

How's your car registration, kemo sabe?

Every so often, I like to use this column to be of service. It applies especially when I've been had by some government entity or other. At the risk of a bit of embarrassment to myself, perhaps I can save you a few bucks. If I do, it'll make my day to do the DMV out of some ill-gotten gains.

I was feeling particularly good about myself on a recent Friday. I'd driven over to Peninsula Blood Bank. The good folks there had divested me of a pint of the red stuff. Then they'd fed me half a sweet roll and a couple of cups of juice and coffee. Life was good.

Since I was already on the other side of the hill and had shot a couple of hours, I drove on down to San Mateo, found a parking meter with an hour on it right around the corner from a computer store I wanted to visit (Oh, glorious day!) and happily shopped before returning to the car.

What's that on the window? An ad? Meter shows 20 minutes! Car's parked properly... Ticket! San Mateo cops are carrying ticket printers with them. "See remarks."

Here it is August and the San Mateo cop tickets me for expired registration. Can't be! Somebody must have stolen the sticker. I was sure my wife had paid the reg fees. After all, we'd bought the car only last September. I

drove directly to DMV, where the laconic clerk said it had expired in March. Damn!

I headed for AAA in Daly City. They told me why we had never gotten the DMV notice. We'd registered the car promptly last September, following the rules with pernickety exactitude. Dave, the fellow Pacifican we bought the car from, did everything right too. I'd been impressed by his careful concern. He'd done what is always a good idea, sent a release notice to DMV, just as I might have suggested. It arrived at DMV AFTER we had registered the car. Big Mistake!!! DMV thought Lydia and I were about to sell the car we had just bought, so they didn't bother to send us notice to renew registration. I'd been driving around oblivious to the situation four and a half months.

The AAA wouldn't take my credit card, so I drove home to get my checkbook. Then I drove back to

Daly City, got my sticker and started to drive home. A block from AAA I saw a Daly City cop behind me. Red lights! I pulled over. "Your stickers are expired." It was a good feeling to flash the sticker in his face. The conversation was actually pleasant. "I'm going home to get a knife, officer." To peel the old stickers off, of course. He even offered to sign off on my San Mateo ticket. Unfortunately, I'd left it home.

Bottom line: a 60 percent penalty on my registration, ten bucks "processing" to the city of San Mateo, and three hours I hadn't planned to spend at the DMV, Triple A, and driving back and forth on the streets of San Mateo, Daly City and Pacifica. If you haven't received your notice from the DMV, they don't care. It's your tough luck. Don't wait for them to remind you. Better take a look right now. I'll wait.

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