

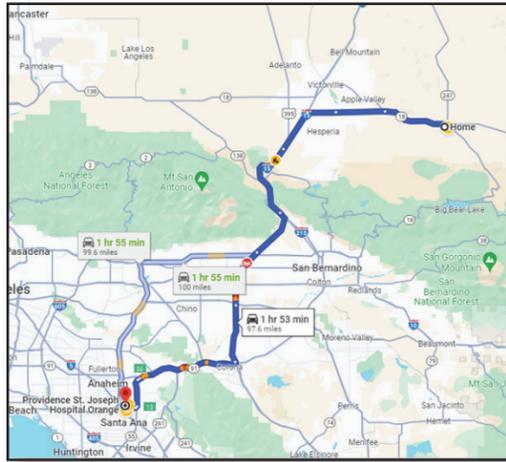
Mr. Google and Little Red

It was a Tuesday that I had to go down the hill to a doctor's appointment in Orange. You know, a Tuesday that isn't Monday or Wednesday. It should have been sort of "normal" type traffic, right? (Define "normal", please.)

I was optimistic that I could drive down the hill and return in a reasonable amount of time. I had prepared by opening an account on "The Toll Roads of Orange County," and then even ordered a transponder. Transponder? What's that? It sounds like some cell-phone-sized piece of electronics that you have to mount somewhere on your car. Where would I be able to mount it?

Well, this fancy-sounding transponder thingy is simply a small piece of tape, about 1-1/2" X 1/3", with a barcode printed on it. You place it in the lower corner of your windshield, gaining admittance to the wonderful world of toll roads on those blasted freeways. But somehow, something along the way can read that tiny bar code as you whiz by at 70mph or so! That's kinda scary!

Along with the transponder, I drove the new red Honda HR-V, which I call Little Red, since it's one of Honda's smallest models. I was able to connect my phone



to a screen on the dashboard, and along with an app called Android Auto, I was guided to my destination smoothly, with all my normal questions already showing answers on the screen.

What's the next exit I take? How far is it? Is it a righthand or lefthand exit? Will I get there on time? Little Red gave me all of that information on its screen at a glance. Very handy. Very helpful. Plus Mr. Google directed me verbally, loud enough for me to understand.

The drive started out well, as I took the



back road over to the 15 freeway, joining it where the 138 crosses it. No backups at the normal spots, with freeway traffic moving quickly and an easy merge. Whew! Relief. I was on my way down to the 91, where I had planned to use the

toll road from the 60 to Diamond Bar, bypassing all of the congestion at the interchanges. Cool!

But... Yes, but, Mr. Google said that there was too much congestion down that way and it recommended using the 210 to the 57 and down to Orange. Google NEVER did that before. It always routed



me to the 91, the most dreaded freeway I know. Something was up.

The 210 was so bad that Google routed

me down to Baseline and back up on city streets to bypass the 210 merge. On the

210, my average speed had to be about 2 mph for 20 miles, but it cleared up in time for me to get on the 57 with no problem. I still had 40 minutes to spare. Until Dia-



mond Bar. And then all the way into Orange County. My average speed must have

been about 1.5 mph. Maybe just 1 mph.

Why, Google, haven't you rerouted me around this mess?? I thought I knew better and decided I would get off the parking lot and make my own way to Orange. I still had about a 30 minute cushion so I could make it in time. Or so I thought.

I got off on Chapman Ave. in Fullerton. Easy, right? Chapman Ave goes to Orange, right? I can just stay on Chapman to the doctor's office that's in that huge medical complex called St. Joseph's, right? O foolish sucker! You think you can beat out the traffic gods, do you?

As soon as I left the freeway on Chapman, Google started yelling at me. And yelling. Turn left at the next street! Make a U turn! Turn left. TURN LEFT! U TURN! It yelled like that for the 2-3 miles I stubbornly stayed on Chapman. Then all of a sudden I noticed that I was no longer on Chapman. Oh, no! Where was I? Where did Chapman go?

Chastized, I humbly apologized to Google and obeyed its order to turn left at the next light, and then left again, on Chapman (!), which had turned into this tiny little neighborhood street. After 3-4 miles of city streets, Google returned me to the 91 East, then to the 57 South, and on to Orange. I had lost any cushion of time I had allowed myself and was in fact due to be late.

Finally, I drove to the parking structure, grabbed my ticket, and started looking for a place to park. Yeah, right. I went around, and around, and around some more, until finally, at the fourth level, I found a spot. Still had to walk all the way



over to the Cancer Center for my 3-month checkup. 3-1/2 hours on the road for 10 minutes of doctor time! Wow.

As I faced the return trip, I knew that traffic should be fairly light, but I still chose to try the toll lane. Yes, it cost me about \$7, and yes, I wasn't travelling much faster than the regular traffic, but was it ever worth it anyway. I didn't have to navigate among the millions of big trucks, medium trucks, little trucks, big cars, little cars, and the worst of all, the unseen motorcycle coming seemingly out of nowhere to buzz loudly by. Instead, the two lanes were clear and felt much safer.

I must confess, Little Red, the Honda HR-V, really helped things along, much as I hate to give credit to any technology, with all its downsides and negatives. It tells me when there's a vehicle in the blindspot, either right or left. It slows down if there is a car in front of me within a certain distance. It warns me if I get too close to the lane lines, and even shakes the steering wheel a little to get my attention.

"Yes, Little Red, I heard you. Thank you." "Google, just shut up. I don't want to go that way!" "Thank you, Google, for that information!" "What are you talking about this time, Little Red?" When you start talking to, or shouting at, your car or your map app, well, maybe it's time for the little men to come take you away! (They're coming to take me away, haha, to the funny farm, where life is merry and gay!")

What does all of this have to do with the Spirit of God, Who I hope drives my life and for Whom I live? That's a good question. Well, for one thing, I can tell you that I do a lot of talking to God when I'm on those nasty freeways. Especially when I arrive safely there and home again, I'm most thankful to Him!

If we truly are given to God in surrender and obedience, He is involved in all of these seemingly mundane things on our behalf. We should have greater peace of mind and spirit when we can leave things to Him.

Even Little Red. I feel guilty for having that nice new red car, but maybe God sent Little Red to help navigate that ugly traffic safely. And Mr. Google, whose highly technological navigation assistance is amazing and wonderful. We just need to keep our heads on straight and avoid worshipping the wonders of technology that still bite us when they can.

We must worship God, the Creator of the Universe and of us, and thank Him for those things He sends us to lighten the load along the way.

Linda Gammel

On The Lighter Side of Valentine's Day . . . from the Web

