

January 13, 2013

Hello World!

Six o'clock in the morning, 28 degrees and I am lying on the bone-chilling asphalt. Half way between my housing unit and the chow hall, at least I am not alone in my indignant position. Three hundred men who were going to or coming from morning feeding have been lying on the track for 25 minutes - at least it is not raining.

The cause of our discomfort? Two pod buddies, roommates, and jogging partners decided that it would be better to fight outside in the frosty weather than in the comfort of their heated room. The effect of their brawl is that when the alarm sounded, all inmates must get all the way down - prone out. These two friends were very inconsiderate toward the rest of us. They were also very moronic. They obviously forgot their loving mothers' instruction of - "Use your words." Then again, it was probably their words that led their fists to finish the conversation.

Hmm? I was led to believe that this level II prison was a place of privilege. That only the best of the best, the well-behaved, and self-disciplined were allowed here. Apparently, I was misinformed. I find it interesting that as the years passed, my tolerance for poor decision makers and bad behavior has come close to zero. Living in an environment supposedly of us inmates against them staff, I am suppose to root for my team. This, however, is not the case. Is it a form of Stockholm syndrome? No. I simply want to be on the winning team and 'my' teammates repeatedly prove that they have no clue as to how to succeed in life. It is as if they are playing Russian roulette with a bullet in every cylinder.

I have learned that to avoid conflict, a little humility and keeping my eyes on the goal of freedom keeps my tongue in check and my fists in my pockets. Too many inmates concern themselves with what others think of

them and especially not looking weak. Interesting, because they do not want to become victims, yet many are repeat offenders having left many victims in their wake. Hmm? Curious and puzzling. Are they unable to connect the dots?

I admit that my passage within the prison system has been blessed. God has kept me away from the psychopaths and I have kept a close watch on my surroundings. I walk boldly in the confidence of God's protection, but I do not strut proudly as if I am more important than my fellow inmates. It is a delicate balance where my best tool to prevent falling a foul of inmates or staff is a genuine smile. I do not wield it as a weapon, but as a comforting and understanding hug, a nod of sympathy toward the recipient, saying, "I understand - we are in this together."

I realize that everyone, inmates and free people, have bad days, personal tragedies, and emotional ups and downs. However, within these moments of crisis, how each reacts says a lot about character. I have become disciplined enough to examine self instead of lashing out at the guilty or innocent. Am I serenely perfect? Far from it, but I am happy to report that I have all my teeth to smile with and while pruned out on the frigid ground, my hands were in my pockets.

Oh, and when we finally made it to the chow hall for breakfast, it consisted of fluffy pancakes kept warm by considerate cooks.

Thanks for checking in on me.

Cordially,

Gregory Barnes Watson

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Novel: A Thundering Wind

Journal: A Year in a Life Sentence

} Amazon.com