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On The Fence...

by Ben Hermann, President

And just like that, here it is March. It won't be long until those of us daily drivers take off the snow tires and the rest of you take off the car covers and start shaking loose the cobwebs. Mother Nature has already given us a few days of good weather and soon those days will start being the rule instead of the exception.

We have a couple things planned to for you to enjoy the hopefully impending nice weather. Saturday, March 12th we are taking a behind the scenes tour of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. (Details inside.) Two weeks later, on March 26th, John and Marsha Schaub are throwing their second annual Cabin Fever Rally. (Details inside.) I'm trying to work out details for a monthly dinner, but things haven't come together yet. We'll probably start it up next month, but you might want to check the club's website or sign up to receive email from the club in your online profile. If you've misplaced or never received your log-in and password, use the link on the club web site or you can email me. The emails are a great way to get reminders of upcoming events.

Thanks again to everyone who took the time to return the survey that was in the January newsletter. We're still compiling the results, so look for them next moth. It was great to see everyone's opinion and now we all can use this information to help plan upcoming events. There wasn't anything terribly surprising in the results, but I feel there is definitely a need for more Sunday events. We have very few right now and need for some of you to step up and host a couple. As you'll see, it doesn't really matter what kind of event it is as most people like the events we have. Don't forget, we're always open for new types of events, too.

As far as merchandise goes, we're working on that, so please be patient. Before we move forward with merchandise, we'd like to come up a new logo. This issue has been brought up before but has never really gone anywhere. We've begun the process to actually do something about it this time and I'd like any opinions and thought you may have. Our current logo has served us well, but it's getting a little long in the tooth. Plus, what better time for a new look for the club than to coincide with the new look of the Miata? You can email me with any thoughts or suggestions you have.

Now, I don't really want this column to get too overly political, but there are two bills in the legislature that concern the use of our cars. One is raising the speed limit to 70mph and that will probably pass and become reality, the other is still up in the air. It involves the use of red-light cameras. I don't really think it's my place to tell you what to think about them, so I'll just give out some information. I'd encourage you to contact your congress person and let them know how you feel. After all, they are supposed to represent you.

The argument for the cameras use is safety. Studies have shown red light violations drop 40-50% after the installation of cameras, and injury crashes decrease 25-30%. Side impact collisions decrease with the installation of the cameras and when you reduce side impacts, the seriousness of injuries is decreased and there is also a drop in the number of fatalities. The cameras can also help cash-strapped communities by increasing revenue without increasing taxes.

There are several problems that come along with the use of the cameras. While side impacts are reduced, rear-end collisions increase as people are more prone to slam on their brakes. Most systems only take a photo of the back of the car and the owner is then liable for the ticket, even if they weren't driving. Then there is the same argument for having them as there is for not having them - money. Studies have shown that with proper engineering, generally the lengthening of the yellow light, you can reduce the number of violators by a greater number than with the use of cameras. Also lending evidence that they are just a revenue booster is a study by Rep. Dick Army (R-TX) that concluded that communities that installed cameras reduced the amount of time the yellow was on from five seconds to three seconds. That reduction increased the number of violators, therefore increasing money brought in from the cameras.

There is a ton of information out there for you to read and form your own opinion. These are just little snippets. After you've done your research, head over to <http://www.in.gov/legislative/> or write a letter and tell your representatives what you think.

Now, get ready to pop that top open and enjoy the fresh air again! Remember, *The Fun Starts Here!*