

Wilson vs The Forest Circus

I first met “Wilson” soon after he moved to the area. He told me he moved because he had lost his business. Personally, I think his business was *stolen* from him by the mafia Wilson always referred to as the “Forest Circus”. These were the clowns who controlled (and rationed) the license which “allowed” Wilson to conduct his business.

His former business would be my dream business. In fact, I tried to think of a way we could go into partnership and start again, but unfortunately, it was never to be. Neither of us had the money to get it started.

He showed me one of his leftover brochures. I loved his idea.

What he did was take people into the Colorado wilderness on “public” [*sic*] land. Sounds simple, doesn’t it. He charged what seemed to me to be a huge amount, but he had plenty of takers. He said he had as many as he could manage.

He then let them decide what they wanted out of the experience.

If they simply wanted to get away for a few days, that’s what he helped them do. If they wanted to learn survival skills, he helped them with that. Whatever they were looking for, while having an experienced outdoorsman along, he tried to provide. He asked that they not take radios or anything like that on the trip, but otherwise didn’t require anything too primitive unless that’s what they wanted. He was always more modern than me anyway.

He made certain to walk “lightly” and leave as little trace as possible. This was partly self-interest, otherwise his future clients wouldn’t have been happy with the scarred land and the trash, since he generally used the same area for each trip. He was conscientious about leaving little or no trace, and proved this to me time after time.

One thing he did was to go out the day before they left and bury a frozen Cornish game hen (one per person) and make sure that’s where they ended up on the last day out when he would dig them up and cook them for a special meal. (He never mentioned any getting taken by bears.)

He had clients from all over the country. The one who apparently made the biggest impression on him was a city guy who was facing a bleak, short future with AIDS. He was the only client Wilson ever specifically talked about. The guy was very grateful for the experience of being immersed in nature’s beauty and grandeur, and Wilson seemed moved by the chance to see the wilderness through that guy’s eyes. When you see something every day it’s almost impossible to avoid getting a little jaded. I think the dying man’s joy jolted Wilson out of his apathy.

Unfortunately, I think that was one of the last customers he had before the bureaucrats of the US Forest "Service" decided to not allow him to renew his outfitter's license, but to give it to a political crony instead. Suddenly, Wilson's successful business was turned into a "crime". This infuriated him, and he never got over it. I can't really blame him.

He was soon broke and (mostly) homeless and moved to the western side of the pass where I lived. I would never have met him otherwise, but it really was a nasty thing they did to him. Something he never really recovered from- emotionally or financially. I don't know how much he hated government before this happened (I heard stories) but they definitely made an enemy that day. Not that they care. But, if he ever goes Heemeyer on them, I'll understand and sympathize.