



# BUSTED!!!

BY STEVE HOBART

**S**eeing alternating red and/or blue flashing lights in your rearview mirror is one of the most unpleasant experiences imaginable (that, and being forced to attend a Michael Bolton concert). Some of the most common reasons for being pulled over are speeding, failure to obey traffic/highway signs, illegal turns, improper passing and reckless driving.

Even though most law enforcement officers (LEOs) have made up their minds about issuing a ticket even before exiting their cruiser, there are still several things you can do to reduce that unintended donation to municipal coffers or, if you're lucky, even escape a ticket altogether.

- ✦ Reduce your speed and immediately pull over to a safe section on the right shoulder of the road.
- ✦ Turn off the motorcycle and put the sidestand down, BUT remain seated on the bike (this is particularly important).
- ✦ Remove your gloves and helmet and place them on the gas tank. It's always best for an officer to speak with a person face to face rather than to a helmeted stranger.

★ Stay on the bike with your hands on top of your helmet and keep your attention focused forward, not to the rear and what the officer is doing. Keeping your hands in plain view is a courtesy that reduces the anxiety level of the officer.

★ When the officer approaches and asks for your driver's license and registration, let him/her know where they are *before* retrieving them.

★ Lastly, do not lie when asked if you know why you were stopped. It is disrespectful and just plain insulting. However, it is appropriate, even expected, to be remorseful, apologetic, tearful, and to blame your dog or mother for your stupidity and poor upbringing. Tell a joke. Compliment the officer on his/her tasteful attire. But don't lie.

If these suggestions didn't work and you were issued a ticket anyway, don't ignore it in the hopes that it will go away. They never do. If you don't respond to a traffic ticket, you may be found guilty in your absence, best case scenario, or worst case, the court may issue a bench warrant for your arrest – which means you will be incarcerated the next time you're stopped in the jurisdiction where the ticket was issued. So if you feel you were unjustly wronged, by all means contest the citation in court, but do not ignore or forget about it.

Of course, the best way to avoid being stopped is to abide by the law. But for a variety of reasons, this is not always possible. In this respect, there are other things you can do to reduce your conspicuity – especially as it relates to cues police officers use to initiate a traffic stop.

★ Stay as far to the right as possible on multi-lane highways unless passing. Properly passing another vehicle will not single you out, but hovering in the passing lane might – regardless of speed.

★ Beware of guilt by association. In other words, avoid riding with people who do stupid things like driving recklessly, weaving in and out of lanes, tailgating, failing to routinely use their turn signals, or anything that smacks of racing and road rage.

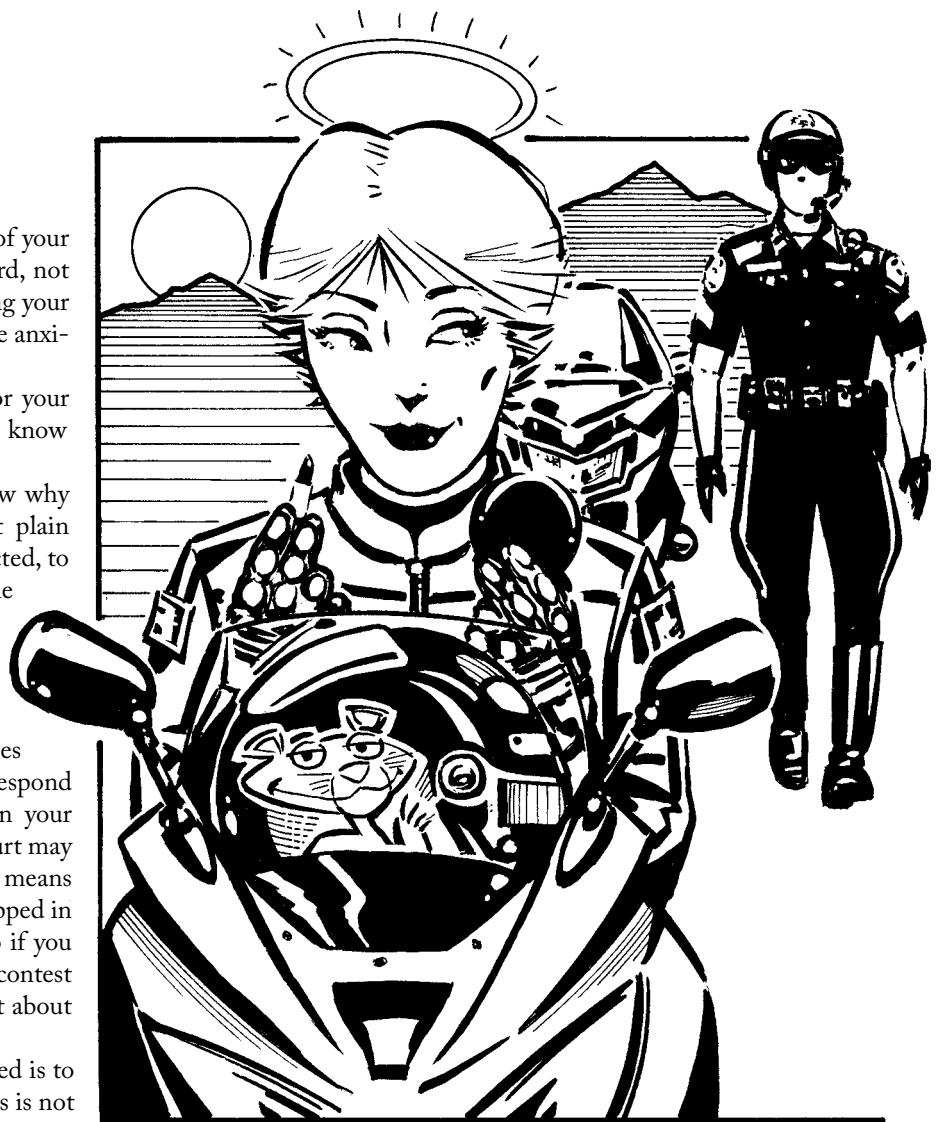
★ Never exceed the posted speed limit in a residential area. EVER.

★ Never exceed the posted speed limit in a school zone, even if no kids are insight.

★ Be alert when crossing state lines, particularly when traveling on an interstate or when there is a change in the posted speed limit. Be especially careful for 10 miles on either side of a state border.

★ Be alert when passing by rest stops, truck stops and weigh stations. Police tend to watch closely those places where people congregate and areas that generate the highest number of calls in their patrol area.

★ Be aware of any vehicle that suddenly appears in your rear view mirrors. While not a hard and fast rule, some larger depart-



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ments do not allow the use radar/laser equipment at night or on Sundays. Officers will then rely on a technique called “pacing” where a cruiser follows behind a driver (usually for at least 2/10ths of a mile) before initiating a traffic stop.

★ Never be the fastest person on the road. Even if a cruiser is not equipped with radar/laser or the officer is not able to pace for the required distance, a ticket can still be issued for “Failure to Obey a Highway Sign,” to wit, the posted speed limit.

★ Do not go more than 9 mph over the posted speed limit (even when passing a slower vehicle) on interstate or U.S. highways. In reality, it is impossible to be invisible to the police while simultaneously being conspicuous to other motorists. And going 10+ mph faster than the speed limit increases the likelihood that you will be spotted by the police.

★ Never, ever pass on a double yellow, exceed the speed limit by 20 mph or more, or drive in a manner that endangers the life, limb, or property of any person. These activities constitute reckless driving and result in a custodial arrest. Most jurisdictions also require the operator to appear in court at a later date. This could be a pretty expensive lesson to learn – especially if the ticket was issued three time zones away. 🚫

*Steve Hobart spent 27 years as a California Highway Patrol Officer, before retiring in 2009 at the rank of Sergeant.*