

## UNUSUAL LICENSE PLATES

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### A1 – Bob LaBrash – Phoenix, Arizona

1928 Arizona Motorcycle Trailer - # T1 over 698 - Mint Restored by Dan Landino - It is known that this format for 1929 Arizona Motorcycle is correct but the T in front of the top number must be a trailer type. There is known to be at least 3 of these plates.

1942 Arizona Trailer Plate - # 9-58T2 - Mint Original - 1943 Arizona Trailer Plate - Triangle about a 2 inch plate - #302620 & 1943 Arizona Trailer Plate - Round about 2" in diameter - plate has NO number on it but has TRL on it. This round plate is the only one known to exist. It seems the Diamond plate is shown in all the known information as what a trailer plate for 1943 Arizona is supposed to be but having the round type with TRL on it then what is correct?



## **B2 – John Ewing – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

Manitoba changed a few classes of non passenger plates to quarterly, for a 6 year period, with expiry dates on the plates. This started in 1972, with the first being Exp, 28-2-73, and so on.

This worked well for a few years and in the Exp 76 year, they just reran the Exp day for Feb, not remembering 1976 was a leap year. so the first batch went out

Exp.28-2-76. Somebody then must have finally noticed, and another batch was run with the correct expiry day, showing the leap year extra day in February.

That shows here as the second plate, Exp.29-2-76.

Only in Canada.....



### C3 – Dean Sandvold – Tucson, Arizona

These two 1974 Minnesota Bus plates are sleeper unusual. Most collectors would not notice the difference in stacked B/Y and regular BY. I asked Mark Woodbeck for help with an explanation.

Mark believes that the State Cloud, Minnesota Prison had the dies set up the 1972 B/Y format with 5 digits. When the 1974 plates started the prison workers left the stacked dies. Either the State or a Prison official said to remove the stacked B/Y.

While we are talking 1974 Minnesota plates I want to give a special thank you salute to Dale Swenson of Le Sueur, MN. Dale passed away quite a few years, but his legacy lives on. Dale saved many MN plates from becoming scrap metal. He had a deal with the MN DMV to buy their unused and turned in plates at current scrap metal price. He hauled over 200,000 1974 MN plates from St. Paul back his barns in Le Sueur.

That is the tip of the iceberg for the amount of plates that Dale has able to share with collectors world wide.



## D4 – Charlie Smith – Anderson, California



Since I own some antique trucks, I also collect truck and trailer license plates from different states and territories. For our ALPS Unusual Plates virtual display my first plate falls in that category. It is an aluminum base 1992 West Virginia Plate, 1-1108, WD Towing Only, Dealer plate, black on orange/yellow. I found this plate at an ALPCA Meet, glanced at it briefly and thought it was a tow-truck plate. I did notice it had rivets through the metal and something in plastic on the back. I put it in my backpack, then forgot about it again for many days.

Once at home several days later, I took it out of my pack to look at it more closely. I then saw that inside the plastic on the back was a registration slip which had been riveted to the back of the plate. These unusual commercial plates always attract my attention, and it is fun then to try to figure out what they were all used for.

First thing to do to find more information was to check West Virginia in the ALPCA Archives. Sure enough, there was a photo of a similar plate, but a newer one dated as 1999. The archives listed it under WD Towing Only as a type, but gave little details, other than it appeared this type began in 1985.

I looked again at the registration paper attached to the back of the plate. It indicated a 1992 registration to Keith's Used Cars in Nitro, West Virginia.... so Keith was a used car dealer in 1992, and he could tow vehicles. WD in case you're wondering, stands for weight and distance driven which is how the registration fees for this type plate would have been determined.

I checked further in the Archives, and a few states have a "WRK" plate type, which is issued for wreckers or tow-trucks. Some list the type as "Tow-Truck" rather than WRK. The information under the WRK type for California gives some further clues for this type. According to that listing, the large numbers on the plate are the dealer's registration number, and the smaller number indicates the number of vehicles in the dealer's business fleet.

What I still don't know is whether this plate was used on the tow-vehicle itself, or was it placed on the vehicle being towed? Trying to figure out the details on the plates I collect is one of things that makes the hobby fun for me.



The second plate in my virtual display is one I had never seen before. It is a steel base plate, dated 1979, and is from the State Correctional Facilities in Albany, New York, which is where some of my distant relatives on my grandmother's side lived. I also found this plate at an ALPCA regional meet. It is black on orange/yellow, and screened with the name, address, and phone number for the State Correctional Facility. It lists a whole variety of things that the facility made at the time, and interestingly enough has a calendar for the year on the plate!

Was this an actual plate, I didn't think so, but once again I consulted the ALPCA Archives. New York State has a huge variety of special plates shown in the archives, but nothing that looked like this one. I then decided this is a "booster plate" made by the State Correctional Industries at the time, but then I wondered how was it used?

I do know many states license plates are made in state correctional facilities. Several of our ALPCA members have even been able to visit one of these facilities and see the license plates being made. This plate shows that some of the facilities might make a whole variety of other things, as well.

So, did a booster plate like this actually get used as advertisement on a vehicle that belonged to the agency? Was it something given to visitors who toured the facility? Or, was this plate sent to potential customers who might buy something made by the facility? Maybe it was all three, I am not sure, but I like the plate, and I think it qualifies as an "unusual plate" for our ALPS Virtual License Plate Meet.

## E5 – Eric Sundius – Sierra Vista, Arizona



This **Saudi Arabia passenger plate** is a classic quad format. The numbers in the upper left are Eastern Arabic, with a derivative of Western Arabic numbers used in the West, below it. Numbers 1 and 9 are the same in both systems. This is one of my most unique plates because of the dual languages, and the anti-counterfeit features such as the painted-on hologram and the custom printing on the border and on top of the serial number. I learned a valuable lesson from this type of plate, and the story follows.

In 2001 I worked in the same office as Dave Pinter. In fact, his cubicle was right next to mine. Dave was finishing up an engineering project in Puerto Rico and the only other projects in our office that needed people were in the Middle East. We called that area Southwest Asia (SWA). Dave had zero interest in going to that part of the world, so he pulled some strings and transferred to another office. The work in SWA landed squarely on my lap. Thanks Dave! In late August of 2001 I was on my way to Riyadh. But our Project Lead screwed up. He thought our team could get our visas for Saudi Arabia at the consulate in NYC. It turned out that we had to get them from the embassy in Washington D.C. So, we cancelled our flights and did a bunch of driving between these two cities. I was later glad I got to see them again, less than 2 weeks before 9/11.

Our rescheduled flights the following week were not ideal. We had to fly to Cairo (no air conditioning in the airport, but I got to see the pyramids out of the plane window!), then change planes for a flight to Dammam, which is on the East Coast of Saudi Arabia. We would have to drive 200 miles west to Riyadh. Endless sand dunes. And the toilets were just holes in the ground. Fun stuff. We finally got into Riyadh that night. We had difficulty finding Highway 65 that would take us to our Western-style housing compound because all of the road signs were in Arabic. We drove around for an hour feeling very frustrated. Had we been coming from the Riyadh airport there would have been signs in English we later learned.

It finally dawned on us that we could use the Saudi Arabian license plates as a translation key. By looking at a lot of plates we wrote down the Arabic versions of numbers 0 – 9. We could now read the highway signs! We could locate our position on a map. We quickly found the way to our highway and made it to our villas. Without those license plates we would have been lost all night. Note that I did not obtain this plate in the Kingdom, because I did not want to lose my right hand trying to get it out of the country. I safely purchased this at an ALPS meet in Casa Grande from a friendly collector of international plates. It was very eerie and kind of scary being over there on 9/11. I was given one day off of work the following day and I sat by the pool in 108 degree heat listening to BBC news on my shortwave radio. At the end of the month air traffic resumed and we were allowed to come home.

I have had this **vintage U.K. motorcycle plate** since I was a kid. I traded something for it but I don't remember what. That was how I got most of my plates back then. The person who traded it to me said it was a French motorcycle plate. Because there was no country or province listed on it, I took him at his word. Years later I would take this plate to ALPS meets but no one could identify it. Someone recommended that I buy the Registration Plates of the World book, which I did. But the pictures in it were small black and white images so I did not have any luck in finding where it came from. Several days ago, I wanted to resume my research on the plate. I did an image search on vintage French motorcycle plates and came up empty. Then I noticed that there was a manufacturing stamp on the bottom of the plate that said "Hills". I thought it very unlikely a French plate would be made in the UK. I searched on vintage UK motorcycle plates and voila I got a match for an identical plate on eBay selling for \$175. The listing said it was a 1960s UK motorcycle plate that came off of Triumph. I would like to think mine came off of a Triumph also. Those were cool bikes. The DM prefix on the plate likely denotes that it came from the Deeside region in Northwest England. I have not seen one of these plates at a meet so I consider it to be uncommon here in the States, and I am glad to have it in my collection.