Red Light, Green Light

Remember the Red Light, Green Light game you probably played as a child? One child yells out “Green light,” and the other children run. Then the child yells, “Red light,” and the children stop. On a dime. The fun begins when children get confused and stop when they should run and run when they should stop.

A recent conversation in a coffee shop reminded me that Red Light-Green Light is not always clear cut.

Woman: If the light is red, you stop.

Man: Even if there’s an emergency?

Woman: The law is the law. The policeman will write the ticket and the judge can decide.

Red Light: In a land not so far away, in a time not that long ago, “Leonard Deadwyler was shot and killed by an LAPD officer after allegedly speeding and running red lights while driving his wife, who was in labor, to the hospital. His wife later sued Los Angeles for wrongful death, but lost the case. However, his death helped spur the building of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital in South Central,” (Wikipedia).

Green Light: During that same era a young woman I knew in New York was driving out in Long Island after two o’clock in the morning. She was at an intersection when she saw a car approaching. “I have the light, you @%#&$!” She plowed ahead. The other driver had the red light, didn’t stop and drove through. The woman collided with the car, killing the man driving. She was not charged.

Do we have to consider the intention of legislators who write laws? What was their purpose? Who was the law designed to protect? Under what circumstances? These are some of the issues addressed by soon-to-be-retired Supreme Court Justice Breyer. You can get a FREE manuscript of Breyer’s lecture, Active Liberty: Interpreting Our Democratic Constitution, at [TannerLectures.Utah.edu](http://TannerLectures.Utah.edu)

My parents taught me two simple lessons - look both ways and remember traffic lights are not attached to brakes. That’s another story.

Have you ever played Red Light, Green Light? Please e-mail [jcromhsow@yahoo.com](mailto:jcromhsow@yahoo.com)