

The Importance of Understanding True Red and Truly Classy Silver

(Humor)

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For older parents, especially with children in college, learning from them about the latest and greatest in science and technology, is axiomatic. Not only do the kids find new ways to fulfill their wants by devising schemes to get their parents to finance the latest and greatest personal computer, they now use claims of needing cutting edge technology to justify parental parting with even larger amounts of cash. How else do parents really learn except by financing their children's central needs?

Consider my 19 year old son's emerging transportation needs, and the importance attached to getting a new car that is True Red. No self-respecting father would want his only son to drive an automobile that would be scoffed at by college coeds, let alone his manly friends.

But why does he want a car that is True Red? Just what is True Red?

According to my son, there is now theoretical and empirical support for the proposition in advanced engineering physics that True Red cars go faster than cars of other colors. Indeed, there is recent empirical evidence of a likely new speed constant. A Bright Rally Red 2002 Z-28 Camaro Coupe with the 5.7 liter engine has been clocked at 120 MPH while standing still, and has been declared the new True Red Speed Standard. My son claims that the convertible version of this True Red standard is somewhat slower (114MPH) due to the heavier weight of convertibles. This, he claims, is a blessing because it is well known that convertibles are less safe than coupes, while at the same time more expensive. Therefore, he argues that I should be grateful that he requires not only the fastest True Red car, but in so fulfilling his transportation needs [fantasies?] I am not only saving money, but also taking automobile safety, his health and well being, into active consideration. Typically at this point my loving wife weighs in that the coupe is the better deal.

This new constant in the positive numeric domain raises many questions that my son has yet to answer to my full satisfaction. He and I both agree that the mandatory hair color for a college coed True Red car driver is blonde, either natural or bottled. The converse, that no self-respecting college coed, owner of a 2002 Z-28 Camaro, would color her hair other than blonde, has important implications not only for the hair stylists of America, but also the parents of blonde daughters. My son's friends routinely state that, while a college blond coed may not exceed the speed of True Red if she is driving the Speed Standard, she will be attracted to young men who drive True Red cars themselves. Importantly, there is some experimental evidence from San Diego County, California, reported in a recent *Car and Driver*, that the speed of a True Red car with a college blond coed in the passenger seat was 12% above the theoretical maximum.

Since teen age drivers who choose to drive with baseball caps (ball-caps for the remainder of this essay) seem to drive faster, and those who wear their ball-caps in reverse to protect their necks from sun burns [why else?] drive faster yet, questions arise whether or not a college age driver of a True Red car can experience a speed gain in excess of the True Red standard by wearing a ball- cap, or even a reverse ball-

cap. My son, who escaped being a ball-cap teenager for unknown reasons, provides several opinions on this matter.

First, it is factual that the True Red Standard is along the real line, which means that there are other color-car combinations that are slower. Second, whether the speed of True Red can be empirically exceeded is the subject of debate and scientific dispute. He suggests that the National Science Foundation or the Society of Automotive Engineers open up a funded directorate to address this important issue. My son further observes that when he wears a ball-cap, either traditional or reverse, there is no evidence that the True Red Speed Standard is exceeded. However, on those occasions when he put the ball-cap on the ledge under the rear window, with beak pointing out to display to the driver behind the Pittsburgh Pirates "P" hat, he noted a 10% gain in the speed of a True Red Car he demoed at the local Chevy dealer.

So what lies to the left of the True Red car along the real line? What lies at zero?

Here our 16 year old daughter, with driving permit but not license yet in hand, has related but different opinions from my son that my son grudgingly respects. You must understand her position that choosing a car based on the True Red Standard is an entirely male thing. Real women are not impressed by speed, but by cars that meet the Truly Classy Color standard. Here she opines that there is substantial evidence in support of Truly Classy Black, and Truly Classy Silver. Unhappily for my bank account, only BMW and Mercedes meet the Truly Classy Color Standard. Perhaps like Woodward and Bernstein, she already understands the importance of "follow the money." She did take advanced social studies this past year.

Unlike her big brother, she is not so dogmatic to believe there is one standard for guys and another for gals. Choice of a car, she says, is a two dimensional problem: finding the Truly Classy Color and finding out what the car is on the True Red Standard real line. She is emphatic, for example, that there are many types of silver cars that move immediately to the zero origin for both dimensions. In particular, the 1986 Toyota Corolla, donated to our household by my 91 year old mother when she decided to retire some years ago from the streets of suburban Cleveland, qualifies as a zero in the mind of our daughter. Since at 16 she has an expressed need for a Truly Classy Colored car, the zero rating of the 1986 Corolla is more than a passing matter. In fact, she takes the position that she will never be seen driving this vehicle, either because it is not reliable or because it is too slow. Currently she is driving [with her mother] in our forest green minivan. At five feet even, her presence behind the wheel can be easily missed which may be operationally equivalent to driving the Corolla.

Friends my age think I should hold the line on the silver, 1986 Corolla [with rust-orange highlights here and there], which sadly sits un-driven in our garage. They predict that even a highly opinionated 16 year old, faced with the choice, Friday night, of staying in her [messy] bedroom, or venturing out with girlfriends once her license is secured, will lower her color and automotive standards as long as gas, oil, and insurance remain on dad.

There are, other, historical reasons why the 1986 Corolla sits un-driven in our garage, and that may explain why our youngest eschews it as a practical means of transportation. Our oldest daughter, now 22, was the first driver of the Corolla, and may have ascribed to both of the above automotive standards without letting us in on her scientific discoveries. After she was given, a few years ago, the keys to the Corolla to meet her college transportation needs, the once reliable, trusty and fuel efficient little car began to leave her stranded and frantically calling home from far away places in the early AM on her family supported cell phone. No matter that she figured out how to put 50,000 miles on it in 2 years, sometimes choosing the open road rather than attending classes or doing her homework. Thus for safety and reliability considerations, dad was coerced into finding a used, *red* 1999 Stratus with moderate mileage.

Whether or not the Stratus is True Red is a matter of active dispute. Our youngest adamantly states that even if it is True Red, it is certainly not Truly Classy Black or Truly Classy Silver, and thus not a transportation resource she should be expected to share. Not surprisingly, older and younger sister agree on this sharing point, which makes me wonder in turn about the possibility of collusion on the scientific matter of what is really a Classy Color.

But I digress from my son's plight. Last weekend, we were passed by a red Corvette coupe of recent vintage. My son observed that, while it was not really True Red in color [it must have been a couple of years old], he would settle for something like that if my purchasing the True Red Car of choice, the 2002 Z-28, was too expensive. I thanked him for his concerns about my financial position, but explained that a used Corvette would set me back more than a new True Red car. He apologized, though I had the feeling that, once again, he was way ahead of me in reasoning this through.

There remains the awkward matter of how law enforcement views cars capable of meeting or exceeding the True Red Standard. Everyone in the family agrees that anybody driving this year's True Red car [the 2002 Z-28 with the 5.7 liter engine] must drive with their foot on the brake pedal AND with the parking brake on, or run the risk of attracting the color sensitive speed radar now being used by law enforcement, and paying huge speeding tickets. It is a natural law that the guys lucky enough to drive a True Red car are never able to achieve the immunity from radar detection and prosecution typically granted to college blonde coeds driving the same car.

Therein lies the ultimate dilemma for loving parents of driving age children. Should parents accede to their children's need for a True Red and/or Truly Classy Color car, and watch them lose their license for speeding violations, or give them something slower and more mundane which will keep them on the streets, but fail them in terms of improving their social standing?

Perhaps parents are better off never really understanding the technological and scientific importance of True Red or Truly Classy Silver, and through ignorance can be freed of spending large sums of money to solve such problems. Since the above experiences may well be universal in character, if not detail, what is a loving parent's final line of defense when reminded about these important matters? One approach that I use most generally these days is to simply to state that I forgot. And when reminded, I forget again!

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