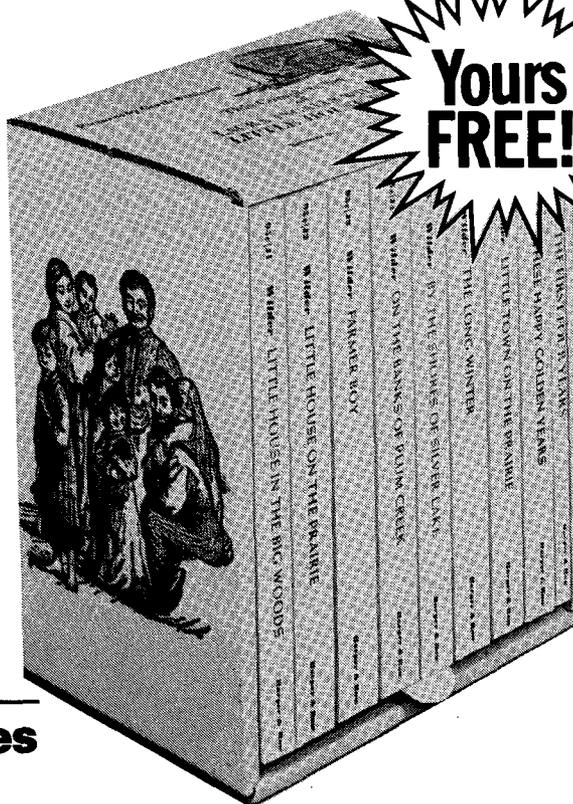


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LETTERS

Start Your Engines

The feature articles related to automobiles, mobility, and their regulation ("Autonomy," "Trapped Inside the Safety Belt," and "Going Mobile," Aug./Sept.) carry consistent and important messages:

- Personal mobility and the vehicles that make it possible are viewed as negatives by those elements in society that covet central authority and the ability to control other people's lives.

- Regulatory and enforcement agencies are motivated more by perpetuating the "need" for their existence than they are by problem prevention and resolution.

- Agencies, organizations, and industries that cloak their activities in the banner of safety or environmental sanctity often do so to further agendas designed to enhance their own economic status or power base, at everyone else's expense.

As stated in "Trapped Inside the Safety Belt," the National Motorists Association is indeed a small organization, but we are not always "outgunned" by the regulatory/insurance/Naderite coalition. It was through our efforts that the first serious dent was put in the 55-mph national maximum speed limit. We will have more victories when citizens realize that the freedom to travel where they want to, when they want to, and the way they want to is in jeopardy of being lost in their lifetime.

James J. Baxter
President
National Motorists Association
Dane, WI

I PERFORMED SOME mathematics on statistics given in "Autonomy," by doing a least-squares fit of an exponentially

decaying curve to the data of fatalities per 100 million miles of travel for the years 1921, 1941, 1947, and 1966. All of these statistics predate the founding of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed*. Using this statistical analysis method, I arrived at an estimate of 2.26 deaths per 100 million miles for the year 1988. The actual number, as reported in the articles, was 2.2. This gives further support to Mr. Smith's contention that we do not have the NHTSA to thank for fewer highway fatalities.

Jeff Wrobel
Kwajalein, Marshall Islands

COMMON SENSE SHOULD prevail in any analysis of the horse vs. the automobile for the transportation of people. Superiority of the automobile was established long, long ago. Comparison of early century transportation alternatives is a needless exercise and is irrelevant to the solution of our current transportation problems. However valuable the automobile may be as a transportation machine, urban areas across the nation are experiencing a deteriorating level of mobility from traffic congestion caused by an overabundance of automobiles. We have learned that the automobile does not lend itself to the transport of large numbers of people, simultaneously, in a given amount of operating space without inducing travel delays.

Pricing peak-hour travel, electronic navigation systems, and carpool lanes may help to alleviate peak-hour traffic congestion on heavily traveled routes, but these measures do not address the basic problem of excessive automobile travel demand. In heavily populated areas, alternative modes of transportation are the most effective means of reducing that demand.

Enamored by the automobile's convenience and flexibility, and the insis-