

The incident I am about to share with you happened to me several years ago. I share this knowing that I made mistakes and am not afraid to openly share this experience to generate thought and discussion on the topic.

While driving into work along highway number one here in Victoria, I noticed a yellow school bus from a local private school that was having problems maintaining control on the highway. As I got closer to this bus, I noted that its break lights were coming on several times, and that there was a group of approximately 15-20 junior high school girls on board.

As I drove up beside the bus, on its right side, I noted that all the girls were screaming and crying, at which time my attention was immediately drawn to a small car that was directly in front of the bus. As I watched this small car, I noted that the driver was approximately FIVE feet to front of the bus, consistently hitting his breaks, while doing this the driver would turn and give the finger to those on the school bus. It should be noted that the roads were wet as it had just rained, and both vehicles were traveling approximately 80kmh. What I was observing was a road rage incident in progress, which was going from bad to worse real quick.

I next proceeded to pull in behind the bus, and contrary to road safety, I proceeded to call 911. Just as I was making the call, the driver of the small car, preceded to switch lanes, slowed down, and pulled up beside the entrance door to the bus. The driver of the small car then proceeded to roll down his window, and with his left hand, stuck his left fist out the window and shook it several times at the driver of the bus and all of its occupants.

The driver of the small car then sped up, switched lanes, and once again began to hit his breaks in a clear attempt to have the bus loose control. In fact the bus began to fishtail and almost hit a cement divider on the highway. It was at this point in time that I made the decision that if I did not intervene; something bad was going to happen.

I proceeded to pull up to the right side of the small car, rolled down my driver's side window, produced my police badge and identification, and honked my horn in an attempt to get the driver to divert his attention to me. Well this action worked, but worked too well. Due to the state of rage that this driver was now in, he proceeded to angle his vehicle towards mine in an attempt to bump/ram me off the highway. I immediately sped up, and upon taking this action, the driver in the other vehicle also sped up and was now clearly pursuing me. It was at this point in time that I observed the school bus in my rearview mirror safely turning off the highway.

As we continued speeding down the highway, we approached a red light in semi heavy traffic, at which time the driver once again pulled up to the left side of my vehicle and again attempted to bump me off the road and into the curb. Due to the fact that there was traffic in front of me, the only action I could take was to move my vehicle to the curb in hope of limiting damage to my vehicle. What happened next is something that I thought you would only see in the movies. The driver of the other vehicle proceeded to nudge the

right side of his car up to the left side of my vehicle, thus preventing me from opening my driver's side door. The driver then proceeded to reach over with his right hand to unroll his right side passenger window, reached through and grabbed me by my left shoulder, with his right hand, through my open driver's side window that I had rolled down to produce my badge earlier on the highway. Upon grabbing me, the driver said; "you're no fucking cop" and next proceeded to cock his left hand while yelling further profanities at me. By this time the light ahead of me turned green and the traffic began to move, thus allowing me to hit the gas and escape unharmed. I immediately drove to work, ran the driver's license plate, got his address, had a fellow officer visit his home where he was subsequently arrested and charged for several offences. Investigation found that this driver had in fact committed this same type of road rage on several other victims and was therefore charged with several other similar crimes as well. At trial, this driver was convicted for several counts of dangerous driving and assaulting a police officer, ME.

What I learned from this incident:

Those in ROAD RAGE are dangerous individuals:

It seems that every day we hear on the radio or read in the paper about another "Road Rage" incident that left someone hurt. When a person in road rage combines the anonymity of operating an automobile with their willingness to take their frustrations out on others, you have a very dangerous individual. I don't know what triggered the incident with the bus, if anything, but I recognized that if I did not do something a bad thing was going to unfold in front of me. Right or wrong, I made the decision to intervene and with that intervention came all the consequences associated; both good and bad.

Cell phones are useful tools before or after an incident

Although cell phones are useful safety tools, if you are the one involved in an incident they should only be used prior to that incident unfolding or immediately after it is over. It was impossible for me to talk, drive, and take defensive driving counter measures all at the same time. Once the driver attempted to ram me, I immediately threw my cell phone down so that I could concentrate on what needed to be done to keep me safe.

The Lure of EGO

Although it would have been easy to pull my vehicle over to the side of the road, get out, and confront the other driver, I made a conscious decision not to, why ???

- I was unarmed and did not know if the other driver was armed. This person had clearly showed his intent to be violent by any means necessary

To have exited my vehicle to confront the driver would have played into EGO, which has been the lure of many, sometimes to their death. There was no tactical reason for me to exit my vehicle at anytime during this confrontation.

Learn to fight in confined spaces, such as sitting in a car:

Prior to this incident, I had never trained or even thought about fighting in a car. Suffice to say, this incident led me to train for this eventuality. Some ideas:

- Fighting while someone is attacking through your open car door window and you are still seat belted into your car
- Fighting while someone has opened your vehicle door and you are still belted into your seat
- Counter measures to someone pointing a gun or knife at you through an open window
- Fighting multiples

If you do find yourself in a road rage situation there are several things that you can do:

- Make every effort to get out of the way. If you can't drive to your local police department or a busy place where you can call police. Don't drive home
- Do not retaliate. Ask yourself is it is worth personal injury or damage to your vehicle. Put your pride and ego away and do not challenge the other driver. Wherever possible, do not get out of your vehicle or open your window to confront the other driver.
- Be polite and courteous, even if others are not. Ignore gestures and refuse to return them
- Report aggressive drivers to police
- Remember that a person in road rage has control of a very large weapon. His car, which can be targeted towards you. No matter what, even if you are right, you have to ignore a person in road rage or risk being victimized

Remember that no one wants to be a victim of road rage. While you never deserve to be a victim of someone's aggression, there are certain triggering factors you can avoid as a driver to make a road rage incident less likely:

- Don't tailgate
- Don't cut people off
- If you are traveling slowly, try to use the right lane
- Always signal when making lane changes
- Only use your horn when necessary. It's a warning device, not an expression of your state of mind
- Avoid swearing or rude gestures that may offend other drivers
- Don't let agitated drivers bother you (but be wary of agitated drivers are potentially dangerous drivers)
- Use low light beams near other vehicles
- Be courteous; drive the way you would like others to drive

I hope this posting gets people thinking. Proper Pre Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance. Did I make mistakes; sure I did, but I also did what I truly believe needed to be done, thus accepting all the consequences associated.

Strength and Honor

Darren Laur