

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“Holiday Stuff-ing”

Guns and Roses' *Welcome to the Jungle* was blaring on the radio as we sat in the backed up traffic the day before Thanksgiving. I looked in the cars around me. The people were wedged in their cars with frowns on their faces and heads bent forward because of the luggage creeping over the seats. Some had mini vans, some had SUV's and some were stuffed into small compacts that were not much bigger than my wallet. And we were all doing the same thing – getting away from the hectic-ness of our lives for a little Thanksgiving holiday. Welcome to the jungle.

As we idled on Interstate 95 on the way to Williamsburg, I looked in the rearview mirror and contemplated all the stuff we had brought on this little holiday excursion.

Up front, we had a mandatory cell phone so we could call our family to complain about the traffic and let them know when we would arrive (which is always later than expected due to the \$%#@ traffic). We had one pair of very cool sunglasses, mints to mask our car breath before we kissed the relatives, 24 music CD's for the times when we only got country and Lawrence Welk on local radio stations, \$87 in loose change, maps of Northern Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, the Eastern United States and parts of Canada and one pair of very outdated sunglasses. We had two Starbucks' lattes plus two loaves of bread and a tray of brownies placed on the floor under my wife's feet so no one would “smush them.” Stuffed in the barely closable glove box was forty extra napkins, more mints, pens, paper, a knife tool with twenty seven active parts and all of my “documentation” in case I got a visit from Mr. State Trooper.

In the back seats were my two kids. According to the last visit by Social Services, we were now “mandated” to take them with us. Apparently, you're not allowed to leave children at a rest area just because they keep asking, “Are we there yet?”

Each kid came equipped with a pillow, hand held electronic toys, homework they didn't do (yet brought with them as a requirement by their overachiever mother) and 5-6 half finished drinks which they would spill before, during and after the trip. There were more maps covering Europe and Central Asia and under the seat were jumper cables, an umbrella and a piece of aqua-colored food that no one could identify. And to think that we no longer “Go Greyhound” because the buses are too crowded and smell.

The back seat also contained our ferocious toy poodle Harley. We could have put Harley in the Deluxe Canine Bed and Breakfast (i.e. kennel) but my in-laws don't particularly mind her licking their furniture and chewing up toilet paper. Of course that

meant we had to bring dog food, a dog dish, a water bowl and a disassembled, impossible to reassemble, metal dog cage that rattled the entire trip no matter where or how I packed it.

The suitcases took up most of the cargo area of our SUV. I admit that I'm not the best packer. I always pack way too much stuff just in case I spill spaghetti sauce on myself, fall into a raging river or need an extra pair of clean underwear for a trip to the hospital. You never know what might happen.

But we had even more stuff like golf clubs, tennis rackets, rope to tie anything that might escape, a laptop computer (so I could write this column), a PlayStation II with thirty-seven video games, and four sleeping bags that have never rolled back as small as the box they came in. There was also a mandatory camera my wife insists we bring even though we haven't used it in a year and the batteries no longer recharge. Of course, since all we seem to do at Thanksgiving is eat too much and fall asleep in front of the TV, I couldn't imagine there would be too many "Kodak Moments" anyway.

The car tipped the scales and just under 17,000 pounds. It was a miracle the engine survived the trip. I couldn't help wondering what stuff was left in our house. And you what my wife and daughter did the day after Thanksgiving? They hit the sales and bought more stuff!

On Sunday, we got home and started unloading everything. It was forty five minutes before we realized we had left my son in Williamsburg.

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.