

Chronicles of February

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Ok, so here is another entry of one of my journals, written on February 6th of 2013. For those of you new to my writings, I arrived at USP Tucson on December 7th, 2012, to begin my sentence in the Federal prisons. So between that date and this one, 3 months had passed as I was learning my way around the prison, and all those who lived here at USP Tucson.

I started writing my journals a week after I got here, about December 14, and even continue to write to this day (currently mid May of 2016). There's a LOT to share, and many times I look back at it and see how far I've come in understanding myself, and the surroundings of prison.

I am learning that even in difficult times, you have to trust God, and to believe that every person has worth, regardless of what the courts say, and how prisons treat you. Believe me, there is MUCH to say on that, but I'll leave that for later writings.

So, as I usually say in my journals, I will at times "pause" so I can kinda fill in the gaps of some of the things I talked about. So, let's begin...

February 6th, 2013: It's 5:15pm as I skip out on dinner; not that I don't like pork chops, but I got a letter from mom, and needed to call home. No problems; mom was just concerned that I had not called in awhile. It actually felt good to talk to mom, it was worth skipping dinner. And this Monday mom will put at least \$75.00 in my account. That's good, so by next Wednesday, when we have our canteen... commissary, run, I'll be prepared.

(PAUSE: I gotta tell you, most of what they serve here at USP Tucson is decent, I can't complain about the meals, although I've been in many other county jails where the food is MUCH better. It's like they cook for people they know in county...and cook for strangers when in the feds. Nevertheless, the food is ok. Many guys here actually sell their trays for money, depending on the meal. Chicken meals are the most popular, outside of special meals like Christmas meals or stuff like that.

Did I ever sell my trays...ahem...

I also mentioned my mom writing to me. I had not written in awhile, but keep in mind I was only at the prison 3 months. Mom was worried about me, as family ought to be. But ~~s~~ sadly, most times, family and friends forget that they need to stay in contact with their loved ones, and guys start to feel abandoned. Calling home helps, but a letter or card you can read over and over<sup>is good too.</sup> I can't tell you how TREMENDOUS an impact

it is to have mail, most guys don't get it, and it really has a negative impact on their rehabilitation. If you're writing to people in prison, remember to keep it positive, and remember, they count on you, since you're their connection to the outside world. Ok, let's continue...)

It also means my canteen actually will make it a month, meaning I managed it pretty well. Now I can plan on buying a radio, and 40 stamps. Now I feel a little better, knowing I'll have money next week. How much, I don't know. In March they'll take out \$25.00 because of my restitution; that sucks. I can only hope they take it out quarterly, not monthly. That would really suck.

(PAUSE: I try my best to make my money last, but I feel guilty when I have, and others don't. I know this sounds crazy, but I remember as a kid praying to God, saying, "Don't make me rich if I can't share it". Sure, we all want prosperity, but I want to have it so I can help those less fortunate.

This applies in prison too. If I have money to buy food, hygiene, and other things, I always try to set aside some for those who don't get anything. Guys, it's very HARD to do time when you can't buy anything for yourself. Your morale goes up when you can go to canteen...the prisons call it "commissary", but I'm not saying that... 4 syllables to 2 in "canteen".

I also mentioned the restitution, or "FRP". This is a hard subject for inmates, because the courts are literally trying to get blood out of rocks. Many times guys' accounts are frozen or taken, so many come to prison with little money. Yet the BOP (Bureau of Prisons) expects inmates to pay a \$25 FRP (Financial Responsibility Program) every 3 months, or be put on refusal, freezing what you can buy at canteen.

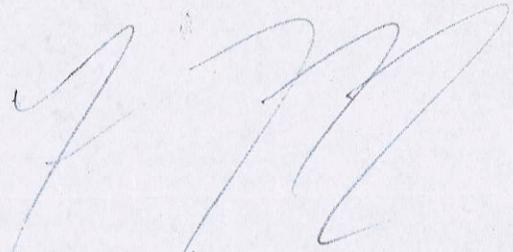
But consider... likely 90% of inmates get money from family and friends...not from their personal accounts; that restitution is forced on THEM, not us. Our loved ones send money to us so we can buy the things we need, but BOP takes \$25 every 3 months, or else. I need to write a separate essay on that, to help you understand how damaging this can be, and has been to inmates. Anyway, let's continue...)

Well, I need to decide whether to go outside tonight, or to the indoor gym, Not quite sure. maybe I can buy a radio off somebody and save some money. That would be good too. A radio will go for about \$25.00; maybe I can buy one for \$15.00. We shall see. Oh well, it's 5:30.

(PAUSE: I was trying to buy a radio, since at the time I didn't have one, and needed one to listen to jazz, classical music, and even the Silent TVs. The prison has 7 TVs per dorm, but the speakers are turned off, and you can only hear them by using a radio, and tuning in to the station, like for example, picking up Fox on <sup>107.9 FM</sup>~~175.9 FM~~. So getting a radio for me was necessary, especially if I wanted to watch the sports.)

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Anyway, that gives you a slice of what I was going through at that time, much has happened since then, and I hope to share more with you in the future. Feel free to write me, Until next time...



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