



Gigglebytes: Another Comedy Routine

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"Another routine day on another routine survey." Those were my thoughts as I left the office to go stake a property line for a new client. He had said that he wanted to build a new fence after having torn the old one down a few years ago. He wanted to make sure that the new fence didn't cause any problems with his neighbors. I thought at the time that he was wise to have called me and more especially to have hired me to stake the line. It was a cost that he was willing to incur to protect both himself and his neighbors—he said. I took that to be a thoughtful gesture.

While talking to him on the phone he gave no indication that there was any type of disagreement between him and his neighbors at all. Of course, as surveyors, that is something that we are wary of, but as for me, I never make the assumption that there are difficulties between neighbors. I like to live in a world where everyone gets along. In my world people are always thoughtful, kind, generous, understanding, and accommodating. I like to call my world ... *Earltopia*.

Well, as it turns out, *Earltopia* is not where I ended up living on that day.

I did a diligent amount of research prior to going to the site and at first glance this appeared to be a somewhat normal situation. This was not a subdivision property line I was staking but a line along a metes and bounds tract. When I first got to the site I was busy looking far and wide for property corner monuments for a while so I went unnoticed. I had a certain amount of difficulty finding monuments within a reasonable distance from the line I was intending to stake. I was beginning to get a bit frustrated that this wouldn't be as simple as I had hoped. Luckily for me, I hadn't mentioned any specific dollar amount to my client. I had just told him that I wouldn't be able to quote a cost until I had done my re-search and visited the site to locate corner monuments.

For the purposes of this story, I'll call my client Bud and his neighbor Lou. I knocked on Bud's door to gain his permission to proceed with my survey, since he would now be footing the bill. Bud, a tall and rather slim man, was at first a bit annoyed that I was so late, until I explained to him where I had been all morning. We proceeded to walk out through the field/yard because he wanted to tell me "where the line had always been." Has anyone heard that before? For some reason he was having trouble understanding why I couldn't just stake the line where he was telling me it had always been. After all, it would save him quite a bit in survey fees if I didn't have to survey his whole property and half of his neighbor's, too.

Lou, a short and stocky man, happened to be outside working and saw us jabbering away so he came over to see what we were doing. That was when I first discovered that these two were not bosom buddies. It was obvious from their looks—even before they started speaking to each other. I swear, this was the exchange between them, as best as I can remember it:

Lou: "What are you all doing?"

Bud: "We're trying to locate the line. I'm putting up a new fence."

Lou: "Well the old fence line is over there."

Bud: "But that's not where the line is."

Lou: "What line?"

Bud: "The property line."

Lou: "The line has always been over there!"

Bud: "The FENCE line!"

Lou: "So what line are you after?"

Bud: "The PROPERTY line!"

Lou: "But the property line IS the fence line."

Bud: "They're not the same line!"

Lou: "Of course they're the same line!"

Bud: "Whose line?"

Lou: "Our line."

Bud: "MY line has always been over here."

Lou: "What line?"

Bud: "The PROPERTY line!"

Lou: "MY line has always been over there!"

Bud: "The fence line?"

Lou: "The PROPERTY line!"

Bud: "That was the FENCE line!"

Lou: "That was my PROPERTY line too!"

Bud: "MY line's over here!"

Lou: "Your line IS my line!"

Bud: "Which line?"

Lou: "PROPERTY line!"

Bud: "Well good, 'cause MY line's over here!"

Lou: "But that's not MY line!"

Somewhere along here is when I interjected. I would have jumped in earlier, but I was enjoying myself too much. Besides, I had to catch my breath.

I first suggested that I continue with my work to try to determine just where the old fence line and the property line were and then let them both review those findings. Then they could each determine a course of action with which they felt comfortable. I suggested that there may not even be a disagreement once I had completed the survey. I didn't really believe it, but that's what I told them. They needed to agree on who was going to pay my fee, though. After much discussion, and an eerily similar comedy routine, they agreed to split it. I suspected that I may never get paid for this one. Even so, the thought of witnessing more comedy routines was enough to keep me on the job. I was somehow able to hold in my laughter until I got into the truck to leave. I hadn't laughed that hard in years. More of that kind of laughter was fee enough to continue.

Well, believe it or not, this case wound up in court. I was sitting in the courtroom, awaiting my turn to testify when the case opened in front of the judge. And I swear to you that if I hadn't made up this whole story that this would be true, the judge kicked off the trial by asking the bailiff, "Who's on first?" It can be extremely embarrassing, in such a quiet environment, when you're the only person who gets the joke.

About the Author



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