

Ordinary People...

[Continued from page 4]

They were from Missouri and drove a real nice fixed up Chevy El Camino. We met at an I-84 rest area in Oregon on a nice sunny day that was forecast to go down into the 20's that night.

I had been looking for a phone that wasn't there any longer and returned to the picnic table where I'd left my pack two minutes earlier. After grabbing something to eat out of my pack, I moved 50-75 feet away to view an Oregon road map that was attached to a wall.

About 30 seconds later, I heard a metallic sound, looked in the direction of the sound, and saw nothing. I then looked towards my

pack, and it was gone.

Praise God the thieves had to turn around in a cul-de-sac before exiting the rest area. That gave me enough time to run in front of their moving El Camino with my pack in the back.

It was either run over me or stop and the "show me" state couple chose the latter. I offered a deal of my pack for not writing their license tag number down. Their comment of "it was abandoned" reeked of lies as they sped away empty handed.

Probably you've not had everything stolen. That is your car, home, bed, food, clothes, money,

I.D., journal, Bible, camera, coats, toothbrush, etc. Everything! The pack had my everything, which makes it a heinous crime.

Us middle class white folks tend to get nervous around poor folks, homeless folks, people of color folks, and out of the ordinary folks. You know, they might do something to us.

We'd better add to that list ordinary looking middle age white folks who might pass for our neighbors too.

I'm glad I've decided to not write off white folks, people who drive Chevrolet vehicles, or anyone from Missouri.

When Jesus said to Peter you should forgive seven times seventy he meant it (Matthew 18:21-22). Missouri white folks driving Chevrolets have 489 more chances with me, but who's counting.

Till the next time...

In Christ's love,

Don

Miles to date: 7,413
Current location: Kansas
Money picked up along road:
\$602.63
Unsolicited money given by
motorists: \$566.44

A World Seen Through Excited Eyes...

[Continued from page 1]

I thought of these things when I sat across from Julie at Community Kitchen not long ago. She is ten years old, and she has experienced homelessness for much of her life. Right now, her family is relatively stable. With her mother and brother, she lives near her school and has good friends in the neighborhood. Her smile and the light in her eyes are just as potent as they were when she was living with her family in our "shelter" at Clairvaux Farm.

To my surprise, she asked me about the new family residence building we are constructing. She was very excited about the project, and she had question after rapid-fire question! I didn't realize she even knew about it, as she lived in our community over a year ago, before we had broken ground. But she and her family had heard the news, and they made it a point to get people to drive them to Clairvaux Farm from time to time to take a peek and see how the work was going. The more we spoke, the more I realized that, just from hearing about it, she was as thrilled as anyone at the prospect of this new "home" for families with children who are, as she had been, enduring homelessness.

Yet, how can a homeless shelter be exciting for anyone? A shelter building, in itself, maybe not, but the beauty of human community is

powerfully invigorating. A new structure is not as arousing to the heart as the vision of a new place to call *home*. I quickly realized that Julie had expanded her outlook, and the boundaries of her safety. She was beginning to see how *home* was only partly in the security of a beloved place – a familiar house or room. *Home* is also in the beauty of our relationships and the confidence of old friends. It is the warmth of knowing that, through time and distance, the human soul itself is a refuge and safe residence – one that is not easily shaken. *Home* is to know how very much we are loved.

I think that is why the holiday season from Thanksgiving through Christmas is so important to our community. Among folks experiencing homelessness, this festive season may be one of intense hopelessness which edges toward despair. The recollection of past rejection and neglect, and memory of lurking fear and loneliness, can easily outweigh any aspiration for a bright future. Because of this, we work especially hard to create an atmosphere of celebration and happiness. For those who might dwell on their own grief there is always the possibility of joining in the effort to make the time bright and pleasant for others, especially the children. It can't erase the blight of past darkness, but neither can anyone ignore the joy experi-

enced in helping bring happiness to others. The restoration of the spirit of excitement is as much a part of our work as is the provision of housing and meals.

A design of shelter, any temporary or transitional housing for homeless persons, ought to include the incentive of true community. A sterile atmosphere – rows of beds and lots of rules with control and order as the objective – can lack the important dimension of the possibility of passion. True, allowing for excitement also brings the prospect of chaos. Human relationships are not always predictable, and the entry of adventurous spirit into the mix may bring in negative impulses.

Yet, human love is precisely the opposite of neat, precise orderings. That same electricity which lifts us out of a drowsy, predictable place, also takes us to

worlds never before imagined. We lose control, but our scope of *home* expands, as does our confidence and strength of will. The end of homelessness in a person's life also means the restoration of an ability to look toward the majestic, clear horizon -- where the power of heaven meets earth.

The holiday season seems to accomplish that for us in a small way, as does a chance encounter with a child whose eyes are full of wonder. It is extraordinary that she can see, in the emergence of a new building, the birth of wonderful kinships and new thoughts. It can only be explained as a function of the human soul which has been touched by a powerful force of love. Someday, somehow, we will all be home again. And this inexpressible possibility is what we know lies on the other side of that exciting horizon.



On Our Own

October
Open house
in their new
center at 114
E. Main St.,
Elkton, MD
Come by
and visit!