

FROM A FAITH PERSPECTIVE

Way opens for stranded travelers

By **Richmond Shreve**
Correspondent

The warning “Reduced Power” was accompanied by an ominous mechanic’s wrench icon on the dashboard display of my Ford F350 diesel truck. We’d serviced it days before our Christmas Day departure and there had been no sign of trouble in 800 miles of driving. Nothing felt different even now because we were going downhill, our 12,000 pound travel trailer in tow.

We were half way to Florida. A 3-month-old grand baby awaited us in Key West. Our eldest son was being sworn in as a judge there in a few days. The last thing we needed or wanted was a delay. I have always been meticulous about maintenance, and I monitor the gages as I drive. The diesel engine had only 16,000 miles — though the 2008 chassis had 116,000. We limped to the next exit and found a Ford dealer nearby.

My spirits sunk when I learned that the exhaust gas recycle cooler on the engine leaked and would take two or three days to fix. I’ll spare the details, but the further the mechanic got into the job, the more problems he found. After replacing the cracked EGR cooler, he found that the head gaskets had blown, presumably due to overheating. It was New Year’s weekend and even with working Saturday, the mechanic could not be sure he’d have the job done before Wednesday. What had been estimated as a \$3,000 repair was now \$9,000 if the heads were OK. If not, it would be a \$12,000 job. My Good Sam extended warranty policy proved worthless — I would be paying the whole bill plus the cost of staying in a hotel for a week, and my wife and I would miss seeing our son robed as a judge.

Unable to move our trailer with no truck to tow it, we were mired in a traveler’s nightmare: stranded with

breathtaking bills piling up. My anger and resentment seethed just beneath the surface. It was unfair, the worst of luck, undeserved ... I obsessed on seeking justice from Ford and Good Sam. This should not have happened.

Quakers have a saying, “Way opens.” When one looks inward in faith and comes to clarity about the spiritual context for one’s circumstances, a path opens. The next right steps simply appear as if obvious.

So it was for Marguerite and me. We stepped back, took a deep breath and considered our situation from a spiritual perspective. We were safe and warm. At no time were we in peril. We weren’t stuck at the side of the road nor far from help. Our trailer was safely parked nearby. Our truck was in competent and trustworthy hands. The dealer had even loaned us a car at no charge. We wouldn’t be missing any meals because of the expenses. Indeed, we were blessed in many ways and supported by the kindness of strangers. Our mood transformed to one of gratitude for deliverance from something much worse.

And in that positive and expansive mood, way opened. I’m 78. I asked myself how much longer I was going to enjoy driving a big rig like ours. A year? Two? Why not give it up right now? I could have the trailer professionally transported to Key West. I could arrange for Anderson Ford to sell my truck. We could rent a car and be in Key West in two days.

All these arrangements were easily made. As I write, we are in Key West. We saw Mark’s robing ceremony and are enjoying getting to know our new granddaughter, Virginia Eloise. Way opens.

Richmond Shreve is a member of the Newtown Friends Meeting (Quaker) and lives in Newtown