

BROCK'S BANTER: Losing the Moral High Ground

By Brock Weir

Admit it, we've all had a chuckle over those year-end reviews of wacky police calls.

More often than not, they involve enraged calls to 9-1-1 or other emergency services over seemingly trivial things, but trivial things that are evidently of the utmost importance to the individuals making the call.

Did someone in a busy mall parking lot take the space you had your eye on? Apparently, the most logical thing for some members of our society to do is call 9-1-1 to complain about the dirty rat.

Did McDonalds put too much sauce on the Big Mac you picked up from the drive thru window? Why take those precious steps into the store to complain about it, when you can get the police on Ronald McDonald's tail?

Are you and your spouse bickering on what to watch on prime time when a PVR just won't cut the mustard? Surely the police have nothing better to do than to help you settle the score.

I'd wager many of you have your favourite examples of weird and wonderful police calls and, admittedly, I do as well. But what's that old saying about he who laughs best?

Take, for instance, an experience of mine just after the New Year.

While on vacation with friends, we had just finished up visiting one of those must-see tourist traps on the west coast when it was time to move onto a long-standing appointment. We overstayed our welcome and it soon became clear that transit would not get us to our final destination on time, so it was time to deploy Uber ? an app very similar to a taxi service, but worlds more economical. Following the instructions to the letter, I booked the trip, but the driver was having a tough time figuring out our precise location ? as were we ? so he called me looking for more information. After doing my best to describe our surroundings, we agreed to meet the driver at a location we both could recognize, with the proviso to call him back at the number provided to confirm when we got there. So I did.

I found it odd that the number coming up on my iPhone was listed as being a number for Cleveland, Ohio, but since we were in California, weirder things happened and I just went with it and called him back.

?What are you reporting?? came the voice on the other end.

?Pardon me?? I replied.

?What are you reporting?? she replied.

With no introduction, or a how-do-you-do I explained what the problem was to what I assumed was a customer service clerk with the company.

But, it soon became clear I had another problem at hand.

Yes. Apparently I inadvertently called 9-1-1 in Cleveland, Ohio to order a taxi.

So, to all those at whom I have chuckled when they decided to escalate a take-out order to the next level or demanding a S.W.A.T. team to settle a bet, I offer my apologies.

I don't feel so inclined to apologise to United Airlines.

I wrote the above stranded in St. Louis, Missouri.

The degree to which one is stranded is in the eye of the beholder, and being ?stranded? while holed up in the Crowne Plaza Hotel near the St. Louis Airport is certainly what they now call a ?first world problem.? But, hear me out. Upon checking into the hotel, there was a sign listing the ?top three? things to do today. They were, in consecutive order:

? Bread of Life Ministries ? Service

? New Life Church of Christ ? Service

? Power of Prayer Cathedral Ministries ? Service

?Stranded? really seems like the most appropriate term in this instance, although I could very well be mistaken and any one of these services could swing like the pendulum do. But, I digress.

The reason for being ?stranded? was a new one to me.

After a particularly uneventful flight from Los Angeles International Airport to St. Louis, I was supposed to take a connecting flight from St. Louis direct to Toronto, arriving back in our fair province by 9 p.m. on Sunday night. As soon as I arrived, however, I was distressed to find the sold-out flight had been cancelled.

I was even more surprised ? and dismayed ? to hear the reason. United Airlines, on a flight operated by Air Canada, was unable to scrape together a flight crew to operate the scheduled service.

?That can't possibly be right,?

I thought as I grudgingly went to the ticketing counter to get a better read on the situation, only to find that that was indeed the case. To my mind, this was a missed opportunity. On my flight from Los Angeles to St. Louis there were no less than 19 (by my count) uniformed members of the United States Air Force on board for the journey. They might have welcomed the chance! Unions, on the other hand, might have had a differing view.

As of that writing, I was not due to get out of Missouri until 6.30 p.m. that Monday night, with two days of work to cram in on the following day. Nevertheless, they refused to guarantee they had confirmed their flight crew for the next leg of that adventure, but lo and behold they actually showed up.

There we were ? all camped out (in the height of comfort) at the hotel ? teachers from Hamilton (along with their families) who would not be at the front of their respective classes for the first school days of 2015, families from Ottawa, some looking forward to seeing their families again after long absences, others looking forward to starting new jobs and new lives, and many others who were missing a day of work.

I wonder how the final phase of their journeys turned out. Of those people who were as frustrated as I was, I wonder what stories they regaled their families and friends with upon arrival. If they were among those looking to settle for a new life ? or even for a time ? in Canada, I hope it was worth the hassle.