

Chronicles of August
(When Birds Attack... Smile)

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My name is Fred, and I share my experiences from prison to help those understand that not every person in prison is some "monster" that the prosecution claims. I hope, in the years that I have written essays and shared my journals, that you see that every person has value, and often times this is lost in the Federal Prisons, because the FBOP believes in punishment, and not rehabilitation. Those of you who read dozens of my essays have seen some of my stories on this.

I try to share pieces of my journal, to try to "humanize" myself to the readers, and to create sympathy, if possible. So, in this particular entry, from August of 2017, I share a day where I was trying to stay in faith, while dealing the everyday affairs of prison.

Please note, not every day in prison is like what you see on television. Yes, many violent things happen, but prisons won't tell you everything, so I will do my best to color in what they don't share. You'll get the meaning of the title in a second... and don't laugh at me (smile). Ok, let's begin:

August 18th, 2017: 7:20am on a Friday morning; I've read my scriptures for the morning; Proverbs 17 and I John (all 5 chapters). Today I gotta do 70 scriptures- that shouldn't be so hard, now that I've been working on it the past month. I'll do it after my cellie goes to work; he's been on the CMS Paint Crew the last week, or so, which now affords me time to the cell if I want. I could have the cell to myself from 7:30-3:15 now, which is great. He works until his 2pm GED class- which he may drop. But that's another story.

("PAUSE: I'm setting up how my day went; you'll notice that I started my day reading the Bible. I cannot tell you how vital that is when you are doing time. Many guys give up on God when they get sentenced, as if the Federal Courts are the final word. In time you're going to see some incredible stories from me regarding God's ability to answer prayer, but for now, I have to try to convince you that people in prison have value, and that God loves them too.

One of the things I mentioned was doing my "70 scriptures". I had a kind of practice I did; I try to quote, without help, a certain number of scriptures from the Bible. Why is this important? Because when you're in difficult times, you have to make a stand in what is most important. Are the circumstances more important than God? For most guys, it is, because it's what comes out of their mouth. As a scripture says, "From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks". I tried to start my day speaking God's word. I don't say this with a halo over me, but I do say this in faith in a Loving God who is merciful, even when the courts are not.

At this particular time, I was writing from a different dorm, C1, rather than my current one (as of January 7th, 2020). Months before, I was falsely accused by staff and put in the SHU (Special Housing Unit) for 40 days for writing about prison abuse. The prison staff tried to keep me from mailing it out, and when that didn't work, they cooked up two false accusations to put me in the SHU, and prevented me from writing. I ended up beating the charges, and wrote several essays on it. I'll be glad to share that in the future.

But, after getting out the SHU, I was put in C1, with a very cool Jamacian cellie. He was very kind to me, and a Christian man. When I had no snacks to eat,

he would put food on my table. I was very blessed to have him as a cellie. Unfortunately the staff moved me back to B2, even when they asked me if I wanted to go back, and I declined. The very next day, they told me I had to go back...

...what was the point of ASKING me then?

Anyway, while I was in C1, I was working on my faith, staying as best I could in God 's word, and writing. Let's continue..."

Gosh, so much to write, but I haven't done nearly enough. The venues still haven't opened up for me. Last night I went to my card-making class, which actually was fun. I'd love to make some cards, but who am I sending them to? Ironically I used to make tons of cards for inmates, when I was home using Print-shop and other software- now I'm making cards AS an inmate. 7:27; they should call CMS any minute- I forgot what "CMS" stands for.

("PAUSE: A few things here; "CMS" stands for "Compound Maintenance Service", which is simply the work crews of inmates on the prison. This includes plumbing, yard work, electrical and other necessary jobs, each run by an officer.

I mentioned the cards; as of 2019 the people here at USP Tucson has changed the rules of mail concerning cards, which I find disturbing: No longer are inmates allowed to receive cards; they only get a cheap photo copy of the card you send. So, if a mother goes to Wal-Mart, selects a beautiful Christmas card with colors and raised print, and all the works, and pays \$5 for such a card, and mails it, the prison will take the card, make a cheap black and white copy of it to deliver to the inmate...

...then destroy the card.

There are SO many things wrong with that. But maybe another essay. Let's continue..."

Anyway, yesterday was weird. I went to the softball field to eat a Pop-Tart and drink coffee. I wore 2 t-shirts, sweatpants and borrowed shoes. Just before going to the softball field, a pigeon decides to add color to my plain white t-shirt... not sure if olive green goes too well.

So, I had to take off the top t-shirt, and clean my MP3...ugh. Good thing I had a 2nd t-shirt. So, I'm on the fence later, talking to Troy, drinking my coffee, and apparently I forgot how to drink, as I spilled coffee on my sweat-pants...great!

So, at 10am I had to go back, with coffee stains in my pants, and pigeon surprise on one of my t-shirts. At least it encouraged me to do laundry in the laundry room in the dorm. Few prisons actually have a laundry room with three washers and three dryers. So, all my clothes are clean.

Well, it's 7:33 and they called CMS; my cellie should be gone. So I have the cell to myself for the next 7 hours... but I'm going out at 8am. Gotta do my 70 scriptures first...

("PAUSE: USP Tucson has a LOT of pigeons; the inmates feed them quite often, and they may have been spoiled by us. Oddly, they rarely drop surprises on us, VERY rarely. Maybe this one was giving me a sign of what was to come; about a year or two later, the prison changes the uniforms from the khakis we

had, to the "spruce green" uniforms we now have. I'll be honest, I don't know why they changed it, except to eliminate the front pockets we had. To me, it is a petty change, but they claim it is to prevent some inmates from using the front pockets to "gunsling" against female officers...

...you DO know what that means, right...

sigh...it's embarrassing to explain, but follow me: In many prisons, like here at USP Tucson, they hire a lot of women. I can make an argument about that, not that women shouldn't work here, but the problems that are created when they are here. For the record, I believe if they are qualified, they deserve to work here. But if they are QUALIFIED, then they are also trained that they are in a male environment... and a men's PENITENTIARY.

As such, they should have been trained to expect, at times, disrespectful behavior from some-not all- inmates. If they are not willing to accept that, then they are not qualified to work at a male penitentiary.

One of these "tests" is what is called "gunslinging". A male inmate that sees a female in the prison would fix his eyes on her, and... forgive the color here, slide his hands in his front pockets, where the pockets are likely cut, so he can reach inside his boxers...

I don't think I have to tell you what he's doing after that.

In prisons, it's called "gunning her down", for the obvious reasons. Now, I grant you, this is very disrespectful. But when you are in a penitentiary, around men who have been locked up for a long time, what are you supposed to expect? Guys, this turns into a much more complicated subject, one I can't totally get into here, but it raises the questions of how women officers are treated, and how some treat all inmates because of this stereotype. Some women here over-react and punish the entire inmate population for what one person did. That is not fair to those who do respect women officers, and when women officers and staff continue to do this here at USP Tucson, it slowly dissolves the respect we should have for women officers and staff, and see them as only bitter people who apparently wasn't trained to work in a MALE penitentiary.

But again, that is another essay.

So yeah, the pigeon dropped one on me, coloring my t-shirt and got some on my MP3. Just so you know, inmates here at USP Tucson and federal prisons are allowed to buy a MP3, but it is GROSSLY overpriced. I had to pay \$90 for a SanDisk that's worth about \$25 on the streets... and I have to pay an average of \$1.30 per song. AND the prison does not honor the warranty. Just last week or so, a guy here bought a new MP3, and it died inside of 2 days. He told the prison about it, and they was like, "so what"? They won't honor the warranty even after they sold him a defective MP3.

It's like I once said, some of the worst criminals aren't the ones in the cells... it's the ones coming out the parking lots.

I wrote several essays on MP3s, the good and bad; you'll have to look for those, as I have well over 100 essays floating out there. But just to give you an idea of how much we are being ripped off, the prison has a Music Library, where we can browse for songs or other material... like books.

So, I checked out some genres, and found a "book", titled, "The Mysterious Island". It had 200 chapters. Each chapter costs 24 Tru Link credits; that's how the prison does it here. You have to pay for credits, called "TRU-LINKS", and use those to purchase songs, or make copies and such.

Each "TRU-LINK" costs 5cents, so do the math: 24 "TRU-LINKS" is \$1.20... but the book "The Mysterious Island" is 200 chapters, at 24 credits each chapter.

So, to get that book will cost me... \$240.00. For a BOOK!!! For that amount, they better come in person and read it to me, and tuck me in at night, and bring me snacks!

It's a ripoff to buy spoken books here, because they charge too much per chapter. I've seen "Alice In Wonderland", "The Wizard of Oz", "The Fate of the Elves", and several other books, and I've listened to some of them. Not bad, but anything over 10 chapters is just a ripoff to buy. Lots more to add to that, but again, that's another essay.

I also mentioned the laundry, after the stains of my accidents. At the moment, 2020, we still have personal laundry. USP Tucson has an institutional laundry, where inmates can take their clothes to be laundered, or they can use the washers and dryers in the dorm. There are benefits and downsides to both; I won't get in too much detail about that here. It is a convenience to be able to do your own laundry, as in my case here, where I had to get that bird poop and coffee stain out, but you have to buy laundry detergent for it. It's the super-cheap detergent "Simline", which you may NEVER see in any worthy store. We pay \$1.30 for a bag, and they also sell a brand name, "Supremo", made by the same company, with the EXACT same ingredients. The only thing different is the design on the bag.

Ok, enough about that, let's finish this entry up, dated about 20 minutes later..."

7:50, got my 70 scriptures done, probably more like 80. Most were from the New Testament, probably like 65 or so. I could have done more, but I panicked, thinking I needed to go back to the Old Testament. So, I'm dressed in my CLEAN 2 t-shirts and sweat pants. I'll go to the softball field if it's open. Hadn't talked too much with Aiden this week, which I'm actually cool with. We talked I think Tuesday during recall. Might see him today, if not, oh well... 7:54am

End of entry

You see how much can be pulled out of a single entry; I have over 5 years of journals, waiting to share. You also notice that I ended it with my work on quoting scriptures. Not every day is like that, but I strive to try to keep God involved in my day. To be sure, not every day is as pleasant, but the idea is to stay in faith as best you can. Sometimes when days are difficult, you've just got to see it through... even if birds decide to add some color to your day.

Sometimes, if possible, you gotta laugh at the embarrassing times too; I suppose it proves humility... and you can't be more humble than having pigeon poo on your t-shirt and MP3, and still find the courage to laugh and smile.

I wonder if God was laughing at me, or with me. Oh well, until next time...