

Driving Safe  
June 25 2024

My first task in the morning is to walk our dog, Zoe, for a mile or so. Sallie and Zoe, the two females of the household, gave me his task. It is a routine that I must follow or suffer the consequences of dereliction of duty.

So, last Tuesday at about 8 a.m., I put Zoe on the leash, and we proceeded to our daily route down Cullasaja Drive from our home on Pinecrest Road. This route entails taking a short turn on US 64 to proceed down the half-mile stretch on Cullasaja.

Zoe is very anxious when we arrive at US 64 and the corner of Cullasaja because large trucks are normally on the highway, making a lot of noise. Zoe is a sensitive dog and hates loud noises.

We had just made the turn onto Cullasaja when Zoe and I were suddenly startled by a loud, continuous horn from a vehicle. She jumped around to see what was happening, and I initially thought a traffic accident on 64 was imminent. But that was not the case. A white pickup truck was coming down US 64 and headed to town at about the speed limit of 25. Behind the truck was a maniacal-looking driver behind the wheel of a black Audi sedan, sitting on his horn for about 10 seconds as he tailgated the truck.

As the two vehicles passed by, I wondered what was the problem? Was the person feverishly honking his horn, angry that the truck was going too slow? Was the honker late for work? Had the honker been cut off, or had there been a hit-and-run fender bender? As the two vehicles traveled toward town, I worried this situation might evolve into a road rage situation. Later on, I checked with the police to see if it had. Fortunately, it had not.

This incident illustrates something I wrote about just a few weeks ago. If one is coming to Highlands from a large urban, leave the metropolitan baggage there; don't bring it to this peaceful mountain sanctuary. If I had been in New York, Miami, or Atlanta and heard the angry Audi driver using his car horn as a type of personal weapon, I could accept it as just another action of big city life.

Such behavior in Highlands isn't necessary or acceptable, and it can be dangerous, as it can lead to an escalation with serious ramifications. In these cases, it is always better to take the side of patience. Don't overreact, and if possible, allow the troubled driver to pass.

By the way, road rage is not something limited to big cities. Several weeks ago, in Glenville, there was a road rage incident where shots were fired into a vehicle with three occupants. The good news is that the one person hit in the car will recover. I hope the perpetrator gets the full review from our justice system. Not being kind and considerate can have tragic consequences.

To end on a positive note, we are Bee City! We are also a bird sanctuary. As a civil and caring community, we are also a BEE Kind City! Our Highlands-Cashiers Health Foundation, in partnership with the Counseling Center of Highlands, initiated the BEE Kind program this year. Being kind to others and understanding one another is a pillar of a healthy community and personal well-being. I hope as we go through this busy and exciting time of the year, we all will remember to be kind.

As a matter of safety, I have asked our law enforcement agencies to continue to be on the lookout for aggressive and reckless drivers, but the real enforcement has to come from all of us motorists in being mindful, calm, and patient.