

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“If Life’s A Highway, I Can’t Drive 55”

I’m a good driver. I might not qualify to “save 15% or more on car insurance” but I hadn’t had a speeding ticket in over 15 years.....until last fall.

Our family had gathered for the annual Thanksgiving Gorge Fest at my sister Jane’s house in central Virginia. She lives in a beautiful rural area where all you can see is mountains, cows and trees with dangling cans that my brother-in-law uses for target practice.

Since Jane could only accommodate my kids, my wife and I stayed in a hotel in Charlottesville, the home of THE University of Virginia. Wendy and I met at UVA (for those of you who graduated from Virginia Tech, that’s spelled U-V-A). I figured that staying there would give us an opportunity to see UVA again and perhaps recapture a bit of that early relationship romance in a kid-less hotel room. Talk about thanksgiving!

After the eating marathon and some target practice, Wendy and I headed for the hotel. It was 10:30 p.m. There were few cars on the road and my mind drifted toward our evening at the Best Western Love Depot. The car ahead was crawling so I slipped around him. As he quickly disappeared behind me, my headlights revealed a stealthily parked county issue Ford Taurus just off the main road. I glanced at the speedometer. I tapped it to make sure it was working. I was going 75.

Before I could move my foot to the brake, an Albemarle County Deputy Sheriff was within a foot of my bumper. Unfortunately, there was nowhere to hide so I pulled into a gas station parking lot. He rolled up behind me and aimed his spot light directly at me. I remembered my Harley Davidson eagle and the NASCAR “I’m not tailgating, I’m drafting” stickers on my bumper. They screamed, “Of course I was speeding!”

While the deputy called in my tags to make sure he hadn’t stumbled onto one of America’s Most Wanted, I retrieved my license, my registration and prepared my rebuttal. For years, I’ve carried a Monopoly “Get Out of Jail Free” card in my glove box for just such an occasion. But as I sat there waiting, I began to have a silent debate with myself.

What if he doesn’t have a sense of humor? What if he’s mad that he had to work on Thanksgiving? What if he went to Virginia Tech?

Keeping my hand below the spot light, I slid the Monopoly card back into the glove box just as he arrived at my window.

“Where are you heading?” he asked.

“Uh, we’ve been at my sisters for Thanksgiving and now we’re going to our hotel in Charlottesville. She didn’t have enough space for all of us, so we’re the lucky ones who get to stay in the hotel. Well, not lucky that we have to stay in a hotel. We’ve got kids so it’s kind of a treat for us to have a night alone. I don’t mean that we don’t love our kids but we went to UVA so it’s like being back in college again. Not that we went to hotels when we were in college – just that we didn’t have kids in college…….sir”.

I should have been arrested on the spot for that response.

“Do you know how fast you were going?” he said.

Now here’s the dilemma. If you’re honest, you’ll get points for honesty but you’ll lose points for knowing you’re speeding. If you lie, it’s obvious that you’re just trying to get out of the ticket. So you have to be strategic with something that’s truthful but not necessarily the truth he’s looking for.

“I bet I was going 70.” Not a good bet mind you, but a bet nonetheless.

“You were going 74,” he said.

“Wow. Hmmm. Really?” I could think of nothing else to say. He went back to his car and wrote the ticket.

When he came back, I said, “You know, I haven’t been pulled over in more than 15 years.”

He laughed, “Boy, I wish I could say that!”

Drat, I thought. This guy’s been pulled over more than me and he thinks that’s funny. I should have used the Monopoly card.

As the cop drove away, I saw a “Go Hokies” bumper sticker on his car. Touché.

As I pulled back onto the highway, my wife said, “That gave me a headache.”

Drat.

Until next time, just humor me.

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Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He shows people how to have more FUN while preserving the integrity of the work they do and the lives they lead. For more information, visit www.RonCulberson.com.