

“Never again!” The Fireworks Stand

I spent the past couple of weeks working a fireworks stand. It was hot, dusty, boring work—except on the 3rd and 4th when it was frequently crazy.

And it wasn't hot, dusty, or boring the two times it rained and the leaky fireworks stand threatened to drown all the fireworks. Only by great effort did I save all but a couple from the water.

The stand wasn't in the best shape. The electrical wiring was all wrong and tried to electrocute my dad during the first rain. The lights wouldn't all work and even after an electrician came and put it all in order, there still wasn't enough power to run my parents' RV A/Cs. This meant some of the less hardy individuals working the stand demanded the RV generator be run during the day, costing a lot of gas.

The phone line for the credit card machine had been ripped out since it was last used. The phone company had assigned the stand's phone number to someone else, and the credit card machine was messed up and wouldn't work even after the phone situation got solved—until after a 2-hour phone call got it cleared and ready to go.

The stand was inside the city limits by about 20 feet (the other side of the street directly behind the stand) so we couldn't sell anything which would launch or explode. This lost us about half our potential customers— they were looking for bottle rockets, Roman candles, firecrackers, “ladybugs”, and artillery shells, none of which we were allowed to sell.

Since we were in a different state than most of the company's stands, there was confusion over “permits” and such. My dad had to go wait for hours to get a couple of permits the company was supposed to have already taken care of for us. Have I mentioned how stupid permits and licenses are?

The fireworks market was also saturated— there were at least 7 fireworks stands within a quarter mile of us. And I think this isn't counting the small independent stand in a family's front yard.

The first week there I stayed awake all night watching the stand. Unfortunately, I could only manage to sleep 3 or 4 hours during the day, so I would go ahead and sit in the stand the rest of the time. The second week I had a baby monitor inside the stand with the other end in the RV so I could nap at night, and sit in the stand during the day. That was better.

We had a 160-mile round trip to get the opening inventory, then we had a 110-mile round trip to turn in the unsold inventory.

Sadly, it was "*the worst year for fireworks sales in 30 years*" according to the people who convinced us to sell fireworks. If I clear \$5 per day I'll be shocked. It might be a lot less... if I end up getting *anything*.

I have already put my foot down and said "*Never again!*" to a family fireworks stand. It was probably unnecessary since no one seems inclined to do it again next year.

But, I guess some people pay hundreds of dollars to go to camps which provide hardship experiences to "build character" and this at least didn't *cost* me anything. I feel it didn't work; my character may have eroded a little due to the experience.

Most of the customers were great, though. They were fun. My daughter got chummy with some of them and their bikes. I'm grateful she didn't decide to run away with them. The temptation would have crossed my mind.

We only had one customer who was bad; he cheated us out of some money. A cop. He paid, went out and sat in his car, and then came back and told the person who waited on him that she had made a mistake. He had bought a whole box of smoke bombs (oops- "smoke balls", can't say "bombs" I guess) and claimed they were supposed to be "*buy one, get one free*". They weren't, but the intimidated cashier refunded half the price anyway. I wish she'd called me over during the "discussion". But, it was a cop; what else would you expect?

There was no wifi at the site, so I had to get things ready to post during my quick daily run home (14 miles one way) for a shower. I'm so far behind on everything, including my writing, it feels like I'll never get caught up. Please be patient while I try.

So that's what I've been up to. I'm exhausted.