

I MISS MY TABLET

By James W. Harkleroad

Some years back a Department of Corrections bureaucrat told me plainly that prisoners would never possess computers.

In 2018 Tablets were introduced.

I was blessed with some money at that time. (I was part of a class that received compensation due to medical malpractice.) So I bought the larger Tablet, with a 7" screen. Bigger screen, easier to type on, larger storage capacity.

The last two points being the most important to me. For one of my writing projects is the creation of a new translation of the Holy Bible.

That is a whole lot of text to store and to type.

Once I had the Tablet I learned that the company was offering access to books and education programs. An avid reader (I have averaged about one (1) book per week for 50 years), having books on my Tablet would mean that I would not have to worry about having access to the institution library.

I even downloaded some games. Two of which were not so good. But the third I really enjoyed the challenge.

Things went well - for about 15 months. Had the New Testament typed up. Had finished Genesis and was in Exodus. Had several books downloaded. Was working my way through a collection of Atlantic Monthly articles.

Then some piece of garbage stole my Tablet from the recharging wagon.

For the battery.

Five days a week I left the dormitory around 7:30 AM to work as an orderly in Education. To get a recharge of the Tablet battery I would usually plug it in around 11 PM. For I had no access to the recharger wagon before going to work.

Returning from work around 3 PM I (usually) had to wait until 5 PM, or later, to collect my Tablet from the recharger wagon.

This particular evening it was around 5:30 PM when I discovered

that my Tablet was missing. I immediately informed the officer who was "supervising" (unlocked the wagon and then let the ~~in~~ inmates help themselves), and the Officer In Charge (Sgt. Gordon).

Unfortunately, being near 6PM the change of shift was about to occur - so there was little interest in dealing with a problem.

Later that evening I checked the recharging wagon - and found no Tablet. Again, I reported the theft to the guards.

Again, a lack of interest in the problem.

So I wrote a Formal Grievance reporting the theft. Requesting that my Tablet be replaced since it was stolen due to the DOC's failure to supervise the access to the recharger wagon. And continued to check the recharger wagon for the next few days.

My grievance was (surprise!) denied.

So I appealed to the Warden.

The appeal was (surprise!) denied.

So I appealed to Central Office.

The appeal was put on hold while the Grievance was returned to the institution for further review.

After further review the institution (surprise!) once again denied the grievance.

An appeal was, once again, sent to the Central Office.

Which sat on the paperwork before returning it. And then the institution sat on the paperwork before sending it to me.

I had failed to attach a copy of the paperwork (which the Central Office had) from the original appeal.

So I had to resubmit the new appeal with all of the paperwork.

Only to have the appeal dismissed on the grounds that I had not submitted it within the time limit set by the rules. A time limit that I was not able to abide by because Central office and the institution deliberately delayed the transport of the paperwork.

So it is that I am without a Tablet during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

No games to play.

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No books to read while the institution (including the Library) is shut down.

No work getting done on the new translation of the Holy Bible.

No way to obtain a new Tablet because Florida laws and DOC policies bar me from any opportunities to earn money.

The author is a former death row prisoner who has been incarcerated in Florida since 1971.