

OPINION

Small Picture

by Kurt Hildebrand

editor

I got a bill from my credit card company the other day, it was astounding.

I opened it up, and under the debt column was a figure — \$148.

I stared at the bill for nearly 15 minutes, trying to figure out what was going on.

My mom walked in the room and asked me what I was studying so intently.

It turns out that the hotel the staff had stayed at for the CIPA convention had used the number I had given them to guarantee the rooms to charge me for two of the rooms.

I called the company this morning to tell them what had happened, they were very understanding

and said they would contact the hotel to clear up the bill. This was, however a clear lesson in plastic economics.

Don't give your card number to anyone you don't intend on buying something from.

This reminds me of what happened to my friend George, last year.

George got his first credit card and immediately went out and got an account with a local video rental store.

George likes movies, and he proceeded to rent one a night for two months.

Well, one day George got a bill for his card.

It was for nearly \$200. It seems George forgot to return one or two tapes and the rental place

charged him for the movies.

George promptly got in touch with the rental place to determine which movies had not been returned and when they had been due.

It turns out George hadn't rented either film, and, in fact, had no interest in seeing either film.

The rental store swore up and down that George had rented the movies and had signed for them, and then had not returned them.

George was hot. He couldn't figure out what had happened, but he was in mortal fear that the company would cancel his card.

So, George did something I personally consider stupid. He paid the bill, and then tried to get everything straightened out.

He went to the rental store and complained for two months. He wrote letters to the parent company. He did everything he could, except that no one wanted to hear about it, because he had already paid.

During the two months, George spent half his time at the video store screaming at clerks and the other half writing letters to the company.

He did, however, not rent a single movie in all that time.

Then, at the end of the two months, George received another bill from the card company. This one was for movies again.

Instead of contacting the rental store, George called the card company and told them he hadn't rented any stinking movies, and he hadn't kept any of the movies he

hadn't rented.

The card place then contacted the movie rental company and told them to prove he had made the charge.

There was not a single word from the rental store. George went there for the three-zillionth time to talk to the manager. He told him he thought someone was using his card to pay for someone else's movies.

It turns out George was right. One of the clerks at the rental store had been removing movies from the shelves and charging them to various cards. It turns out he made a mistake when he picked on George twice. No one else had bothered to check.

That lesson cost him \$200.

That old plastic magic can cost you if you are not careful.

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The firing squad from Riker's Island marched out on the parade ground. Six soldiers, led by Captain Loughboro, lined up at attention, facing the wooden post.

Two soldiers, one on each side, marched Tony the Termite to the post and tied his hands behind his back. Captain Loughboro stepped forward with a blindfold and tied it around Tony's eyes.

"Would you care for a cigarette?" the captain asked.

"Yes, I would," Tony said. "I'll take a king-sized mentholated."

The captain drew one out of a pack and placed it in Tony's mouth. He was about to light it when a uniformed inspector from the city's Anti-Smoking Unit ran on the parade ground and cried, "Halt! You cannot smoke on this property during a firing squad execution."

"That's ridiculous," the captain said. "Puffing a last cigarette before being shot is an ancient military

tradition."

"Never mind tradition. No one is permitted to blow smoke within 10 feet of another person as it's hazardous to everyone's health. Tony isn't just doing harm to himself but to the firing squad as well."

"Suppose I move the squad 10 feet back?" the captain suggested.

"That still would be considered secondhand smoke. Don't you have

any respect for human life at all?"

The captain turned to Tony, "Would it bother you to give up your last cigarette?"

"It certainly would. This is a free country and when it comes to puffing, I know my rights."

The captain riffled through a book. "He's right," he said to the inspector. "It says here no one can be shot unless he is offered a last cigarette of his choice."

"But we're only doing

this for his health. If Tony sucks on that fag he's going to develop a terrible cough."

"I'll worry about that," Tony protested. "It's too late to quit smoking. I should have done it years ago when it had some meaning. Now, let's knock off the sweet talk and give me a light."

The inspector said, "That's the trouble with people who face capital punishment. They think of nobody but themselves. We are never going to

have clean air if smokers ignore the rights of others. Well, I'm warning you. If the captain lights up your cigarette I'm going to arrest you for violating the law and it's going to cost you."

Tony asked, "What will I get?"

"Thirty days and a \$50 fine."

"I'll take it. That's better than what they are going to give me now." Tony declared.

The captain barked at see Buchwald, pg 7



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