

My Brief Life of Crime

My latest brush with The Law occurred at the Hawkeye home football game versus Purdue last November, but because this case has finally wended its way through our venerable court system the truth can now be told.

Somewhere near halftime, LuAnn's 32-year-old niece (let's call her "Amanda") became suddenly ill to the point of briefly passing out in one of the women's restrooms. LuAnn is an R.N. in UI Transplant and a former ER nurse - she ruled out food poisoning (there had been fresh-shucked oysters at the tailgate we co-host) and diagnosed Amanda on the spot with acute viral enterocolitis. Amanda is a schoolteacher in a small central Iowa town (let's call it "Oskaloosa") where "stomach flu" was rampant at the time. She is also a runner who rarely gets sick, so we were very concerned.

LuAnn said we had to get her out of there, so I jogged up to where our car was parked at our friends' house (let's call them "Mike and Jane") on Koser Avenue in University Heights. I drove back to Melrose Avenue just in time to watch a guy in an orange vest drag a barricade into my path to turn Melrose into a one-way street heading away from the stadium to accommodate the traffic from a game that was now into the fourth quarter.

I pulled around the barricade and rolled down my window to talk to the man (let's call him "Mr. Rules R. Rules"). He said, "You can't go this way." I explained it was a medical emergency and I had cleared access to the Kinnick Society lot with the attendants as I ran out. He insisted, "You'll have to find another way." At that moment there was no traffic at all on the Melrose Avenue Bridge.

I drew a deep breath and asked what the shortest legal route to the stadium might be and he said, "I don't know, you'll have to ask my supervisor." At that point I believe my precise words were "I don't think so," and I proceeded quickly but safely to the Kinnick Society lot entrance less than a block away where the attendants waved me in.

After picking my way through the lot, I pulled up at the entrance closest to the women's restroom. A former starting UI Football lineman (let's call him "Tyler Luebke") had somehow been recruited to go into the restroom to carry Amanda out and put her in the back seat of our car. She weighs about 105 pounds soaking wet, so this was not a problem for him.

The next thing I know, a uniformed University Heights police officer (let's call him "Officer Beeks") is tapping on my window curious to know if I hadn't seen him in his six-wheeler with the flashing lights following me through the parking lot. I said no – I was concentrating on my driving – and he said something to the effect that it did look like I was being careful.

He saw Amanda in the back seat still throwing up into a plastic basin we luckily had back there and asked if she had been drinking. I said no - she had only one at tailgate – this was something else. After checking my license and registration, He asked if we were taking her to the Emergency Room and I said no – we're taking her home. (LuAnn had already told me that an E.R. could do nothing for Amanda that we couldn't).

I was half-expecting him to offer a police escort to expedite our exit and was instead surprised when he issued the citation. In retrospect, he probably was confused about why I was claiming a medical emergency but apparently was not seeking medical care – I failed to mention to him that LuAnn is an R.N., and the situation was under control. He probably assumed Amanda was just another over-imbibing fan and I was trying to talk my way out of a ticket. In any case, despite receiving the citation I was impressed with his professionalism.

What followed in the weeks to come were email exchanges with the University Heights Chief of Police confirming there is no such thing as a medical emergency exemption for Failure to Obey a Traffic Control Device, and even more emails with the Prosecuting Attorney. Not to mention a cattle-call arraignment in front of a Johnson County Magistrate which featured my first visit to a Johnson County courtroom despite my having lived in Iowa City my entire life.

Finally, everyone agreed this was not the Crime of the Century and the charge could be dismissed if I didn't mind paying \$60 in court costs. That was significantly better than the \$262.50 listed on the citation, and (more important) it

avoided my conviction on a simple misdemeanor which as we all know is the first step on the slippery slope toward becoming a habitual criminal.

Oddly, I feel good about the whole experience. Everyone did exactly what they were supposed to do (with the possible exception of Mr. Rules R. Rules) and justice was served in the end. Now if I could just get my old speeding tickets expunged...

Writer's Group member Dave Parsons is laying low in his office at the business he co-owns on the Coralville strip.