

The Last WORD

By Edward J. Walters, Jr.

IPSE DIXIT: COLUMBUS TOOK A CHANCE

Many of us know Baton Rouge's John Perry as an excellent mediator, but, as most mediators, he had a prior life as a lawyer.

Many John Perry stories abound, but this one is particularly unusual because it has happened to all of us from time to time, but never quite like this.

So John Perry is in Allentown, Pa., in 1988, taking a deposition in a products liability case. The deposition ran long, as they are wont to do in products cases — through no fault of John, of course (so he says). He had a reservation to fly home immediately after the deposition, from Philadelphia, some 65 miles away by Interstate. His flight was scheduled to leave at 4:30 p.m. Last flight out.

He rushes out of the deposition and he's on the Interstate trying to get to Philadelphia. He's looking at his watch. Not gonna make it. Being the competitor that he is, he is undaunted. He's driving aggressively, even driving on the shoulder passing cars on the right. VERY unlike John Perry.

Well, it's now 4:15 p.m. Where is John? John is just pulling into the airport.

Problem No. 1: He has a rental car he needs to return. Off-site. Not gonna happen.

Problem No. 2: He HAS to catch this flight because he promised his wife (and MUCH better half) Fran that he would be home for her birthday, which he's let work interfere with way too many times in the past. But NOT this time. NO, not THIS time. Not today.

This was in the PC era (pre-cellphone era) so he couldn't just Google the Hertz desk, call them and let them know what's up.

Time is of the essence.

Solution: Don't return the car.

What? That's no solution!

Well, it WAS, that day!

John pulled the car up to where it says "Departures." He saw a very nice fam-



ily — looked like a family sending off a grandmother. John goes to the person who looked like her grandson and said, "Here's a \$20 bill. The keys are in the car. Here's the rental agreement. Please bring this car to the Hertz counter." Then he quickly headed for the gate. (John said if he did it today, it would have probably been a \$100 bill. Inflation, you know.)

He made his flight. That made him happy. That made Fran happy.

BUT, what's the deal with the car?

We're sure who he DIDN'T make happy that day was the Hertz representative at the Philly airport when grandson dropped off the car.

John, of course, doesn't know what happened after he left, but his credit card got charged like no big deal. He never heard a word from anyone.

His partners said, "John, I can't believe

you did this! There's probably a cop pulling over a kid in Laredo claiming to be John Perry and he's showing them the rental agreement."

No courage, them.

It all turned out fine.

John took a chance.

Don't try this at home. True story.

Edward J. Walters, Jr., a partner in the Baton Rouge firm of Walters, Papillion, Thomas, Cullens, L.L.C., is a former Louisiana State Bar Association secretary and editor-in-chief of the Louisiana Bar Journal. He is a current member of the Journal's Editorial Board and chair of the LSBA Senior Lawyers Division. (walters@lawbr.net; 12345 Perkins Rd., Bldg. 1, Baton Rouge, LA 70810)





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