

June 25, 2012

Hello World!

When is having cancer a blessing? When it gets you out of prison - even if only for one day. Last Tuesday, the 19th, I was shackled, handcuffed, and waist chained, placed into a reenforced steel box, loaded into a prison van with two heavily armed guards, followed closely by a chase car with two more officers and driven 45 miles to Mark Twain hospital.

How blessed was I? More than I deserve. The van left Mule Creek State Prison at 6:30 AM, traveling south-east from Amador to Calaveros County - Home of the Frog Jumping Championships. We sped up, over, around, and through a romanticist's countryside.

Forgive me for waxing poetic but the sun's rays lit up hills covered in two to three feet of brown weeds, the dried vegetation turned golden resembling amber waves of grain. Standing as majestic sentinels, proud oaks by the thousands stood their ground, their outstretched limbs creating the first shade of the day. Through my box's 4" portals I soaked it all in. We traveled across the Mokolumne Dam, a single-lane road that held back the sparkling waters of Dupree lake. Off the two-lane winding highway, homes, first built as gold rush cabins hid behind bends, their narrow dirt drives spoke of quiet solitude. "Who lives there?" I wanted to shout.

Then I saw it. An updated blast from my vehicular past. On a hill that looked like a woman's rounded hip, up a smooth fire break, sat a 1963 Volkswagon bug. One would believe it was abandoned except it had been meticulously restored. Painted cherry red, it glowed hot against the brown dirt and golden brush. It's front wheels sporting chrome moons were angled just so - as if preparing to flee. "Why are you there?" Wishing to be its owner I conjured a lovers rendezvous. Two impassioned youth, now exhausted bodies asleep on a blanket just out of sight. "Yes, that's it and you, the Bug, are standing protective against prying eyes."

The 2:30 PM return trip was filled with cars, trucks, and people, all hurriedly on their way to some where. None knew that within the nondescript van followed by sharpshooters was a chained and post-op bandaged man. That man, being me, again soaked up all I saw. Besides the natural and manmade sites, all enhanced by my depravation, I saw a carefree, twenty-something woman walking along a sidewalk at the edge of the historic town of Ione. Wearing a pink poka-dot summer dress and sandals, she stopped at the corner while the van turned in front of her. As if using x-ray vision to penetrate the dark windows and steel, she saw me...and smiled.

Hers was the kind of smile that imparts understanding and strength. Without words, she said, "We are waiting for you." Meaning the amber waves of grain, the passion, and the people, it's all waiting for you. Hang in there!

As the van turned into the prison I thanked God for my cancer.

Thanks for checking in on me.

Cordially,

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