

Taking a Dump at Camp Williams

One of the perks of working in the store and getting to know the various folks in law enforcement was not being concerned about being ticketed for minor little things. Things like driving with a taillight out, firing a gun less than a hundred feet from the road or driving while blindfolded. We certainly never considered any sort of run-in with the law while driving the company vehicle. The camp vehicle was a faded blue 1968 Chevrolet El Camino. This babe magnet was all original factory parts. Meaning we never replaced anything which had been slightly broken, gotten bent or fallen off. Even the upholstery was original, what was left of it. This jalopy was mostly used to go from the campground to the trailer park or on the public roadway just along the perimeter of Camp Williams. I don't remember a single instance of the truck every being driven down the mountain. Out by the workbench was kept a fifty gallon drum of gasoline at the camp. From this we would use a hand-crank pump to fill the El Camino and the bulldozer. These vehicles could also be useful if you wanted to impress your new Soviet mail-order girlfriend. The few times we would drive it on the road beyond the distance of the property were for the occasional test drive if we had to make repairs and perhaps down to Camp Follows if there was some need to visit with the other local locals.

My luck would run out one day when a new sheriff's deputy arrived on the mountain. I had just finished picking up dead plant material in the trailer park, along with a cluster of trash alongside the road, just adjacent to Camp Williams. The back of the old blue scrap-heap was filled to overflowing. With the task of cleaning up out of the way, the next part of the job was getting rid of all I had managed to cram in the bed of the junker. We had a real neat system up there for dumping trash. We dumped it off the side of the cliff on the far north end of the parking lot. It would disappear from sight, unless you were walking by the river and happened to look over at our many years' worth of trash and debris. But, as unpleasant as it was to look at from the relative beauty of the waterway of the East Fork, it was technically on our property. It is the same legal doctrine applied in the case of *Camp Williams v. Shirtless Buford*. As long as he was on his property there wasn't much we could do, no matter how unpleasant it was to look at.

So back to me and my luck running out. Not only was I followed down the road by the freshly minted mountain deputy, but he waited to see what I was up to before writing what could have become a myriad of tickets on the unregistered El Clunker. As I pulled out my pitchfork and began the task of moving branches out of the truck and over the cliff, our newbie had seen enough. Lights and siren going, he quickly drove the thirty feet from where he had parked to where I was pitching. (Forking just sounds weird.) "Put down your weapon, step away from the vehicle and walk toward my voice." were the commands he issued to me. Of course once he stopped talking, walking toward his voice was difficult to do, so I just sauntered over to him. A saunter is similar to a meander except it only takes place in rural settings.

"Something I can help you with officer?" I asked, beating him to the punch. Note: Beating an officer of the law to the punch is not a good way to begin a first-class constable to citizen relationship. Also when a policeman mentions that the guy riding with him is his partner,

it is best not to tell him how brave you think he is for being so open about his sexual orientation. And even though everyone tells you what a good sense of humor you have, never respond, “Why yes, yes I do.” when an officer asks if you think you’re funny. This officer did not think I was one little bit funny.

Young officer Scooby began his interrogation of me by first asking what I was doing and then, in an effort to hurry things along, supplied me with the answer. “Do you know why I stopped you? I’ll tell you why I stopped you.” It is rather interesting the amount of cliché used by the law enforcement community. Certain phrases are a matter of protocol, such as referring to any kind of car or truck as a “vehicle”, or instead of seeing something, the officer “observed” it. But other phraseology is so prevalent, I just wonder if they are part of the police academy curriculum:

Finish this sentence,

“Hey buddy this isn’t my first...”

- A) Bowel movement
- B) Spiral notebook thingy
- C) Slurpee
- D) Rodeo

“I may have been born at night, but I wasn’t born...”

- A) In a hospital
- B) In the back seat of a Greyhound bus
- C) To run
- D) Last night

So while Deputy Scooby was advising me of all the crimes I was possibly guilty of, and I was probably guilty of many of them, he discovered something in the truck, car, uh whatever an El Camino is, which he seemed very concerned with; a lukewarm, half full Lucky Lager beer. This is where things got a little odd. After being able to list penal code and vehicle code violations right off the top of his head, out comes this beer from the El Camino and he pauses. Suddenly seeming not to know what this amber liquid in the brown bottle was. Hoping I may shed some light on the situation, he asked, “What have we here?” I felt sad for him.

Just when it appeared I was heading for the hoosegow Deputy Dean pulled in behind Deputy Scooby as backup. Dean thought the whole situation was rather funny and explained that the dumping of trash, sticks and bodies was okay since it was on Camp Williams property and the vehicle violations could probably be let go since the vehicle wasn’t registered anyway. As for the open container, he asked me if I had picked the beer up off the side of the road while cleaning up the highway. Why yes Dean, yes I had.