



The Director's Digressions

By Bill Taylor

April Ramblings – Thinking of others

This month's article was inspired on my drive to the Red Cross and back home again. So it was on four wheels, but it was only 30 some degrees, the road salt was still on the road and it would be dark and colder by the time I got home.

The first event was as I was trying to make a right turn on red from Bunker Lake Boulevard to Highway 65. The vehicle in the left turn lane had pulled so far forward, that it was impossible to see oncoming traffic without taking a chance on having the car's front grill 'polished' as cars on 65 drove past me. I would expect any car in a left turn lane (or even the left lane of a two-lane street) would have a clear view of what's coming at them from the left, no matter how far back they stop. And ideally, they should always be stopping before the crosswalk. Seems like I was told by one child or another as they drove around with their permit that it was illegal to stop in the crosswalk. Whether or not that's true, or whether or not the penalty is much, it is still common courtesy to allow pedestrians to have full access to those paint stripes when crossing the intersection. And if the road you are trying to cross angles to the right a bit, maybe back off that crosswalk just a little more to allow right-turning vehicles next to you, a bit more visibility.

On the way home, I have to make a left turn at that same intersection. Traffic that night was moving along at a bit above the posted speed limit of 60 mph. It's a fairly long left turn lane and it is two lanes. So there can be an incentive for cars planning on turning left to maintain their speed into that left turn lane, even though the cars in front of them are stopped or coming to a stop. Any car behind the car about to move into the left turn lane will be at least partially blocked from seeing the cars in front of the left turner, until that car shifts to the left. One of the driving habits I taught myself when I used to drive the "big green van" was to match my braking and speed to the cars in front of me as I approach that left turn lane. Or at least flash my brakes so any cars behind me have some warning that they may have to slow down more than me. It can be quite a shock to someone that might be following the car in front of them, to suddenly find a stopped car immediately in front of them. Of course, people should always drive defensively and be prepared for that type of situation. Just like they should keep their eyes on the road ahead, scan their mirrors for vehicles approaching them from behind, never hold their phone while driving, etc, etc. So this was never something I did for my benefit – it was for the driver(s) behind me.

So this is just a couple ideas of how we can promote some of that "Minnesota nice" we used to hear so often. Maybe if enough of us try these couple ideas, we can bring the slogan back.

And of course, this is only two of many driving techniques that can be helpful/nice to other drivers/riders we share the asphalt with.

And I was just about to end this, when I thought of one more thing – turn signals. I have never understood why people wait until they are already in the turn lane before turning on their signal. Or worse – stopping while they wait for oncoming traffic to pass before turning their left turn signal on and taking that left turn. What good does it do then? I already know you're planning on turning. If you aren't going to tell me that you're going to turn, when it will do me some good, then you might as well save the life of your light bulb and remove that turn signal lever. Just my opinion. But I really hope that while you are on your motorcycle, you are giving other drivers plenty of warning before you turn and/or shift lanes. And yes, I know some drivers will speed up to try to prevent you from shifting lanes, but last I checked, two wrongs don't make a right.

Thanks for reading, and feel free to send me those rebuttals.
bill