



## **Small Law: Maybe This Is What We Wished For**

**Law Department Management**



I flew to my father's place to collect the [Radwood](#) eligible pickup truck he recently told me was mine if I wanted it. I drove it 552 miles back to my home without incident. This was summertime, and I was glad for the powerful air conditioning and the functioning cruise control that made the drive on the interstate much easier. At highway speeds, the truck was arguably more comfortable than the small sports car I normally drive.

The only thing that wasn't functioning properly at that point was the odometer, but I wasn't worried about that. Apparently, it had only recently ceased functioning, and I had already researched the issue and found a likely solution that would only set me back about US\$8 for parts and a couple of hours of tinkering.

## Tinkering

I ordered the parts (two tiny gears) and found a free weekend morning to install them. Helpful folks on the internet had already shown me how to do this; I had step-by-step instructions and pictures to go with them. I noticed a couple of the lights that illuminate the instrument cluster were out, so I decided to also replace all those bulbs while I was in there.

I extracted the instrument cluster and came inside to work at the table. Sure enough, once I opened it, I could see that the little gear attached to the tiny electric motor that advanced the display was crumbled and mostly gone, the victim of years and heat. I carefully installed the replacement gear,



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replaced the bulbs, put the cluster back together, and reinstalled the whole unit in the dash. I took it out for a test drive to check my handiwork and it still wasn't moving.

That's when I thought maybe I should've paid more attention to the second, larger gear included in the repair kit, despite there being no mention of it in the online forums. Lesson learned, I resolved to tackle it again soon, but didn't hesitate to use the truck in the meantime.

## Inspiration

On one trip, the weather was mild, and I had the windows down. I reached my destination and went to raise them, but nothing happened when I pressed the buttons. I completed my errand and when I returned the truck to go home, they were working again.

I didn't think much of it until a few weeks later when it happened again, only this time it was raining, and not only did the windows stay put, but the wipers were also out of commission. Thankfully, function returned after a few panicky moments.



Tools for extracting individual wires and clips from large plug harnesses - fun indeed

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I returned to the internet for help, and soon learned both functions were controlled by a processor attached to the back of the fuse box. I'm not particularly limber, so I waited for inspiration to strike, and months passed. During this time, the battery repeatedly discharged, a problem I read was also likely caused by that processor. I eventually decided to replace motivation with money and found a shop willing to tackle the repair along with replacing a few other worn items due for a refresh. Weeks later, they declared they couldn't find a replacement for the processor, and I collected my vehicle.

I eventually found the motivation, extracted the processor, and promptly found an online source for a replacement. I installed it, and sure enough, wipers and windows were working fine, and I had functionality in other areas I didn't know I was missing! Elated, I took it out for an overdue trip to the recycling center, and soon discovered I no longer had functioning turn signals.

I still don't have them, which is why I now own two sets of the items in the picture. Those are for extracting individual wires and clips from large plug harnesses, one of which I believe the repair shop damaged when trying (and failing, judging from the evidence) to access the processor. A couple of weeks ago, I theorized that this is where the turn signal problem originated, and proven it by wiggling the wires in back and seeing the turn signals come back to life. It seems that in all that wiggling I may also have loosened the wire to the starter relay, so now it won't start.

Does this sound like fun to you? I've frequently struggled to see it that way, but I should also mention that my *only* specific wish for our new home when we moved a few years back was that it have a garage large enough to include space for a vehicle I could tinker with in addition to sheltering the ones we use daily. I got my wish, and months later, I got the vehicle. When I first made that wish, I envisioned something smaller, older, with a convertible top, and made in Europe or Japan, but there's no doubt in my mind that this truck is a tinkerer's dream come true. I look forward to the day I can make better use of it, and continue to make it better as I go along.

## **Transforming angst into gratitude**

Isn't this what we signed up for as in-house practitioners, particularly in a small-law generalist setting? Aren't we there to help diagnose, repair, and improve, and to return the next day (or the next hour) to do it all over again? Even though some weeks may seem like a game of Whack-A-Mole, how often do we (and our friends in Human Resources) observe that if the problems stop coming, there's little need for us? I find this perspective very helpful for transforming angst into gratitude when the inbox starts to fill.

Also, everyone within earshot of me is sick of listening to me gripe about the damned truck, and I suspect I won't stop anytime soon, so thanks for taking a turn. ?

[Jeffrey W. Wheeler](#)





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