

Merging Traffic

What happened to courtesy, common sense and citizenship?

By Del Albright, BlueRibbon Coalition Ambassador

Here's the scene. You're driving your rig hauling your toys in the slow lane of a freeway. You're at the speed limit plus six so you won't get a ticket, but can sort of keep up with the flow of traffic. Several merge lanes are part of the picture and folks are jumping on the freeway, changing lanes, and rushing to somewhere. And no one is giving you a break, let alone the time of day or a bit of courtesy.

You are cut off, nearly side-swiped and forced to brake often. You can see dip-wads merging into your lane totally oblivious to traffic – especially to you. And when you honk or show your displeasure for someone endangering you and your family, you get a single-digit salute for your trouble. What happened to blending in with the flow of traffic?

What happened to courtesy, common sense and citizenship?

Now scene two: motorized recreation. Do you notice dirt bikers routinely pulling over for horses? How about four-wheelers yielding to uphill traffic on narrow mountain roads? Do you see folks staying on the trail when they have to sit in line while someone is broken down for an extended time? Do snowmobilers give way to cross country skiers?

Or, are we all starting to act like merging traffic on our crowded freeways? Are we no longer blending in with other forms of recreation? Have we forgotten the basic premise of sharing trails? Have we lost sight of courtesy, common sense and citizenship – the “Three C's”? I don't think so; but you might know someone who may get a touch impatient now and then. 😊 So I want to offer some reminders on sharing our trails and recreation areas so we can share our sport with our children and grand children.

Let's look at the Three C's:

Courtesy is defined as a polite, helpful, or considerate act or remark – as having manners. The courteous recreationist gives way to others and blends in with the flow of traffic with politeness and maybe even a big smile.

Common sense means having sound practical judgment and a sense of what's right and wrong. The recreationist with common sense learns to observe the surroundings, stay alert to things that might cause an accident, and tune into the needs and rights of other recreationists so that we can all blend together and enjoy our great outdoors.

Citizenship is about the duties, rights and privileges of enjoying the freedoms we have in this great country, and about doing what's right. The recreationist with good citizenship reads

and obeys the rules and laws knowing that our future opportunities depend on all of us doing our part, the right way. It's also about helping and teaching others the rights and privileges we enjoy.

Every recreational club and organization should have a code of ethics that embodies courtesy, common sense and good citizenship. For an example, check out the BlueRibbon Coalition very practical code of ethics here: <http://www.sharetrails.org/index.cfm?page=27>.

The days of outlaws and idiots who do not seem to have any of the three C's, are over. They have to get off our trails and riding areas. The days of the uninformed are numbered if you do your part to help them get involved the right way and learn the Three C's.

Merging traffic in motorized recreation is what we face every day. Our sports are growing and we are sharing recreational areas. Our need for courtesy, common sense and citizenship has never been stronger. If you have not already done so, adopt your own code of ethics. Teach younger people that code. Get involved in clubs/groups that are working to save our sports. Refer to my article on Basic Training for Life for more on words and deeds to live by: http://www.delalbright.com/Articles/basic_training.htm.

I believe the majority of recreationists already practice the Three C's. It's only a small percentage that gets our dander up and refuses to blend in smoothly. Now it's time to take the next step and get more of us tuned in to the reality that we need to merge together with courtesy, common sense and good citizenship.

The BlueRibbon Coalition is a national recreation group that champions responsible use of public and private lands, and encourages individual environmental stewardship. It represents over 10,000 individual members and 1,100 organization and business members, for a combined total of over 600,000 recreationists nationwide. Call 1-800-258-3742 and visit www.sharetrails.org. For more from Del Albright, visit www.delalbright.com.