

Cab Gab

by Abe Mittleman

MTA Tax-Disturbing

I've done some calculating. My figures show me that every taxi in the city will pay to the MTA somewhere between \$5,000 and \$6,000 a year. That's a familiar figure. Why? Because that's about what I pay for a health insurance policy for myself. A policy that doesn't cover all my medical expenses but is far better than having nothing at all. Even so, I'm fortunate to have this. Most taxi drivers can't afford to pay this amount and are without any health coverage .

Drivers have been asking for help with this situation for years and have not been offered any help. When gas prices were over \$4. a gallon and we wanted a surcharge to help pay for this expense, we were denied outright.

So, now our customers will have to pay, if we are lucky enough to collect it, an extra fifty cents. This is not for drivers health insurance. This is not for increased expenses. It's for another worker in another business to have health insurance and what ever other benefits these MTA workers have.

This is so wrong! Everyone knows it and they let it happen anyway! I only hope that somewhere down the line someone or some group gets together and reverses this injustice!

G.P.S. for Drivers

I never thought that I would need any help finding addresses. I've been driving a NYC taxi for close to 40 years with out any problems. Sure once in a while I would have to break out my five borough atlas and look up an obscure address in the far reaches of the city if the passenger couldn't guide me. This worked 100% of the time.

Recently I had a few fares out of the city. I had a fare to Suffern, NY. I knew that this was exit 15a on the New York State Thruway. But I hadn't a clue what to do afterwards. Luckily my passenger had G.P.S. on his cell phone. So, I was able to complete the trip.

Another fare was going to an address in Yonkers. A phone number at this address did not answer and my passenger did not know where the address was. I had to phone a friend! I asked him to use his computer to find the address. This was successful. But, I'm not taking any more chances! I bought a G.P.S. device for \$124. Now I'm in control!

G.P.S. for drivers to find locations should be a priority. The PIM should be equipped with this service!

Cleaning Up A Mess

I just passed the 39th anniversary of the first day I ever drove a NYC taxicab. That was Sept 20, 1970. I've had many great experiences in the 39 years and more than my share of not so great experiences.

Now there have been many a time when I've had to take a taxi to the car wash to be cleaned inside and out after someone who had too much to drink puked in the taxi or outside on the doors and windows. Each time it happens is as disturbing as the time before. This is not something you can easily adjust to. Even though after a few times you know that if you are going to continue in this business it will probably happen again.

But this one was a first:

It happened just before 11Am on Sunday Sept 6. It was Labor day weekend and the streets were very slow at this time. Street hails were scarce and there was a lot of competition from other taxis who were having trouble finding fares at this hour.

I was cruising up Broadway. As I approached the corner of 90th street and had gone for some time not finding a fare I saw a woman raise her hand from a block away. Relieved I had found some business I pulled up to her.

It was a warm sunny day and she was wearing shorts. As she approached the taxi I saw what appeared to be a brown liquid running down her leg. I didn't have time to really think about the experience I was about to get into.

She got in and asked to be taken to 100th street and Riverside drive. I could smell what the brown liquid was. I knew what had probably happened. We have all

probably been in this situation at one time or another, uncontrollable diarrhea.

Sure, I've been there. All taxi drivers have experienced this desperation while driving. Pedestrians on the street in many instances have the same problems we do, no facilities and not enough time to find one. I've lost control a few times. But one thing I've never done was make it someone else's problem.

I opened all the windows and hoped that it wasn't getting all over the back seat. She didn't say a word. It was obvious to me that she wanted to get home as quickly as possible so she could clean herself up. I didn't speed but I didn't dilly dally either. I was prompt.

When we reached her destination the meter read \$4.10. She handed me a clean (thank god) twenty dollar bill and quickly exited the taxi without asking for change. I knew by this gesture that I had a problem to clean up, especially so because I saw her backside as she walked away. It was soaked with the substance. I pulled around the corner and looked. It was all over the back seat and had dripped onto the floor.

But it was early in the day and I said to my self "Don't let this ruin your day". Clean it up and go back to work.

Luckily I had a clean towel that my driver keeps up front. I used that to wipe it up well enough to pick up my next fare. I disposed of the towel. They didn't comment, so I knew I had cleaned it up well enough to get the smell out. After a while I was at a location where I could get some paper towels and soapy water. I did a thorough clean up including myself. I may have gotten it on my hands and arms while cleaning.

A few hours later a man got into the taxi and asked: How's your day going? I laughed and asked if he smelled anything? He said no! So I knew the clean up job was successful. I then told him the story! By this time it was a story to have a few laughs.