

Rudes Of The Road

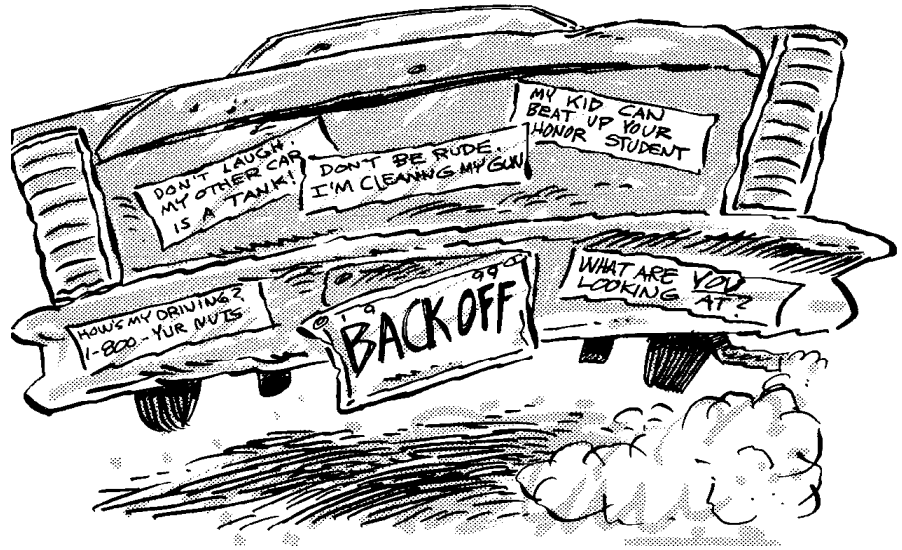
Larry is as macho as the next guy. Played all the sports, had a couple of rousing fist fights in his youth, and hunts and fishes on the weekends. So, when Mr. Macho was rudely cut off on the interstate by Mr. Inconsiderate, Larry flashed an obvious signal of disapproval. A mile or so later, he and Mr. I. sat side by side at a stop light. Larry glanced over and saw that he was staring into the barrel of a large handgun. He froze in fear. The driver looked at him stonily, shook his head, then lowered the pistol and drove off. As you might imagine, Larry has since become much more tolerant behind the wheel.

The highways have always been dangerous, but increasingly people are using their vehicles as weapons; or worse, using actual weapons to prove a point about their driving. **One six-year study by the American Automobile Association found more than 10,000 violent road clashes that resulted in over 200 deaths and 12,000 injuries.**

Hey! Who You Calling Aggressive!

Aggressive drivers are more likely to speed, tailgate, fail to yield, weave in and out of traffic, pass on the right, make improper lane changes, run stop signs and lights, make hand and facial gestures, scream, honk and flash their lights. To coexist with aggressive drivers:

- Be patient and flexible. Practice cooperative driving behavior.
- Don't be goaded into confrontation.
- Don't take other drivers' behavior personally.
- Do not respond by blaring your horn, following too closely, cutting them off, or tapping your brakes.
- Give other drivers plenty of space, especially drivers behaving competitively or aggressively.
- If you make a driving error that upsets another driver, smile and try



to signal an apology with a hand wave.

- Drive in the right or center lanes unless passing. If you are in the left lane, even if you are driving the speed limit, and someone wants to pass you, let them. It's courtesy to move over if you can.
- Use turn signals when changing lanes or turning.
- Use your horn sparingly.
- Dim your high beams as you approach another vehicle.
- When you merge, make sure you have plenty of room.
- If someone cuts you off, slow down and give them room to merge into your lane.
- Don't tailgate. Allow at least a three-second space between your car and the one ahead. If you feel you're being followed too closely, signal and pull over to allow the other driver to go by.
- Few things make another driver angrier than an obscene gesture. (And if you don't believe us, ask Larry.) Keep your hands on the wheel. Don't even shake your head in disgust.
- Avoid eye contact. Looking or staring at another driver can turn an impersonal encounter between two drivers into a personal duel.

• Open doors carefully in parking lots.

- If a situation is getting out of hand, use your cellular phone to call for help, or drive to a place where people are around, such as a police station or convenience store. Use your horn to attract attention. Do not get out of your car. And definitely **do not go home** if they are in sight.

To Calm The Beast In You

- Adjust your attitude. Strive to be the most courteous person on the road. Others may follow your lead.
- Forget winning. Driving is not a contest.
- Refocus your thoughts and take deep breaths if you feel like you are losing control. Think of a pleasant situation or memory.
- Relieve stress by allowing plenty of time to reach your destination.
- Listen to soothing music or a book on tape.
- Consider you may know the other driver, or he might have a reason for driving erratically.
- If you think you have a problem with anger management, seek professional help. ■