

## *Compliments of the Law\**

David Roscoe's reference to my *Gift of Fire* #85 article, about the David Helfgott "Shine" concert in Seattle that I referred to as one of two good things occurring during the awful Christmas holiday of 1996, reminded me that I had concluded that article: "...and I still haven't told you about the *other* good thing that happened to me last Christmas. Another time, another place perhaps." There's a little time and space here, so here goes.

Kay's mother's death was nigh at hand on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1996 so we purposed to rush down to Oregon after I got off work in spite of inclement weather to see her one last time while hopefully she was still conscious. "Rushing" was, in fact, what I was doing – in heavy rush hour traffic. (We had many guests coming the next day so we would have to return the couple of hundred miles shortly.) Then I saw the too familiar red and blue flashing lights of a Washington State Patrol car coming up behind me. Resigned, I pulled over to the shoulder, rolled my window down, took out my driver's license and waited for the trooper to check out my vehicle via radio and come up with his flashlight, which he then shined directly into my face.

"You don't look like Mario Andretti," he said. I was somewhat taken aback by this humorously complimentary but prickly comment and did not respond. He continued, "It's raining. The roads are very slick, and I was going 85 in this heavy traffic trying to catch you!" Not finished yet, he added, "You were in all four lanes zigzagging through traffic; sometimes you used your turn signal, sometimes you didn't..."

He paused, pointing the flashlight at Kay. "Is this your wife?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, quite subdued but glad to have one right answer.

"Have you bought her any jewelry for Christmas?" he asked. To my negative response he appended, "It would have been a lot cheaper than the ticket I'll have to write you. Have you bought her *anything* for Christmas?"

"No," I confessed sheepishly.

After taking my license to his car to check it out, he returned and said, "Don't you think your wife could use some new jewelry better than the State could use that money?"

"Yes," I said groveling.

He handed me my license saying, "Well why don't you go out and buy her some and try to keep your speed down!" Then he turned to walk away.

Quite emotionally stirred at this, I reached out my arm and said, "You are a credit to your profession, may I shake your hand?" He grabbed it and shook it heartily and then I was immediately smashed against the door handle as Kay was coming up over the top of me to extend her hand also to her gentleman benefactor of the law!

"Merry Christmas!" she said, or some such inanity, which being interpreted is, "Oh, thank you kind Sir!" Whereupon he took her hand and smiled, as would a true knight.

I must confess that I did not manage to get Kay any jewelry before Christmas, but thereafter she received beautiful opal earrings compliments of *The Law* of the State of Washington!

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