

Just Stop It!

By Dennis Payton Knight

*Nothing so needs reforming as other people's habits.* – Mark Twain

You, Crazy Lanes Hirsch, in the BMW. Driving generally means a forward motion, not side to side. You don't weave four lanes just to be the first to a red light. And if you blow through it, you'll only find yourself at another behind a bumper sticker reading, "The closer you get, the slower I go." And you'll be close enough to read it.

You, Oblivious Oscar, on the cell phone. Your love life is your business, your gossip is your business and your business is your business. None of it is mine. Hang it up. Tell her you'll call back. And don't go do it in the men's room, either.

You, Auction Mouth Max, slow down. You've got time, I've got time. Enunciate. Commas and periods in the spoken language are expressed with pauses and conclusions. And, like, don't say "like" between every phrase. Same goes for "uh" for those in my generation. It's like, uh, *duh*.

You, Foul Mouth Phil, shopping with your girlfriend in the produce department. The corn has tender ears. You made us notice you, but, think of another way to say it. You know some better words, and if you don't, keep your mouth shut or buy a dictionary. Damn it.

You, Rude Rudy, the one with 33 items in your basket. The express line is for a dozen items or less. I'll let you cheat at 13, and even count the bag of grapes as one. Otherwise, I'm going to do what one does in an express line: express myself, and I'm using my dictionary. Damn it.

You, Hot Wheels Henry, the bicyclist coming up behind me on the trail. Give me an earlier warning. I get directions mixed up when startled, and if you shout "on your left" ten feet to my rear, I will likely jump immediately to that same left, bending your spokes and derailing your derailleur.

You, Innermost Inga, the introvert on the trail. Make eye contact with the rest of us as we pass. Avoiding it isn't going to keep me from robbing you if I'm of a mind to, and regardless, I am going to wish you a good morning. You don't have to wish it back. You probably won't and wouldn't.

You, Happy Hal, the extrovert on the trail. Nice of you to make eye contact. Yes, it is a very nice day, and yes, it was hot yesterday, and yes, we could use some rain, and yes, the ducks would like it and no, I don't think it will hurt the rhubarb. Well, that's enough eye contact for today. Have a good one. And watch out for bicycles.

And you, Missionary Mary, quit feeding the squirrels. They should be afraid of us, but one followed me home yesterday and griped about my salty pistachios.

Well, that's five-hundred words and quite enough reforming for today. It's my favorite habit.