

The Day Cops Surrounded Me

I used to give a presentation on the mountainmen of the Rocky Mountain fur trade each year for fourth grade at the local elementary school. I went to the classroom in full mountainman gear and talked about the history and the tools. I gave a few demonstrations to the kids, such as showing how to set a steel trap, start a fire without matches (both with flint and steel and with a bow drill; the kids' favorite), and how to load a muzzleloading rifle.

For years, there was no problem. Then one year my wife-at-the-time needed to use the car during my presentation. "*No problem*", I thought. I was mistaken.

That day I finished my program and went to the parking lot to wait for my wife to arrive. I sat down upon my blanket-roll near the school sign; holding my rifle upright at my side. After a few minutes I saw a cop car drive past slowly, but the cop inside didn't look at me. I thought that was odd. He pulled into a driveway and turned around and parked. A minute or so later, another cop car pulled up a little ways from me and also parked along the street. He sat in his car for a minute before getting out and approaching me with his hand on his gun. Out of the corner of my eye I could see the other cop now approaching from behind. I don't appreciate being stalked.

The cop greeted me politely and asked what I was doing. I explained the situation while the other cop stood off and watched. Then the principal of the school made an appearance. We explained what was going on to him, mentioning the teacher who had arranged my program. He knew nothing about it. A passing motorist had reported an armed person at the elementary school. Had I had mayhem in mind, the event would have been over by the time the cops arrived.

The teacher later apologized to me for forgetting to inform the principal of my presence. As it turned out, that was the last year I did the program since I moved away several months later. Amazingly, I survived to tell my tale, but for months townspeople would tell me they saw me sitting there between the two cops, looking rather unhappy.