

Helping the “Homeless”

All the cries to “solve the homelessness problem”, especially by using political government, fall flat with me. It’s not that I’m heartless. I’ve even been homeless myself, so I should have empathy. But I also have experience with homeless people.

Years ago I met a homeless guy named Paul. He was nice enough, but it was clear he wasn’t “all there”. He had left his home in Kentucky and traveled in his car (I’m *assuming* it was his) to western Colorado. There he spent the nights in his car, which he kept parked in the back-country, and walked into town almost every day.

He told me tales of his affair with a ghost back in Kentucky, and told me he left home because his parents wanted to have him committed to a mental hospital. I could see their point.

I did what I could to help him. I taught him some survival skills I thought might help. I gave him a hatchet that had been mine since I was a teen and also gave him some candles and other things I thought he might benefit from. I gave him food a few times.

Paul liked to hang out in my store and visit. I did sometimes get tired of him– my enthusiasm for socializing can get used up pretty quick in any situation that’s not karaoke. He often smelled bad– but he did bathe at campgrounds from time to time.

The worst thing (for me) he did was hit on women who would come into my store– right in front of their husbands. I told him he had to stop this or he couldn’t come in my store anymore; he was driving away what few customers I had. This made him angry and he said he would come smash my front window that night. I had a few overnight armed vigils in the back of the store but he never acted on this threat. And soon enough, he acted like he forgot this had ever happened.

That summer, the sidewalk in front of the store was being torn out and replaced and I found an old horseshoe in the dirt under the concrete. I put it on display in my store. He became very interested in this horseshoe and wanted to take it to his car and let it “speak” to him overnight. So I let him.

He came back the next day with stories of what the horseshoe had “shown” him. He even wrote an account of some of this– minus the darkest parts about dismembered bodies in steel barrels– on a notepad I had given him. (See the scans at the bottom of the page.) He just told me those parts but didn’t include them in the written account for some reason.

But he became convinced the horseshoe was cursed and that was the reason my store wasn’t flourishing. Its presence was the problem.

He said I had to get rid of the cursed horseshoe before something horrible happened to me. To humor him I tossed it.

Oddly, things didn't improve.

He told me one day that Fall that he was moving to Utah. He packed up his car, I contributed some gas money, and he took off. I thought that was the end of that.

A week or two later I saw a very scruffy-looking guy crossing the street and thought it looked like Paul. It was him and he was soon in my shop again. He was dirtier and smellier than ever before. It turned out he had driven almost to the Utah line, but then turned up the interstate and headed toward Denver, and then his car had stopped running. I don't know if he was out of gas or if it broke down. He didn't stick around to see, but started walking back "home". That was over 130 miles, and maybe a lot more, depending on how far he'd gone on the interstate. He abandoned all his possessions there in his car on the side of the interstate, never to be seen again.

He said he'd gotten one ride- an insistent cop had picked him up on the west side of one of the very few towns along his route and dropped him off on the east side of town so he could continue his journey. He refused all other rides along the way, and slept in the grass beside the highway every night.

His feet were sore, and now he had no place to sleep at night. A preacher friend of mine happened to come in the store about this time and heard the story. He offered to have the town's ministerial alliance pay for a hotel room. Paul refused, saying he wouldn't accept anything from them because he didn't know them. The preacher said, "but that's what we do- help people who need help". Paul was having none of it and my preacher friend finally went on his way.

So, instead of a nice hotel room, Paul started spending the nights in a porta-potty at the construction site of the new school. It was now late November, with the temperatures falling well below freezing, and often dipping below zero. I gave him a few candles for warmth.

I began to see less of him, usually only every few days or so.

Around this time there were reports of homes in that area being entered during the night- their toilets being used and food being eaten. Only one homeowner caught a glimpse of someone fitting Paul's description walking away from their house. It was in the paper and I suspected it was him, but I never found out for sure.

Not long after that, Paul decided to go see if there were more opportunities for "the homeless" in Denver, and he somehow got a bus ticket and left, and I never saw him again.

One result of this experience is that it kind of made me skeptical about the homeless. Yes, he was only one example (although there have been others I've met who were very similar). But homelessness isn't about a lack of homes. Paul had a home and he left. He had opportunities to be housed, he rejected the offers. He was a beggar and didn't want anything to jeopardize his chosen lifestyle.

At least I don't believe he was an addict; his mental issues were burdensome enough.

I know most (or all) of the beggars here locally are the same way. Their signs say they are stranded and need gas money, but they live in houses. Here. And have for years. Stranded? Where do they imagine they are going?

I was homeless for a time several years ago. But I didn't sleep on the streets (I slept in the woods) and I didn't get handouts or steal from anyone. I kept my job and worked to get myself out of that situation. But I also wasn't addicted or mentally ill (some might disagree on that last point, though).

It doesn't bother me if people *choose* to give to the homeless, but I know it's not going to fix anything. Nor would building houses for them. They generally have issues beyond what those things can solve. Paul was a case in point.

Below, for posterity, are scans of Paul's "horseshoe visions".

faded image from "horse shoe"

time period 1803?

Big horse 17, 18 hands, brown

laying car.
5:30 am 9/8/96
holding item
in hand, "left."

2 front legs white, white head from legs to head, long clean hairs on legs and long main.

large wagon wheels 4 ft dim.
large cover, large wagon - cover is like backs of wicker furniture built now.

man - thin, 5-8 170 lbs black shirt and trousers, black boots, black leather hat (mormon?) maybe, had musket rifle.

sat on bench, shod horse in middle of trails out west, through (shoe) this one in (box) in the wagon.

image of shoe & skull of a bear together.

2 men firing weapons - one a musket rifle - other looked like toy gun - or (present day 45 - army issue?)

Top hat



picture of gentleman 40-50, woman 20-30-40 yrs they are dressed same period clothing, mid-1800s (her hair dk brown or black - worn up).

black cane (w/ pins o —) photograph of (him) curly

hair, short, mustache, fancy black clothing, her dress - black to floor lgth, kerosene lamp on a table, rifle mounted on wall of house, him in rocking chair.

strung & part



also a severed hand on table beside picture of them

but on table life-size not picture of same room?

tall 2-pole tower w/ a ol' bell at the bottom, w/ nowadays telephone pole and a large mail box silver little boy

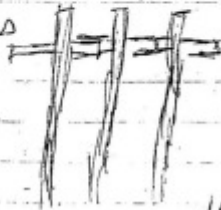


with rusty shirt, grey lederhosen pants, w/ garter white, knee-length socks garter socks to pants. black shoes.

all next to gravel road!

area of three telephone poles all together, seen together as one on the top of hill or mountain top to look as one

a cross



viewed head-on to look like a cross.

Woke - up. Sony/Kent, a