



Gigglebytes: Garbage Day

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My work day started as a normal day in a normal subdivision doing a normal survey for a normal client. My day ended up abnormally, however, as you might have already guessed.

In the Denver, Colorado, area quite a number of these "normal" subdivisions have been built in the last few years. I like to call them "house farms" because out here, we live in wide open spaces that used to be the prairie. Add to that a developer who subdivides a regular PLSS unit (section, half section, quarter section, quarter-quarter section) in a way that maximizes the number of houses, and you end up with a large rectangle chock full of similar homes among a spiderweb of streets out in the open for all to see. In the last few years, developers have taken to spiderwebbing the streets rather than setting them up in a regular square grid. I suppose that makes the occupants feel better in some way. Regardless, from the outside looking in, the subdivisions look like they were planted in the middle of nowhere and just grew there. Hence the name.

Of course, if your view of the subdivision is from the inside looking out, you can easily lose your bearings and get disoriented. Streets and houses start looking the same, so much so that at times, I've momentarily thought I was in a totally different part of town in a totally different subdivision. Aerial views of these subdivisions are also interesting, a regular rectangle of densely populated houses surrounded by open farm land and prairie. You expect to see all the cars back out of their driveways simultaneously in a place like this. The lawn sprinklers all turn on and off at the same instant. The dogs all look the same. And the children, of course, are all above average.

I don't mean to criticize these developments. After all, many people obviously enjoy living in them. And if there weren't a need for them, they wouldn't exist. I have described them in this way so you can better understand how I ended up having the experience I'm about to relate.

As I said, I was in one of these subdivisions doing a "normal" survey. I started by setting up my backsight on a point at the end of a cul-de-sac. I then had to move garbage cans out of the way to occupy the point. I remember it distinctly because the smell was unusually aromatic and caused me to wonder what the people had put in there and what they might have been doing in their house. I didn't let my imagination carry me far enough to take a peek in the can, though.

After traversing a station or two ahead so I had access to the subject property, I decided to leave the backsight where it was and continue my work with my remaining equipment. I don't usually do this because of all the stories I've heard about thievery of equipment, but in this case, I took a chance. It seemed like a safe area. Besides, I knew after a short while I'd have a break when I could return to retrieve my gear.

Well, my break ended up happening much later than I anticipated, and of course, when I went back for my gear, it was gone. I was livid. I was as angry with myself as with the apparent thieves until I remembered having seen the garbage truck pass by while I was working. I hopped into my truck and took off in search of the garbage

truck, knowing intuitively that they had picked up my gear by mistake. This neighborhood felt too much like Mayberry, RFD for anyone to have taken it intentionally. Maybe I was living in Earltopia again, but that's how I decided to proceed.

As I wound my way through the maze of streets, at a faster pace than the occupants of the homes would have liked, I'm sure, I took note that the garbage cans had already been emptied everywhere I traveled. This was not a good sign. Finally, after searching for nearly an hour, I caught a glimpse of the garbage truck a few streets away. My buoyed hopes were quickly sunken when I attempted to turn towards the area in which I had seen my quarry, only to be forced in another direction by the curving web of roadways. I found my self backtracking, turning this way and that, and making multiple K-turns in a vain attempt to somehow gain access to the seemingly inaccessible area in which I had seen the garbage truck, now nearly 30 minutes ago!

Again the truck passed within sight, and again I was unable to get any closer to the area, let alone catch another sight of it. I noticed I was passing locations that earlier had full garbage cans and now had empty ones. Then, I even lost track of which way was north, south, east, and west! This had never happened to me before in my life! My mood sunk even further into despair when I turned into a cul-de-sac, hoping for a through street for about the hundredth time. I stopped my truck and began to realize that in this foolish attempt to re-acquire my backsight, valued at about \$750, I had left all my other equipment, including a robotic instrument, another backsight setup, a prism pole, and a data collector in front of the subject property for over two hours now, and it is valued at...well, quite a bit more, as you are probably well aware. I needed to get back there, but I had totally lost my bearings. Fortunately, I still had the job folder in my truck that contained the subdivision plat, so I pulled it out to try to re-orient myself. I was very surprised to find that I was sitting at the end of a cul-de-sac just two or three blocks down from the subject property. The through road had numerous short cul-de-sac streets all parallel to each other and perpendicular to the through road like legs on one side of a centipede. I was sitting on a big toe. And I can tell you it felt like that too.

I was also only one street down from the cul-de-sac where I had originally set up the equipment I had been searching for. So it would be a short drive now down to the subject property to continue my work. As I drove past that original cul-de-sac I glanced furtively down there at where my long lost equipment would have been standing early this morning lamenting the loss when...you guessed it...there it was... right where I left it...and still level and over the point. The garbage cans were still full too.

About the Author



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