

Attitudes

A Journal of Jewish Life and Style

FALL/WINTER 2016



Southern New Jersey's **CHANGING JEWISH FAMILY**

*Adoption, Conversion
& Interfaith Marriage...
How Synagogues Are
Reaching Out.*

- **Compassion:**
A Short Story
- **Cuisine:**
Family-Friendly Recipes
- **The Family Car**
Is Driving Itself!

Attitudes

A Journal of Jewish Life and Style

VOLUME 17 NUMBER 1

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Auto Technology

is Enabling the Family Car to Drive Itself

BY STEVE LUBETKIN



“Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines...but keep your hands off the steering wheel.”

At the 1939 World's Fair in New York's Flushing Meadows, visitors to General Motors' Futurama exhibit were treated to a vision of the 21st Century that included 1940s-vintage automobiles driving themselves, leaving the occupants to other activities.

It's been almost 80 years since that fair closed, and it is still likely to be many years before the eagerly awaited driverless car is in widespread distribution.

On the plus side, self-driving car promoters claim that the cars can drive more accurately than humans, and reduce accidents dramatically. On the other hand, technological challenges are huge. There have been two recent accidents involving cars with driver-assist technology that didn't work as intended. Meanwhile, computer scientists are still debating the ethical questions about what the cars should do in an inevitable accident.

And driverless transportation is more likely to involve ridesharing than outright car ownership, say industry observers. That's good news for companies like Uber and Lyft, which provide car service on-demand for users who order rides using smartphone apps, but presents a challenge to the standard model of car ownership pioneered by traditional automakers.

Michael Macauley, CEO of Quadrant Information Services, a leading supplier of pricing analytics (www.quadinfo.com/) services to property and casualty insurance carriers, says developers of self-driving cars are emphasizing ridesharing rather than

individual ownership.

“Both automakers and tech companies predict that the traditional car ownership model will dwindle with the rise of self-driving cars,” he commented recently. “The theory is that it will be cheaper for a consumer to just hail a driverless car than to own a personal vehicle.”

Merrill Lynch predicted in a 2015 report that driverless taxis for companies such as Uber would comprise 43% of new car sales by 2040. A somewhat more conservative estimate from the Boston Consulting Group predicted that

prototype self-driving bus completed a 32km trip in regular traffic in September 2015.

So how does autonomous driving work? As Google explains it on its autonomous car website, self-driving cars are loaded with sensors that can detect objects “as far away as two football fields in all directions, including pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles—or even fluttering plastic shopping bags and rogue birds.”

The company best-known for its search engine and extensive street-level mapping database has test cars logging more than 1.5 million miles in California, Texas, Washington, and Arizona.

Early work on the technology suggests that car makers are accelerating their research to meet rising demands from Millennials who don't seem to want to drive cars themselves all that much.

In February 2016, Carl Dranoff, president and CEO, Dranoff Properties, told a Union League audience that when his

Left Bank multifamily development in University City was completed in 2004, it had 282 apartments and 260 parking spaces, and every parking space was rented. Fast-forward to today, and half of the spaces go unleased, because Millennials aren't driving cars, instead opting for bicycles, Uber or Lyft car services, or mass transit.

Making the technology bullet-proof is the biggest challenge facing driverless car makers. No one wants to turn over complete control to an autonomous car until they can be sure it will operate reliably all the time. And

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The Mercedes-Benz F 015. The company is developing a prototype for the model as an autonomous-driving car.

23% of global new car sales would come from driverless taxis by 2040, resulting in a decline in vehicle ownership, according to Macauley's firm.

The key players in the driverless car market are a mix of tech companies, traditional carmakers, and academic researchers, and include such diverse entities as Google, Carnegie Mellon's Autonomous Driving Collaborative Research Lab, which is partnering with General Motors and Uber, graphics display company NVIDIA, universities in Germany and France, and the Yutong Bus Company in China, which claims a

Cars

(Continued from preceding page)

there are different definitions of reliability, too.

In May 2016, a fatal crash involving a Tesla Model S in “self-driving” mode raised eyebrows, even though the car company said it was the first fatality in more than 130 million miles of driving in which the car model’s autopilot feature was engaged.

In this instance, a tractor-trailer made a left turn in front of the car, and speculation is that the autopilot was unable to distinguish the white side of the truck against a bright sky. In the Tesla, the technology is not completely autonomous driving, but a driver assist feature, and the company says drivers are instructed to keep hands on the wheel even when using the technology. Neither the autopilot nor the driver stopped the car.

Then there is the ethical dilemma. If a driverless car “knows” it is going to get into an accident, like hitting another

vehicle or a pedestrian, should it try to avoid the accident, even if that decision causes injury or death to the car’s occupants?

The journal “Science” says most people support programming the cars to minimize the total number of deaths from an



Ford expects to have an autonomous car ready by 2021.

inevitable accident, even if it means the car’s occupants might die. However, at the same time, people don’t want government regulation to require such programming, suggesting that they want their own cars to put their safety first.

President Obama recently weighed

in on the regulatory and ethical dilemma, writing in an op-ed in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that “Regulation can go too far. Government sometimes gets it wrong when it comes to rapidly changing technologies.”

“There are always those who argue that government should stay out of free enterprise entirely, but I think most Americans would agree we still need rules to keep our air and water clean, and our food and medicine safe. That’s the general principle here,” the President said. “What’s more, the quickest way to slam the brakes on innovation is for the public to lose confidence in the safety of new technologies.”

In the wake of news reports that it said misquoted one of its engineering executives, Mercedes-Benz is reassuring car buyers that its cars will implement what the company calls “a risk-avoiding operating strategy” that does not choose one person over another. The company admits that there is no clear consensus on how to program the cars.

“To clarify these issues of law and

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ethics in the long term will require broad international discourse. This is the only way to build a comprehensive consensus and promote acceptance for the results," the company said in a statement. "As manufacturers, we will implement both the respective legal framework and what is deemed to be socially acceptable."

• • •

Mercedes-Benz has its own driverless car research in a partnership with the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, where an autonomous S500 series Mercedes was programmed to make the same long-distance road trip as Bertha Benz did 125 years ago.

Mercedes is also developing a prototype of its F 015 Series vehicle as an autonomous car, and much more.

"Anyone who focuses solely on the technology has not yet grasped how autonomous driving will change our society," said Dr. Dieter Zetsche, chairman of the board of management of Daimler AG and head of Mercedes-Benz Cars. "The car is growing beyond its role as a mere means of transport and will ultimately become a mobile living space."

Indeed, the F 015 is designed with four seats that face each other lounge style, even on the driver's side. Digital displays on the walls enable entertainment or working travel.

Ford said in August that it expects to have an autonomous car ready by 2021, but in commercial ridesharing applications at first. Ford is partnering with four startup technology companies working in advanced computer algorithms, 3D mapping, and radar and camera sensors. Ford is using LIDAR technology, a kind of night-vision, and is the first carmaker to demonstrate a driverless vehicle operating at night.

In May, Fiat Chrysler announced it was giving Google 100 Chrysler Pacifica vans for prototyping.

It's getting a lot closer to the vision of driverless cars first introduced at the 1939 World's Fair.

But there's still a very long way to go before we get there.

And we still need to look both ways before we cross that road.

▼

Steve Lubetkin writes the *Voice's* CompuSchmooze column.

Committed Converts

(Continued from page 19)

handsome fellow waiter—and determined to make a move. But there was an unanticipated glitch.

"He didn't want anything to do with me," said Pam, who graduated with an art history degree. "I was a blond, a *shiksa* and he was focused. He had never dated a non-Jewish girl. So we were 'just friends' for quite awhile."

Although raised Roman Catholic and highly involved in church life, Pam let Steven know she would be willing to convert. And she was patient. As a "friend," she set him up with her Jewish friends on double dates—but the two would just end up spending the night talking to each other anyway, ignoring their so-called dates. Within a year, Pam gave up her real job in a swank Philadelphia art gallery to move with Steven to Cleveland, where he would be attending podiatry school. Unemployed, not-yet-engaged and moving to the rust belt without an ironclad plan, Pam said her mom was not the only one who thought she was nuts.

As it turned out, the move was a perfect launching pad for Pam's Jewish journey, putting her on a path she pursues today as a Jewish educator, involved volunteer, and leader in the South Jersey Jewish community. The Cherry Hill resident is also a proud mom of two Jewish sons: Jake, 16, and Brandon, 10.

"As I learned more and more, I realized this makes so much sense to me; it fit," said Pam who currently works as a regional BBYO staff member, teaches Hebrew School and cooking classes in



Pam Folbaum's conversion ceremony took place at Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple in Beachwood, OH in 1997. Pictured (from left to right) are Sylvia Weiss (of blessed memory), Bruce and Ilene Folbaum, Steven Folbaum, Pam and her parents Joan and Ron Nettleship.

M'kor Shalom's religious school and spends summers working in Jewish camps. "I loved how knowledge-based Judaism is. I truly believe in the morals, the values, and the importance of having organized religion as a support system."

To think, it all fell into place when Pam followed her heart and boyfriend to Cleveland. Soon after the move, she took an administrative job with the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies, where not only could she take free courses in Judaism but had instant access to some of the greatest thinkers in the Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Reconstructionist movements while she and Steven pursued conversion classes.

"My feeling was that I was learning and experiencing Judaism from the inside looking out rather than outside looking in," said Pam. "Whenever I had a question, I could ask it to a rabbi but also get multiple takes on it."

In April 1997, three years after starting the process, Pam converted in a ceremony witnessed by both sets of parents. They were married at M'kor Shalom later that year. Shortly after the conversion, Pam was asked to teach kindergarten religious school at her temple.

"I never went to Hebrew School, so this was my chance," she said, noting that she and Steven also served as youth group advisors.

When the couple returned to live in Cherry Hill the following year, Pam continued working in the Jewish non-profit world as an office manager in the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Over the years, she has worked on and off in the secular and religious world, having held positions with Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey and JCC Camps at Medford. Often, her employment choices have been influenced by her family's religious needs, but those jobs have always resulted in broadening her own understanding and appreciation of Judaism, she said.

"It does all revolve around my kids," said Pam, a Cherry Hill resident. "I converted to have a unified upbringing for them, and almost all other choices I've made were to be able to give them their Jewish life. But it's still a joy for me. As I put myself through all these situations, for me it's been a chance to develop my Jewish identity." ▼