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## **Man takes political message on road Flags covering vehicle represent fallen troops**

By Jim Carney  
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SUFFIELD TWP. - Jeff Maurer's conversation piece has caused quite a stir the last few years. Some favorable.

Some not so favorable.

Maurer's 1993 Ford Escort Wagon is covered with about 2,300 American flag decals.

The flags represent fallen U.S. troops in Iraq.

He also displays "Support Our Troops," "God Bless Our Troops," and "Out of Iraq" decals.

Maurer, 51, a photographer from Suffield Township, welcomes both the boos and applause his traveling political billboard elicits.

For the most part, he said, response has been in favor of his vehicle.

Maurer also displays a message on the rear window that says 2,652 have died in Iraq as of Sept. 4.

He stopped adding flags at 2,300 because there was no more room on his station wagon, which has 136,000 miles.

In 2004, when he put the first 1,000 flags on his car, someone who did not agree with his politics -- he is a Democrat against the war -- sprayed the word "Bush" on his front lawn.

Last year, after the grass grew back, someone sprayed a large "W" in his yard.

People have left both positive and nasty messages on his windshield in parking lots.

One note writer said, "Hello. I'm Derek and I really like your American car." The writer said that it is good to know "you love your country."

Another writer said, "It's people like you that take your freedom for granite (granted)."

Maurer understands that his car can become a lightning rod for some people.

"I get some people who don't understand how I can be patriotic and anti-war," he said. "I'm not anti-military."

Peggy Buryj of Canton, the mother of Army Spc. Jesse Buryj, 21, who was killed in a friendly fire incident in 2004 in Iraq, said she has no objection to what Maurer is doing.

“We can all have different opinions about the war,” she said. “That’s what makes this country great. Fly that flag anywhere, any way. It’s fine by me. I’d like to see it actually. Just don’t use my son’s name or likeness for profit.”

Maurer said he will drive his Ford Escort to a candlelight vigil today for the victims of Sept. 11 and for all those who have died in Afghanistan and Iraq. The event will be held at 7:30 p.m. in front of the Federal Building at the corner of Market and Main streets. It’s sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee.

The flags, he said, will remain on the car as long as the war in Iraq lasts.

“I’m a good American,” he said. “I don’t like the war.”

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