

Cab Gab

by Abe Mittleman

Happy New Year, 2010 is here and I'm still healthy. I hope all of you can say the same.

I have been writing this column for many years. I can't remember just how many. But it's more than ten. It has occurred to me that I do a lot of complaining about things that just aren't right in our industry. It bothers me very much that despite all of my complaining along with very just arguments that I write to support my claims, very little if anything changes.

In the past year I argued profusely about why the MTA tax is unjust, but to what avail? We are now suffering the injustice of this tax, and to make matters even worse, the money being collected from our passengers and us when they deduct it from our tips isn't even going to solve the MTA's problems. God knows they may even hit us up for more! The mayor is again suggesting congestion pricing and east river bridge tolls.

I suggested to drivers that we combat this unjust tax by boycotting the MTA crossings whenever possible. It's been in the news that revenues are down at these crossings. Although many of us have limited the use to what can not be avoided, many of us have not done the same. Probably the recession is more of a reason that these revenues are down. Many drivers just don't care to fight. They should do otherwise!

How many times have I written about our needs for humane ways to have toilet access? I lost count long ago? But the situation doesn't get any better. Drivers keep complaining. Doesn't anybody care? It seems not!

How about the TV screens that annoy most passengers and all drivers, boy, can we live without them. So many of us hate them. How many times have we suggested that they just have these screens for the credit card payments? Does anyone listen? They hear but they don't care. There is too much money involved for those who are racking it in from the advertisements. Funny, as a medallion owner I'm supposed to see some of that revenue. It's been two years and I've yet to see one dime! So, why do I have to continue to be annoyed?

The list goes on. Pick up any of the taxi publications and you will read about

drivers who have one complaint or another. Sooner or later perhaps something will be done to ease these situations that people in the taxi business have to live with on a daily basis. But now that it's a New Year I have decided to stop complaining for just one time at least! I'm going to change course and see if I can write about some of the positives of being in this business!

1. We are the boss! Regardless if you are a medallion owner, a driver that leases his medallion and owns his own vehicle, or even just a driver who leases both the medallion and the vehicle, when we are on the street serving our customers we are in control. Yes, we are the boss! Most other jobs someone is watching over you. You must adhere to their wishes. You can only do what they tell you. If you need a break you must wait for permission. We can take breaks at our own discretion or even take days off as long as we meet our financial commitments. No one can tell us otherwise!

2. We get to eat every day, and for some too much I may add. I'm going to try to eat less and lose some weight.

3. Our bills are paid regularly. Despite all the news about the bad economy, business isn't so bad. We are all still making money.

4. Time goes fast while working. On many other jobs people watch the clock because they are bored or not enjoying the work. We are always moving and thinking of our next fare. We for the most part enjoy what we do despite the difficulties. Probably even those who sit in offices and make the rules and regulations that we disagree with have the problem of boredom and time going slowly. We don't!

5. Our salaries aren't fixed. True there is a limit of time and what we can reasonably earn. But we know that if we put in extra effort our earnings will be greater. We can work extra days. We can give better service and in some cases earn larger tips. Most other jobs are fixed salaries and limited earnings.

6. We can sometimes enjoy meeting our passengers and carry on interesting conversations while working. Most other jobs don't give you this opportunity.

7. You don't need a college degree or any other diploma to be in the taxi business. There is an opportunity for even the lowest educated person to make a living. All that is required is that you take the TLC classes to obtain your license and that you

are of reasonably good character with a clean criminal background.

It is for these positive aspects of our business that is the reason they can get away with the negative aspects. After all if there were none of the positive things mentioned above why would we continue to work?

As for me I'm going to keep at what I do best. That is servicing the public needs for taxi transportation as best as I can do it regardless of the negative things that may come along. As long as I am healthy, I'll drive my taxi. I'll give good service and I'll earn the money I need to pay my bills.

I only hope that some of these negative things can either be alleviated or done away with. I only hope that at the end of this year there is better news to report!