

PETTINESS, TAKEN TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL  
Monday  
April 17, 2017

What happens when you take a buffoon, give him (or her) a badge, some authority and the full weight of the State's judicial system to back up any boneheaded decision he makes? To put it simply, (s)he turns into a tyrant.

Take what happened to me a couple of weeks ago. I submitted a request for a religious special purchase order, which was first approved by the religious spiritual leader, and then the sergeant who works in our Receiving and Release (R&R). Both of them (presumably) reviewed it and then approved it without requesting that any changes be made. When I received my official approval form, I mailed it out and sat back to await delivery.

A couple of weeks later, my order arrived and I was called up to pick it up. Rather than opening it and inspecting it in my presence, as the rules required, someone had opened, inventoried and made a determination as to what I could, and couldn't have. While doing so, the free gifts included by the package vendor was removed, and kept by whoever inspected the package, without any notice provided to me that something had been removed. When I arrived to receive my package, an officer yelled over to the window that I was at that the package contained a number of items I wasn't allowed to receive, but I didn't respond as he wasn't the officer who'd be giving me my package, and therefore, anything that I said would have been considered to be a waste of time and energy on my part.

When the Sgt. came over with my package, I immediately seen a list of the so-called unauthorized items, along with an explanation as to why I wasn't permitted to have them. First up was the sterling silver necklace I'd ordered. According to them, I couldn't have it, not because it wasn't authorized, but because necklaces have to be ordered with a religious medallion, as a set, and there was only a necklace in the box. I patiently pointed out that I already had a necklace, religious medallion and a jump ring in my possession, which I was turning in to get the new items, and then pointed out the fact that I had ordered the necklace, medallion and jump ring as a set, but that they were out of the particular medallion that I attempted to order. The issue was tabled, and we proceeded to the next item on the list of so-called contraband items.

The next item was a jump ring. Now, for those who aren't familiar with what a jump ring is, if you have a necklace with a medallion, take it off and look closely at the tiny, circular piece of metal holding your medallion to the necklace. If you don't have a medallion, then look at the clasp. You see that little circle where the clasp hooks onto? That's a jump ring. According to the officer who made the decision about what I could and couldn't have, jump rings were permitted if they came attached to the necklace, as either a part of the clasp, or part of the medallion, but not if they were ordered separate, either with a medallion and necklace, or as a replacement for a broken jump ring. This item, too, was put to the side with the necklace.



The final set of items were some five 1 inch "Swarovski Crystal Elements Faceted Fancy Cut Stones." Immediately, I'm told that I can't have the stones because the maximum size of beads we're permitted is only 6 millimeters in diameter.

Now, to better understand this particular issue, it might help to understand what happened with another guy just a few weeks prior to this. He'd ordered some Swarovski Crystal Elements 1.2 millimeter rhinestone crystals. When they arrived, he was told he couldn't have them because, even though they were smaller than 6mm in diameter, they weren't technically considered beads, since they didn't have any holes drilled in them to allow for stringing onto a necklace. With that piece of information...

Again, I patiently explained that these were stones, not beads, and that, as stones, the rules concerning what was, and wasn't, permissible were different. When it came to stones, the rules clearly stated that inmates could have a maximum of one set of five stones, at a maximum of 1" in diameter /or/ a maximum of one set of ten stones at a maximum of  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter. I opted for the larger stones, and since I wasn't sure where they'd be measuring the "diameter" from, I made sure that it measured no more than 1" at its lengthiest point.

It took a few minutes of patient explanation, followed by showing them the copy of the rules I brought along with me, for just this purpose, and the Sgt. was actually about to give me the stones until the officer from the other window came rushing over to give his two cents. Again, I patiently, and politely, explained why I could have these, despite them being larger than 6mm in "diameter." It took a few minutes, but I finally managed to convince him, but now we started arguing about whether or not these were in fact "stones."

According to this new officer, these were "crystals," and not "stones." (Stop laughing, I'm serious!) As such, they weren't authorized. Again, I patiently, and politely, tried to explain my position. For starters, "crystals" are "stones," as any elementary school student who's taken even one geology class can tell you, although I wisely didn't point out their superior intellect to him. I continued, pointing out that crystals are stones because they are mined from the Earth, after which they're cut and polished. However, this wasn't a determination that he needed to make, as that determination had already been made by the company who manufacturers them, in this case Swarovski, who advertises them as "Faceted Fancy Cut Stones." As this issue had already been determined by Swarovski, why is it an issue now?



While the officer didn't exactly come right out and admit that, yes, these crystals were indeed stones, you could nevertheless see the grudging admission on his face, which was supported by the next argument he attempted to use to explain why these weren't authorized. According to him, I'm allowed to order and possess a maximum of one set of five 1" stones, but this wasn't a "set" of five 1" stones, these were three individual 1" stones. Again, I tried to patiently, and politely, explain that I'd ordered a total of five 1" stones, verified by the receipt, and the notation on it by the vendor saying they only had three of the stones I'd ordered. This, however, wasn't good enough. Instead, what I needed to do was order the stones as a single set of five 1" stones, not as one order of five individual 1" stones.

I can hear some of you laughing, while others are snorting at the pettiness exhibited, but I assure you that this is "par for the course" around here. This particular officer is so well known that many inmates refuse to show up to get their packages if he's working, choosing instead to wait for hours at-a-time on his off days to pick them up without any incident. Sadly, he's caught onto this little trick, which is why he now opens up all of our packages outside of our presence and writes down which items his fellow officers are to retain.

I'd love to say that this was the last item he tried to withhold from me, but sadly, this just wasn't the case. By this time, he's pretty pissed off at me for having had the audacity to speak out in support of myself, so now he's taken his pettiness to a whole new level. I'd watched him as he passed out the package to the guy at the next window, and I observed him passing out multiple rolls of thread, which was permissible under the rules and regulations, but now that he was so ticked off at me, my multiple rolls of thread suddenly became an issue. He pulled out a single roll of thread and gave it to me, saying that I was only allowed to have one roll of thread, and that if I wanted to pull up the rules and regulations to try to support myself, that maybe I'd better check and see what they said about thread. Of course, I'm explaining this minus the attitude and body language, but you get the message.

As I was about to leave, he must have had second thoughts as to how far he'd taken his harassment, either that, or he was employing a common technique to attempt to manipulate me into thinking he was my "friend," that he was merely doing his "job," but that he was willing to bend the rules a little bit in an attempt to help me out. The idea here is that, if you believe that someone did you a favor, he doesn't come across as so much of an adversary, and therefore, it becomes more difficult to complain about the other things he did. The technique works equally well when pulled over by cops when you've been speeding, although the employment is slightly different. In that scenario, you want to make the officer laugh, feel at ease and be comfortable with you in the first 30 seconds of being pulled over, because if you can, it becomes more difficult for him to write you a ticket as he now views you as "friendly" instead of "adversarial."



Either way, as I was about to leave, he decides that I can, after all, exchange my old, cheap metal necklace for the new, sterling silver rope I'd just ordered.

And if you've just said "at least he let you trade in your necklace," then you've just fallen into the trap. For starters, I wasn't "given" anything. This was something I was entitled to, regardless of his personal feelings on the matter, but nevertheless, if you said it, then you see how easy it is to fall into that trap, which is why they do it the way they do. (Otherwise, he would have given me the necklace at the beginning of the conversation, before I felt any sting from having so much property withheld from me.)

When I returned to my cell, I did as he instructed and looked up the rules on how many rolls of thread we were allowed to have in our possession. The reality of the situation is that I should have done this when I was standing there in front of him, but truth be told, by the time the thread became an issue, I was so disappointed that I couldn't exactly think straight. Of course, his attempts to intimidate me weren't exactly helping matters, either. Still, I can't exactly go back in time and change things, so all I could do was focus on where to proceed from here, so I looked up the rule to see how it was worded. Sure enough, he'd exceeded his authority again as the rule actually said that we were permitted "sinew or thread in rolls no greater than 50 feet." Notice it says "rolls," as in plural, and not a single roll, so I promptly wrote him a request and pointed this out, requesting that I be provided with the additional 7 rolls he'd held onto. After waiting for several weeks, he sends me his response, stating that I was right, that I can indeed have more than one roll of thread, so long as the rolls don't exceed 50' in length, but he'd measured the thread I ordered and it was a whopping 54'. He went on to say that, as a result, I needed to return the roll he'd given me.

Yeah, fat chance of that happening. The first thing I did after trying to file my appeal was use the thread in a project. Still, I had a few feet left on that roll, so I dutifully returned it to him, as instructed. Something tells me he's going to think I'm a smartass when he gets what's left of that bobbin, but if he can't take a joke, then fuck him, right?

Seriously though, I didn't send him what was left to be a smartass, I sent it to him because this was legitimately all I had left on that roll, and he insisted it be returned. As far as why I'd ordered a roll of thread with 54' on it instead of 50', when it comes to placing orders for anything other than publications, our options are, and this is putting it mildly, "extremely limited." We can **only** order from those companies which have been preapproved by the prison, companies who have agreed to do business with the prison on the prison's terms, which means that the options given to us by these companies are also limited. In this instance, I can't order thread spooled onto cards, I have to order thread sold on rolls, or bobbins, to be more precise, and the shortest length of thread sold on a roll is 54', which also happens to be the same rolls of thread ordered by us for years now, without any problems before now. All of a sudden, it's an issue, which begs the question of "why?"



There are lots of plausible explanations for this. First of all, what's supposed to happen when you give someone who was bullied throughout his childhood life a badge, and worse, the full weight of the State to back him up, no matter how idiotic his decisions? Which brings me to the second reason they do the things they do: because no matter how stupid their actions, their fellow officers will **always** support them. In other words, there's literally no consequences for their misbehavior, and as any criminal will tell you, when there's no consequences for their misbehavior, it's open season.

Of course, it could be something as simple as being born with an abnormally small penis. I suppose if I was born with such a defect, then I'd be mad at the well hung guys I stripped out every day, too.

Then again, maybe his wife beats him, or his husband. I don't know. What I do know is that this is a regular occurrence in here, the rule, not the exception. This was merely the latest in a long series of pettiness I've seen since being in here.

I'd like to say that this is about as petty as it gets, but sadly, it's not. This is the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Whether it's confiscating property from us so they can take it home to their kids or returning our mail to the sender because it weighed .0001 ounces more than the rules authorized, this place takes pettiness to a whole new level. And yes, I was serious when I said that they confiscate things from us to take home to their kids. They did this to me when I first arrived, taking more than \$500 worth of beads from me, which he then gave to his kids, and then had the nerve to tell me what he did, followed with threats of what would happen if I said anything.

Listen, prisons are, by their very nature, staffed with some of the worst people that society has to offer, but keep in mind that the overwhelming majority of those people will soon be released. Now, which would you rather have as a neighbor? Someone who was treated with basic common decency during his term of incarceration? Or someone whose rights were violated repeatedly by the very people responsible for his (or her) rehabilitation? I don't know about you, but while I'd love to get revenge on the people who violated my rights, I'd much rather ensure that this person find a way to keep himself from violating anyone else's rights, but as long as those in a position of power and control abuse their power and control, or worse, as long as those put into place to investigate such violations continue covering for them, then the example being set for us during our rehabilitation is that it's okay to violate the rights of other people, provided, of course, that you have a large enough organization, or a corrupt enough organization, to cover your misdeeds.

Any questions or comments can be posted here, or sent to me via snail mail at the address listed below, and as always, if you're looking for a pen pal, my mailbox is always open, so feel free to drop me a line.

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