

More Stories!

Forum

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How not to cross in a cross walk...

by Ryan R. Matt

It was my freshman year of college. There were three of us walking down to practice. As we approached the crosswalk to cross the campus roads to get to the gym, we looked both ways and after verifying there was no traffic in either direction, we proceeded to step into the crosswalk. Fortunately for us, a campus police officer (at SUNY Binghamton University, State Troopers are the Campus Security) peeled out of the parking lot about 25 yards away, ran through a stop sign and nearly ran me over as he skidded to a stop in front of us. With his lights flashing, he got out of the car, hiked up his pants over his enormous pot belly and told us that "crossing in a crosswalk is a ticket-able offense."

Puzzled, we three college punks looked at each other in shock that we just committed a ticket-able offense. I finally asked, "Under what section of the VTL?" (VTL is the abbreviation for Vehicle and Traffic Law). After being a punk college student for committing a ticket-able offense, I wanted to

make sure I knew the law so I didn't commit the same crime again.

The officer looked square at me. Rushed from the driver's side of his vehicle around the front and right toward me.

"You being wise, kid?"

"No officer. I was asking a simple question.

After interning in the Utica City Court my senior year of high school, I was under the impression that you were supposed to cross in a crosswalk and that we had the right of way. Now you're telling me that every person in the Utica City Court system, including the judges and the DA have it all wrong. I'm just trying to learn how they run things down here in Binghamton so I don't make the same mistake again."

The officer glared right into my eyes. He could smell the fear in all of us. He moved in for the kill, "If you're going to keep up that attitude with me, boy, I'm going to be forced to drag all your asses down to the station. You'll have to call all your parents and explain how you were breaking the law and got arrested."

Now he did it. He cornered me into an inescapable corner. I had no option but to attack. "You arrest me, and it will be the last official act you do as a cop. I know the law, and I was trying to be patient with you as you explained to me why my understanding of the law was wrong. Instead, you cop an arrogant attitude. Need I remind you that if you actually hit me, it would be your fault! You ran a stop sign just to cut us off from walking to swim practice. Then you have the balls to come out of your car with your fat ass and lecture me on the "Do's and Don'ts" of walking in a crosswalk? I dare you to try and arrest me. I'm here on athletic scholarship. It would be great to sue you, the campus security department, the school, and the state to recover a couple million dollars in punitive

damages. I need some spending money." Please note, at the time I made that comment, I had no clue when I could sue for punitive damages or for how much. I just remember reading a Complaint that called for them and the damages were in the millions. "Now, officer, please be so kind as to tell me which section of the VTL we violated, because I can think of at least three you violated in your arrogant attempt to intimidate law abiding citizens to fear your presence. Why I ought to take your badge number now and report you to the state."

The outstanding officer's smile and swagger instantly disappeared. With his tail between his legs, "It's true that if I hit you, it would be my fault and I would have to fill out a bunch of paperwork that I wouldn't feel like filling out. I'd be pissed that I had to fill them out and would be able to ticket you for it."

"No, I don't think so. Not unless you have a burning desire to flip burgers for the rest of your life. You still have conveniently failed to answer my question. What section of the VTL did we violate?"

As he began to step back from his very offensive stance and cower back around the front of his car, "Well, none that I can think of. And you're right that when you're in the crosswalk you have the right of way. But you don't have the right to take the right of way, it has to be yielded to you--"

"I know, and seeing as how there was no traffic taking the right of way was not an issue, until you violated basic laws by peeling out of a parking lot without checking to make sure traffic was safe and allowed you to do so. Then you ran a stop sign without slowing down and stopping to make sure traffic allowed you to progress. Then you came within inches of hitting me, just to tell us we committed a ticket-able offense that you now

tell us is not true. So what the fu@#?!"

As he climbed into his car, he said in a much calmer and less aggressive tone, just be careful when crossing in a crosswalk, that's all I wanted to teach you boys."

So, the moral of the story, is to never cross in a crosswalk when the roads have no traffic and there is a police officer idling in a parking lot 25 yards away. If it wasn't for that officer's heroism, we would not have known that and might be sitting in jail for committing a ticket-able offense.

As for the rest of the story, we ended up 15 minutes late to practice. The coach did not believe my story, until the two captains vouched for me.

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