

CANDOER News



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to Communicators AND Others Enjoying Retirement

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Welcome to the latest issue of a Newsletter dedicated to the **CANDOERS** (Communicators **AND** Others **Enjoying Retirement**). This newsletter will be distributed quarterly. New issues will be posted on the Web for viewing on or about, January 15, April 15, July 15, and October 15.

The **CANDOER** Web site and newsletter may be viewed by going to the following URI: www.candoer.org

The success of this newsletter depends on you. I need contributors. Do you have an interesting article, a nostalgia item, or a real life story you would like to share with others? If you do, send it to me at the following e-mail address: candoercat@gmail.com

or to my snail-mail address:

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Please, **NO** handwritten submissions.

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The **CANDOER** News will be available in three formats: the first format is as a web page; the second format is as a PDF file; the third format is as a Microsoft Word document.

The PDF file and Microsoft Word document will allow you to download and print the newsletter exactly as if I had printed it and mailed it to you.

If you are unable to read the PDF formatted newsletter, you can go to www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html and download the FREE reader. When installed on your computer, it will

allow the automatic opening of any PDF file.

Cat's Corner

Plans have been finalized for the closure of the training center. Complete information is available on the web site (WWW.CANDOER.ORG). The dates October 29 through November 01, 2009 have been agreed on.

Thursday evening, October 29, starting at 6:00 a.m., before the closing ceremony, at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, October 30, there will be a renew acquaintances gathering at McMahan's Irish Pub and Restaurant. The Irish Pub is in the middle of town on business 29. Address: 380 Broadview Ave, Warrenton VA 20186-2331. Phone: (540) 347-7200. Even if you are NOT attending the closing event on Friday, stop in and say hello to some old friends on Thursday evening

In order to attend the event and pass a security check I will need some information from each of you who plan on attending. I will need your FULL name and social security number, as soon as possible. If you are NOT comfortable e-mailing it to me, send me a letter with the information. I will compile it all on my stand-alone lap top and hand deliver it to Don at the training center. If you wish to attend they will need this information or you will not be able to gain access to the training center period.

This has been a bad couple of months for the **CANDOERs** and their families. We have had nine of our members die: Eleonore Lantz (Rush Lantz's wife); Milt Cochran; Isis Patterson Ortiz (first female tech ever hired by OC); Charlie Hoffman; Marge Hoefler; Susan Carter (first Professional Courier ever hired by

OC); Will Naeher (retired DASC); and Odra Holmes (wife of Dewey Holmes).

Members are beginning to hate to open an e-mail from me, it rarely contains good news.

Never forget that manhood is involved in even the most casual Italian traffic encounter

By James F. Prosser

There is a simple method of achieving the right state of mind for driving in Italy. Before you start your car for the first time, sit in the driver's seat, hold the steering wheel and think the following: I AM THE ONLY DRIVER ON THE ROAD, AND MINE IS THE ONLY CAR. It may be hard to believe, especially after you have seen Rome during the first week of July or Milan during rush hour, but millions of Italian drivers believe it and so can you. An Italian driver's reaction to any encounter with another vehicle is, first, stunned disbelief, then outrage. You don't have a chance unless you can match this faith. It isn't enough to say you are the only driver or to think it - you've got to believe it. Remember, your car is the CAR: all others are aberrations in the Divine Scheme.

THE LAW

In Italy, as elsewhere, there are laws about streets, maximum permissible speeds, which side of the street you can drive on, and so forth.

In Italy, however, these laws exist only as tests of character and self-esteem. Stopping at a stop sign, for example, is prima-facie evidence that the driver is, if male, a cuckold or, if female, frigid and barren.

Contrarily, driving through a stop sign is proof not only that you are virile

or fertile, but that you are a Person of Consequence. This is why the Italian driver who gets a ticket goes red in the face, swears, wrings his hands and beats his forehead with his fists, and this is why people come out of nearby shops to snigger and point at him; it isn't the fine, which is ridiculously low, nor the inconvenience - for most offenses, you simply pay the cop and he gives you a receipt - but the implication is that he is, after all, not quite important enough to drive the wrong way down a one-way street.

Remember, therefore: signs, laws and the commands of the traffic policemen are for the lowly and mean-spirited. Every Italian's dearest desire is to be an exception to the rule - any rule. The only place he can do it regularly is in his car.

THE CITY STREETS

The basic rule of driving in Italian cities is: force your car as far as it will go into any opening in the traffic. It is this rule which produces two types of deadlocks; the famous Sicilian Four-way Deadlock at narrow intersections, and the Degenerate Four-Way Deadlock. The former occurs when four vehicles arrive on narrow streets blocking all movement.

The latter occurs when two approaching vehicles unsuccessfully attempt wide turns simultaneously thereby completely blocking the intersection. Sharp study of the deadlocks may suggest that the Deadlock, Sicilian or Degenerate, can be broken if any one of the cars backs up. That brings us to another important point about Italian city driving: you can't back up. You can't back up because there is another car right behind you. If you could back up, and did, you would

become an object of ridicule, for backing up breaks the basic driving rule and suggests impotence and a want of spirit.

The impossibility of backing up accounts for some of the difficulty you will have in parking. Aside from the fact that there isn't anywhere to park, you will find that when you try to parallel-park by stopping just beyond the vacant space and backing into it, you can't because that fellow is still right behind you, blowing his horn impatiently. You point at the parking place, making gestures indicating that you only want to park. He blows his horn. You can give up and drive on, or you can get out and try to get him to let you park. This you do by shouting personal abuse into the window of his car. One of these things will happen: He may stare sullenly straight ahead and go on blowing his horn (if this happens you're whipped, for no foreigner can out sulk an Italian driver); he may shout personal abuse back at you; he may, especially in southern cities like Naples and Palermo where honor is all-important, get out of his car and kill you, subsequently pleading DELITTO D'ONORE (crime of honor), which automatically wins in southern Italian courts.

The parking problem created by the backing-up problem creates the Right-Lane Horror. At no time, in an Italian city, should you drive in the right lane. One reason is that Italians usually drive headfirst into parking spaces. Thus every third or fourth parked car has its tail end sticking out into the traffic, making the right lane a narrow, winding lane.

Unfortunately, the center lane has its hazard - the right-lane drivers swerving in and out of the center lane as they steer round the sterns of half-parked and double-parked cars.

(Double-parked cars run one-a-block north of Rome and two-a-block south of Rome. Italians double-park only in four-lane streets; in six-lane streets they triple-park.) Right-lane driving is further complicated by the Italian style of entering from a side street by driving halfway into the first lane of traffic and then looking.

The way to deal with Lane-Swervers and Cross-Creepers is to blow your horn and accelerate around them. If you make a careful in-line stop when your lane is invaded you not only expose your social and sexual inadequacies, but you may never get moving again, since you also mark yourself as a weakling whom anyone can challenge with impunity. While performing these dangerous gyrations, it is imperative to blow your horn. The more risky the maneuver, the more imperiously you must hoot, for all Italian drivers accept the axiom that anything you do while blowing your horn is sacred. (Horn-blowing, incidentally, except in cases of serious danger, is against the law in every Italian city. I mention this because you would never know it otherwise.) Remember too that one-way streets in Italy are NOT one-way.

To begin with, a driver who has a block or less to go realizes at once that when they put up the signs they were not thinking of cases like this. He drives it the wrong way, going full throttle to get it over with quickly and to prove that he really is in a terrible hurry. More important, however, Italian one-way streets always have a **CONTRO-SENSO** lane - that is, a lane for going the wrong way. It is reserved for taxis and buses, and indeed, is always full of taxis and buses, producing the Two-way One-way Street, which in turn, produces law suits,

pedestrian fatalities and hysterical foreign drivers.

The distinctive feature of the Italian cities is the PIAZZA - a wide space entered by as many as eight streets, in which a Bernini fountain is hidden by parked cars. Italian traffic commissioners have sensibly ordained circular traffic for most of the piazzas, but the traffic circle, with its minuet-like formality of movements is, to an Italian driver, just so much more exhilarating open space. You do not go around an Italian traffic circle; you go across it, at high speed, taking the shortest path from your point of entrance to your intended exit, while sounding your horn.

All Italian city driving requires (and soon produces) familiarity with the Funnel Effect. Especially in those cities that preserve medieval architecture in the downtown section, which means all Italian cities, you will find that four-lane streets usually, after four or five blocks, become two-lane and then one-lane streets. Since most Italian cities are force-fed with automobiles by an excellent turnpike system, this produces the Funnel Effect, and the Reverse Funnel Effect; i.e. three vehicles abreast racing to be first into the neck of the funnel, or coming out of the funnel racing past the vehicle ahead which just exited.

At first glance it may appear that the Funnel Effect is more dangerous and unnerving than the Reverse Funnel Effect. This is not correct. True, the unwary motorist entering a Funnel may get trapped against one side or the other and have to stay there until traffic slacks off around one or two o'clock in the morning, but you can usually abuse your way out of the trap.

It is the Reverse Funnel which produces what my insurance company

keeps referring to as "death or dismemberment". Imagine the effect of bottling a number of prideful and excitable Italian drivers in a narrow street for a half-mile or more and then suddenly releasing them. It's like dumping out a sack of white rats. As each car emerges it tries at once to pass the car ahead of it and, if possible, two or three more. The car ahead is passing the car ahead of it, and so on. If Italian cars were even roughly of the same power, this would simply produce a wild acceleration, but the cars range from 500-cubic centimeter midgets up to Formula I racing cars, and the first hundred yards out of the Reverse Funnel, before they shake down, is a maelstrom of screaming engines, spinning tires, screeching brakes and springs and blaring horns.

ON THE HIGHWAY

Italian roads, just like Italian streets, change their character unexpectedly. It is not unusual to be driving on a six-lane modern asphalt highway, then to round a curve and find that you are suddenly driving on a two-lane sunken road of mud with the original Roman paving stones sticking up here and there. Most roads, however, are something in between these extremes.

The paramount feature of Italian highway driving is IL SORPASSO. The word SORPASSARE means both "to pass with an automobile" and "to surpass or excel". To SORPASSARE someone is to excel him socially, morally, sexually and politically. By the same token, to be SORPASSATO is to lose status, dignity and reputation. Thus, it is not where you arrive that counts, but what (or whom) you pass on the way. The procedure is to floor your accelerator and leave it

there until you come up on something you can pass.

If IL SORPASSO is not immediately possible, settle in its wake at a distance of six or eight inches from his bumper and blow your horn until such time as you can pass. Passing becomes possible, in the Italian theory, whenever there is not actually a car to your immediate left.

When an Italian driver sees the car ahead of him on the highway slow up or stop, he knows there can be but two causes - the driver ahead has died at the wheel, or else he has suddenly and mysteriously become a Person of No Consequence (PNC), which is roughly the same thing and a fate which, in Italy, hangs over every head. He therefore accelerates at once and passes at full speed. If the driver ahead has, in fact, stopped for a yawning chasm, the passer is done for, but more often the first driver has merely stopped for a railroad crossing gate. The same thing, naturally, is happening on the other side of the gate, and the result is the Crossing Double-Cross, or the Railroad Impasse.

RAILROAD IMPASSE

The instant the gates go up, all four drivers obey the Law of Occupation of Empty Space and four cars meet in the middle of the tracks, followed closely by the cars that are tailgating them. In the four-handed personal abuse which ensues, the drivers of the two right-lane cars usually team up against the drivers of the two left-lane cars, but this is by no means a rule. Sometimes, the three in the most expensive cars team against the one in the cheapest car, and sometimes all four fall upon the crossing guard.

In Italy, you will see bigger trucks than you have ever seen in your life - huge, eight axle double-semis with cabs seating four abreast. There are no special speed limits for trucks in Italy. As if the very sight of these things were not terrifying enough, the drivers often paint notices across their cabs, just above the windshield, usually religious. It is nerve-shattering to meet one of these monsters coming downhill at fifty miles an hour on a narrow mountain road, but panic looms if you see "God is Driving" written on the cab, while "Heart of Jesus, Help me" does not bear thinking about.

PEDESTRIANS

It is gauche to be a pedestrian in Italy. It is in bad taste. A pedestrian is a Person of No Consequence. The Italian pedestrian feels shamed, and does everything he can to avoid acting like a pedestrian. To cross the street on the crosswalk, for instance, would be to admit he is a pedestrian, so he crosses in the middle of the block, strolling slowly through the traffic. He is trying to make it clear that he is not a pedestrian at all, but a driver who has momentarily alighted from his car.

If you treat him like a pedestrian, thus drawing attention to his shame, he will be furious. Do not look directly at him. Do not drive around him.

Above all, do not stop for him! If he challenges you to drive within four inches of his toes, drive within four inches of his toes, as if he were not there. Of course, if you drive on his toes he will become an Injured Party, which in Italy outranks even a Ferrari Driver, and he will shout personal abuse and call a cop.

THE SCOOTER PLAGUE

To get some idea of the Italian Scooter Plague, look at any of the diagrams accompanying this essay and imagine all the chinks between cars filled with hurtling motor scooters, each emitting its small blue cloud of hydrocarbons. (Sticklers of naked realism can go on to imagine the chinks between scooters filled with bicycles and small children learning to roller-skate.) I used to think that nothing could be worse than the Italian Scooter Plague, but I was wrong. As young Italians get more money in their pockets the Scooter Plague is giving way to the Motorcycle Menace, which is louder, faster, smokier and altogether more surpassing.

THE INVESTMENT

The Italian word for an automobile collision is L'INVESTIMENTO. When you are involved in a collision (notice I do not say "if" but "when") you will at first wonder what you should do. Sit tight until a cop arrives?

Call your Consulate? Start bribing witnesses? Don't worry. The aftermath of L'INVESTIMENTO, provided there is no serious injury, is as formal as the figures of a quadrille - simply follow your partner. First, all drivers and passengers spring from their cars shouting personal abuse. Passersby spring from their cars. Pedestrians, hopeful of being taken for motorists, act as if they have been principals in the crash. Stores empty as shoppers join the crowd. Invalids rise from their beds for blocks around to totter to the scene, shouting and gesticulating. Do not be afraid of this crowd even if you are utterly and absolutely in the wrong. Half these people are on your side, simply because

the other half are against you. If a priest has blamed you, the Communists become your partisans. If a rich man should point out that you were, after all, dead drunk and driving up the sidewalk with your eyes closed, any man with calluses on his hands will swear he has known you as a teetotaler for many years. All this blame and praise is unimportant - mere rhetoric.

In an Italian collision, blame has nothing to do with the actions of the drivers but is entirely a matter of status and virility. The driver of the newer, more expensive car is automatically in the right. He is, in fact an Injured Party. Any car, naturally, outranks any scooter, and any sports car outranks any family car not chauffeur-driven. This seems simple, but can become complex. For example: does a brand-new Fiat 600 outrank a two-year-old Fiat 850? What are the odds as between a ten-year-old Porsche and a Mercedes that needs washing? As if these and similar questions were not casuistry enough, the bearing and dress of the drivers becomes an additional factor. Consider if one driver is in a suit and the other is accompanied by a blonde under thirty and over five-foot-seven. If one has a calling card and the other has not, the balance can shift in an instant. If both have calling cards, it becomes a contest of titles.

Do not be distracted by all the shouting about what happened. Who cares what happened? That's over. What matters is what is happening now - the contest of dignities. You are being watched by hundreds of eyes alert to the slightest loss of poise. Hundreds of lips are waiting to snicker at your first retreat from savage indignation. But you can win. As you stand there in your wilted nylon shirt, comprehending nothing,

groggy with cross-country driving, bilious with the change of diet, your children shrieking in your dust-covered station wagon, your wife sneering at your ineptitude - you can win! Just keep telling yourself: "I am a Person of Consequence, I am, I AM!"

Humor --- Golf Poem
Author Unknown

In My Hand I Hold A Ball
White And Dimpled, Rather Small.
Oh, How Bland It Does Appear
This Harmless Looking Little Sphere.

By Its Size I Could Not Guess
The Awesome Strength It Does Possess.
But Since I Fell Beneath Its Spell
I've Wandered Through The Fires Of Hell.

My Life Has Not Been Quite The Same
Since I Chose To Play This Stupid Game.
It Rules My Mind For Hours On End
A Fortune It Has Made Me Spend.

It Has Made Me Yell, Curse And Cry
I Hate Myself And Want To Die.
It Promises A Thing Called Par
If I Can Hit It Straight And Far.

To Master Such A Tiny Ball
Should Not Be Very Hard At All.
But My Desires The Ball Refuses
And Does Exactly As It Chooses.

It Hooks And Slices, Dribbles And Dies
And Even Disappears Before My Eyes.
Often It Will Have A Whim
To Hit A Tree Or Take A Swim.

With Miles Of Grass On Which To Land
It Finds A Tiny Patch Of Sand.
Then Has Me Offering Up My Soul
If Only It Would Find The Hole.

It's Made Me Whimper Like A Pup
And Swear That I Will Give It Up.
And Take To Drink To Ease My Sorrow
But The Ball Knows ... I'll Be Back
Tomorrow.

Stand proud you noble swingers of clubs and losers of balls. A recent study found the average golfer walks about 900 miles a year.

Another study found golfers drink, on average, 22 gallons of alcohol a year.

That means, on average, golfers get about 41 miles to the gallon.

Kind of makes you proud. Almost feel like a hybrid.

Take care and be safe!