

Jonathan Schechter – “Corpus Callosum” Column
***Jackson Hole News&Guide* – February 11, 2009**

Today’s column has two roots.

One is that I grew up in Los Angeles, a surprisingly good place to grow up. Because L.A. long ago sold its soul to the automobile, at an early age I osmotically developed an awareness of cars, one that continues today.

The other is a “Prom Rides” article years ago in the *Jackson Hole News*. The story’s basic point was that guys were only as cool as the car they drove to the prom. The article reminded me of something I’d heard once, to the effect of “being grown up is just like high school, except with a lot more money” – when you get right down to it, adults don’t behave much differently than high school kids; they just have much bigger allowances.

All this led me to wonder what people in Jackson Hole drive. To find out, I scurried down to the county building, for every car registered in Teton County is recorded in the treasurer’s computer. Unfortunately, at the time, the system was so antiquated that it couldn’t report out the vehicle registration information it had within. “But don’t worry,” I was told. “The state is upgrading the system, so we’ll be able to answer your question in a year or so.”

That conversation took place two treasurers and well over a decade ago. Since then, every year or so I’ve gone back to the treasurer’s office and been told the same thing. Finally, though, thanks to Donna Baur, Teton County’s treasurer extraordinaire, that information is available. So, after all these years, I can now share with you exactly what Jackson Hole – both cool kids and everyone else – drives.

Before getting into the data, two notes. First, a truly great thing about growing up in L.A. was listening to Vin Scully, lead play-by-play man for the Dodgers and perhaps the greatest baseball announcer of all time. Years ago, I heard him interviewed about his style, which he described as being from the less-is-more school of broadcasting. In particular, when something dramatic happens, he will sometimes stop talking and let the sounds of the game tell his audience all they need to know. In that spirit, this column will serve as my homage to Vin – I’ll let the data speak for themselves.

With one exception. As even a blind man can see, Teton County is defined and distinguished by its environmental quality. Our landscapes, open spaces, and most of all our wildlife are unequaled in the lower 48, and surpassed in only a few remote places worldwide. We know this; we embrace this. That’s why last year’s comp plan polling showed that over 3/4 of us ranked environmental quality as our highest land use priority.

In that context, one does not need to be a connoisseur of irony to note that, in this bastion of environmental quality, the most popular vehicle type is an SUV. Further, four of the ten most popular models are SUVs, and four others are pickups. These vehicles use around three times more fuel, and emit around three times more greenhouse gasses, than the Toyota Prius, the most fuel-efficient mass-market vehicle in America. (Table 5b)

This isn't intended as criticism, for there are good reasons for people to drive the vehicles they do (whatever those vehicles might be). It is to suggest, though, that a community which overwhelmingly favors both a pristine environment and large gas-guzzling vehicles is a community sending out some pretty mixed signals.

Such, um, inconsistencies are part of our heritage and charm; they are also something which ultimately works against preserving the pristine environment we claim to value. Building new roads; poaching powder; buying gas-guzzlers – there may be good reasons for each, but each inflicts additional harm on a system which, ultimately, has only a limited capacity for absorbing such harm.

Generally speaking, stewardship is a long-term effort, the result of hundreds and thousands of small actions over time. Degradation is much easier. Unfortunately, there are few positive ways to help the environment; usually the best we can do is avoid doing things we know will inflict harm. Yet that requires us – whether individually or collectively – to say “No,” something we don't like doing and are not very good at.

However, until we – as individuals, a community, a nation, and the world – learn not just to say “No,” but to embrace so doing, we'll continue to see an erosion of the environmental quality at the heart of our economy, recreational pursuits, and, ultimately, so much that inspires us. The choice is ours, but history suggests it's a hard, hard choice to make.

Table 1
All Vehicles Registered in Teton County
by Vehicle Type
(Data current as of December 31, 2008 – Source: Teton County Treasurer)

Type	#	%
SUVs	8,406	25%
Cars	8,379	25%
Trucks	6,317	19%
Light trailers	2,678	8%
Non-commercial trailers	2,355	7%
Boats	1,505	5%
Vans	1,199	4%
Motorcycles	981	3%
House trailers	577	2%
Commercial vehicles	278	1%
Other	699	2%
	33,374	

Table 2
**All Passenger Vehicles Registered in Teton County
 by Manufacturer**
*(Data current as of December 31, 2008 – Source: Teton County
 Treasurer)*

Manufacturer	#	%
Chevrolet	4,704	19%
Ford	3,988	16%
Toyota	3,171	13%
Subaru	2,256	9%
Dodge	1,623	7%
Jeep	1,382	6%
Gmc	1,092	4%
Honda	791	3%
Volkswagen	667	3%
Audi	493	2%
Other	4,506	18%

Table 3
**All Passenger Vehicles Registered in Teton County
 by Color**
*(Data current as of December 31, 2008 – Source: Teton County
 Treasurer)*

Type	#	%
White	5,189	20%
Black	2,657	10%
Silver	3,355	13%
Blue	2,831	11%
Red	2,649	10%
Green	2,482	10%
Grey	2,101	8%
Maroon	821	3%
Tan	717	3%
Gold	646	2%
Other	2,553	10%

Table 4
**All Passenger Vehicles
 Registered in Teton County
 by Decade of Manufacture**
*(Data current as of December 31, 2008 –
 Source: Teton County Treasurer)*

Decade	#	%
1910s	1	0%
1920s	10	0%
1930s	15	0%
1940s	32	0%
1950s	90	0%
1960s	259	1%
1970s	629	2%
1980s	1,532	6%
1990s	7,920	30%
2000s	15,549	60%

Table 5a
All Passenger Vehicles Registered in Teton County
10 Most Popular Models
(Data current as of December 31, 2008 – Source: Teton County Treasurer)

	Type	Make	Model	#	%
1	SUV	Chevrolet	Suburban	760	4%
2	Car	Subaru	Legacy	736	4%
3	Car	Subaru	Outback	660	3%
4	Truck	Ford	F150 Pickup	596	3%
5	Truck	Ford	F250 Pickup	545	3%
6	Truck	Chevrolet	Silverado	530	3%
7	SUV	Chevrolet	Tahoe	528	3%
8	SUV	Ford	Explorer	515	3%
9	Truck	Toyota	Tacoma Pickup	466	2%
10	SUV	Toyota	4Runner	424	2%
		Other		13,928	71%

Table 5b
All Passenger Vehicles Registered in Teton County
Emissions of the 10 Most Popular Models and a Prius
*(Registration data current as of December 31, 2008 – Source: Teton County Treasurer
Gas mileage and carbon emissions data: EPA)*

	Type	Make	Model	Gas Mileage (mpg)		Carbon Footprint (tons of CO2/year)
				Town	Highway	
1	SUV	Chevrolet	Suburban	14	19	11.4
2	Car	Subaru	Legacy	20	27	8.0
3	Car	Subaru	Outback	18	24	9.2
4	Truck	Ford	F150 Pickup	13	17	13.1
5	Truck	Ford	F250 Pickup	12	16	13.5
6	Truck	Chevrolet	Silverado	14	19	11.4
7	SUV	Chevrolet	Tahoe	14	19	11.4
8	SUV	Ford	Explorer	13	19	12.2
9	Truck	Toyota	Tacoma Pickup	15	18	11.4
10	SUV	Toyota	4Runner	14	17	10.8
		Toyota	Prius	48	45	4.0

Table 6
All Passenger Vehicles Registered in Teton County
10 Most Popular Cars
(Data current as of December 31, 2008 – Source: Teton County Treasurer)

	Type	Make	Model	#	%
1	Car	Subaru	Legacy	736	11%
2	Car	Subaru	Outback	660	10%
3	Car	Subaru	Forester	360	6%
4	Car	Honda	Accord	181	3%
5	Car	Honda	Civic	180	3%
6	Car	Subaru	Impreza	174	3%
7	Car	Volkswagen	Jetta	168	3%
8	Car	Volkswagen	Passat	139	2%
9	Car	Toyota	Camry	131	2%
10	Car	Audi	A4	121	2%
	Car	Other		3,678	56%

Table 7
All Passenger Vehicles Registered in Teton County
10 Most Popular SUVs
(Data current as of December 31, 2008 – Source: Teton County Treasurer)

	Type	Make	Model	#	%
1	SUV	Chevrolet	Suburban	760	11%
2	SUV	Chevrolet	Tahoe	528	8%
3	SUV	Ford	Explorer	515	8%
4	SUV	Toyota	4runner	424	6%
5	SUV	Jeep	Grand Cherokee	388	6%
6	SUV	Jeep	Cherokee	357	5%
7	SUV	Jeep	Wrangler	243	4%
8	SUV	Gmc	Yukon	230	3%
9	SUV	Chevrolet	Blazer	203	3%
10	SUV	Toyota	Land Cruiser	193	3%
				3,020	44%

Table 8
All Passenger Vehicles Registered in Teton County
10 Most Popular Trucks
(Data current as of December 31, 2008 – Source: Teton County Treasurer)

	Type	Make	Model	#	%
1	Truck	Ford	F150 pu	596	9%
2	Truck	Ford	F250 Pickup	545	9%
3	Truck	Chevrolet	Silverado	530	8%
4	Truck	Toyota	Tacoma Pickup	466	7%
5	Truck	Chevrolet	K1500 Pickup	396	6%
6	Truck	Chevrolet	K2500 Pickup	367	6%
7	Truck	Ford	F350 Pickup	344	5%
8	Truck	Toyota	Tundra	337	5%
9	Truck	Dodge	Ram 2500	270	4%
10	Truck	Ford	Ranger	218	3%
		Other		2,229	35%

Table 9
All Passenger Vehicles Registered in Teton County
Miscellany
(Data current as of December 31, 2008 – Source: Teton County Treasurer)

Category	Car type	#
Gas use extremes	Prius	114
	Hummer	18
	Limousines	2
What the cool kids drive (or want to)	Aston Martin	2
	Bentley	3
	Ferrari	6
	Lamborghini	0
	Lotus	1
	Maserati	1
	Model A Ford	4
	Model T Ford	1
Rolls Royce	0	
The 70's Live!	Gremlin	0
	Pinto	1
	VW Beetle	91