

Can I Graduate?

Here I sit, writing while listening to the Washington Post radio ad about what love means? After 6 to 8 months of Street Sense, paying some dues as a vendor and top attending member of the 'Will Write for Food' writers' group...

I needed an ending to the way I got into Street Sense, written as last weeks in class timed writing exercise [attach or append this to it?]....

Pre-holiday, as Laura/Iayola/IAToldYa calls it, the homeless season wanes, a large box of knee high socks are delivered off season, possibly in response to some author's comments on Christmas [Really: Oh, shucks, you shouldn't have...]

I wonder if the learning happens after it stopped being fun, like the school season shopping for that new set of supplies is long forgotten, when wondering what that shopping/clothes/stuff is really for...

The new crop of interns has arrived at Street Sense, and the baby is developing and well on it's way, hopefully will pop out anytime, but not at the office, (giving birth in the office MUST BE AGAINST THE RULES!!!)...

I remember Laura mumbling under her breath, after getting off the phone that 'It's A Boy!??', and later missing the surprise shower party (busy doing bylaws for a regional Mental Health group in NOVA) catching up and talking of making the little guy a vendor badge (and thereby violating the rule of no vendors in two corner office seats ;-}

I'm sure he will be a top selling Street Sense vendor, if not as an accessory and baby magnet like I spend most of my time at farmer's markets, hoping to talk to kids and animals, not as a predator (which most people would assume, some of the moms are cute though...) but as an uncle and disabled depressed person, kids and animals are said to be good for depression, and we are not all bad...

Like the park bench photo, killing some time between events with a camera or other tech like a new music player/recorder, commuting time is too great to go back and no car to leave stuff in, most people complain about the baggage involved in day long outings to the city. Got food? Got tech? Got reading material? Got paper? Got pens? Got attitude? Yep.

Skunk Works:

And I'm getting tired of being told I smell... My nose doesn't work anymore, too many sinus infections... Skunk works, indeed. Wondering if it is the old sneakers bought in Cumberland, MD after riding through the horse shit to complete a 184.5 mile ride to a conference?

or the bike messenger bag that has seen over two summer seasons on my

sweaty back while commuter biking?

or a punctured tuna pouch or spilled yogurt in the accessory food duffle bag to provide healthy (though maybe mercury and/or sugar laden) alternative to the constant pizza eating climate (and they wonder why weight is an issue?)

What is it like being homeless/ formerly homeless/ still poor?:

People, in general, and some recent journalism students appearing for an article on the writer's group, wonder what homelessness is like, and for me, here is a little list from the last few months experiences:

discovering the Street Sense office after purchasing issues 'catch as catch can' getting issues from various vendors while commuting into downtown...

getting to know more about the vendors from their Vendors profiles and eventually meeting many during brief office visits to buy papers...

Jesse [former Vendor Manager], saying to write my own vendor profile, because I'm not disclosing enough identifying details to make it work, and the readers must be wondering what he's hiding...

going to a Street Sense fundraising Gala that surprisingly serves alcohol, meeting founders, off schedule interns and other people interested in helping the poor, and homeless, then binge shopping on silent auction items as Christmas gifts while other vendors can't afford to...

finally visiting the National Coalition for the Homeless, where Jesse was selling papers to vendors after spending many trips not finding the back entrance, limited hours and discussing the 'disability lottery'...

a vacancy notice of an old friend's job, wondering if he left trying to help you...

meeting a homeless woman on your birthday coming out of the public library, offering to get a meal to avoid being alone, but the shelter serves and need to check in instead...

a Christmas party seeing someone being ejected for some reason, wondering about making your plate for takeout...

and as you put up tables and chairs afterwards, the new female vendor is leaving with someone else...

it's buying papers that age out while busy doing other things...

it's not being allowed to buy old editions at 2 for 1 after the selling time, thereby eliminating the main gift of recovery and Street Sense for those that have been lucky enough to experience it...

it's standing in the cold, rain, etc, while countless people pass by wondering if you are panhandling, and probably thinking they shouldn't encourage us to provide an easier way in print than actually talking to homeless people...

new interns sitting in Jesse's old seat but when I sit there, and joke about interns in the commoners/bullpen section, people question whether I'm allowed to sit there...

it's trying to do responsible journalism, by having people come back to the places and sources where they have written to take responsibility for the effects of writing about someone/ something...

it's being asked for a copy of a Street Sense, saying you will sell them one, but as a young late student, using that as a teaching example of what it's like to not have money and something you want and/ or need...

it's having a fantasy of quitting, wondering who would enjoy it, but also wondering what happens to some of the people you care about if you do...

and then it's not publishable because it's too negative, but trying to keep it real...

Maybe it's just a tired feeling? Have I passed the test?
Can I have my peice of paper now? How about an honorary Nobel Prize winning pen like in the movie 'A Beautiful Mind'?
A gold watch? I might even settle for some sleep...