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A Tuesday-morning ride without me? Yes, I'm going Postal. Or trying not to.

Jury duty caught up with me today. Got out of the morning session, but the computer log-in said I was still vulnerable and had to show my face at 12:45pm. 139 people in the room, getting instructions from the deputy in charge on what to expect, how to make sure you don't have to serve again within 12 months, how the computer decides it's your time. Oh, and lots of stuff about parking, and how to take care of parking tickets you got because you didn't put your jury duty sticker in the window. Nothing about bike parking, or how to get there without driving (it's only a couple blocks from the train station, duh!).

Interesting thing learned- if you have a slight difference in spelling or punctuation between your birth certificate and driver's license, you are likely to get twice as many summons, because the system thinks you're two people. Those with hyphenated names are especially vulnerable, because the DMV computer doesn'tÂ "see" them (it simply merges the front and last part together and drops the hyphen) while other forms of ID do.

The deputy also tries to put people at ease, and tells us, when he calls out our name, to say something like "Go Giants" instead of just "here." I'm thinking, OK, what could I say that would relate to cycling, and then it hits me. "Go Postal!" Only that just might be taken the wrong way.

139 people start the process; at 2:15pm they call out 65 names. I escape round 1. Actually, the sooner you're assigned to a case the better, because of those 65, they're only picking 13 (or is it a couple more with alternates?), so your odds of going home early are pretty good. But instead, the rest of us wait. And wait. And then the deputy's phone starts ringing; he's got another court case to fill. There are 74 of us left. He needs 70. He tells us that the lucky 4 who don't get called need to go buy lottery tickets to see if they can extend their streak; we laugh nervously. He calls out the names (you'd think there would be a way to only call out the 4 who get to go home, but the computer doesn't work that way, or at least that's what he tells us). We get down to 20 left and I'm thinking, wow, I've got a chance. Who knew I'd make it this far. But of course, my name is called, and I dutifully head up to courtroom 2D, joining 64 others, at about 3:45pm.

We find places to sit and stand, the judge comes in and introduces the players and tells us what this is all about and how long the trial is likely to be (short, no more than 2 or 3 days), and then they call out 25 names (except that we're no longer just names; we're now officially "juror 8" or whatever) and sit them up front. I'm not in this group, but at this point wishing I was, because it's beginning to look like this process isn't going to finish anytime soon. I hate being right about things like this, because I certainly wasÂ in this case. He's asking questions about hardships and who thinks they have valid reasons for being excused... pretty amazing what people come up with. For example, state employees who think they're not going to have a job when they come back, or get paid for the time they're on the jury. The judge is very friendly and good-natured but he's got to be choking on some of the things people are saying.

Long story short, you can get excused if you're a full time student and a few days on a jury are going to cause significant grief; you can get excused if you're the sole provider of childcare (although he was pretty tough on that one); you can get excused if you're going to suffer extreme financial hardship. But you're not going to be excused if you're doing childcare for your grandkids.

At 4:40pm the judge announces that it's obvious they're not going to be able to finish selecting a jury today (neither defense nor prosecution even got a chance to ask any questions yet), so I'm back in courtroom 2D tomorrow morning, 9am. And, at 9am, I know precisely where I would rather be. Right at the top of west-side Old LaHonda road.

Having said all this, and even though serving on a jury is not going to be easy on the shop (since this is the time of year we need to be seriously ramping up for the busy season), I'm not going to lie or even stretch the truth to get out of it. Society doesn't ask all that much of me, and rarely, if ever, asks for anything more than a financial contribution. Serving on a jury is an opportunity to engage your mind and make a thoughtful contribution, beyond simply complaining about things that others have done (others who have

actually bothered to engage the system). So do I want to end up on the jury? Yes and no. They tell us it will be over on Thursday, Friday at the latest, so it's not a huge imposition on my time, and it could be that, spending some time each day during which I am completely removed from the normal day-to-day stuff could be good for me. But forcing me to not ride is a criminal act itself! We'll see what I have to say on all this tomorrow.

Oh, right, one more thing, something that really does suck about jury duty. Once you've been assigned to a trial (not picked to be a juror, merely assigned), you're cut off from the outside world. You can't use your cell phone, much less a computer. You aren't even allowed to read a book. You become 100% owned by the State. Or The Man, if you will. I understand why, and in the grand scheme of things it's not that big a sacrifice, but I still don't like it.Â Â --Mike--