

## **IT HAPPENED TO ME**

By

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A major change in life's circumstances called for my moving from California to the Atlanta metropolitan area a few years ago. A two-day drive with my best friend and my two dogs ended with the arrival at an apartment I rented in mid-town Atlanta. Moving is always a hassle, and after wrestling with the moving company over missing objects and breakages and cramming a significant portion of a four-bedroom house into a two-bedroom space, I was ready to take on some of the other necessary steps that are a part of integrating into a new life environment.

In Atlanta, battling the traffic is one of the first things you have to adjust to -- city streets and the small town bedroom communities that make up the metro area were not built for the huge volume of traffic that transverse their roads on a daily basis -- patience is a definite virtue, and you learn to leave a lot earlier than you need to be somewhere in order to get there on time. I found this out the hard way when I thought I was driving across town to meet a friend and an hour later was only a mile from my apartment. So driving and all things connected with it are important in getting around the city and the surrounding areas.

When you move to the metro area, you have 30 days to change your driver's license, to get new license plates, and to get your mandatory insurance switched over to Georgia...and you quickly find out that you need to come up with a thousand additional dollars just to be allowed to bring your car into the state.

Moving is hideously expensive...so in addition to the thousand dollars owed for bringing in my car, I still needed to pay for the new driver's license, the new car tags

and the insurance. Bright and early about three weeks in, I got up headed for the nearest Georgia Department of Motor Vehicles to get legal. I arrived well before the office opened and ended up being about the twenty or thirtieth person in the first line - the driver's license line. After several minutes of winding my way to where the velvet rope was, and where a clerk would direct you to the next line, I handed that person my Arizona driver's license, thinking it would basically be one exchange for another. The clerk looked at my license -- at the paperwork I had downloaded, the paperwork I brought with me (birth certificate) and asked, "Why does it say Anderson on your birth certificate, and Anderson-Moore on your driver's license?"

"Because I was married," I explained to her.

"Well, I need to see your marriage license," she said.

I looked at her blankly. "A driver's license from another state isn't good enough?" I asked with dismay. "I'm not married anymore."

Didn't matter, I was told - I had to produce the actual marriage license with the name change indicated. Which meant I had to go all the way back home, find the marriage license and drive all the way back. I looked at the line which had only gotten longer. Do I have to go back through the line again? I asked, pointing at it extending all the way out the door of the mall where the office was located.

No, I was told, when I came back I could just stand under this sign she pointed me to, and when Salakaniqua came on duty, to let her know that Quanibalusha said I could stand there. So I drove all way home, rummaged around and found my marriage license (thank goodness I had it), and drove back to the Department of Motor Vehicles office...stood under the sign...and was allowed to move forward...I waited patiently, successfully received my new driver's license, and asked the person who

waited on me if I needed to pick up my car tags at the registration office located in the same mall.

“Where do you live?” I was asked.

In Atlanta, I answered.

“Oh, well you need to go to Fulton County,” I was told.

I can’t go down the hall? I asked plaintively.

“Not if you live in Atlanta,” I was told in no uncertain terms.

So I sadly gathered up my stuff, went out to my car and drove off...with a driver’s license, but no tags....

The next day bright and early I get up, fight the horrible downtown traffic, prepare to pay twelve dollars for parking, walk forever, get to the right place, stand in line, then sit and wait, and I’m finally called. I walk up and hand my information to the clerk behind the desk, and she walks off...apparently there’s some sort of hot joke, or juicy gossip or vital information circulating that is claiming all of their attention. She finally gets back to me, and I hit the first snag of the day - my proof of insurance card is not acceptable. But it’s the card the insurance company sent me, I protested.

“Don’t matter,” I was told, “It’s not official. You need to have them fax you an official insurance card.”

Who knew? Who could possibly know? Of course there was nothing I could do but call my insurance company and wait not only until they decided to send it, but also for the people behind the counter to pick it up -- there seemed to be a lot of them stacking up. Finally my name was called, and the person waiting on me had my

insurance information in her hand...she started entering information in her computer...and stopped. She rifled through the papers and then looked up.

“Your address is in Dekalb County so you need to go to Dekalb County to get your tags.”

I stared at her in utter disbelief. But...but...I sputtered...I was *in* Dekalb County *yesterday*, I *asked*, and they told me to come here...

“I don’t know why they told you that,” I was informed. “You have to go to Dekalb County.” Knowing that screaming at the top of my lungs would probably get me mentally evaluated, and tearing stuff up would get me arrested, I took a deep breath, turned around, walked the distance to my car, forked over twelve dollars, got into downtown traffic, drove back to the same mall I had already visited more than once, and walked down to the vehicle registration office.

I get there, and for once, things seem to be going in my favor. There was no one there -- at any of the windows-- but me. I am the only one there. I walked up to one of them went to reach for my documentation and was told: “Ma’am? You need to go stand behind the pole.”

I looked around. But there’s no one here but me, I explained.

“Ma’am? You need to go stand behind the pole.”

“But...” I stood there one moment longer, decided arguing wouldn’t change a thing, so I turned around and went and stood behind the durn-burn pole.

“May I help the next in line?” I hear. Of course I was the next -- and only -- person in line so I walked up to the window I had just been turned away from, and the person behind the desk who I had just spoken to, said, “Good afternoon, how may I

help you?” After sparing a moment to wonder which one of us was crazy, I managed to finally conclude my business and walk out with Georgia license plates.... bruised, battered, but ultimately successful...**it happened to me.....**