

THE ONLY THING CONSISTENT ABOUT PRISON LIFE IS THE INCONSISTENCY

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WHEN THE TERM PRISON LIFE IS MENTIONED OUT IN THE FREE WORLD, THERE SEEMS TO ALWAYS BE THE THOUGHT OF A MONOTONOUS LIFE STYLE WHERE EVERYTHING IS DONE IN THE SAME MANNER AT THE SAME TIME OF THE DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK. AS MUCH AS IT WOULD SEEM LIKE THAT'S THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE, IT UNFORTUNATELY IS NOT TRUE. YOU SEE, I'M THE BORING TYPE OF INDIVIDUAL WHO LIKES TO GET INTO A PARTICULAR PATTERN OF DOING THINGS & STICKING WITH IT; NO CHANGES AND NO SURPRISES. THAT WAY I KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT AND WHEN. BUT DUE TO THE CONSTANT CHANGES HAPPENING ALL AROUND ME (MAINLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT I'VE MOVED TO 7 DIFFERENT CAMPS IN MY 12 YEARS OF BEING LOCKED UP) I NEVER SEEM TO BE ABLE TO REACH THE ECSTASY OF THE MONOTONOUS LIFE I HAVE SO DREAMED FOR IN THE PRISON SYSTEM. NATURALLY THERE'S GOING TO BE DIFFERENCES IN THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE FROM ONE CAMP TO ANOTHER. BUT THERE CAN ALSO BE A NUMBER OF DIFFERENCES AT THE SAME CAMP AND IT WILL ALL DERIVE FROM SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS WHO HAPPENS TO BE ON DUTY THAT DAY. IT'S OBVIOUS THE OFFICERS DIDN'T GET TOGETHER AT THE OPENING OF EACH OF THESE CAMPS & DECIDE, "OKAY, THIS IS THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING TO OPERATE HERE". IF THEY DID, THEY OBVIOUSLY FORGOT TO INFORM THE NEW OFFICERS AS THE YEARS HAVE PASSED.

CONTINUE WITH ME AS I TAKE YOU THROUGH A FEW OF THE SIMPLE EVENTS OF PRISON LIFE THAT ARE ASSUMED TO JUST FLOW IN A CONSISTENT PATTERN, BUT INSTEAD NEVER CEASE TO CHANGE.

THE SUBJECT OF EATING COMES FIRST TO MY MIND. PROBABLY BECAUSE I'M IN THE MIDST OF TRYING TO GAIN BACK SOME OF MY WEIGHT FROM THE LAST CAMP I WAS AT. MY WEIGHT HAS FLUCTUATED FROM 155 lbs TO 132 lbs, DEPENDING ON WHICH CAMP I WAS AT. THE TWO EXTREMES ARE WHERE AT ONE CAMP IF YOU HAVEN'T FINISHED YOUR FOOD WHEN THEY DECIDE IT'S TIME TO GO, THEY SIMPLY TELL YOU TO RIDE OR SLIDE. (GET OUT OR MOVE TO THE NEXT ROW OF TABLES) SO I'M ALWAYS GOING TO BE ABLE TO FINISH MY MEAL AND THE LEFT OVERS OF ANYONE ELSE'S AT THE TABLE. BUT AT ANOTHER CAMP THEY WILL GIVE ME ONLY 5 MINUTES AND THEN TELL ME TO GET OUT, SO I JUST HAVE TO DUMP WHATEVER FOOD I COULDN'T INHALE THAT FAST & WALK OUT STILL HUNGRY. I'VE GOT TO ADMIT THOUGH, THE FOOD AT THAT PLACE WAS SICK. SO WHO KNOWS, IT WAS PROBABLY TO MY BENEFIT THAT I DIDN'T EAT IT ALL ANYWAY. THE WAY THINGS ARE RUN DURING THESE MEAL TIMES IS WHAT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCES IN BETWEEN THE TWO EXTREMES. ON ONE DAY I'M TOLD TO WALK FROM THE SERVING WINDOW STRAIGHT TO THE DRINK MACHINE, BUT THE NEXT TIME I'M TOLD TO GO WALK AROUND THE LAST ROW OF TABLES FIRST. THEN, AFTER I GET SET ON THAT PATTERN FOR A COUPLE OF MEALS, I GET YELLED AT FOR DOING IT, BECAUSE THIS TIME I'VE WALKED BEHIND A CAPTAIN SITTING ON ONE OF THE TABLES MONITORING EVERYTHING. OR THERE MIGHT BE SOMEONE WHO WANTS ME TO GO PUT MY TRAY AT THE TABLE FIRST & THEN GO GET MY DRINK. NEXT THING TO WATCH OUT FOR IS WHICH WAY THEY ARE FILLING THE TABLES; FROM BACK TO FRONT? OR FRONT TO BACK? THEN WE HAVE THE ISSUE OF HOW THE OFFICER CONDUCTS HIM OR HERSELF TO ACCOMPLISH GETTING THEIR POINT ACROSS AS TO WHEN IT'S TIME

TO FINISH UP. THE TWO EXTREMES I'VE SEEN ARE OFFICERS WHO THINK THEY NEED TO BLOW A WHISTLE AND SCREAM AT THE TOP OF THEIR LUNGS ABOUT HOW ROW 1 NEEDS TO GET OUT, ROW 2 HAS TWO MINUTES LEFT AND ANY OTHER KIND OF ORDERS THEY THOUGHT WAS NECESSARY. THEN I'VE SEEN AN OFFICER WHO COULD ACCOMPLISH THE SAME TASK BY JUST WALKING UP AND DOWN THE ISLES SLOWLY AND LIGHTLY TAP ON THE TABLES. THEN WHEN I LEAVE, CAN I JUST WALK STRAIGHT TO THE DUMP WINDOW OR WILL I HAVE TO WALK TO THE BACK WALL AND WALK ALONG THE FAR SIDE TO REACH THE SAME DESTINATION. NATURALLY YOU HAVE MANY KINDS OF OTHER OFFICERS WHO FIT IN BETWEEN THESE TWO EXTREMES, SO I NEVER KNOW WHICH DAYS TO BRING MY EAR PLUGS. SOME WILL ALLOW ME TO TALK QUIETLY, SOME WON'T. SOME WILL ALLOW ME TO TRADE FOOD, SOME WON'T. SOME WILL WATCH ME LIKE A HAWK TO BE SURE I DON'T SNEAK ANY FOOD BACK TO MY CELL, OTHERS COULDN'T CARE LESS. OF COURSE, THERE ARE ONES AT SOME CAMPS WHO ARE SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT THE FOOD IS SO BAD I WOULDN'T TRY ANYWAY.

THE KITCHEN ITSELF PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN DESTROYING ANY FORM OF CONSISTENCY AS WELL. LIKE WHEN I RECEIVE THIS WEEKS THURSDAY LUNCH ON TUESDAY. (OH GREAT. YOU MEAN TO TELL ME I CARRIED THIS MAYONNAISE SQUEEZUM ALL THE WAY DOWN HERE FOR NOTHING?) OR WHEN THEY DON'T MAKE ENOUGH OF SOMETHING ON TIME AND SO I DON'T EVEN GET CALLED TO GO TO CHOW UNTIL AN HOUR LATER THAN USUAL. (A REAL FAVORITE FOR THE BREAKFAST MEALS.) SO NOW THE ENTIRE FIRST HALF OF THE DAY IS ALL AN HOUR

(TO BE CONTINUED)