

## Lost in New York City

By JAMES COLLINS

Saturday morning, at 11 AM in June, the sun was shining as I walked on Jamaica Avenue in Queens at about 246<sup>th</sup> street. My two-year-old daughter was in the stroller and she was enjoying watching all the traffic on busy thoroughfare. A four-door sedan, with a man and a woman inside, pulled up to a stop and the driver impatiently honked the horn to get my attention. He opened door, stepped out and was thoroughly agitated.

"Sir, can you help us were trying to get to a wedding reception and we are totally lost. I was on Jericho Turnpike for a couple of miles but now, suddenly, I am on Jamaica Avenue and I do not know how I got here or where I switch roads. We have to get to the 'Old Inn' (a fancy reception hall back a mile from where they came). Can you tell us how to get there?"

"Sure but first you should pull the car over the curb and get out for a minute."

He looked suspicious and flustered like I might be a mugger. I tried to assure him nothing was amiss. "Look there's nothing to fear. I am out here with my daughter in the stroller getting her some air. You hailed me; I didn't hail you."

He thought about that for a few seconds; got back into the car and pulled safely to the curb. Then he got out and still looked wary.

"Look at the street sign on the island in the middle of the road. It says Jamaica Avenue."

"I know that that's why I stopped."

"Now carefully walk to the other side of the street- be careful of the cars- and read the sign from the other side"

He looked at me very strangely and then, timing the traffic flow, he crossed the street, turned and yelled, "On this side it says Jericho Turnpike. Where the hell are we - in the twilight zone?"

I asked him the come back and when he did I explained the contradiction.

"This side of the road is Queens County, New York City and is identified as Jamaica Avenue. The other side is Nassau County and the road is Jericho Turnpike. As you came up the road, it was Jericho Turnpike on both sides as it bisected Nassau County. A few blocks back you entered the border and this side is now Queens. To further the commute confuse the matter the numbering system is weird. On both sides of the road, the numbers are even because each is a different street in a different county. On this side, the numbers increase as you go towards the city; on the other side they increase in the opposite direction. This is why you are lost but you are on the right road just heading in the wrong direction."

"What do I do to get to the reception?"

"Just go to the next corner; make a U-turn and look at the addresses only on the right-hand side of the road. You go about four traffic lights and look for yellow two-story brick building on the right hand corner. That is your reception hall. Good luck"

"Thanks," he hollered as he got in the car made a U-turn and disappeared into traffic.

I am sure he got there if he followed the instructions and I bet he tells the story of getting lost in New York City for many years to come.

THE END

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