

my Personal side

By Craig Hastings



Is there cause for government intervention through regulation and safety standards for all means of vehicular travel when humans are aboard? Over many years I have probably been one of the NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) biggest critics. Through the 70's when I was an avid gear-head way too deep into the "go fast and look good while doing it" automobile scene. I was witness to the structural safety standards revamp that, in my opinion, changed the American automobile from beautiful and elegant designs to ugly and boxy in just a few years. The NHTRA forced the American automobile manufacturers to drastically increase the structural rigidity of all models and to do it quickly. Most Americans didn't see the increased roof, cowl, and door supports because these additional steel impact protection pieces were hidden by the interior components such as the headliner, door panels, and dash pads. What everyone did notice was the gigantic oversized bumpers being hung front and back that continued around several inches of all four corners. If that wasn't enough, most bumpers included two each, front and back smaller bumperettes attached parallel to each bumper. If the bumperettes weren't included not to worry, your car probably got stuck with a single, two to three inch rubber strip that ran the entire length of the bumper. These strips came in just two colors regardless of the color of the car, silver or black. The NHTSA required that all bumpers must withstand a 5 mph impact that wouldn't result in more than \$500 damage to the vehicle. When the all new C4 Corvette was released in 1994 this single hideous rubber strip ran completely around the car and for about ten years this one inch strip was black regardless of the paint color of the car. The manufacturers were required to change and adapt to new regulations much too quickly. Appearance suffered throughout the model lines. I won't get into the emission standards that for a decade killed off the American muscle cars.

These impact regulations started in 1972 and continue on today. However and fortunately automobile manufacturers figured out they could hide a heavy impact bar behind a rubber bumper cover and still meet the standards. I believe it was the early 80's when the rubber bumper covers became the norm for all manufacturers. I'm still not a fan. Yes these work well in the design of most vehicles but because of these giant bumper covers, it kinda mandates that most vehicles take on a rounded egg shape. The sharp and chiseled lines of vehicles of the pre 1974 era would be lost forever because no longer would small, sleek, and attractive chrome bumpers of the past adorn our vehicles because of federal regulations. Safety and emission regulations continue to increase and become more stringent every single year yet today. Airbags hang hidden throughout all models now in as many as twelve locations in some models.

Okay so most of you know all of this already so where am I going tonight? The Ocean-gate submersible catastrophe has me scratching my head and I have questions. Probably you've all heard about the five people who apparently died when the submersible imploded while diving down to view the Titanic wreckage last week. This wasn't the first trip down to the wreckage in this same vehicle either. I've read reports that there were technical difficulties in the prior two attempts of this same dive near the Titanic. It appears to me that the expendable wealth of some private sector Americans has exceeded that of our own federal government. We have a

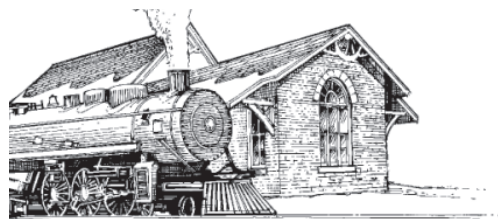
couple of guys building their own rockets that are carrying people and equipment into space at will and it appears we also have a few Americans building submarines in order to frolic about the ocean floor. Both are charging hundreds of thousands of dollars for the privilege of going into space or to the ocean floor but, that capitalism! Spend a dollar to make ten back! Now, I have nothing against these entrepreneurs. Good for them that they are a million times more intelligent than I am but that doesn't take much.

However... If our federal government is going to tell me I can't have sculpted chrome bumpers on my new cars, my car has to get forty miles per gallon or buy an electric car, I must have a dozen airbags surrounding me that I'm forced to pay for, I have to have at least four computers controlling various operations of my new car that adds thousands of dollars to my car, etc., all in the course of keeping me safe and the air we breathe safe, then what about spaceships and submarines? How is it that there are no safety standards for private companies manufacturing vehicles that travel into space carrying humans? What about safety concerns should any of these spacecraft blow up a fall to the ground? Why hasn't uncle Joe and his band of electric plug-ins (Democrats) demanded Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg convert their rockets to electric propulsion only? There are virtually no regulations now or forthcoming for space travel.

How about private companies now manufacturing their own submarines. What are the safety regulations? There aren't any. Five people just lost their lives because no one in the federal government regulatory department has bothered to intervene in this newest means of human travel. Why? I have another concern just as important to me as safe travel with spacecraft and submarines. Shouldn't someone be stepping up security concerns with both? Shouldn't our government be monitoring not only the humans traveling in these vehicles but what about their payloads? Just what is it that's going into space, released to orbit the earth, and the purpose of any payload?

The submarine incident really has me concerned. For five days this submarine couldn't be located! What?! Five days and our own Coast Guard, our Navy, Canadian Navy, and few private companies, couldn't locate this underwater vessel? From a national security interest, doesn't anyone but me find this a bit worrisome? With all of the trillions of dollars we spend on underwater detection devices to protect our shores, why would it take five days to locate this submarine? What's even more worrisome is it appears this submarine imploded within an hour or less after it first submerged. Meaning, it wasn't even moving! It wasn't trying to hide! And we couldn't find it! So now the what if. What if, say China, sent a hundred of these submersibles the same size as the one we couldn't find for five days, to our east shores? What if each one of these hundred submersibles were carrying just one nuclear weapon? God I hope someone can reassure me our navy can do better! The only explanation I can come up with is this; was there more to the missing submersible than what was reported in the news? Did our Navy actually know right away what happened here and for whatever reason just not tell the American people? As much as that theory would really upset me, at least I'd feel a little safer. What do you think? I'm at a loss here.

(The views and opinions expressed in the submitted columns are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of The Journal.)



Back in the day...

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DO YOU RECOGNIZE this week's Back in the Day photo? If so, drop us a note at The Journal. Your efforts will be rewarded.

10 years ago July 10, 2013

If you weren't in Ervin Park at some point Friday, July 5 or Saturday, July 6, particularly Saturday night, you were very much in the minority, as the 2013 Sparks in the Park festival enjoyed a comfortably cool kiss from Mother Nature, making the many outdoor activities quite pleasant for participants and spectators alike. Lots of helping hands meant a lightened workload for the main organizers, the Tuscola Chamber of Commerce and City of Tuscola and City Treasurer Alta Long was quick to offer their thanks.

A two-person team of administrative law judges has issued a proposed order regarding a suggested route for a 345,000 volt Ameren Transmission Company of Illinois (ATXI) transmission line that would run through Douglas and Piat counties and local land and property owners are not happy about it.

Local car dealer Tim Mooney is planning a \$1.05 million renovation to his Ford dealership located at 400 East Southline Road, and a request for TIF assistance to help with the endeavor was passed at the July 8, 2013, city council meeting.

20 years ago July 1, 2003

Young ladies competing for the title of Miss Mo-Do Fair Queen this year included Lyndsay Tabb of Tuscola, Amber VonLanken of Tuscola, Rita Conley of Atwood, Kylee Stonecipher of Newman, Michelle Mill-

er of Arcola, Janelle Hanke of Tuscola, Lindsey Suding of Arcola, Andrea Collins of Atwood, Michelle Cookson of Lovington, Heather Dilliner of Sullivan, Lyndsey Greger of Tuscola, Chantell Hilton of Lovington, Leslie Cummings of Sullivan, Kelly Robinson of Atwood, and April Hicks of Sullivan.

School district teachers made a plea to the school board for retention of the Title I math and reading programs, which might be dropped due to funding cutbacks at the state level. This was also the final school board meeting for retiring superintendent Jim Voyles and TCHS principal Mike Damler.

The old Dairy Queen building was being cleared out in preparation for its razing. The lot was going to be paved over and utilized by Tim Mooney Ford as additional lot space.

30 years ago June 29, 1993

Former Douglas County sheriff's deputy John Chambers announced his candidacy for sheriff. He would be running as a Democrat in the March 1994 primary election.

Tuscola Township officials appointed Margaret Weaver to serve out the township trustee term of the late Amos Albritton. Albritton died May 15, one

month after winning a second term in the April election.

Doreen Sanders was the grand-prize winner in the karaoke contest held at Proud Mary's in Tuscola. Jack Postlewait was the male winner.

Country music superstars Sammy Kershaw and Don Williams were entertainment headliners at the Moultrie-Douglas County Fair.

40 years ago July 6, 1983

Shareholders of Villa Grove Farmers Elevator Co. and Tuscola Cooperative Grain Co. would be voting August 9 on a proposed consolidation of the two cooperatives.

The Fourth of July holiday was marred by two drownings in Douglas County. A 2-year-old Chesterville toddler was found in the Kaskaskia River near her home Saturday, and a 20-year-old Louisville, Ken. woman drowned in a barrow pit near Arcola on Sunday.

During changing of the guard ceremonies at Tuscola Rotary Club, Rick Davidson assumed leadership of the club from retiring president Steve Winans.

Tuscola students Rob Gentry and LuAnn Weatherford brought home excellent ratings from the annual National History

Day competition held June 15-18 in Washington, D.C. Gentry made a model of a multi-sided barn, while Weatherford created a stuffed water snake in a prairie-like setting.

50 years ago June 28, 1973

Tuscola's Brenda Breen became Miss Illinois Amvet during competition Friday evening at the Ramada Inn, and was now eligible to compete next year in Puerto Rico for the 1974 Miss Universe title. Breen was a former Miss Tuscola, Miss Moultrie-Douglas, and in March won the Miss Campaign Amvet contest.

Mr. and Mrs. G.E. Maloney and Mr. and Mrs. John Morris returned recently from a 22-day European tour. They visited England, where they saw Queen Elizabeth at a distance on her official June 2 birthday; toured Germany; and spent time in Austria.

The Tuscola Woman's Club tennis class completed its tournament Monday. Mrs. Clarice Schweighart won the tournament, with Joan Cross capturing second place.

Fred Galey hurled a one-hitter to place Tuscola one step closer to the Okaw baseball championship Friday evening. Tuscola, sporting a 6-1 record, thumped Warrensburg 4-1 in a tight contest.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I always read "My Personal Side" first. I find that column truthful. My family and I have

always loved Tuscola and the Tuscola Newspapers and hope Mr. Hastings column will always be there.

For wider circulation, Mr. Hastings "My Personal Side" should be in every edition of the Wall Street Journal. That

way more people would benefit by reading his column.

Dixie L. Curry

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