



Tall Tales from the Editor

Evil violators or honesty

My first road trip for 2012 was a senior road trip. No, it wasn't a senior high school road trip, but one with my parents, who are in their 80s, and me, older than I ever dreamed. Older than anything an oddsmaker would have bet on: 30-plus years past 30.

Honestly, I never saw any reason to rack up numbers past 30 years of age. If I thought I would have lasted this long I would have partied harder—fast-lane living 24/7.

Of course, everything looks different now. Such as 40 wasn't a bad age. I sure miss 50, and how I long for 55. My prostate, which has since fallen victim to cancer, was still my sidekick then.

When my parents asked me if I would drive them from their place (Fairview Bay, Arkansas) to see family in Texas, I jumped at the chance. You see, I have a rather large, actually more like humongous, amount of karma to work off with my parents from my youth. A 1,500-mile senior road trip would go a long way toward working off some of that debt load. Well, maybe only a little way.

My mother said I couldn't use her name in this story so I'll just refer to her as "mother" or "mom." I don't remember if the "King" (my father) made the same request or not (I've got that aging memory thing going on). I'll just refer to him as "father" or "dad." Even though I have my own car keys now, why take the chance.

Driving the scenic back roads, we weren't making very good time, but it was worth it to see the countryside. We were 20 - 25 miles past Hot Springs, Arkansas, when I thought, *am I having some sort of flashback?* But no, those were real flashing red lights in my rearview mirror and they were attached to a deputy sheriff's car.

The police car had been behind us for a while and we had three cars in front of us. I assumed he was responding to a call, so like any good citizen would do, I pulled off the roadway to let him pass. He followed me right into a gravel parking lot of a business long consigned to the dustbin of history.

My parents were asking me what was up. We hadn't been speeding or anything obviously illegal. "I don't know," I told them, then asked my mom, who was riding shotgun, to get the car registration out for me. When the deputy reached my lowered window, I had my driver's license in hand. As he took my official "Oregon tax permit to be behind the wheel legally," he asked, "Do you know why I stopped you?"

"I don't have the foggiest clue," I said. "Your tags are registered to a Ford and you're driving a Jeep. And those tags expired last October. It's now February."

I looked over at my mother who had all the contents from the glove box

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strung out across her lap and the car's dash looking for the registration. She told the deputy that they had indeed owned a Ford Explorer and had traded it in on this Jeep Patriot this past summer.

"Madam, you have to pay an assessment [another word for tax] and register your car at the DMV after a purchase."

"I'm sure the dealer took care of all that," my mother said. "Not necessarily so, madam."

As my mother continued her nonproductive search for a registration, she was telling the deputy that everywhere they've ever lived the dealership always took care of the paperwork.

My father hadn't said much from the back seat, but I couldn't have heard him if he had. I'm hard of hearing even with aids and my father has a soft voice.

Then my mother leaned forward in her seat so she could make eye contact with the deputy (who *may* have been old enough to shave) and said, "I heard on TV that you should put the registration in a lockbox to keep it safe. That's probably where ours is at." I told her "It's the car

title that you'd put in a lock box, Mom."

The deputy had a nice smirk on his face after that response.

"Here it is," said my mom and handed me a paper that was from the dealership all right, but it was for an oil change. I knew the deputy wanted to laugh. I could see it in his face when I smiled at him.

"I don't know where it is. The dealership always takes care of the paperwork. I'm going to give them a piece of my mind when we get home," repeated my mom.

My mom gave me an insurance ID card that I handed to the officer, who really started smiling now. (I later learned that it was the old expired card—they did have a valid one, though.)

While the deputy talked to dispatch, I started to daydream about the three of us making a run for it. Yep, we all jumped out of the car and headed for the hills. The deputy's camcorder would show my father, who has Parkinson's, shuffling away; my mother, who has asthma and a battery in her pacemaker in need of replacement, would run about ten steps, then stop to catch her breath. Me, I had a numb right butt cheek—the numbness ran all the way down past my knee. That meant that I could run as fast as a handicapped escargot. Our combined speed would be that of the Rocky Mountains eroding to sand pebbles or of the Applegate River cutting a gorge like the Grand Canyon. In other words, time standing still.

The deputy derailed my daydream when he said, "I'm not going to issue you a citation, but you need to get the car registered and licensed." All three of us thanked him, then my mother said, "We're going on vacation. Do you think we could register the car when we return?"

"Madam, I'm not giving you a citation; that's at *my* discretion. I can't say what the next officer will do. Drive safely now."

With that, he left us to discuss which options we might pursue. The elders decided that we would charge ahead into the world of evil violators.

This is very cool because, unlike my Moab, Utah, outlaw buddies, my parents have never ever knowingly broken any laws. You can bet that gene was not passed along to me.

We decided to run the Interstate because we were less likely to have police trailing us. I tried to get my parents to sing along with me to the Judas Priest song, "Breaking the Law," but my mother was too busy looking in her side mirror for law enforcement vehicles, of which we passed many looking for speeders. Once the police cars disappeared from sight, I could hear my mother whisper, "Thank you, Jesus."

At my niece's home in Austin, Texas, my mother asked my niece's husband, who is on the Austin City police force and in training for the SWAT team, if he or any of his police buddies might give us a warning ticket that could work for a pass on our drive home.

"Granny, I don't think that's a good idea. You'll probably be okay," he told her. And we were.

Once home, the dealership did indeed have some paperwork that my folks had never been contacted about. They paid the tax on the car at the assessor's office and when the lady at the DMV offered my mother a way out of paying a penalty for driving an illegal vehicle, my mother said, "No, my conscience wouldn't let me do that."

Oh, yes, the days of my parents being evil violators vanished. Honesty has been the code that my parents have lived by their whole lives, excluding our ten days in Texas.

My parents are again traveling the road of honesty. Can you imagine what our country would be like if lobbyists, lawyers, bankers and politicians traveled that same road?

That's another daydream, right?



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