



HAPPY VANITY LICENSE PL8S DAY!

April 1st is VANITY LICENSE PL8S DAY, a holiday I invented; because so many vanity plates are funny -- and fun! -- it was obvious that our new holiday should be celebrated on April Fool's Day.

Last year, on 4-1-2015, at the Croton Free Library in my hometown of Croton-on-Hudson, NY, we held the world's first VANITY LICENSE PL8S DAY celebration. On 4-1-2015, we made history by celebrating the power of vanity license plates as message platforms that empower motorists to promulgate phrases or to promote their favorite causes... including their businesses.

Connecticut issued the first vanity plates, in 1937. Today, every state (and the District of Columbia) issues vanity plates. According to the VANITY LICENSE PLATES SURVEY, which I conducted in 2007 with the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, which represents the American and Canadian departments of motor vehicles, Americans have vanitized 9.3 million motor vehicles, and Canadians have vanitized 440,000 vehicles. New York ranked 35th out of 51 American jurisdictions in the survey.

I inspired Ken Giustino, the publisher of *The Montauk Sun* (and my boss!) to vanitize; his MTK SUN vanity plate helps him promote our illustrious publication... and also helps him find his car in crowded parking lots!

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Donald J. Trump, the NY real estate developer and presidential candidate, is vanitized, with a plate that proclaims his initials, DJT. I have met Mr. Trump, who has worked with my sister-in-law's siblings, who operate a construction business.

Although he is a tough competitor in business and in politics, in person, Donald J. Trump is clever and charming -- as befits one of NY's earliest vanitizers. Donald Trump is also personally generous and thoughtful: when my sister-in-law's nephew had cancer, DJT went to great lengths to help him get the best doctors and treatments.

Other famous NY vanitizers have included Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had the first-known vanity plates, which said FDR, on his cars, with hand controls he designed, at the polio clinic he founded in Warm Springs, Georgia. The official state car for NY's governors, including FDR and his successors, is vanitized with a special low number plate, which says 1; our lieutenant governor's offi-

cial car has a plate that says 2.

According to *The New Republic* magazine, before he became Governor, Andrew M. Cuomo had a vanity plate that said AMC ES0 -- a reference to his initials and his career as an attorney.

This year, I hope to persuade a car dealer to celebrate VANITY LICENSE PL8S DAY by offering free vanity plates to customers on 4-1-2016; I shall let you know how that turns out.

As *Montauk Sun* readers know, my vanity plate, LCNS2ROM -- pronounced LICENSE TO ROAM -- is the title of my forthcoming book about the vanity plates phenomenon. Although I have been working on *LCNS2ROM* for a decade, I have been unable to persuade any book publisher to recognize that *LCNS2ROM* would appeal to the almost 10 million North American vanitizers, and to unvanitized readers who love great stories, told on vanity plates, like this one:

"Allison Masry is always with her husband, Rudolph, even when they're miles apart. That's because, in 2003, Ally donated a kidney to Rudy, who suffered from end stage renal failure. Ally's NY vanity plate says, DONOR, and Rudy's plate says DONEE."

That's why I have decided to reposition the book as a memoir called *4 A NEW USA - THE ROOSEVELT/REAGAN WAY!*, which shall recount my efforts to start a business selling books, calendars, greeting cards, and other products, all with vanity plates.

In *4 A NEW USA - THE ROOSEVELT/REAGAN WAY!*, I shall explain how Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan inspire me.

FDR was paralyzed by polio on 8-10-1921, when he was 39 years old; although he couldn't walk after polio paralyzed him, FDR could drive, using hand controls he designed, which enabled him to get back into politics and get himself elected as NY Governor, in 1928, and as President in 1932. FDR found opportunity in adversity; I agree with Eleanor Roosevelt, who wrote that polio "proved a blessing in disguise [because] it gave Franklin strength and courage he had not had before."

Ronald Reagan overcame poor eyesight to become a football player at Eureka College. Reagan was a huge FDR fan, who, like FDR, had a voice made for the radio. Reagan got his first job after college as a radio broadcaster by copying FDR's confident, yet conversational, style of speaking on the radio. "FDR's fireside chats made an indelible impression on me," Reagan later wrote.

Like FDR, Reagan found opportunity in adversity. Reagan's mellifluous voice helped him become a movie actor in 1937; when his movie career fizzled out, he became a TV star, hosting "General Electric Theater" from 1953 -- 1962. When "GE Theater" was cancelled, Reagan segued in to politics and got himself elected Governor of California in 1966.

Like FDR, Ronald Reagan was a great fan

of vanity plates. On 8-21-1970, Governor Reagan signed the law authorizing California to issue vanity plates, which provides that the plate fees are paid to the California Environmental License Plate Fund. Today, thanks to Governor Reagan, California's 1 million vanity plates EARN the state \$38 million annually for environmental protection programs, statewide. Nancy Davis Reagan was one of California's earliest vanitizers; her plate said: 111 NDR.

After he was elected in 1980, President Reagan enthusiastically authorized the construction of the FDR Memorial, near the White House in Washington, and, in 1983, preserved and strengthened FDR's greatest domestic legacy, Social Security, when it was on the verge of insolvency. Today, thanks to President Reagan, Social Security has amassed accumulated surpluses of \$2.8 trillion.

I shall tell you more about the amazing Roosevelt-Reagan connection, in *4 A NEW USA - THE ROOSEVELT/REAGAN WAY!*, which I plan to publish as an e-book on June 1, 2016, in order to try to persuade NY's State Senators and Assembly-members to pass legislation, introduced last year in the State Senate and Assembly at my behest (a nonprofit I co-founded hired a lobbyist), to name the new Tappan Zee Bridge, spanning the Hudson between Westchester and Rockland Counties, the FRANKLIN AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT BRIDGE.

In order to pass the FRANKLIN AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT BRIDGE legislation, I propose to amend the bills to also provide for renaming the Verrazano Narrows Bridge the RONALD REAGAN BRIDGE. This would win support for the bridge-naming bills among the Democrats, who control the Assembly, and the Republicans, who control the Senate. The Legislature is expected to adjourn for the year on or about 6-30-2016.

I also think that NYC should rename the Brooklyn Bridge the MARIO CUOMO BROOKLYN BRIDGE, which would be an appropriate way to celebrate our former Governor, who died on 1-1-2015.

For many years, before he went into politics, Mario Cuomo practiced law on Court Street in downtown Brooklyn, near the Brooklyn Bridge.

I shall let you know how all this turns out. In the meantime, I hope that, on 4-1-2016, my friends in Montauk and elsewhere will make a special effort to look for vanity plates. If you can speak with any vanitizers, ask them, as I do, what their plates mean, and what inspired them to vanitize. I have met hundreds of clever and creative people, some of whom have become my friends, by asking them about their vanity plates. Who knows, you might make some new friends that way, too!