

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

This morning as I sat in my automobile, I reminisced about that May Day I drove it brand new from the showrooms in north Co. Dublin. I paid the happy salesman with a big slice of my life's savings, but what the hell, for over fifty years. I've loved the smell of driving a brand-new car. I'm sure Sarsfield House was happy to receive yet another big VRT.... VAT cheque, compliments of my life's work, and no doubt the Lord Mayor was equally happy with my road tax contribution to his business account. Then I remembered I was just another brick in the wall. The salesman hadn't been too generous with his discount which amounted to two gallons of diesel, so I pulled into the nearest garage and filled up. This triggered another nice contribution to the Sarsfield pot.

I looked at the windscreen decorated with three discs. The first for annual road tax, acquired by payment to the Lord Mayor's business account. The second to my insurance company, who in fairness replaced my windscreen in 1979 after it was battered by stones from a freshly laid road. They told me the battered paintwork was my own responsibility. Of course, the Minister for Finance was also sent his portion of my insurance payment. And last but not least was my recently expired NCT disc. I had already prepared for this by a full service, four new tyres, new battery and a home drive valet. More of what's left of my life savings were duly transferred by way of VAT to Sarsfield House, though nil from the home valet, which I carried out myself.

So happy with my pre trip checks, I switched on the engine and reversed out into Claremont Court or should that be Crescent? As I drove in my usual slow fashion down the Crescent, I noticed the committee's recent cleanup had gone very well. I say well, but the gutters, in some sections still had leaf debris which had built up over several winters.

I had a lightbulb moment. I'll suggest to the committee at the next AGM, that it might be a good idea if we all increase our annual property tax contributions. That would increase our collective payment, to maybe, say one hundred and twenty grand a year, or more, and the hope the Corpo might honour us with a half hour visit from one of their leaf sucker vehicles. Is that what they're called?

I reached the end of the estate and got in queue to exit onto the Finglas Road. I say road, but the planet savers, of which I'm sort of one, have now reduced our section to little more than a central city boreen. Eventually a few of us managed to exit onto the Boreen where we joined the multitudes of other vehicles, patiently waiting their turn to reach the magic lights at the fork, near St. Philomena's Road. I'm not sure where all these cars were going, as Dublin City centre is now a no go, very cold place, for us cash cow motorists. Anyway, as we made our slow progress towards the magic fork, we had some entertainment. The new golden elite zoomed past us on their toll-free bicycles.

A few wore helmets and even had both hands on the handlebars, but most wore no helmets and used only one hand for steering. This of course was understandable as they needed their second hand to accommodate their phone conversations. Others steered without hands as they needed both to exchange text messages. Again, this is quite understandable.

Some cyclists did actually use the dedicated cycle lanes, but most just used the footpaths. I saw old men and women, some almost as old as me, cower against the cemetery wall, as the high-speed blurs passed them, sometimes from both directions, and simultaneously. I then had a pang of conscience thinking all those poor cyclists were born colour blind.

Then there's the bus lane. Cars with D/MH/DL/G/MN/LS/KK etc. would pass close to our near side, often at speeds that would make Lewis Hamilton jealous. Initially I thought 'GREEDY IGNORANT Bs' but then I thought 'Thank God for these law breakers or the queues might start in Slane!

Eventually I reached the magic spot and could see the start of the Phibsborough boreen. A young female cyclist, fully helmeted and with both hands on the bars, waited patiently for the lights to go green, as her fellow cyclists zoomed past her ringing their bells and giving her filthy looks. I thought I might take a video and send it to the RTE Primetime team. Then I could hear both my daughters 'Daddy that would be totally unacceptable, in this day and age'

OK I won't,

and then I thought maybe if I do lift my phone, I'll be surrounded by An Garda Siochana, rushing from their hideouts, possibly accompanied by the ARU.

Eventually I turned into Whitworth Road and bounced my way over the speed bumps, till I reached Drumcondra Road. I found a parking spot and paid a three-euro fee on my phone app. Not a lot for the Lord Mayor's account but every little helps.

I walked to the local chemist where a nice assistant handed me the small white tablets which Doctor Des said would buy me a bit more bonus time. I tapped the payment and returned to my car with twenty minutes still on the meter.

It was time to get to Northpoint 1. The journey up the M50 was quiet pleasant as most of the satellite town people were now happily supping coffee and tapping on their keyboards. I presented my paperwork and car keys at the NCT desk and was directed to the waiting room. After a while, through glass windows, I could see the inspector put my lovely clean car through its paces. Shortly after he finished my name was called to go to the exit desk.

'All's good Donal except for one major failure which will have to be put right within twenty-eight days or a full reinspection will be required'

The mechanic told me somewhat sheepishly, I thought, the offside light is a little out of focus. Maybe you hit a pothole Donal?

I returned to my car holding the MAJOR FAIL paperwork and began my journey back to Claremont and my cat Blackie.

As I drove down the M50 I thought.... POT HOLE?NO.... THE SPEED BUMPS ON WHITWORTH ROAD.

I looked at the bonnet and thought..... More money for my mechanic.... the NCT and another small contribution to Wood Quay. Even the bloody speed bumps are working for the alligators. I mused as to what will replace the billions of euros when the battle to erase three million vehicles from the highways is finally won.

I can't see those colour-blind cyclists coughing up fifteen billion every year or whatever it is, and horses don't have pockets. Their rear end deposits would be welcomed by the flower beds in the Botanic Gardens I suppose.

No, on reflection I think it would be best to keep
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All reactions:

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