

Develop patience, not patients

After a spate of motorized vehicle/bicycle collisions during warmer months, it would be tempting to conclude that cyclists are convenient targets for road rage. Analysis would suggest otherwise.

Issues plaguing cyclists are symptomatic of a more serious societal shift from respecting life to simply valuing how much we can get done in life. I count myself fortunate that I was born before we created cell phones, hot dog cookers that can be hooked to a vehicle's cigarette lighter and vehicle viewing screens.

When I bought my first car in 1966, seatbelts were not mandatory. My dad installed two in the front seat – one to the far left and one to the far right. As he finished, he said if he ever saw a girl in the middle, he'd know two things: she wasn't using a seatbelt and my mind wasn't on driving.

Being inattentive is a leading cause for accidents – on the road, in hobbies, homes and the workplace. Motorists have run into homes, churches, bus stop benches, bookstores, daycares etc.

A woman, talking on her cell phone, made a sudden left in front of me into a parking lot without signaling. She continued talking on the phone until I pedaled up beside the driver's door. She apologized profusely.

"I'm not looking for an apology," I said. "I just want to know what was so important about your phone call that my life didn't matter?" Cyclists also should have their minds on the road, not tunes etc.

The state of Pennsylvania views driving a vehicle as a priority, not an inconvenience. In Pennsylvania, it has been illegal for decades to eat while driving. With the exception of energy bars, cyclists would do well to heed the same strategy. Several years ago I came upon a cyclist who was turning gray, lying on a sidewalk. I ejected the apple piece that he was choking on.

In many bicycle/car collisions, the motorist sees the cyclist but fails to yield because they think of a bicycle as a "toy" instead of a piece of "transportation" that "may be going faster than you think."



Unfortunately, some bicycle riders, in an effort to increase their safety margin, choose to ride against traffic or on sidewalks. Both are extremely dangerous in that motorists are not expecting cyclists to be there.

The ultimate solution is for people – motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians - to develop patience, not patients.