

Nemo's Anonymized and Cleaned Fieldnotes for Day 5, Part 2

Noon-ish: Mel, from Sioux City, IO whose pick-up truck was overflowing with dog cages (he ran a animal accessory business), but who somehow reorganized stuff to make room for us and strapped our bags down in the bed of the truck. Mel was picking up some cages from where we were at because he had to make a delivery in Mitchell, SD

Mel had gone to jail several times, once for 4 years when he was 19, and then again for 20 months and some more times for undetermined periods. The charges were: having ten pounds of weed, getting in a high-speed chase with the cops, and something about him putting weed in the car of this guy who didn't want weed there, but I'm uncertain what that all was about. He also mentioned something about "conspiracy to converse with criminal intent," as well as a "state-paid vacation" for 3 months in jail (you don't have to worry about anything, where you sleep or where you eat, the state takes care of that).

I asked Mel what it was like in prison and he said he never went to any of the super tough ones, and that you mostly get into a routine. You wake up, roll call, breakfast, work out a bit, get ready for lunch, roll call, eat, work out, go to the rec room, dinner, rec room, roll call, go to sleep, wake up, do it all over again. He said that when you're in solitary you can read a 400-500 page book in a day, cause you have 18-20 hours a day of just sitting around. When he got out of jail he was 200 pounds and could bench-press 350, but now he was 280 pounds (though he reckoned he could still bench 300).

He had been down to Arizona several times to bring up his nieces. Their mother had 4 daughters, two of which were his brother's, so they told her "look, we'll take care of our own until you can get a place to live" (she didn't have a house at the time). They weren't taking them away or anything, only until she could get back on her feet. But then she came over to their house one time and told the girls their sisters were in the van and wanted to say hi, so the girls got in and then they all disappeared. But Mel had a friend look into this in Arizona and turns out the girls were living just ten minutes away from the friend, so when Mel got out of jail (he was doing time in Arizona) he dropped by there.

He's brought the girls up several times to see the family, sometimes brought up their sister too since her dad was in Sioux City.

Mel took us to Mitchell and showed us the Corn Palace, which is basically this building with a facade out of corn that gets replaced every now and then. They've been getting bigger acts (it's a performance venue) than the habitual 80s hair metal cover bands. Finally, he dropped us off @ Twin Dragons Chinese restaurant in Mitchell because I was really munching out. I got hot green tea, Szechuan tofu and fries. We ate, then headed to the on-ramp. It started drizzling, then just as the heavy rain was about to start coming down we got a ride from...

3-4ish: Linda-Anne, who was coming up from Iowa to visit some family for Memorial Day in SD. She was a medical clerk (worked in the office of a medical centre in Sioux City) and had two daughters, one in Oklahoma City and one in Denver. She couldn't believe she was doing this, she never picked up hitch-hikers.

She said that being an undocumented migrant was a problem, when I asked her if hospitals had the obligation or habit to report the undocumented to the authorities. She said they didn't do that, but they did have the obligation to treat people. So you had these three gentlemen who cam to the kidney dialysis unit several times a week, and since they couldn't get a social security number, they couldn't get medicaid, so they were being treated for free (I understood this as meaning that they get treated at

the cost of the hospital). After that talk I got sleepy and dozed off, only to awaken when we stopped to get dropped off near the exit to Pierre, SD. We waited for some 10 minutes until we saw a figure walk up the on-ramp, also with a backpack and something in their hand. Since we were in the middle of nowhere, this was quite surprising. Soon we met this figure, named...