

With Wilson in the Wilderness

I've mentioned the business "Wilson" had which was shut down by government meddling. Well, due to our similar interests in that area he and I used to hike in the wilderness area outside of town. He wore a camo army jacket with cargo pants and army boots and I wore my buckskin clothes and mocassins- in other words, I didn't dress any differently than normal for the hike, although I did carry extra gear.

Most people find me a frustrating person to hike with- one former wife said I don't hike, I wander aimlessly from spot to spot. But Wilson seemed OK with it.

Those hikes gave us chances to hone some of our less-critical survival skills. We had to cross racing, ice-cold rivers on foot going in and coming out- during the spring melt that was pretty exciting. We sometimes encountered serious mud traps. We nibbled on various plants, tracked animals, watched game, and met whatever other necessity cropped up for us to tackle.

Until we'd get a long ways down the trail, when we *used* the trails, we would also encounter the occasional hiker or two. When I'm out wandering like that, I tend to go a bit psychologically feral. When that happens I usually don't like encountering other people, so when we'd hear someone crashing noisily down the trail- and that's what they all did- we would step off the trail, sit and wait for them to pass.

When we did this we were never noticed. Not *once*. We especially enjoyed seeing the female hikers pass, but we never spoke to them. We didn't want to get pepper sprayed as a result of trying to be polite.

We were never more than a few feet off the path. Not hidden. Just sitting still and silent. I suspect people don't like to suddenly notice you under those circumstances.

Once, however, I was in the open, sitting on a boulder in an open area in plain sight, and still just about scared a hiker's dog to death when I said "*Hi*" as he came to sniff the rock. That time I was seen, but I wasn't trying to not be.

Needless to say, Wilson and I were not very impressed with people's observational skills. Of course, who's to say we didn't miss people doing the same as we hiked past. We were a lot quieter than others, though; while most of them never stopped talking, we rarely spoke. And we saw a lot of deer quietly watching us pass. But who knows.

Of all the Wilson stories, these were the times I enjoyed hanging out with him the most. It was always hard for me to turn around and come back to "civilization". But that's always been the hardest part for me.