



Senior Moments

For only the second time on the walk I took myself out to an eating establishment. Lifting my spirits, filling the tank, and being able to legally sit down for awhile were the main reasons this happened. A pizza place with an all you can eat lunch buffet was the perfect place for meeting the above requirements.

I'm sick of being viewed as a loser by most of humanity. It sometimes gets me down. That *loser* fact makes a difficult occupation much more difficult. Spending some of my 11 cents per hour wage at this restaurant allowed me for a moment in time to be somebody. That is as long as the moment in time didn't last too long.

For the first time in my life I was asked "Are you a senior?" I replied, "It depends on what age being a senior starts." She said, "55," and I was in, having turned 55 two months earlier. I don't know if I should feel good or bad that the cashier didn't ask for my I.D. as proof. The bill of \$5.32, including the senior discount emptied my wallet of 48 plus hours labor. Maybe you can understand why I've only gone out to eat on my own twice during the three plus years of this walk.

After awhile I waddled out to the pavement, the steamy hot pavement, and wondered why I'd shoved the last piece of pizza down my throat. Stooping over to pick up homeless coins was more difficult than usual. Maybe the last two or three pieces were too much.

Not long after leaving the Harrisonville, Missouri city limits, Cass County became my home again. Not long after that the Sheriff's Department stopped me. This was the opening act of what I now unfondly remember as the Cass County incident.

If you've ever been to large grocery store or super center type retailer, you've probably been asked by the cashier how you're doing. I have and don't think the person truly cares how I am. They are just trained to say, "How ya doing?" During the 15,000 miles of being stopped by law enforcement 99% of the time they don't care how I'm doing either

when they ask that first question, "How ya doing?"

Please understand I'm not stopped for breaking any laws. I'm walking where I'm supposed to be walking and minding my own business. Sometimes I'm stopped, they say, to be investigated. Some of the crimes I've maybe committed are being a child molester, going to my meth lab, being a terrorist, blowing up mailboxes, doing destruction at the railroad, walking in the road, walking in the middle of the road, photographing small horsies, photographing large refineries and chemical plants, causing a car wreck, being seen on *America's Most Wanted* T.V. show, and so on. Believe me, this gets old after awhile. I think it would be easier on me if I'd just accept the fact that I'm a filthy cockroach or a disease carrying rat. Maybe then the way I am treated by people would be O.K. But I am a real person, under the scruffy appearance, under the large backpack. I'm not a cockroach or rat. I'm an O.K. human being. I'm not very much different than most of humanity.

The second or third question is "Where are you headed?" or "Where are you going?" I don't know why I'm asked that because I'm not believed most of the time. And then its "Do you have I.D. on you?", and then the problems begin.

It's my unscientific opinion as more Patriot Acts are passed, as we get more fearful the screws are being tightened down on the fringes of society (like me) and maybe down the road the screws will be tightened on us all. I give my name, my full legal name, to law enforcement because that is the law, but don't get my I.D. out of my backpack, because that isn't the law. Doing this leads to some interesting discussions. Doing this brings the ornery-ness out in ornery officials.

Backup was called and five minutes later a second deputy arrived. It did no good to say to the second officer, "I already answered that question." So I answered all the questions over again including "Do you have dangerous weapons on you or in your



backpack you could hurt me with?" I guess walking for Jesus Christ doesn't preclude me from carrying dangerous weapons. There are countless thousands of Christians who carry human killing weapons while working every day. I guess maybe they think I am one of them, so I answered, "No."

I listened to all the rhetoric and lecturing I've heard so many times including "Why if you aren't hiding anything are you hassling us?" I want to say, "Look, who is stopping and hassling who? I'm just peaceably abiding by the laws of this land, minding my own business, walking across America! You say I'm wasting your time, well how bout you wasting mine?" I've heard it over and over, "We have the power and you have none." Sometimes I wonder if this is the land of the free anymore. Free if a person is white and driving a good looking vehicle, and not breaking any laws maybe. If this sounds angry, I am, I am. I have much more empathy for those who are messed with just because of how their skin color is or how they look. I don't like the direction we're heading in. We better be careful what we agree is O.K. for the sake of security as all the security in the world isn't going to make us safe.

After 30 minutes of hassling, I was told to take my backpack off, was frisked, tightly handcuffed, and put into the no room backseat of the 1st officer's cruiser. After 15 minutes of sitting, while the two officers were probably discussing what to do with me, my backpack was put in the trunk, I was belted in my seat in a

very painful position, and was transported to the county jail.

Four or five surgically gloved sheriff's deputy jailers "greeted" me as I was escorted out of the cruiser. The first sarcastic question was, "Are you going swimming?" Immediately, one of them found my spoon in a plastic baggie in a pocket of my pack. Before I was led away as the officer was carefully inspecting it for cocaine residue, I told her I buy frozen concentrate orange juice and that's my O.J. spoon. The last I saw was the opening of my water bottle and the sniffing of it's contents.

I was very roughly patted down, lectured to, and asked the same questions for the third time. The backs of my shoes were stepped on and I was told to walk out of my shoes. Then my pack went to the "tearing apart" room and I went to the holding room and prayed.

A few minutes later one of the officers showed me my I.D., and they ran me, like they all want to do, and I came out clean, like I always do. They wanted me bad. They wanted my Social Security number, which I didn't give them. They went through everything piece by piece in my backpack. When I was let out of the holding cell, and was lead to the evidence room, I couldn't believe what I saw. My worldly possessions completely covered the floor of the room. They went through my journal, photos, notes, everything. It was like a tornado had torn everything apart. They had a pile of things from my pack that looked like they would be drug related and a sealed evidence

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