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## Special Supplement to Exhibit D: Traffic and Lydel Sims' "Assignment: Memphis"

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO EXHIBIT D: TRAFFIC  
and  
LYDEL SIMS' "Assignment: Memphis"

The intimate relevance of TRAFFIC--indeed, of transportation in general--to First Amendment rights of the people of Memphis may best be appreciated by reference first to the recent editorial statement on apparent resolution of the expressway controversy (cited p.6, n. 3, above) and the comment (p.3) regarding City Hall and public transportation.

For decades, the uncompleted I-40 leg through Overton Park was literally the whipping boy of City Hall, politicians, and too many business men (who should have been more farsighted), for all our traffic ills! But humorist Lydel Sims always knew better. A kind of "closet ecologist" long before editorial policy promoted transit, traffic controls, and environmental balance regarding highways, he managed to lay the blame where much of it belongs: on local driver stupidity and selfishness, and unenforced traffic regulations. In his front-page column, "Assignment: Memphis", Sims managed--even pre-Grehl!--to satirize some of the worst offenses.

Included in this EXHIBIT are four Sims articles about Memphis traffic, together with news items documenting the facts. Humorous in itself, the Swiftian depth of his ridicule begins to appear only in the political context. Thus, like Jonathan Swift, Sims requires footnotes.

*Trappé*  
Assignment: Memphis—

*July 7, 1988*

## Blind Driver No Optical Illusion, So Look Out

By LYDEL SIMS

When Memphis police announced last week that they had arrested a blind man for driving while intoxicated, it didn't surprise Bill MacLaughlin as much as you might have expected.

MacLaughlin is blind himself. And he has a brand new license authorizing him to operate a motor vehicle in Tennessee subject to the laws of the state.

The same kind you and I have.

By golly, MacLaughlin admits, it's a temptation.

WE ARE NOT dealing here with a case of fraud, mind you. Let me give you the background.

MacLaughlin, a retired city employe, has been totally blind for about two years. Before then he was blind in one eye only, but that hadn't stopped him from doing just

about anything he wanted to do. In fact, he was good enough with just one eye to be a test pilot during World War II.

Then, a while back, the other eye went. Without consulting the state, MacLaughlin quit driving.

WHICH BRINGS US to a day a few months ago when the Department of Safety in Nashville sent him his application for a renewal of his license.

"What do you want to do about it?" his wife asked.

"I don't know."

"Well, let's just fill it out and see what happens."

INTRIGUED BY THE idea, he said sure, why not? So Mrs. MacLaughlin went over the application form and made entries in all the appropriate spaces.

"Enter your Social Security number." She did it for him.

"Enter the amount of money enclosed." She did that, too.

Then she turned it over on the back and read the instructions and questions there.

No. 5 says: "Do you have any physical or mental defects such as loss of limbs, epilepsy, fainting spells, use of drugs or alcohol, hearing or sight, which would make it difficult for you to operate a motor vehicle safely?"

She checked the little block marked "Yes."

"If you do, describe."

The description she gave was clear enough for anybody to understand: The applicant was blind.

Then MacLaughlin signed the form, certifying that the information set forth above was complete, true and correct, and that he

was a holder of a valid Tennessee driver's license at the time.

They mailed it back to the Department of Safety with the required \$6 fee, and waited to see what would happen next.

AND SURE ENOUGH, with a promptness remarkable in these bureaucratic days, back came MacLaughlin's new license.

Well, they had just done it for kicks. And MacLaughlin got a whale of a kick out of it. He figures it was worth every bit of the \$6 it cost him.

No, he said, he hasn't driven since he got it. In fact, he hasn't driven in more than two years.

But the state says he can. And there are cars sitting out there in the driveway.

"If you see a red car coming at you, you'd better look out," he warned. "It could be me."

*Traffic!*  
Assignment: Memphis—  
Memphis drivers: mayhem in a  
messy Christmas?

CA  
Nov 28, 1980

# You're Ready To Get Into Yule Shopping Spirit

By LYDEL SIMS

Gang, as you know, this is the final class in Offensive Driving in Shopping Center Parking Lots. We promised we'd have you educated in time for the Christmas shopping, right?

So today we're just going to review some of the principles we've studied together. Follow what you've learned in this course, and you'll get that good old Christmas spirit in a hurry.

FIRST OF ALL, what's the first rule for parking at shopping centers in the month ahead? Anybody?

Yes, Mr. Slambang, you tell us. . . Right, right. Forget that good-will-to-man business. That's the thing to remember above everything else. Good will to man is all right in its place, but it has no place in a parking lot in December. Hang onto that principle, and everything else will follow.

We're going to skip the fine points, gang, and just run over a few of the basics. Like what's the best way to enter a lot? Mrs. Deadeye?

Good. . . good . . . good. Cut across all the painted parking lines, right class? But what did she leave out?

Exactly. Always enter a lot with a left turn, opposing traffic on the thoroughfare — and if there's a turn lane, ignore it. Re-



member, Mrs. Deadeye, part of your mission is to confuse and upset so many other drivers that they'll get mad and go home. That way, there'll be less competition indoors.

AND ONCE WE'RE in the lot and approaching the stores, how do we drive? Miss Dent, you want to take that one for us?

Exactly. You drive against the direction arrows. That upsets the traffic flow and works to your advantage. And you can always back into a parking space if you're headed the wrong way.

But try this one, class. What do you do if you see a parking space at the same time somebody else sees it?

Oh, good, good. This is no time for compassion or timidity. Step on the gas and go for it. As the poet says, the race is to the swift and surly. You can scare the other driver out of the space more than half the time — and remember, you're playing the percentages. You have to. After all, it's the Christmas season.

WHAT'S THAT, MR. Squeamish? You're still not sure how to treat people who have got out of their cars and are trying to walk through the traffic?

I'm disappointed. Haven't we made that point clear? You run 'em down, if possible. It sets a good example for others. Yes, I do understand that you'll be walking through the traffic yourself after you've parked, but the other drivers won't all be playing by your rules. Ignore them. Let 'em wait for you to get out of the way. And if they do come too close, holler at 'em. Spread the cheer.

NOW ABOUT PARKING in a tight space. I hope you're all clear on that. Don't — repeat, don't — worry if it's such a tight squeeze you can hardly open your door. Just give it a shove with all your might.

What? Of course it'll knock paint off the other car. Shucks, it may even leave a dent. But why should you think that's any concern of yours? Look, do you want to share in

Christmas giving, or don't you? All right, then, let's hear no more about dents in other people's cars.

I guess a word about backing out of your space might be in order at this time, gang. Always remember the rule: Don't LOOK back, just BACK back. Catchy, isn't it? Believe me, it works.

NOW I KNOW some of you out there are still a little timid about following our rules. You have a new car, maybe, and you're worrying that something might happen to it. All right, I have the answer for that, too.

What you do is, you go to some place where they have demolition derbies, and you buy one of the rejects. You can get it for peanuts and, with luck, it might last till Christmas.

And it'll be the best investment you ever made. Keep your own car safe and drive a wreck. Ever notice how many smashed-up cars there are in parking lots? Believe me, there's a reason. If you're not ready to play hardball, just forget Christmas.

That's all, gang. Oh, except for one final word. We plan to review your performances in a little informal seminar just before New Year's. The details aren't all ironed out, but I'll let each of you know as soon as possible which hospital we'll meet in. Now get out there and smash 'em up!

TRAFFIC! ("courtesy")  
Assignment: Memphis—

O.A., Sept. 12, 1980

# Memphians Put A Halt To Usual Motor Mores

By LYDEL SIMS

People who don't understand the quaint mores of our local inhabitants are sometimes confused by driving practices in Memphis.

Such a person approached me only the other day, shaking his head in disbelief.

He had been driving on a major thoroughfare during the rush hour, he told me, when an incredible thing occurred.

A car somewhere ahead of him in the right lane came to a halt. Well, he said, nothing strange about that. Cars often stall in heavy traffic. You learn to put up with such glories of progress.

But when, at long last, he got a chance to pull into the adjoining lane and get past the obstruction, he was amazed.

"That car wasn't stalled," he said. "It was just sitting there with the engine running while the driver talked to somebody on the sidewalk.

"The fellow hadn't even bothered to pull over to the curb."

SUCH IS THE difference in driving habits

in other parts of the country that this man actually was under the impression that something unusual, even newsworthy, had occurred.

I tried to set him straight.

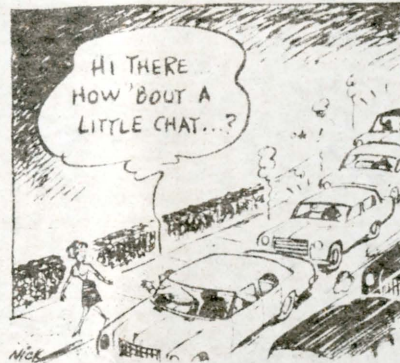
Memphis motorists, I explained, consider it a God-given right to come to a halt anywhere, at any time, for any reason. If they block drivers behind them, what about it? Where's the fire? Let 'em wait.

But surely, he protested, I must be jesting.

Jesting? Hah. Just because drivers in other parts of the country have some rabby feeling that they mustn't obstruct other drivers, why should the proud citizens of the sovereign city of Memphis feel the same?

HE WENT OFF in a huff, which is a pity. Cars are more comfortable. And besides, I could have cited examples for him until he was purple in the face.

Like any other Memphian, I could have told him of cases where people not only stop in crowded lanes, but even back up. I could



have told him how drivers renew old acquaintances with passing pedestrians, or urge young women to come on and take a little spin, or debate politics or whatever.

Indeed, I could have told him of occasions — especially in residential areas — when cars approaching from opposite directions halt alongside, blocking all traffic, while

the occupants discuss possible activities and meeting places for the evening's festivities.

JUST WHY SUCH practices should confound some people might be considered a mystery.

Do they actually think it is better to keep traffic lanes flowing smoothly unless car trouble develops?

Isn't the whole world better off when someone forces a brief and neighborly pause in the bustle of city life?

Can it really be assumed that the combined interests of the blocked drivers are necessarily any more important than those of the middle-of-the-street parker?

PEOPLE WHO DON'T know, and understand, the right answers to such questions are obviously unfit for the privilege of driving on Memphis streets.

Unfortunately, that doesn't stop them. I would have told the fellow that, too, but civic pride prevented it. Sometimes you have to smile to keep from crying.

Assignment: Memphis—  
*Traffic - CMAA!*

*P.A., Oct. 12, 1988*

## Lane Markers Seen As Battle Lines

By LYDEL SIMS

If you pay close attention, you can pick up helpful little tips about driving in Memphis that will make the experience easier.

There is, for example, a suggestion from Mrs. L., a relative newcomer to our city but clearly a rapid learner.

What's the best way to change lanes? Listen to Mrs. L.:

"I have discovered that while driving on a multilane street like Poplar, if I want to change lanes, I should not turn on my blinker, but rather just move over."

Now why, an innocent observer might ask, would she decide that?

"The sight of a blinker causes the guy in the other lane to floor the accelerator, thereby preventing a lane change."

WHEN YOU STOP to think about it, there's a heap of truth in what she says. Something about a blinking light ahead does seem to arouse the fighting spirit in a Memphis driver. Pull over in front of me, will you? We'll see about that.

But Mrs. L. is not particularly happy that she has solved only one problem. She outlined a list of others as long as your arm to justify her statement that "the drivers in Memphis are by far the rudest and most inconsiderate that I have ever seen."

Having said this, she was cautious enough to ask me not to use her name:

"I am basically a coward and do not wish to receive threatening phone calls from



those who declare Memphis the South's friendliest city."

CIVIC PRIDE HAS long led me to insist that we do indeed have the worst drivers in the whole wide world, but I suppose that's only a matter of opinion.

After all, a recent visitor here from Egypt went out of his way to praise our traffic as compared with that in Cairo. So maybe we're only the worst in this hemisphere.

And the situation isn't really too bad in good weather. It's only when he is faced with snow, ice or driving rain that the Memphis driver reaches his full potential for destruction.

BUT EVEN ON good days we have our problems, many of them beyond the list cov-

ered in Mrs. L.'s lengthy indictment.

Mrs. Irene Rudd, for example, wonders if Memphis motorists have forgotten that pedestrians have to cross streets. As a pedestrian herself, she told me, she recently counted 10 narrow escapes within only four days.

The trouble is double-barreled, even when you wait for a traffic light.

During one half of your trip across the intersection, she noted, you're in danger of your life from people making left turns onto your street. During the other half, you're in equal danger from people making right-on-red turns off your street.

"One day," she predicted glumly, "my luck may run out."

AND ANOTHER CITIZEN told me the other day how he almost came to a fiery end in expressway traffic.

He was driving in the center lane when suddenly the car ahead came to a full halt. Fortunately, he was able to avert disaster, but he couldn't help being a mite curious about that abrupt stop. So he looked to see.

Well, sir, the driver had decided to take an exit ramp he had almost passed, so he was sitting there in the middle lane with his blinker blinking, waiting for the right lane to clear so he could cut across it and make his exit.

NO WONDER SO many of our citizens arrive at work with their hair standing on end. Maybe the next solution Mrs. L. should try in her duels with Memphis drivers is a hairnet.