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Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

October 2008

Ol' Toothless

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<http://www.ignatius-piazza-front-sight.com/essay-contest-finalists/essayseven/>

Recently, I went to my local sheriff's department to get myself a free speech license. I am fortunate enough to live in a state that has a First Amendment "Shall Issue" policy for open free speech and peaceable assembly. They offer permits, fees and tax forms for religion, the press and petition, too, which is also neat.

There are some states, though, that have criminalized any and all First Amendment activity. Our great nation's capital and some of the more progressive states have banned free speech entirely. I don't know how it could have happened. An old timer around town said it was because Americans had lost their teeth. Only later did I understand that he wasn't talking about dentures.

They used to say about the First Amendment "use it or lose it." So, I decided to use it. All I had to do was walk in and ask and the permit was mine.

Well, almost. Apparently, there are some First Amendment preliminaries that I was unaware of. The permit was mine if I was a law abiding citizen, could provide good character references, showed the authorities proper and safe use of my ideas and opinions, proved responsible during the initial probation period, and met the approval of my local sheriff. Then I would have permission to speak and think freely in nearly forty of the fifty-one states across this great land.

And for a little extra cash I could also assemble myself freely and peaceably with the same permit anywhere, at any time of my choosing, in one of those special zones devoted wholly to free speech and nothing else.

Some of the First Amendment lobby groups

are trying to pass a free speech uniformity law, which makes sense to me. It means that when you cross state lines, those bookmarks, diaries, pencils and other First Amendment "paraphernalia" you have tossed on the back seat won't get you accidentally locked up. It also covers trans-state line telephonic conversation, electronic mail and snail mail. You're also protected if you stand on one side of the state line and call out across it.

A man was thrown in jail the other day merely for having a blank journal in his vehicle's glove box. "But there's nothing written on the pages," he complained.

The arresting officer let him know that in his particular jurisdiction, the journal's page capacity was illegal, whether it was written upon or empty. When I travel, I always keep my cell phone, notebooks, recordings, photographs, book lights, memories and daydreams locked in a box in the trunk of my car. You really have to be very organized to follow the First Amendment rules correctly.

In my town, the free speech fee is quite manageable. In fact, it isn't much of a fee at all. It's just a small tax on my thoughts, similar to what you might find on stamps or tea. Heck, it's pretty much the same as the tax they put on my labor; nothing new, something we are all accustomed to in the pursuit of liberty.

So I opened up my wallet and had my application and free speech tax forms already filled out. I told the young deputy at the bulletproof window that I would like a free speech license, please.

The young deputy eyed me suspiciously. "What do you want it for?" he asked.

Excuse me?

My stunned expression prompted my deputy to repeat his question.

"What-Do-You-Want-A-Free-Speech-Permit-For-Sirrrrrr?"

I could feel my eyes glazing over. Was it →

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the simplicity of the question that momentarily numbed me?

While I gazed at my upside down reflection in his badge, a distant voice echoed in the recesses of my mind... Congress shall make no law, shall make no law, shall make no... but it was gone.

What did I want a free speech permit for, indeed? Even my own eyebrow went up at the thought.

I would have to answer carefully or he'd no doubt paint me as a First Amendment kook, one of those "book nuts," as the Book Burners like to call them, that tend to meet in libraries, assemble at rallies and go to, you know, "book shows."

Now there's an exhilarating example of exercising our First Amendment permission. A book show, hundreds of books lain out on tables as far as the eye can see. Not even undercover agents from the BATFE (the Books And Talking Freely Enforcers) and their tempting illegal post-ban first editions fully autographed by the author can dampen the electric atmosphere.

I don't actually own a book, but I have read one, and I've been to plenty of libraries and bookstores. I wonder if the Book Burners would think I was a kook?

They probably would. It seems they won't rest until every citizen in this country has thrown his books, pictures and doodles into the fire. They argue that only the police, government personnel and the military should have the right to carry books and express their ideas. Now isn't that a recipe for disaster? (You'll need a permit for the recipe, by the way.)

And has everyone completely forgotten about the criminal element of our society? It seems so simple. Forbid law-abiding citizens from owning books and expressing themselves freely and they will comply. They will abide. But the law-breakers will be grabbing up those books and expressing themselves like it's going out of style. The good citizen will surely be left at a great and some say dangerous disadvantage.

I'm thankful that we still have a First Amendment so that we can freely read, write, diagram and express how we really feel about the way our freedoms are being threatened. Statistics clearly show that book control has

never created safe and happy societies, quite the opposite in fact. That is why the First Amendment has always been my favorite over all the other Amendments.

So, there I was at the sheriff's office exercising my First Amendment permit request. I had to remember not to mention the Constitution. That would just rile my deputy and send up a red flag.

"Just in case," was all I said, to be on the safe side.

"Just in case of what?" my deputy replied, obviously noting the perspiration forming on my upper lip.

My eyes averted from his, to the pen on the chain, to the wanted poster, to the thumbtack on the face of the man in the wanted poster, to the fire extinguisher on the wall. Anywhere but his sullen yet expectant, half-lidded eyes.

"Um, in case of emergency?" was all I could manage, thanks to the extinguisher.

I just wanted my free speech permit. I didn't expect to be bombarded with all these confusing questions. (Can I say bombarded?)

I should have said my First Amendment interest was purely historical, that I was a collector merely interested in antique opinions and rare but harmless ideas. Maybe that would have called off the dogs.

Gosh, it's not like I planned to spout off from the nearest campus clock tower as soon as I got my permit. I'm a law-abiding citizen. Why would that suddenly change? People think that you put a book in someone's hand and they suddenly turn into a drooling anti social zombie.

"Are you a member of any First Amendment organizations?"

"I'm a member of Book Owners of America and the NRA," I proudly offered. Maybe now he'd hand over the permit, no more questions asked.

"The National Readers Association, huh?"

Well that did it.

"Jethro!" My deputy beckoned his supervisor. "We got the NRA!"

Jethro, probably not a fan of books, or writing, or even thought by the looks of him, sauntered across the room and gave me the once over with his myopic eyes. →

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"We don't want any trouble, Mr. Jones..."

It was an open-ended statement that just lingered in the air between the five inch thick glass and my reddening face.

Who's causing any trouble? I just want your permission to speak freely and assemble peaceably in nearly forty of the fifty-one states.

He asked his colleague, "What does he want it for?"

Not that again.

"Self defense," my deputy replied, remembering my fire extinguisher comment.

He must have been "old skool." Self defense has all but disappeared. What we have now is "acceptance."

"Look, all I want is to be able to freely assemble or speak in the unlikely event of an emergency, to protect myself and my family, and even my country for that matter, and I want to be able to do so without getting into any trouble. That's what exercising my state-given First Amendment permit means."

"Calm down, Mr. Jones. You do realize there's a five day cooling off period before we can issue you a free speech license, provided you pass the requirements?"

I knew I had to wait the five days. And I was prepared to. I just hoped there wasn't any kind of emergency on the horizon.

The First Amendment waiting period is in accordance with the newly adopted Grady Bill passed specifically to fight terrorism. It's named after Alberta Grady, the author of "Kafka's Goat," the children's book the President wanted to finish reading during the recent terrorist attacks.

"Mr. Jones, what exactly are you planning to say if you get your permit?"

If?

Wait a minute. *If I get my permit? If I am*

Letter to the Editor

Sam,

I've been reading some of your back issues and I rank you favorably with Frederic Bastiat, Mark Twain and Will Rogers. I am currently engaged in a local word war against the Awhahnee Principles and Smart Growth, stupid fads that are infecting politics everywhere. Your ideas are helpful and instructive, so I will be

given permission?

"What do other people answer when they get their permit?" I replied, hoping to walk in the successful footprints of previous applicants.

My question was funny. Suddenly I was the world's funniest man. Both my deputies were flailing about in the thralls of hysterical laughter.

Jethro managed to straighten himself, wipe his spittle off the window and look me in the eye. "What other people?" he managed to blurt. Then the laughter continued and lasted until the door closed behind me and I left empty handed.

What do you do when you can't get your First Amendment permission?

Then it dawned on me. This was the same bureaucratic rigmarole that they used to suffocate the Second Amendment. Use it or lose it, indeed. Those Book Burners were the same people as the Gun Grabbers.

I might have seen all this coming, and done something about it, if I had paid more attention to the "Sporting Amendment." I am beginning to wish there were still some of those Second Amendment kooks running around. Now I'm the kook for requesting a permit to speak freely.

I remembered what the old geezer said about Americans losing their teeth. George Washington referred to the Second Amendment as the teeth of liberty. I finally realized what he meant.

So, what can I say?

First they came for our privacy, and since I had nothing to hide, I said nothing. Then they came for our guns, and because I had no gun, I said nothing. And then they came for our voices... ∞

See my article Dead Right on page 1 of the June 1995 issue of this newsletter. —editor

quoting some of your work.

Many thanks,

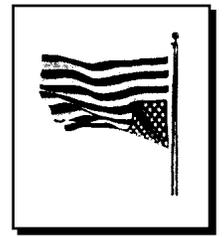
—Boblink

A White Man's Notes

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Status and Consequences — It's better for a man to remain wrong than to allow himself to be corrected by a woman because, once she establishes the precedent of correcting him, it will never again matter if he's right. ♂

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Nation in Distress

The only difference between taxation and extortion is the excuse for doing it.

—September 22, 1975
Milam's Notes



Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: SantaClara Bob; Lady Jan the Voluptuous; my mother; Dewey and Betty; and Boblink. —editor

From the Advice Columns

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

Q What's the worst thing that a wife can get on her twenty-fifth wedding anniversary?

A Morning Sickness. ∞

Definitions

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

- adult — a person who's stopped growing at both ends and started growing in the middle.
- dust — mud with the juice squeezed out. ∞

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Court Quotes

From *Humor in the Court* and *More Humor in the Court*, by Mary Louise Gilman, editor of the *National Shorthand Reporter*. Forwarded by Don G.

Q What is your brother-in-law's name?

A Borofkin.

Q What's his first name?

A I can't remember.

Q He's been your brother-in-law for years, and you can't remember his first name?

A No. I tell you I'm too excited. (Rising from the witness chair and pointing to Mr. Borofkin.) Nathan, for God's sake, tell them your first name! ∞

Submissions — I solicit letters, articles, and cartoons for the newsletter, but I don't pay for them. Short items are more likely to be printed. I suggest that letters and articles be shorter than 500 words but that's flexible depending on space available and the content of the piece. I give credit for all items printed unless the author specifies otherwise.

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—Sam Aurelius Milam III, editor

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