

## Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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### “Where Are We and How Did We Get Here?”

At any given time, I usually know who I am, where I am and approximately what day it is. In mental health, it's called oriented to person, place, and time. However, I have an even better handle on where I am, now that I have a GPS (Global Positioning Something) in my car. GPS is a satellite directional system that literally tells you where you are and how to get somewhere else. My GPS is equipped with the voice of a sexy female named Candy who breathlessly advises, “Take the next right,” “Left turn approaching,” or “Go back you stupid idiot, you missed that last turn.”

I love a strong woman.

Every once in a while, Candy is wrong. Once, I was driving to a hotel near Philadelphia. I entered my destination: 500 Stevens Drive. Candy cooed, “There is no such address.” I politely disagreed and entered it again, hoping I didn't hurt her feelings. Her voice became angry, implying that I wasn't listening. She insisted there was no such address and strongly recommended I try 300 Stevens Drive. Not wanting to cross her again, I gave it a shot.

I arrived at 300 Stevens Drive to find the dead end of a parking lot. In the distance, however, I could see my hotel – on the other side of a large toxic waste dump. A few hours later, after circling the dump and looping briefly through Des Moines, I arrived safely at my hotel. I've never challenged Christine, er, Candy since.

When finding our way in life, it's important to know the difference between right and left, north and south, paper and plastic. Unfortunately, I'm east-west dyslexic. My brain always interchanges the two. It's not so bad when the location is included in the name of the destination. For instance, I know that West Virginia is west of Virginia, that Northwestern University is somewhere in the state of Washington and that the West Indies are on the western side of Indiana. But sometimes, it's not that obvious.

A few weeks ago, Candy and I drove to the Eastern Shore of Maryland together. When we got there, I discovered that the Eastern Shore of Maryland is actually on the western side of Maryland's main peninsula. This sent my internal GPS into a spintail. I looked at the map, I consulted Google, I even called my therapist. He started spouting something about finding my happy place which only made matters worse because Candy said “there is no such happy place.”

Finally, I consulted my favorite, semi-accurate, online resource: Wikipedia. Apparently, the word “shore” in Eastern Shore refers to the eastern side of the Chesapeake Bay, not the western side of the Mary—land. This is just wrong. The eastern shore of the United States does not refer to the eastern side of the Atlantic Ocean. It refers to the eastern side of the dirt, the soil, the land where my pilgrims died, or something like that.

Then I wondered where the Western Shore of Maryland was. Here’s what Wikipedia said: “Maryland's Western Shore, not to be confused with Western Maryland, is an area of Maryland west of the Chesapeake Bay. The term does not identify an official region of Maryland but it is often used in contrast to ‘Eastern Shore’”. Apparently, both the early Maryland settlers *and* the Wikipedia editors smoke crack.

But this is not the first time I’ve been directionally challenged. I grew up in Southwest Virginia. In college when I told someone where I was from, they always responded, “Where in West Virginia?”

Just to be clear, a born and bred Virginian never wants to be confused with the hair heightened and dentally challenged inhabitants of West Virginia. Even the suggestion that I was from West Virginia sent chills up my overalls.

Equally frustrating is the larger geographic region where I grew up known as Appalachia. Almost all outsiders call it “App-uh-LAY-chuh” but the correct pronunciation is “App-uh-LA-chuh.” When I corrected my college roommate, a native New Yorker, he said, “Ron, do you really think the people who live there know how to pronounce it?” Damn wester...uh, northerner.

Our country is a tad lost these days and we’re desperately trying to find our way. Now that Barack Obama is President, I can’t help wondering if *he* knows where he’s going. If not, maybe I’ll let him borrow Candy. She’ll tell him how to turn things around.

Until next time, just humor me.

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