

A VENT WINDOW VIEW – **PRIDE GOETH BEFORE A STALL**

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Two summers ago on a trip across Nebraska, a service station advertising regular gasoline for several cents less than the average caught my eye. With my gas tank beginning to look anemic, I decided to stop and “tank up!”

I was pumping *regular* into my tank before I noticed the price; it was about a dime higher than the price advertised on their signage at the edge of town. *Well!* I stopped pumping and went to the office where my complaint was met with “*We don’t have anything to do with the pricing. You’ll have to talk to the owner.*”

Since he was not on duty all I could do was take the man’s address and leave. I took careful notes listing as much information as I could about the fact that they were selling regular for the cheaper price at a single pump located at the farthest, least visible spot on the ramp. There was a paper sign on the pump that gave it an “out of service” look from a distance.

After I returned home, I mailed a written complaint to the station owner and to the Nebraska state attorney; neither bothered to reply. That lack of concern rubbed a spot raw on my sense of righteousness that still itches when I travel across NE.

And, then one day when driving east across that state after filling up in Cheyenne, WY, it occurred to me that I was nearly halfway across NE and the gauge on my 2007 Ford 500 had not yet dropped to the half full mark. *Hmmm!*

Now for those who have not traveled Interstate 80 across Nebraska, let me point out that the eastbound leg across the state is slightly “downhill.” Also, the prevailing winds usually blow from west to east.

I guess that day was when I decided it was unnecessary for me to buy gasoline in Nebraska at least when eastbound; why give that state any tax revenue when they could not spare a first class stamp to answer my earlier gripe?

The story should have ended at that point but last week while returning home from Iowa, I filled up at a station about 35 miles east of the Missouri River that marks the line between Iowa and Nebraska. Again we were driving the 2007 Ford; its computerized gas gauge shows how many miles one can drive before running out of fuel. In this instance, the gauge showed we could travel approximately 475 miles before running low on gas. I checked again as we crossed the river into NE and it still showed that we had enough gas to drive approximately 440 miles.

Now, even though I was aware that our westbound route to Wyoming would be uphill, I decided in that moment that we could cross the entire state without buying a drop of NE gas. The wind was light and the temperatures mild; traffic on I-80 was moving at 75 mph except in road repair zones. At Sidney, Nebraska however, 50 miles from the Wyoming border I began to sweat because it seemed as if the needle was dropping faster than it had been and now was well below the quarter-tank mark.

We were still ten miles from Pine Bluff, WY when the warning bell rang and the information screen lit up with “LOW FUEL SUPPLY.”

That large “all caps” type was a wasted effect as warnings go; it could have been written in miniscule Chinese script and I’d still have known the gas tank was about to run dry! Still, we made it into Wyoming without a problem; in fact, when we got to Pine Bluff well over a gallon of gas remained in the tank.

My tongue though was dry, too dry to lick a stamp and mail an envelope!