

DTTR 101

A Short Story by Charles E. Chupp, SR/WA

Ken was a cracker jack buyer of right of way, and would pay for the coffee when he and I took brief respite for our Herculean task of negotiating both fee and easement takings.

He also had another strange compulsion which was probably aggravated by too many hours under a steering wheel and out standing in someone's field. He was foolish about acronyms and any conversation with Ken was liberally sprinkled with them. He employed only those of his own manufacture and his account of how things were going was a challenge until you mastered his verbal short hand.

DITW was "Dead In The Water," DHLAEOE was "Dropped Him Like An Otis Elevator" and my favorite, TAAB, which he used to describe particularly obstinate clientele. "Tough As A Boot" was the classification.

He and I were working a 138KV transmission tap in Howard County Texas. On a hundred and something degree day in August we met at a cafeteria in Big Spring to dine and play a two handed game of AIA, "Ain't It Awful." We dispensed windmill fuel at a remarkable clip as we downed our repast, and each successive fabrication dwarfed its predecessor. We lied like champions of our insurmountable problems, which is the way of right of way negotiators. If we'd had the ability to write our woeful tales on paper we'd a been authors instead of liars.

Once we got on the outside of our meal we moseyed back to the parking lot and he invited me over to inspect his new company car. It was a dandy four door Chevy and I told him straight out that I drove Fords. But, it was still a fine looking specimen with one obvious battle scar.

"How'd you crack that windshield?" I asked as I studied a single crack that originated at the top on the driver's side and snaked its way across to the bottom on the opposite side. It was evident that the point of origin

was on the driver's side. "Gravel hauler get you?" I asked.

"Nope," Ken said. "I attended a DTTR seminar this morning and got that broke windshield as a memento."

Now, DTTR was a brand new acronym to me, and I suspected it was of recent manufacture.

"I ain't ever heard of DTTR Ken," I admitted, "but I don't believe you've been to any seminar today. What really happened?"

I've been trying to deal with an old hard case for two weeks. His ranch is a little smaller than Rhode Island and we finally agreed on the money for the easement, but then we hit a snag. He contends that our electric line will devalue his whole place. I took the opposing view.

"He went and got a tack hammer and pecked my windshield up in the top corner and that crack went across like lightning."

"It made me nearly mad enough to jump him, but I stayed calm!"

"He told me to come to town and have it replaced. He said he'd pay for his proportionate part!"

"They ain't no damage to the remainder according to you," He said, "so you calculate how much of the area my crack takes up! I'll pay for my part."

"DTTR," I guessed. "Damage To The Remainder."

"Yep."

"Are you going to get a new windshield?"

"Not until this job's over," Ken said with steely eyes. "I ain't about to let that sucker know that he's got a good point!"

"In both his logic and on his hammer," I said. "You'd be DITW if you put a new one in now."

