

Take a second look for safety

We all have 'em, you know, one of those days when we just don't quite seem in tune with the rest of the world.

I had one earlier this week, when I was out driving. It was sunny— very sunny, and I was driving to an assignment.

As I pulled up to an intersection, I squinted to see if anyone was coming. The sun was like a shaft of light, right in my eyes, and the best I could see were silhouettes of oncoming cars.

It appeared clear, and (fortunately) I eased out onto the street.

Just as I did, a motorcycle appeared from the one side of that shaft of sunlight. I hit the brakes and stopped just in time, and he also took evasive action and pulled into the inside lane.

No damage done, except I know I had a motorcycle rider who was shaking his head in disgust (and rightfully so) as well as a very embarrassed 'yours truly' sitting behind the wheel.

I can honestly say, the instant I looked, I could not see him at all, the sun was that bright.

I'm always quite conscious of everyone on the road, be they drivers of motorcycles, cars, SUVs or huge tractor trailers. I like to be courteous, but also expect others to be the same with me.

So, coming close to dusting off a motorcycle rider didn't give me a moment of very high self-esteem for some time.

I know we all have those moments when we make less than perfect decisions while behind the wheel. But generally we are lucky enough to get through them unscathed.

I don't think I'm unique. I've seen countless other drivers make similar mistakes, just because something made them less in-control, be it conditions, weather, a distraction in the car, or simply bright sunshine, like in my case.

But the thought kept nagging at me, "What if I hadn't seen him at the last minute, or he didn't change lanes that quickly?"

Well, suffice to say, it wouldn't have been a pretty ending for either of us. I was driving an SUV, and he would have plowed into my dri-

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ver's side door. No one would have been lucky in that combination.

I figured I'd been spared the agony of a motor vehicle accident this time.

It made me think—a lot.

It achieved one thing. It made me more conscious of all those who share the road with me.

I continually remind myself that the world won't stop in its tracks if I'm a couple minutes late for my next appointment, and my life could certainly be changed dramatically if I don't make that effort to take one more look before pulling out into traffic.

Later that same day, I pulled into a parking lot, where several vehicles were vying to get onto the street at the same time. One was a huge truck, the other was a van, and another was a small car.

Two of the three drivers waved me to advance, giving up their place so I could pull out.

I felt a bit guilty, after my morning faux pas, but graciously accepted their considerate behavior, and pulled onto the highway.

Their courtesy impressed me. I think it's helped make me a more considerate driver as well.

Being that way is so much better than wiping out some motorcycle or another car, and possibly injuring or (worse still) killing someone.

So just take it easy, when driving out there. The road can be a much safer place as a result.

(Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@independentfreepress.com)



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