**Carpool to Azusa with Garrett**

The year was about 2005. Louis was working at Northrop Grumman in Azusa. The job there was as a consultant while I was employed at Science Applications International Corporation. My first job was at the same site which was then Aerojet Electro-systems in 1972-1973. I really enjoyed the challenging work there and felt that I had really helped the DSP project become a success at that time. Unfortunately, my manager felt that I was overpaid and gave me a zero raise. When I left for TRW with a 20% raise, they counter-offered a 25% raise, but I felt that now I would be really overpaid and there would be no raises in the future. Besides, the environment at TRW was more professional.

There were other consultants working in Azusa during the early 2000’s. One of them was Garrett who also lived in Calabasas, a few blocks from my house. He was a competent engineer there and I suggested that we should carpool to Azusa which was about an hour drive across the 101, 134, and 210 Freeways. I had no problem picking him up and taking him to Azusa. His house was only one minute out of the way of my normal route to work. He was somewhat time-flexible and a good person. He did insist that he should do half of the driving, and he was willing to pick me up at my house which was a few minutes out of his way. The situation seemed good for a carpool.

Pretty soon, I realized that there were issues. He insisted on stopping at the Costco gas station in Irwindale, which was next to Azusa, but several miles on city streets. The usual wait for gas there was 20 minutes because the gas price there is less than most other places. Something seemed strange when he stopped there every second trip. Soon, he felt more comfortable if he did all the driving. He did not like that I never seemed to stop for gas and my gas gauge was frequently very close to empty. He also did not like riding in my smaller Subaru that got 30 miles per gallon of gas. I could easily drive all week to Azusa without refueling.

I wondered what was going on. He said that he was raised in northern Utah where the roads were poor, there was always the possibility of a storm, and his Dad said that anyone who did not have at least half a tank of gas in the car at all times was a complete fool. I quickly agreed with that statement, after all, rural roads in Utah in the 1930’s were poor, storms were frequent, and gas stations were widely spaced. Stations could be closed and did not necessarily have gas available. However, he now lived in Southern California and none of those conditions existed here. Gas stations along our route were numerous and always had gas for sale. The other situation is that he had to stop at Costco for gas, since that was the cheapest station and there were no Costco stations near his house. I volunteered to reimburse him fully for all gas if he would stop at any other station with no wait to get gas. He refused since he seemed to feel that it was a sin to allow me to pay extra for the gas, especially gas that cost 10 cents more per gallon. I tried to explain the value of time to both of us and my aversion to waiting. The time advantage of the carpool and the faster carpool lane on the freeway was more than completely lost by the extra time to drive to that gas station and the extra wait in the gas line. I even suggested a car with a larger gas tank or more fuel efficiency.

I really tried to explain why his childhood upbringing was correct for the area at the time, but was not required in the current situation. He tried to adapt, but ultimately admitted that he was so uncomfortable with less than half tank gas, and he really could not accept my offer to reimburse him for the gas cost unless it was at Costco. From my point of view, I liked the carpool except that his driving was somewhat suspect in following distance and lane changes. My complaint was that I could not adapt to the extra 30 minutes that were unnecessarily expended on almost every trip.

Eventually, the carpool was abandoned even though we both continued to commute from Calabasas to Azusa. I still wonder how many people are still affected by childhood memories and actions that do not have any relevance to their current situation in life. I am surprised that a seemingly rational engineer would admit to irrational actions but just could not take the initiative to change his approach.