

# Road rage? It ain't new

I often listen to the Toronto traffic reports as I drive to work, even though traffic jams are a little foreign for me.

But I still listen, and in doing so, breathe a sigh of relief, since the worst traffic problem I can encounter is getting behind a lumbering school bus on one of Georgetown's side streets.

As I listen to the traffic reporters, (and commuters who I meet later) I know driver frustration (more commonly called 'road rage') is alive and well.

Earlier this week, I heard of a major road rage incident on the Don Valley Parkway. A motorist was cut off, then decided to take things into his own hands at the next stop light. Getting out of his car, he approached the other driver, and threw a punch through the open car window.

That was when he realized he was dealing with someone much bigger than himself, who started to get out of his car to retaliate.

The first driver attempted to hold the car door shut, but the big 'un kicked it open and broke the other guy's leg with the impact.

They were both charged. And rightly so.

Now I admit I am a bit aggressive when it comes to driving. I pull out into the stream of traffic fairly quickly, and drive the speed limit, or better.

But I'm never discourteous.

Most times I let people in front of me, and only after the most blatant display of idiocy or lack of regard from another driver, do I resort to any kind of reaction.

Generally, er, ahem, a 'gesture' of sorts.

We tend to think of road rage as something relatively new, a product of our high stress, warp speed, short deadline lifestyles. But it's been around for eons. When I was a teenager, I had a buddy who was a trail blazer as far as road rage went.

(And I don't want to hear any smart remarks

A  
TED  
BIT



Ted Brown

about stagecoaches or horses and buggies.)

It would suffice to say he was excitable.

Every once in a while, he'd get his mom's car, and we'd head to Toronto, to drive up and down the main drag on Yonge Street, or check out the shops around the city. And every time I went along for the ride, I was a study in terror.

Picture this—flogging it down the 401, the car radio on, blaring the Top 40 on 1050 CHUM, (okay, so it was an AM radio, that's all we had back then) with all the windows down in the car, my friend driving with his hands clenching the wheel, knuckles white, as he called every errant driver beside, ahead and behind him every bloody name in the book....

And, of course, at the top of his lungs.

Relaxing it weren't.

I'd venture to say, a ride to Toronto with him was par with facing a certain chemistry teacher without having your homework done.


Or, at least a firing squad, sans blindfold.

If I happen to drive, it was worse, since he'd conduct a running commentary on what I could have done, which lane I could have pulled into, or that I could have made it before that car....

You know, I'm thankful for that experience.

Cuz whenever I encounter a less than ideal driver, who pulls a move that annoys me, I have one simple consolation.

No one is quite as bad as my friend was.




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