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“Round and Round She Goes...”

**by
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Round and round she goes, where she stops nobody knows.... we're talking traffic circles here. Over the last few weeks in conversations of which I have been a part, some have brought up the subject of traffic circles or “roundabouts,” as those from more urbane societies might call them.

For reasons unknown to me some individuals have a difficult time maneuvering around the circles properly... some even indicating the presence of fear as they approach these circular intersections. “Why do they have such things in The Villages,” I've heard some ask. “They're just accidents waiting to happen,” others have commented. Some of my less adventurous friends say, “I just get in the outside lane and stay there till I get to the turnoff I'm lookin' for.”

They are then asked the oft spoken question, “If you're going to stay in the right hand lane, what's the sense of having two lanes?” A good question and one I intend to answer to most everyone's satisfaction.

Traffic circles have been in use in this country since 1905 and have worked well. Places where they haven't worked as well as others are those areas like New York and New Jersey where traffic has exploded exponentially through the years and traffic circle designs have not kept up with the evolution of traffic volume. More volume is handled by adding additional lanes.

Traffic circles have proven throughout the century to be a very effective way of controlling traffic converging on an intersection without the necessity of bringing the traffic to a complete halt, allowing a constant flow of traffic through a high traffic area. Imagine having to spend the time necessary for traffic lights to change if there were traffic lights at every intersection in The Villages. I know many individuals who would be screaming about having to wait.

There is no question traffic circles can be dangerous places, but no dangerous than the open highway in general. The only reason circles seem more dangerous is that a lot of people just don't know how to drive around them. I can remember my first introduction to traffic circles back in 1960 on my way to Newport News, VA from my home in WV. Having never seen a traffic circle, other than in movies, when I came upon one, unexpectedly, at a major intersection I did what a great many drivers do here in The Villages... I stopped short... confused as to what I was supposed to do. The obvious, of course, was not to stop in the middle of a traffic circle.

Very quickly, allow me to give you the non-official rules as to how one should drive in a traffic circle. When approaching a circle, where you want to go determines what lane to get into. Let's look at a traffic circle as 3 turns... Immediate right is a $\frac{1}{4}$ turn; Second right (or straight ahead) is a $\frac{1}{2}$ turn; and the Third turn is a $\frac{3}{4}$ turn around the circle.

Those going right at the ¼ turn should be in the right lane entering the circle; those turning at the ½ turn should enter in the outside lane as well, but immediately give their right signal when they get into the circle so cars will know they are turning; if you're wanting off at the ¾ turn, you should enter the circle in the left lane and give your right turn signal immediately upon passing the first turn so cars in the right hand lane will yield to you getting into their lane by the time you are to enter the 3rd turn. Elementary, my dear Watson.

Keep in mind, these rules are for people who have a modicum of sense and also the attitude of "doing unto others." One must be willing to allow other vehicles to share the road with you and not be in such a hurry that you refuse to show a little road courtesy.

If any of you have ever been to a function at the polo fields where several thousand golf carts assemble at one time I think you, like I, have been amazed at how quickly the traffic thins out... all because each driver of the carts is willing to allow those carts arriving at the exit the same time he does to merge, one right after another. Courtesy does work, and I think those who conceived the idea of traffic circles for the Villages' highways not only provided another remembrance of days gone by but also implemented a very efficient way to move a lot of traffic to and fro in The Villages.

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