



## "Get your hands out of your pockets..."

...and cross your arms." "Oh, boy, here we go again," and "I don't need this aggravation," filled my mind for the umpteenth time. Doesn't the police officer know my hands are cold and that's why they are in my pockets? Doesn't he know with my damaged shoulder muscles it's quite painful to cross my arms with a 60 pound pack on my back? Guess not. It probably wouldn't matter even if he did. Why don't they leave me alone?

Why is it while legally and correctly following the laws of the land as I walk the streets and highways of America I gotta hear this stuff? No, the answer isn't that I have 20/20 hearing. Why is it when someone walks with me I've only been hassled once? Could it be that this person looked a little ragged like me? Could it be all the other times those that walked with me looked bright and shiny? You know, they didn't look homeless.

I was stopped once because I looked like a terrorist with my large backpack brightly lit up with a road construction vest attached to it. The vest is there so cell phoners, drinkers, daydreamers, and half-fallen-asleepers can see they are about to run me over and get their vehicle back on the road. Most of the time the vest works, although there have been about twenty times I've had to play matador or be run over. With the five who deliberately tried to run me over, the vest probably helped them sight their target better. It's hard to forget the look in someone's eyes who is going to do me in on purpose. Been there, done that, and I'm the one who'll be squished like a cockroach under someone's foot. It's not fun playing matador or juicy cockroach.

Anyways, back to being a terrorist. Here are some suggestions that might help you someday: 1. Don't look homeless (whatever that

looks like) and walk the nation's roads. 2. Especially don't carry a large backpack capable of holding lots of explosives. 3. When showing your I.D. (if that's what you choose to do), make sure it doesn't show you're an organ donor if you have a West Virginia driver's license.

Seems the snake wrapped around the cross that M.D.'s use for the symbol for Dr. can be misconstrued by some in authority to mean you are a pilot. A cross with a snake wrapped around it (the medusa) can look like an airplane, and terrorists, since September 11, 2001, fly planes. I'm sorry West Virginia puts the medusa next to the I.D. picture on their driver's license. I've flown a plane twice and readily admit it, but didn't do it to practice destruction maneuvers. Honest!! One police officer was sure he had himself a real terrorist.

I know some of you are reading this and going "no way". Well, "way" to you 'cause it happened to me and I still haven't even crossed the Mississippi River yet. I hope they don't think I'll be blowing up a bridge crossing the mighty Mississippi. The Church of the Brethren (my denomination) would have a fit and fire me if I'd be a terrorist or do violent acts. With unemployment so high I might not be able to gain meaningful employment ever again.

Also, if you walk across America, be ready to be picked up and put in the paddy wagon for causing a car wreck. I've learned, even though I'm walking and not riding across America, to get in the police van when I'm told to. Bigger trouble awaits me if I refuse. I told the officer who informed me there were four witnesses who saw me cause the wreck that if a blade of grass growing along the side of the road, or a custom '57 Chevy in a parking lot, or a bathing beauty



hanging out at a motel swimming pool can cause car wrecks, then I'm guilty. I don't have control of drivers gawking and rubbernecking while checking me out. If I'm off the road and they are driving, it's their responsibility to pay attention to the car turning to left that is stopped ahead of them. Praise God! After being transported to the scene of the crime the officer got to the truth which was that the driver wasn't paying attention. It felt good to be free again and back on the road.

Sometimes I've taken my pack off when I've been stopped. I remember a couple of times the conversation went something like this: "You don't have weapons in there you'll hurt me with?" What I'd like to say back is "Like if I had some I'd tell you about it", but the reply is, "Didn't I just tell you I'm walking across America for Jesus Christ? Having weapons or trying to hurt you doesn't fit with Jesus."

Occasionally I've found dangerous-looking butcher knives along the road. These could be viewed, I'm guessing, as dangerous weapons, maybe even weapons of mass destruction. Praise God I haven't been asked about weapons while something like that is in my pack. As Ricky Ricardo used to say to Lucille Ball, "You've got some 'splainin' to do". Yes I would.

Kansas unofficially has earned the nickname "The Gestapo State" as far as this walk is concerned. I walked through the majority of counties in Kansas and was interrogated in most. Usually I look forward to the next county line,

but not in Kansas, as it meant new trouble instead of progress. There was more hassling in Kansas than all the other states combined.

Because of Kansas "security" I started a policy that I'll trade my I.D. for the police officer's first name and a snapshot of him next to or in his cruiser. A few decided this was a good trade and smiled for the camera. Most wanted nothing to do with this proposal. "It's against regulations," or just "NO!" would be the reply. Many good conversations arose from the lack of a trade. Usually we get along better when we can put ourselves in the shoes of others.

One who traded was Sergeant Mike from Kansas. He'd stopped me for no reason except I was following the laws of the land and minding my own business walking where I was supposed to on a U.S. highway. It became apparent he wasn't going to accept "no" for an answer to my I.D., so I offered the trade and he accepted.

After I gave him my I.D. and reached for my camera he exclaimed, "If you take my picture, I'll arrest you!" Not knowing how the law works and figuring someone ought to have the right to refuse their picture being taken, I quit pursuing my camera and his mug shot. I did ask him, "Didn't we just make a trade, I.D. for photo?" His reply was "I don't know what you're talking about. We never agreed to anything like that."

[Continued on page 11...]