

June, 2005

Traffic Update

Great rides home these days. Last Friday was 80 minutes plus. I saw a woman driving a Subaru Outback, hardly unusual, more like prevalent. Then I noticed she was smoking...definitely an unusual sight. But to cap it off there was a child in the car. It's odd enough that a woman...driving a Subaru smoking...would do so in a car with a child yet the child was letting the woman smoke! It must have been a cold day in hell.

Also on Friday, I was sitting in traffic in this particularly annoying long session of first and second gear when I looked to my right and did a double take. I flashed back to a Cheech and Chong movie. There was this old pickup truck next to me that seemed to be in that low rider mode with the front end jacked up. Then I really flashed back to the Cheech and Chong movie because there was no one in the cab of the truck. On closer examination I realized it was on an elevated tow truck bed. There was a curious resemblance to a Greaseman bit that I won't go into.

There is this obnoxious merge from two lanes to one when you hit 15 N from Leesburg. People go into that like gaining that extra car length is going to save them 15 minutes. I have been forced out of my lane, the right (and right of way) lane a few times. Guys in trucks seem to like to do it. Today there was some guy in a stinking minivan pulling a trailer with two watercraft who was dying for the extra car lead. Coming into the merge he was weaving from lane to lane like a stock car driver shooting for the slot.

As I got my groove on and did a smooth merge, I saw this guy coming up on me like he was going to pass me on the left in what was left of his lane...about a foot...so I decided to go in to interference mode and block both lanes. He tried to force the guy behind me who was behaving with decorum out of his rightful lane but the guy did not give in. That guy is my hero for the day.

Night Vision Goggles in Montgomery Count

This has been hit on already in some of the news media but I'll quickly say my piece. Doesn't the Montgomery County, MD, police department have better ways to spend their money than to outfit their squad cars with night vision goggles so they can bust people who are not wearing their seat belts? I guess there might be some savings...someone would have to or already has done a study on how much money would be saved by hospitals, insurance companies, and the public in general if people wore their seat belts.

The savings better be freaking huge! I want my police department to get out there, find some maggots, and bust them. And I don't consider people that don't wear seat belts maggots. They're just stupid...and we can't defend ourselves against stupidity!

What's in a Name

Richard Dicker is a counsel for Human Rights Watch. What kind of name is that?

Working Indoors on a Sun

After almost eight hours on my feet today working on two machines controlled by ancient Sun Sparc 4's to get them back up and running, which I did successfully, I was having a pretty smooth drive home. This was good because an accident drew my morning commute out to 75 minutes. I knew when I saw a backup on the off ramp from 340 to 15S that things were not going to be good.

Back to the "smooth" ride home. I made it down Route 7 and through the 15 bypass without much problem and traffic looked pretty good on 15N but it was slow and I kept seeing people passing something up ahead. I thought maybe it was a farm vehicle or something like that but as I neared it I realized it was a van motoring along at about 20 MPH with its flashers on.

The asshole in me cursed this silently wondering what kind of fool was doing this. Finally, the driver pulled over so we could pass. When I saw the Pennsylvania tags I felt a bit of remorse...someone had a long evening in front of them.

Obfuscation on Education

A survey about the No Child Left Behind Law cited in the Washington Post on 23 June, 2005, noted that "When asked if the basic approach of that law should be extended to high school by requiring states to set standards and test students in grades nine through 12, more than four out of 10 parents said they strongly favored it, but an equal portion of high school teachers was strongly opposed." The editorial seemed to think this was troubling...that there was an obvious disconnect between parents and teachers.

Let us look at this a bit more closely:

Parents for applying the basic approach of NCLB to high school	40%
Teachers against applying the basic approach of NCLB to high school	40%

Conversely:

Parents against applying the basic approach of NCLB to high school	60%
Teachers for applying the basic approach of NCLB to high school	60%

Let's merge:

Parents for applying the basic approach of NCLB to high school	40%
Teachers for applying the basic approach of NCLB to high school	60%
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Teachers against applying the basic approach of NCLB to high school	40%

Okay, maybe there is a disconnect but that proportion is probably similar for parents and teachers but the bottom line is that the article is misleading. Teachers aren't against NCLB...60% of them are for it.

More troubling to me is the conclusion that teachers are wrong by thinking that enforcing standards of performance for all schools, teachers, and students is unreasonable. "More than half of the parents favored the single standard, but only one-quarter of the high school teachers agreed." When we see equality of funding for all schools, teachers, and students, maybe we can hold them all to the same standard!

Wolf Trap or the Kennedy Center?

I went with my sister Julie, brother-in-law Ed, and their neighbor Matt to see Mark Knopfler (front man for Dire Straits way back when) at Wolf Trap last night. It was a great show though the opening band, Bob Kennedy, was mediocre at best. Nobody really pays attention to the openers there anyhow. Most folks are hanging out on the lawn eating, drinking, and mingling. It is always a most festive atmosphere.

We hung out and did the same. Julie saw some friends, including Debbie and Buddy, across the way so we gave up our green and headed to the top of the lawn to hang with them for a while. Come time for MK, we took our seats in the pavilion which were about 20 or 25 rows back dead center next to the sound booth.

We were generally enjoying the tunage talking a bit amongst ourselves during the second song or so when the women in front of us, who was with her husband both of whom appeared to be in their late 50's, turned around and told us to shut up. Well I never.... We were a bit disconcerted at first but generally got back into our groove. This was, after all, a rock concert, not Beethoven's 9th with the Chorale at the Kennedy Center!