

# The Alternative Line

by Joe Holzer for Publication in CNY-PCA Redline Report Copyright 2009 <http://www.holzerent.com>

## The Car Guys – Instrument Design – Truth in Indicating

The Sept 20 2009 Post Standard Auto section had an article called “Car Talk”, ostensibly two brothers who respond to automotive subject letters they receive as “experts”. A reader had inquired of them as well as some OEM car companies why they made speedometers which indicated far higher speeds than they could ever reach, to say nothing of being far beyond any legal speeds in this market. He received responses from only Toyota and Nissan, but they were textbook examples of form letters which never addressed the question to which they replied. So he wrote to the brothers, whose response was that it was a marketing ploy to suggest the “potency” of the model. I think they missed the point and merely left it as a joke. My reply:

*Re your speedo response 9/20/09:*

*You guys should have longer memories - and the form letters from the auto companies proves my point - We seem unable to handle the truth - or at least that is what SOME believe. They are wrong.*

*Marketing may be involved, but in 1974 Joan Claybrook, a Naderite running NHTSA, convinced congressional morons to impose the double-nickel NMSL, with draconian enforcement leveraged by Fed highway funds, and subsequently forced the automakers to make all speedos highlight 55 and max at 85. Which meant that even a Yugo could bend the speedo peg.*

*The problem is that everybody did, which made the rules and the results a joke, except it also meant that people who actually pay attention noticed the real difference. As the decade with that mis-representation continued, fatality rates relative to prior trend actually went up. Real root cause was that 55 was unnatural on a superhighway, which taxpayers had paid to be naturally speeded at 85. That should have been the MEDIAN in other words.*

*It was simply another example of people with powerful BELIEFS overriding people with DATA. Any of this sound familiar? So a '78 911 with an accurate speedo displayed its real speed well past 120 mph, as any engineer will tell you is the PURPOSE of a gauge. And also explains why the Claybrook wetdream speedos were available for \$10 at swap meets with 12001 on the odo contained therein (the end of the warrantee), since they are SO easy to change out on a 911.*

*So now, in states which actually have speed limits marked of 80, and actually enforced at just about 90, you have 15 years worth of cars which were designed to kill their drivers with boredom, and which let them have NO IDEA what their actual speed is as they approach the cop.*

*Brilliant. Like the Nissan and Toyota Form Letters.*

I know I am starting to sound like a broken record, yada yada yada. But I am an engineer. Just because I don't want my blood pressure to reach 200, the gauge had damn well better be accurate, or what's the sense? Sure, the top speed looks impressive, but VERY few people will ever actually find out what the lower real max number is before they have to stop to clean their pants anyway. “So what?” if the high number looks great. If it is TOO high above the real potential, I would argue that it would be contrary to the marketing effect hoped for, as the reality would seem puny by comparison. And if you have tried to merge into traffic on the Thruway, or worse on the Taughannock Parkway with its short merge lanes (one of the MOST fun and potentially scary roads in NY State), you will immediately understand why cars can reach far higher than legal speeds – they use only a minor percentage of available horsepower to maintain even 80 mph.

Entertainers and engineers have very different requirements – laughter is easy until you need to factor the safety of highway merge vs the demands for maximum fuel economy, comfort and crash safety in the realm of real-world engineering.

THE most fundamental reason for a speedo to display much higher than it will really be driven is “because it ultimately is possible for the vehicle to go most of that range, and a gauge should be accurate AT ALL TIMES”. To do otherwise is an insult to the work of the engineers. You know, the people without whom NO cars would exist. And while I know that WE might wish that all cars were Porsches, and all drivers were as well skilled as we (ahem), the simple fact is that the ONLY reason we all have the choices of the decent roads we have is because there ARE so many other cars on the road. The real value of democracy is shared enjoyment of liberty. But even if I am the ONLY person who ever actually needs to know how fast I am going when I am driving, as I am capable of doing, when I look at an instrument I want the truth, not what some Washington spin doctor or Toyota/Nissan form letter thinks is an “adequate” response. Thanks for asking.

And now for a word from our sponsors: Unless you have just landed from another planet, you cannot possibly have missed the discussion about “Healthcare Reform”. Whatever your personal position, the level of DIS-information is staggering. But a few points to ponder (YOU figure my bias ;-):

- a) We already have a single-payer system. In fact there are not fewer than three; VA, Medicare and Medicaid. And except for the windfall profits for the drugs, they work pretty well for their constituencies. At a HUGELY lower overhead for both patients and providers vs commercial insurers.
- b) The latter two of those are regulated by the same CMS. But neither can use the forms of, nor talk to, the other. So providers must bill each separately, while Medicare can pass directly to most secondary payers in the commercial market. At least that saves SOME of the admin burden in the stupid system now.
- c) At the same time, the politicians who all state that they agree that there should be absolute coverage continuance if you HAVE been paying the premiums, not a single one has offered a bill to fix just THAT. Instead, they refuse to agree on what they already agree on, because it might hurt their bargaining position on the stuff they don't. So much for morality and helping the weak.
- d) And don't believe for a second that all EMR systems must interconnect, nor that they are all hyper expensive. OpenEMR is FREE. It can stand alone on a notebook computer, or be used to run large healthcare organizations with full patient data security as a server. Because it is open source instead of canned proprietary, its users can change it to do whatever works best for THEM. By HIPAA law, no provider can share the health information for ANY patient without the express written consent of the patient, detailing who, what and why that info is to be shown. Orwell may have been an optimist, but if you think the town hall meetings have screamers now, just try eliminating that barrier as personal protection.
- e) Any HONEST reading of the CMS rules for a “conforming” system will recognize that “If Available” is all over that rules set, and until a LOT more than the sub-20% currently using electronic medical records of any kind actually contribute data to the demanded central repository, its health information “ideal” ISN'T available, and its value will be zero for ALL. I think it would be far better if every person carried a USB memory stick and asked their healthcare provider to add their findings to all the prior providers' data. Then THAT patient could share THAT info with whomever THEY wanted. I think a memory stick like that would be just about \$3. Retail.

Just thought you might like to know.

