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Chronicles of December

"It's the most, wonderful time, of the year..."

We all remember that Christmas song, done by nearly every person who ever held a mic, and every time I hear it, it brings back wonderful memories. Christmas was the best time of year to me, when I was home, kinda the grand finale of the season. I could write tons of pages of the fun times I had when I was home.

But here, in prison, it's far different. It's very stressful, and you're trying to find a foothold to stay positive. Many times the emotional pain is unbearable, missing family and friends, but most inmates deal with it by blocking it out. I do the same, at times, but I cannot let my precious memories disappear... sometimes it's all that keeps me going.

But in this very short entry, dated December 2nd, 2015, I was trying to get myself in a good mood, first thing in the morning. Not always easy, but you do the best you can. As I usually do, I may "pause" in between some of it and explain a few things to you. Ok, let's begin:

December 2nd, 2015: I'm listening to "Linus and Lucy"

at 6:21am on the Christmas station, 94.9, on a cold Wednesday morning. I love this song, and it's helping me wake up. Vince Guaraldi is the name of the guy who did the song.

(PAUSE: Technically it's not a "song", since nobody's singing, rather a "piece". Anybody who's seen the Charlie Brown specials knows EXACTLY what I'm talking about. I absolutely LOVE those cartoons; I grew up watching every single one of them. Charles Schultz was my favorite comic strip artist, and everytime I hear a piece from Vince Guaraldi, especially the Charlie Brown pieces, it reminds me of those cartoons.

It's these memories that help me when I need to steer away from negatives, and in prison, the first thing that hits you upside the head is negativity. I used to write on my blog when I was home, that waking up is like opening your eyes to see Satan with a sledgehammer standing over you, reading to knock you upside your head. It is from that moment, when you're most weak, that you need to find a reason to get through the day, to find something positive. Such is the case in prison, and music, especially Christmas music, helps. Let's continue...)

It's hard to get into the Christmas spirit (6:22) but I'm trying to do the best I can. I woke up with a scratchy throat, so I'm trying to drink hot tea. We go to canteen Thursday, but I don't want to go unless I have enough to get enough to fill my locker.

(PAUSE: "Canteen" is called "commissary" here, but I'm not wasting syllables on that... it's canteen to me. Anyway, we go once a week, but I try to go when I can buy a lot. It's really a chore to walk halfway across the compound, sit in a small room with 30-40 loud inmates, trying to listen for your name so you can get the items you checked on the canteen sheet, then haul all that stuff back to your cell, with everybody on the yard looking at you. Still, canteen is one of the biggest morale boosters, because when you can buy stuff, it just makes you feel better. Consider that if you have loved ones in prison. Ok, let's continue...)

The other day I downloaded "Carol of the Bells", which is the song I just heard on a local Tucson commercial. So what to do today? Got several projects to type, maybe I'll make money today. Who's song is this? "Noel, Noel" by Nat King Cole. It's hard to shake the depression first thing in the morning, but...need another pen... now, what...another dead pen, I need pens! How can I have 10 pens and all are crap!! Ok, so I'll wait for breakfast... I'll have to write more later; these SHU pens are garbage. Frustrating...more later-

(PAUSE: I don't have a lot of Christmas music on my MP3, even now, August 31st, 2016, but I love listening to it. As many of you know, I do have an MP3; Federal Prisons do allow them, though outrageously overpriced. Like paying \$70,000 for a Yugo! I wrote many essays on MP3 in prison, check those out if you can, or write to me about it.

I mentioned making money... in prison, you kinda need a "hustle", to make money, or here, stamps. Since we only get to go to canteen once a week (if you have money), you need to find ways to get stamps outside of that, especially since you're limited to 20 stamps to buy a week. But I write a LOT, I need stamps like trees need water. So you do jobs to get stamps from other guys. In my case, I type legal stuff. I don't DO legal stuff, I type it. If a person needs me to type a 30 page document, I can do that, for a certain amount of money, in stamps. Here in this prison, the currency is stamps.

And although they do sell BIC pens (2 for \$1.05), they have SHU (Special Housing Unit) pens, or security pens. These are short pens that are very flexible and clear. It's hard writing with it, and the quality is less than par. I was trying to write with one, when it went out, went to the second, that went out, and so on. It's just better to buy the BIC pens...)

Anyway, that's all for now, much more in the future. I hope it helps you understand how some inmates deal with depression and stress during the holiday season. It can be tough, but not impossible. If you have a loved one in jail or prison, take the time to encourage them, ok?

Fred M