

Talk Radio

By Hap Hansen

Radio talk shows first invaded and then became entrenched in metropolitan areas. It used to be when one drove their cars into the outskirts of multi-radio station big cities, a flip of the dial would bring in country, jazz, top 40, or classical music. Not so today. A flip of the dial usually brings in one talk show after another.

The individuals in charge of the microphones on the radio station are almost always opinionated, arrogant, egotistical and overbearing. They love to argue with callers and often try to embarrass callers who may not be quite as sophisticated as the controller of the microphone. Many of the callers, however, deserve to be embarrassed or intimidated because their simplistic solutions to everybody else's ills are usually too far-fetched to be believable by anybody but themselves. Here are some interesting questions and comments I have heard on talk shows recently while driving my car:

"Why should I have to license all four of my cars when I can only drive one at a time?" "Who cares if my used auto transmission oil gets dumped in the river, because the water purifies itself every hundred feet anyway?" "My kid is smart. Why won't anybody give him a job? Just because he has four speeding tickets driving his hot-rod, and he dropped out of high school as a sophomore shouldn't make any difference!" "How come the City came out and made me quit building the corrugated metal shed I'm adding on to my house so I can garage my car? This is America! I should be able to build anything, anytime, anywhere I want to!" "You've got to do something about my neighbor's dogs. They keep barking all night at my 12 cats!" "Why can't I get a loan to buy a car? I know we've declared bankruptcy twice, we've been sued several times for late pays and my wages have been garnished. But we've changed!"

And so it goes. Perhaps there is some value for the callers in getting things off their chests that their friends and neighbors are tired of hearing about. Perhaps there is some value to talk show listeners as they discover their lives are fuller and far more interesting than those of most callers. And perhaps there is some value for the radio stations, as they provide a forum for malcontents to air their grievances.

And sometimes I get a chuckle out of an occasional far-out solution to a complicated community problem. But, while I'm driving, I'd still rather switch from top 40, to country, to jazz, to classical, than switch from talk, to talk, to talk.