

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Galesburg drivers use imagination, patience

When my family and I moved to Galesburg in 1971, we noted that for some reason, Galesburg drivers were awful. And that was a generally accepted rumor for years. But after facing the obstacles of Henderson Street for the last few months and screeching to a halt for more trains than ever, I can safely say — I've changed my mind. Galesburg drivers, out of sheer necessity, are imaginative, patient and flexible. Of course, now I have to include myself.

Living West of Henderson Street can be a particular challenge. Every time we head out of the house we have to get across, down or around the area. Before I describe some of the antics needed to get from one point to the other, let me say that I think the Henderson Street project leaders are masters of organization and the process is fascinating to watch. How anyone can figure out what people, machines,

materials and barricades go where and when, is beyond me. The business entrances have been ingenious and complicated. The signage has been the best it can.

But traveling down Henderson Street is a challenge and not for the weak of heart. Several weeks ago my husband and I drove two vehicles to the Ramada on the square for breakfast, knowing that afterwards we had to go our separate ways. I bravely said to him "Follow me!" Why, I don't know, and before we got there, the air in his pickup truck was visibly blue.

We arrived at the intersection of Losey and Henderson, and since there is always a long line of traffic on Losey Street with someone driving 15 miles an hour, even when there is no construction, I made my way carefully through barricades towards my favorite east-west path, North Street. In an instant, or a block ahead of North street

I saw the intersection was closed and made a quick turn east — then at the first opportunity, turned south again. By this time I didn't dare look back to see if my husband was following me, and if so, what his expression might be.

So I finally hit North Street and turned east again. Thinking I was well on the way, I turned south on Broad and I don't need to tell you what was going on there. A train. The gates down, a long line of cars, filled with drivers who have overcome brick streets, barricades, strangely placed stop signs and who knows what else to get where they were. Waiting for a train. You see, there's no point in getting aggravated. It won't help. Galesburg drivers show amazing agility and imagination getting from one point to another.

By this time my husband was probably fantasizing about his home town of Alexis, but really, do they ever have this kind of

excitement? It keeps a person on his toes, alert, ever-ready for the next obstacle.

Another day I was so proud of myself, waiting at the intersection of Academy and Main, facing North and needing to go North and West. Crossing ahead of me on Academy Street was a train. Aha, I reasoned, that train is going east, so if I head west it should be gone in no time. By the time I could turn left, it was past the Main Street crossing. There was a line of traffic, but it was moving.

We must be ever vigilant and intelligent about this driving in Galesburg. It's important to outsmart the trains and find good routes as alternates to Henderson Street. It builds character. There's no road rage here. Not yet.

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