

GLOBAL NEWS



81-YEAR-OLD DIALYSIS PATIENT KICKED OUT OF CAB ON HOTTEST DAY OF THE YEAR!

Floridian Charles Brucks is 81, has failing kidneys, a bad heart, a degenerative spine disorder that has left him stooped and has to use a Zimmer frame and occasionally a wheelchair. He also has to go to his local hospital three times a week as a dialysis patient. He admits that he has little to feel happy about and says he tries to be nice but does have bad days.

On one particularly bad day, he complained to his taxi driver that their service was poor and used a swear word to emphasise the fact that he had waited too long for the driver to arrive. The cabbie then made him get out of the cab on the hottest day of the year, even though he was taking him from a dialysis clinic to his home about a mile away. The Yellow Cab driver said he wasn't going to be spoken to like that, stopped the cab and ordered Mr Brucks out. Brucks said he took a step, stumbled and fell. He also claimed that the driver took his Zimmer frame from the cab's boot, tossed it several yards away and drove off, leaving the WW2 vet lying by the side of the road with no shade or water.

The driver later told his boss that Brucks was standing with his walker when he left, although a passer-by found him 30 minutes later crumpled on the ground, with the walking frame out of reach. The temperature had been officially recorded as 97 degrees, but the heat index was between 105 and 110. Age groups were outraged by the incident, but a spokesman for the Orange County Sheriff's Office said no laws had been broken. "It may not have been very nice, but there's nothing criminal about it," said public information officer Jeff Williamson.

Mears Transportation, which owns Yellow Cab, has a policy that says a taxi driver may end a trip early "if the driver has reason to believe the passenger(s) may cause bodily injury to him/her, or the passengers become unruly, rowdy or cause physical damage to the vehicle or the driver." The Mears spokesman, Roger Chapin, said there have been no other complaints against the driver during the two years he had worked for the company. On this particular trip, Mr Chapin said the driver had called in to report that his passenger was belligerent, verbally abusive and using a profanity. "Clearly, what got lost in all the calls was that the gentleman was 81 and had a walker (Zimmer frame)," said Roger Chapin. "It is very unfortunate, but at what age or state of mind is it OK to be verbally abusive to a cabdriver?"

The driver, who is black, later said that Brucks had used the N-word, something the passenger vigorously denied, pointing out that his grandson is black and that there are numerous pictures of him in his home apartment. Mears later sent a second taxi to pick up Mr Brucks, but the second driver couldn't find him. Instead, an off-duty postman spotted Brucks on the ground and stopped.

The trouble began when Charles Brucks had to wait for 70 minutes after the dialysis clinic had called him a cab that afternoon. He'd already spent nearly four hours in dialysis and desperately wanted to go home and to bed. Though he often was able to drive himself to dialysis, he took taxis when feeling particularly bad. He said there had never been a problem before.

However, the driver had trouble finding the address, then had trouble finding Brucks. A Mears dispatcher phoned the clinic but couldn't get anyone to answer. Mr Brucks acknowledged that he was fed up by the time he finally got in the cab, though he insists he didn't call the driver names or threaten him. After calling Mears Yellow Cab to

complain that evening, he also decided to call the sheriff's office. "I was going to let it go," he said. "I haven't got too much time left to waste on complaining, but I just couldn't forget about that driver and what he did to me."

However, although the sheriff's office sent a deputy to take a report, they said there was probably little more that law enforcement could do. Randy Hunt, President of the Senior Resource Alliance of Central Florida, referred to the incident as blatant abuse. "This driver has been allowed to endanger a man's life and there is nothing the law can do? Then the law should be changed."

Mary Ellen Grant, executive director of Share the Care, a non-profit agency that aids family carers, said it highlighted a need in the community for special training for cabdrivers who dealt with the elderly. "So an 81-year-old argues with you," she said. "Big deal! Be a grown-up and take the high road and just take him home."

Mears Transportation admitted there was blame on both sides of the equation, but has still apologised to Mr Brucks. The spokesman emphasised that the cabbie had a good record and there was no reason to doubt his version, but added that it shouldn't have ended the way it did. "We just regret it ever happened," Roger Chapin said after calling Mr Brucks over that weekend and having what he described as a "nice chat." Yellow Cab also offered to give Mr Brucks a free taxi service to and from three dialysis appointments for the rest of his life.

Charles Brucks said he appreciated Mears' gesture and intends to use the service. "It's getting harder and harder for me to drive to the clinic," he said. "I just hope Yellow Cab don't change their minds once the heat is off."

EVEN JAPANESE DRIVERS GO TO THE TOILET!

When a Tokyo cabbie felt the need to spend a Yenny – sorry, Global News just couldn't resist that - a cheeky thief made off with his taxi while the driver was still zipping himself up! He said he had left the vehicle for 3 minutes to go and relieve himself and that when he returned, he saw the cab speeding off down the street. Fortunately, the driver's radio equipment included satellite tracking and the cab was soon found, together with the thief who was found standing next to the taxi urinating against the rear wheel!

When Taxi Globe asked if the driver and thief used Horsefelly Road, they told us that they didn't understand! The thief was charged with stealing a motor vehicle and the cabbie went back to work. "Next time I want to go, I'll wait till I get home," he told us...!

AFGHAN CABBY GUILTY OF WEAPONS CHARGES IN USA

A San Diego taxi driver – originally from Afghanistan but having lived in the USA for 10 years – has pleaded guilty to weapons charges after being found with a stash of hidden guns. Attiqullah Sayed Ilmadi allegedly took part in armed combat training in the California desert and has ties to an Afghan rebel leader. He also pleaded guilty to immigration charges after lying during his naturalisation proceedings when failing to mention a 1995 conviction in San Diego for soliciting prostitution.

During a search of his home, investigators found a listing in Ilmadi's personal phone book for an Afghan warlord allied to the Taliban. Ilmadi had driven a taxi in San Diego for several years, was said to be a devout Muslim who fought on behalf of US-supported rebels during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Not sure what our PCO would have made of him! He is to be deported...

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