go toward reduction in the backlog of deferred maintenance on highways, bridges, transit systems and airports nationwide.

That spending doesn't appear likely to occur this year, though. Congress is working out the final issues over funding the federal govern-

ment for the balance of Fiscal Year 2013 at levels that do not allow for major new transportation spending initiatives. House and Senate budget proposals for Fiscal Year 2014 also fail to include any significant increase in federal transportation spending. New spending on transportation will have to come with revenue measures to pay for it. For the first time in a long time this may be completely out of the question.

House Transportation Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) has on several occasions mentioned the possibility of raising the gasoline tax to fund the nation's highway trust fund. An important caveat here is that such a change would likely only occur in the face of a larger tax reform initiative. President Obama has called for such a deal by the end of this summer, and both House and Senate tax-writing committees are working on proposals to amend the code. The tax code itself hasn't seen a major rewrite since 1986, and such a reform will be highly contentious. ■

The NMA Ground Game

Baxter noted in this column that with over 200 million drivers in the United States and Canada, it remained puzzling that the NMA could only attract an infinitesimal number of members from that pool of motorists. He longed for the NMA to become "an organization [that] would have political clout and the ability to shape public policy, from the smallest community and state

legislatures right up to the U.S. Congress, and even beyond."

I share that vision, knowing that if we were to attract even 0.1 percent of all North American drivers to join the NMA, a membership of 200,000 strong would be a force to be reckoned with at the state and federal levels. We have already entered an era in which potential abuses of motorists' privacy and constitu-

tional rights abound. Technological advances make black boxes and GPS tracking inexpensive to employ and drivers easier to exploit.

I look forward to sharing more details of the NMA's Community Support Program with you in the weeks to come. Help me establish a stronger NMA presence, and continue our quest to empower drivers throughout North America. ■

Anatomy of an Illegal Speed Trap Battle

by Neil Slade, NMA Colorado Member

Like all large metro areas, Denver has its share of road construction zones. And almost without exception, each zone has a “temporary” lowered speed limit accompanied by a doubled fine. There’s nothing wrong with asking drivers to slow down to protect the safety of workers, but there is most certainly something wrong with not informing them of either an upcoming construction zone, lowered limits or doubled fines. But it’s common practice in Denver—and the city is reaping millions of dollars in fines from unsuspecting drivers—illegally.

I had seen this kind of thing all over town for ages: road construction with both speed limit signs and “double fine” signs sitting mere inches off the ground on portable stands. I never dwelled on it until one day—the one day I forgot to put my radar detector in my car—and I got nabbed.

The location was a federally funded road construction project at 56th Ave. and Quebec. I didn’t see any sign warning me of a lowered speed limit on this open and clear, divided six-lane urban highway—because there wasn’t any until I was yards in front of the cop running the speed trap, far too late to reduce my speed.

I notified the news team from our local CBS TV station, and they ran an effective and critical story that brought this situation to the attention of thousands of viewers. (See www.neilslade.com/citybreakslaw.html)

Federal law requires speed limit and fines doubled signs be placed at a minimum height of seven feet at every federally funded road construction site per the MUTCD (*Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*). Denver Municipal Code also forbids enforcement when signs are not properly placed.



Some of the many illegal signs that were the subject of Neil’s court case.

I spent two months complaining to every agency involved: Denver Traffic Engineering, the mayor’s office, the Colorado governor’s office, the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. Off the record, officials agreed with me: Speed limit signs and fines doubled signs belong at seven feet, not on portable stands, and the city had broken the law.

But when I tried to get someone, anyone, to put it in writing so that I could defend myself in court, everyone balked. Then, alarmingly, they all began to lie and cover up the mistake. Why? Because ignoring the federal law jeopardized nearly \$8 million dollars in federal road construction funds that the city had acquired. What government employee or official was going to stir things up and blow the whistle on \$8 million dollars?

Nevertheless, I finally had my day in court. I had carefully researched and prepared my case. What I had not been prepared for was a judge who proved to be in utter contempt of fairness and of the law itself. I had the law on my side in black and white. Did it matter to the judge? Nope. In fact, when I began to reference the federal law and the abundant evidence that the city had disregarded the law, the judge refused to let me speak and pronounced me guilty. The judge acted as prosecutor against me. My wife, who attended the hearing,

was horrified at the court’s complete disregard for the law. She is from China and remarked that this was the kind of “law” she saw in China but had never expected to see in a U.S. courtroom.

In 2003 I had successfully defended myself against a traffic ticket when the city had disobeyed the requirements of the MUTCD. At that time, the department of traffic engineering admitted error and wrote a letter to assist me in my court case, and convinced the city to drop its case. In 2012, things were different. Money is tight, and the city is intent on squeezing every dime out of its citizens.

It was a veritable conspiracy against truth, and I was expected to pay—literally—for the city’s failure to properly post regulatory road signs. Further, the court failed to live up to its obligation to render justice and instead only served the interests of the city budget. Unfortunately, my research has shown that the appeals court is equally corrupt. It is a sick system through and through, and it serves only those who benefit directly from the government treasury.

In the end, your only real defense is to be proactive: Join an organization like the National Motorists Association that stands up for your rights in the public forum. And of course, try not to leave your radar detector on your kitchen counter!

I have fought every unfair traffic ticket I have gotten for the past twenty years. If we don’t stand up for our rights in small things, surely, we will have lost a battle of even greater importance. In retrospect, I would take my case to court again regardless of the outcome.

All of the officials who were afraid to tell the truth and the judge who disregarded the law—these are the real losers. I knew and told the truth. In the end, that’s what counts more than anything else. Indeed, I won. ■

Game of Drones

When Americans think of drones, they typically think of military drones used in spectacular overseas anti-terrorist operations.

Now, domestic drones are making news—thanks, in part, to Rand Paul’s recent 13-hour filibuster decrying the Justice Department’s nebulous policy regarding the domestic use of unmanned aerial vehicles. The Kentucky senator was concerned the department’s policy didn’t clearly prohibit the targeting of U.S. citizens for drone attacks on U.S. soil. After some delay, the department clarified its position by stating it did not have the authority to order attacks under those circumstances.

The fact that the Justice Department had to think about it for more than 10 seconds (i.e., the use of drones to kill unarmed U.S. citizens on American soil) is telling. It makes one wonder just how far officials are willing to go in granting authority for various kinds of domestic drone operations—and what the public reaction will be.

Based on a 2012 Monmouth University poll, the public is willing to go along to some degree. Two-thirds or more of those surveyed supported drone use for things like rescue missions, tracking criminals and border enforcement. However, fewer than 25 percent supported using drones to issue speeding tickets, and 64 percent expressed privacy concerns over equipping drones with high-tech cameras. That’s encouraging.

However, the Federal Aviation Administration projects that 30,000 drones will populate domestic airspace by 2020. Some observers estimate even more. Aside from the valid aviation safety concerns those drones will pose, ask your-

self what will all those drones be doing? Here are a few examples:

In 2012, the Environmental Protection Agency used drones to spy on cattle ranchers in Iowa and Nebraska. The purpose? To make sure the ranchers’ operations weren’t running afoul of federal environmental regulations. Also in 2012 the Department of Homeland Security (in concert with local police) launched a predator drone during a standoff with North Dakota rancher Rodney Brossart. The drone was used to track Brossart’s movements and eventually led to his arrest.

Beyond law enforcement and regulatory uses, domestic drones are being deployed for emergency response, scientific research and to monitor weather patterns. Non-military drones are small, lightweight, and inexpensive. You can even buy your own personal drone on Amazon for about \$500, and control it with your smart phone.

Plus, drones can be equipped with a powerful array of surveillance tools: HD cameras and video, automated license plate readers, heat sensors, and soon facial recognition.

Potential for abuse is immense. Not only will cops be able to spy on criminals (and everyone else), criminals will be able to spy on cops (and everyone else).

Policymakers are taking notice. According to the ACLU, legislation governing the use of domestic drones has been proposed in at least 30 states. Most of the bills under consideration require a warrant to use drones to collect information for use in court. Virginia has already passed legislation imposing a two-year moratorium on the use of drones by law enforcement and regulatory agencies. It awaits the governor’s signature.



Privacy advocates have called for drone privacy protections that spell out use limits, data retention policies, accountability standards and abuse prevention. Again, all very encouraging. Some have even predicted all this attention will have a positive impact on privacy rights. They stress that everyone seems to be “out in front” of the issue—meaning that policymakers can implement privacy safeguards before drones become too widespread to effectively control (the proverbial slippery slope).

We’re skeptical. Motorists’ privacy rights have long been under fire; drones represent only the latest assault. Pay attention to what policymakers are saying or not saying. By all accounts, they’ve hyped the more sensational (and more acceptable to the public) uses for drone technology, like nabbing a serial killer or finding a missing child, while downplaying less acceptable uses like general surveillance or traffic enforcement.

Public acceptance of drone use for discrete, well-controlled missions will eventually lead to broader use with less oversight. Sounds similar to the proliferation of photo-based traffic enforcement over the last decade. However, drone-based traffic enforcement will generate the same public backlash we’re currently seeing with standard photo-based enforcement. Policymakers and law enforcement officials, take note. ■

Your Guide to the NMA Ticket-Fighting Toolbox

The numbers on the chart to the right are truly staggering. They provide a snapshot of the magnitude of traffic enforcement (both traditional and photo-based) in the United States.

Given these numbers, here's another staggering number: 5. This is the percentage of motorists, optimistically speaking, who actually fight their traffic tickets. That's a shame because it means 95 percent or more are putting themselves at the mercy of a flawed, revenue-hungry traffic justice system.

Many drivers also plead guilty without knowing what's really at stake. Guilty pleas can trigger unexpected outcomes like increased insurance rates, driver responsibility surcharges and damaged driving records that can lead to license suspensions. Those who do fight almost always have better results in the form of lower penalties, fewer long-term consequences, as well as outright dismissals.

Aside from the personal benefits, ticket fighting also exercises the justice system. Increased pressure from pro se defendants (people who represent themselves) will force the courts and the police to change the way they deal out traffic justice. It's already happening. Traffic courts across the country face huge backlogs as more and more motorists show up to fight camera tickets. And just showing up is sometimes enough to win, as the following example proves.

In December 2012, a magistrate in Elmwood Village, Ohio, was forced to dismiss nearly 1,000 speed camera tickets for drivers who showed up to appeal. It seems the police chief's tablet device containing all of the citation data was on the fritz, and there was no paper backup. If those drivers hadn't shown up to

U.S. Traffic Enforcement by the Numbers:	
55-65 Million:	Annual number of traffic tickets issued nationwide
\$6.5-9.0 Billion:	Total fines issued for those tickets
79,878:	Speed traps in the National Speed Trap Exchange database
\$100 million:	Revenue Virginia collected in speeding fines in 2011
664:	U.S. cities using ticket cameras
\$70 million:	Revenue from Chicago's red-light cameras in 2012
\$375 million:	Revenue from Chicago's red-light cameras since 2003

fight they certainly would not have received such a break, courtesy of a defective microprocessor.

But for most ticket-fighters, it takes more than simply showing up for court to beat that ticket. That's why the NMA has prepared an array of proven ticket-fighting tools to help you. All of these are available to Supporting Members at no- or reduced-cost. As longtime members know, the NMA's ticket-fighting approach focuses on the following five key areas:

1. Avoiding the ticket to begin with
2. Preparing and researching
3. Understanding and using basic legal/courtroom procedures
4. Using technical information to your advantage
5. Traffic Justice Program (learn more at www.motorists.org/traffic-justice/)

All of our ticket-fighting resources explore these essential topics to one degree or another. Let's take a look.

Listen and Learn

If you've never fought a ticket before, the NMA's *Guerilla Ticket Fighter* audio CD which comes with the new Supporting Member packet (also available as a download in the Member Area at www.motorists.org/members/ticket-audio) is the easiest place to start. Listen while you drive

and learn proven techniques to defend yourself. This lively, practical guide covers everything from what do at a traffic stop and how to get information helpful to your case, to effective defense strategies and what to expect in court. (*The Guerilla Ticket Fighter* is also available for download through CD Baby, iTunes, and Amazon.)

Download and Defend

For most NMA members, our downloadable e-book, *Fight That Ticket!*, is the logical place to begin your ticket fight. It's available at no charge to Supporting Members through the Members Area (www.motorists.org/members/ticket-ebook) and comes in two formats: one for viewing on-screen and another for printing out.



Fight That Ticket! provides a comprehensive "Do-It-Yourself" (DIY) guide to fighting your next ticket. Since most traffic tickets are speeding-related, much of the

(Continued top of next page)

content focuses on fighting speeding tickets. However, the techniques and principles presented apply to many types of tickets. Key topics include the following:

1. Requesting Information
2. How to Request a Continuance
3. Enforcement Technology Guide
4. Basic Courtroom Procedures
5. Preparing Your Defense
6. Ticket Errors
7. Enforcement Technology Errors
8. Rules of Evidence for Beginners
9. The Pre-Trial Conference
10. Photo Ticket Defenses

Read a Book

The NMA online store (**store.motorists.org**) contains many extremely helpful books and manuals. Check out *Beat Your Ticket: Go to Court & Win* by attorney David W. Brown. This 250-page book is part of the respected self-help legal guide series from Nolo publishing. It covers defense strategies for many common tickets, offers tips on preparing for trial and even provides

cross-examination questions for specific violations. Written with the layperson in mind, it's the ideal supplement to *Fight That Ticket!*

The store also offers many in-depth technical guides for RADAR and LASER speed measurement devices. This information comes from authoritative sources such as the Wisconsin State Highway Patrol, NHTSA, the Michigan State Police and the device manufacturers themselves. Much of this material is proprietary and is difficult to find elsewhere. If you are preparing a highly technical defense or are simply interested in the technology behind today's modern speed enforce-

ment, definitely consider these manuals. (Supporting Members receive a substantial discount on purchases through the NMA store.)

Put it all Together

For those of you who want the most comprehensive set of information for your ticket fight, the NMA's Legal Defense Kit (LDK) is for you. The LDK compiles the NMA's most powerful ticket-fighting resources into a ten-pound package targeted to your specific needs. It covers court procedures, defense strategy, technical information on almost

all speed measurement devices and key statutes from your state. If you review even half of the material you'll be better prepared than any police officer and some district attorneys you come up against. In addition to the *Guerilla Ticket Fighter* CD and the *Beat Your Ticket* book, you will receive two additional legal guides from Nolo—one to assist you in doing legal research and the other to guide you through the process of representing yourself in civil court. These DIY guides thoroughly explain how you, representing yourself, can research, prepare, build and conduct your defense. The LDK also includes the following specialized information:

Attorney Deposition Guide: A guilty or not-guilty verdict often hinges on the credibility of the police officer testifying against you. Yet most pro se defendants don't know where to begin when challenging an officer in court, especially when it comes to determination of speed. This in-depth manual walks you through the process of questioning a police officer on his understanding of—and proficiency to use—RADAR.

It covers specific questions to ask as well as how to use the officer's responses to support your case.

State-Specific Guide: When it comes to traffic justice, each state has its own way of doing things. This guide compiles statutes, rules and legal cases from your state (or the state where you were stopped) that are relevant to fighting traffic tickets. Review the various speed laws to determine exactly what you've been charged with. Find out if your state has a "speed trap law" that may apply to your case. Learn what discovery and public records provisions are in place so that you can request information helpful to your defense.

Enforcement Technology Information: In most speeding cases, it's critical to challenge the accuracy and reliability of the method used to determine your speed. The LDK bundles the in-depth, proprietary guides available in the NMA store for three common speed measurement techniques: RADAR, LASER (aka LIDAR) and VASCAR. Each kit includes general information, an operator/training manual, technical and error information, and in some cases legal information. Some of this information is highly technical, but many motivated NMA members have used it to win dismissals.

The LDK is available to Supporting Members on a rental basis (\$30 per month plus shipping/handling with \$155 refundable deposit). To find out more call Member Services at 1-800-882-2785 or visit www.motorists.org/ldk/.

Finally, the NMA staff is always available by phone and email to answer ticket-fighting questions from Supporting Members. We encourage members to review the audio CD and e-book to learn the basics of ticket fighting and then to follow up with us to clarify specific points as needed. ■



A Journey on The Mother Road: Route 66 in October

by Eric Berg, NMA Tennessee Member

Route 66 has been the subject of my fascination since 1960 when Martin Milner and George Meharis first drove their Chevy Corvette convertible across my family's black-and-white TV screen in a four-year serial of weekly morality plays. Never mind that they never seemed to drive anywhere fast. Never mind that most of the episodes were filmed on location in states very far from Route 66. Those guys in the 'Vette were way cool!

Through the years as the route was replaced by the U.S. Interstate Highway System, and especially after it was decommissioned as a federal highway in 1985, I feared I would never be able to drive the Will Rogers Highway, the Main Street of America, the Mother Road. After planning and postponing this trip for more than five years, my best friend and I decided that this was the year. I very nearly bought a Porsche Boxster last fall so that we would make the trip in a convertible, but decided instead on a new Porsche Panamera 4S.



Eric's traveling companion, Fred Poland, on the Old Chain of Rocks bridge across the Mississippi River north of St Louis.



This stretch of Route 66 through New Mexico reveals fossilized sand dunes.

We wanted a gimmick for this trip, so I scooped a bicycle water bottle into Lake Michigan near the eastern terminus of Route 66 near Chicago's Navy Pier. Then I met my friend at O'Hare, and from there we traveled as much of the original pavement as still existed. Among our rules for the trip was one that we would not eat fast food from national chains, but would strive to find the most authentic locally owned diners, drive-ins and dives along the old pavement. In that we were successful, though we didn't always eat at the first hunger pang.

We abandoned our tentative ambition to overnight at old motor courts and original neon-lighted motels. Threadbare towels, dim lighting, inadequate HVAC systems, dirty carpets, roaches, bedbugs and undesirable, noisy tenants in adjacent rooms scared us off. We stuck to Marriotts and Holiday Inn Expresses.

Unlike a camping road trip I made to the Pacific Northwest and Canada with the same friend in 1974 in a six-volt 40 horsepower VW Beetle, we had no encounters with the constabularies this time. That's a good thing, because we seldom observed speed limits, and on the return trip in Nevada (headed for Denver), each of us got the car up to 150+ mph. The car wanted to go faster, as it was still accelerating in fifth gear

(of seven gears) toward its top speed of 175, but my tires were only V rated up to 149 mph. Ten miles of straight, level, entirely visible and vacant two lane highway is nonetheless very narrow at that speed, too narrow for a tire failure.

States with particularly onerous speed enforcement (including the return trip via Yosemite and Denver) included all of Illinois, Oklahoma, Arizona, southern California and Colorado between the Utah state line and the Eisenhower Tunnel.

Oh, and the gimmick I mentioned at the outset? We poured that liter of Lake Michigan water into the Pacific Ocean at the end of the Santa Monica Pier near Malibu, complete with a gorgeous sunset for the background of our photos.

I wonder how many environmental laws we broke by introducing Lake Michigan species into coastal California? ■



Eric and Fred fulfill their mission.



Members Write

Editor's Note: In a recent email newsletter two longtime NMA members reflected on the state of today's car shows as well as on today's automotive market in general. Playing off some of their more provocative comments we asked if cars have devolved into appliances and if Americans have lost their enthusiasm for all things auto-related? Here are a few of your responses:

There is still great automotive enthusiasm in America. It is just much more compartmentalized and specialized than it used to be.

I agree that among the mainstream motoring public, the car has devolved into an appliance, just a transport pod to get from point A to point B. To many of the mainstream motoring masses, the freedom of personal transportation has lost its luster, and the pride of ownership has vanished, possibly replaced by computer-assisted connectivity. Or, for many buyers of the high-end cars, it is just about strutting the badge on the hood instead of any real motoring reason. The large manufacturer auto shows cater to those mainstream folks and hence are getting less interesting to people who really care about cars.

However, motoring enthusiasm is very high just below the surface when you look past the yawn-inducing people movers and into the happy niches such as the car clubs, summer car shows, swap meets, weekend track days, road rallies, autocrosses, and just plain ole' road trips. I'm talking about the events you can participate in with your street car, truck, or Jeep, not some high-dollar race team.

The Internet is chock full of car-specific sites and forums to please

aficionados of any make or model. Television has entire channels and blocks of programming to feed our automotive passions. You just have to look for it, but it isn't difficult to find. From this aspect, and coupled with the performance levels of current vehicles, we are in somewhat of a "golden age" of automobiles. The mainstream folks just "don't get it".

*Terry Lilly
Barboursville, VA*

My daily driver is a 1989 Cadillac Brougham D'Elegance in like-new condition. Everywhere I go people say Hooray! in one form or another, and I am engaged in conversation. People have enthusiasm for my car which is a real car. I am quite sure I would not have the same experience driving any of the new models.

As an aside, you don't know how conditioned you have become to having your car boss you around until you step back in time and drive a car in which you are still in control of such things as radio volume and locks, and do not have all manner of warning bells and buzzers. The small freedoms are truly a delight.

*Warren Woodward
Sedona, AZ*

The automobile has indeed become a personality-devoid appliance, like a refrigerator. I cherish memories of making rounds of car dealers at new model time in the fall. There were differences—notable differences—between makes and models. (30's, 40's, 50's and 60's.) Then began the blending into bland appliances, taking us to where we are now, with

one make/model indistinguishable from another. And the Do-It-Yourselfer is no longer a viable aspiration.

I've been letting my subscriptions to car magazines expire. I really don't care about six- and seven-figure exotic machines the magazine writers exult over. I just don't relate anymore.

I cherish memories of the '32 Ford Cabriolet I drove through high school, the '36 Ford Club Cabriolet that saw me through college, in which I blew the transmission during a stop light derby, picked up a used one at a junk yard for \$10, installed it myself that night, and drove back to class the next morning. Such experiences are just not available anymore.

*Jack Kitko
Brandon, FL*

I agree that most recent big city car shows are fairly limited for the gearhead/auto enthusiast. A very notable exception to that is the annual Barrett-Jackson Auto Auction/Auto Show held each January in Scottsdale, Arizona. The auto auction is only part of the event (which lasts six days). For the true auto enthusiast this is an event to attend. They have everything from free rides in Corvettes (and other cars) with instructors from the Bondurant High Performance Driving School, all types of cool high-end exotic cars to view (including big displays from GM and Ford and Chrysler), and huge displays of every type of automotive accessory or performance part that you could ever think of. This auto show is truly Heaven for the auto nut. So if you are ever close to Phoenix in mid-January (or need a break from winter), come to the Barrett-Jackson event and enjoy everything automotive!!

*Steve Wall
Glendale, AZ*

(Continued on Page 10)

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The thrill is gone with today's automotive market because so much of life, particularly for younger generations, is lived online. Nobody cares about the thrill of the drive or going anywhere anymore because so much of their social lives and pleasures revolve around computer screens and cell phones. All those points about over-regulation, ridiculous speed limits, fuel and insurance costs, etc. are valid, but the fundamental issue is that more and more people spend their lives locked away enjoying a simulation of social interaction electronically. Cars take us places on congested, crumbling roads that few want to go to anymore.

David Roberson
Ann Arbor, MI

Some of the "glitz" may be gone, but the cars are massively better than 30-40 years ago. A properly equipped Honda Civic will go 0-60 mph in about the same time as mid-level Corvettes in the 1960's. A decent high-performance sedan with race tires will lap a track in the same range of times as pure race cars of 30 or 40 years ago. It is easy to buy modestly priced cars that have top speeds of 125-150 mph—a range that was unheard of for ordinary cars 40 years ago. To a great extent the "glitz" to dress up lower performing cars is no longer needed—the cars already have performance levels of speed and handling well above the cars of 30-40 years ago.

James C. Walker
Lexington, MI

Here in Minneapolis, we never had the flashy auto show of the bigger towns, but I have noticed more concept cars at our shows the past few years

than in the past. This last auto show, in March 2012, I went to with my then two-year-old daughter and her two grandpas. She liked the Audi RS8 up on the pedestal in their exhibit (I've trained her well). She asked me if she could sit in it, like all the other cars, but I said no, they have it roped off. She protested, and I told her to ask the sales guy, who was approaching.

"Can I sit in your car?" she asked.

"No, you have to buy it to sit in it. Do you have any money?" asked the salesperson.

She held up a penny. He relented and allowed her to go under the ropes and stand next to the car. That made my day and definitely was a thrill for her!



Scott's daughter haggling
over an Audi RS8

While this is about the big commercial auto show, same as your two observations, these are probably the wrong shows to talk about. I've gone to the big "Back to the 50's" show at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds, as well as participated in the Car Craft show, also at the fairgrounds. These shows demonstrate that there is definitely still a strong love for cars in this country! Not to mention all the smaller shows that are around... I think the people you quoted are just going to the wrong shows.

Scott Jann
Minneapolis, MN

At the Milwaukee auto show two years ago, I brought up the subject of

thrilling cars to one of the salespeople. I mentioned there is just nothing exciting anymore. She agreed that they've switched from fun-to-drive to high-tech interior gadgets. Cars have to some extent become appliances.

I still work at the dealership that had the Dodge franchise taken away. We were proud of our vehicles. They nailed the styling and even the exhaust note on the Challenger. Even the Mustangs and Camaros give you that feel-good feeling again, but how many of us are around yet that truly enjoyed the feeling of a 440 Magnum under the hood of the '70 Challenger? My daily driver is now a 2002 Sebring convertible with 150,000 miles and the 200 hp V-6. It gets great mileage, has plenty of power, has great styling and handles great. What would I replace it with? The new cars are boring! I'll spend the big bucks and have the guys in the shop drop a new engine in when the time comes.

Until major changes occur to get this country back to prosperity where we have disposable income to make the emotional purchase instead of the necessary purchase, we will keep driving the older stuff. I give the manufacturers credit. They're trying to bring about exciting styling, and greater power out of smaller engines in spite of all of the government regulations and mandates. ■

The views expressed in member letters do not necessarily represent those of the NMA. Your letters are welcomed and should not exceed 300 words. They may be edited for length or clarity. Full-length articles will also be considered and should not exceed 600 words. Submissions may be emailed to nma@motorists.org or mailed to 402 W 2nd St., Waunakee, WI 53597



News From Around The Country

Now featured, with daily updates,
as "NMA Driving News" at www.motorists.org

National

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced that he will not serve a second term in President Obama's Cabinet, but will stay on until a successor is confirmed. Of his and the Department of Transportation's many initiatives, the one LaHood will perhaps be remembered for most is his effort to reduce distracted driving.

California

Following a campaign promise, newly elected San Diego Mayor Bob Filner announced the end of red-light cameras for traffic enforcement. The cameras, Filner said, are nothing more than "the San Diego version of a traffic trap" using "robotic technology." In the last five years, San Diego cameras issued more than 78,000 citations.

Colorado

The Aspen City Council backed off of an idea of a 14-mph speed limit in the West End neighborhood and instead indicated favor for lowering the speed limit from 25 mph to 20 mph city-wide. Studies reveal that the average speed in the West End is 17 mph.

Illinois

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced the cancellation of the city's contract with embattled red-light camera vendor Redflex, citing new findings that company personnel were involved in a bribery scandal with the former city official who oversaw the decade-long program. Emanuel's announcement followed a report that the chairman of Redflex's Australian parent company resigned

and trading in the company's stock was suspended amid an intensifying investigation into allegations of corruption in its Chicago contract.

Maryland

Baltimore officials scrapped all 83 of the city's speed cameras and will replace them with newer models, after an investigation found errors with the system. The overhaul, estimated to cost about \$450,000, came after the city's new speed camera contractor, Brekford Corp., analyzed Baltimore's system and concluded the only way to cut down on the errors was to replace all the cameras with newer models.

Michigan

A single mother of two was arrested after failing to pay money she owed as a result of minor traffic offenses. She was recently laid off from her job and could not pay the fees she owed because she couldn't find another source of employment. So a judge sentenced her to three days in jail. Debtor prisons, once a relic of the 18th century, seem to be making a frightening comeback in the United States, thanks to the privatization of more aspects of the criminal justice system.

Ohio

What did the first full year of a 70 mph speed limit bring to the Ohio Turnpike? Only one of the least deadly years in the toll road's history, judging by turnpike records. The number of fatalities recorded last year was less than half of the 2007 count, when the legal speed on the toll road was 65 mph.

The Dayton Police Chief asked the city to spend \$120,000 for an airplane to monitor crime hot spots from high above the city. The surveillance flights would happen mostly during daylight or daybreak and twilight. The piloted planes would be equipped with high-definition cameras and would fly at roughly 10,000 feet above the city at a cost of \$1,000 an hour.

Students at Northwestern Middle School in Springfield gave their parents mock traffic tickets when they observed them driving in a distracted manner. Northwestern is currently one of four schools across Ohio being piloted for the Ticket Your Parent Program, which is designed to give students a hands-on approach to identify bad and good driving habits by watching their parents.

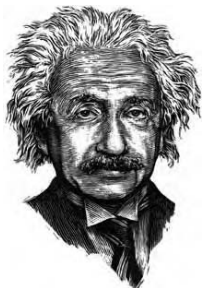
Pennsylvania

In a report, Auditor General Jack Wagner blasted the state-run Pennsylvania Turnpike's culture of freebies lavished on political allies, the lack of transparency and accountability as well as the money-losing financial gambles that the Turnpike Commission used to finance its debt.

Nine Philadelphia judges were charged in connection with a traffic ticket fixing scheme. Allegedly, ward leaders and associates, along with family and friends, regularly contacted the judges to seek help with traffic tickets. Judges would trade favors if the case wasn't assigned to them and would either dismiss or reduce the ticket, helping people avoid steep fines and points on their licenses, authorities charged. ■

This information is current at time of printing. For more information on this and other motorist news, visit www.motorists.org

The Experts Corner



If you have a question that only an expert can answer, the NMA can help. The experts here have volunteered to help you. Please mention that you're an NMA member when you contact them.

This is not intended for listing of commercial business services.

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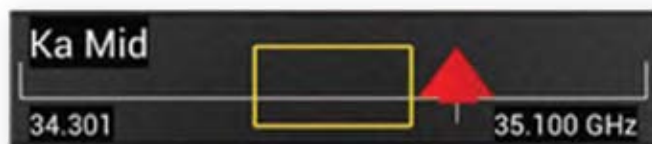
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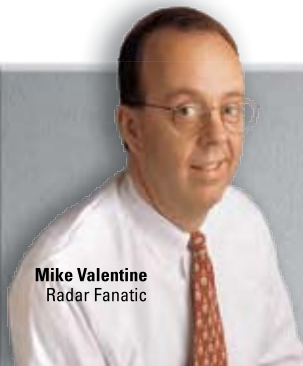


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