

## DEPUTY CRAWFORD'S FILES

By all known crime measurements, Oak County has not yet risen to the level of a 'haven' for lawbreakers. The three sheriff's deputies based at the Cedar Crossing substation work 8-hour shifts and only overlap in an emergency, with the last emergency occurring three years ago. Deputy Brian Crawford, a good friend even though he's a Presbyterian, currently works the graveyard shift. Interestingly enough, that shift does require regular patrols of the Cedar Crossing graveyard. Except for an occasional midnight stroll by moonstruck teenagers, most live folks steer clear of the graveyard at night.

After making his rounds, Deputy Crawford returns to the station to "strategize" (his words) and have a cup of coffee. While at his desk, he often pores through crime data, crime stories, and unsolved cases. When he comes across something of interest, he creates a file on it for future reference. He feels that what he collects could show patterns and prove useful in preventing or solving crime in Oak County.

Occasionally, I will run into Brian at the Chit Chat Café when his shift is over. Knowing that I am always on the lookout for sermon material, he will sometimes share selected stories with me from his files. While I don't consider everything he gives me sermon fodder, I do feel most of his files contain morsels of enlightenment in a broader sense. With that thought in mind, I am forwarding some selected material to you.

From Paris County:

Reverend Tucker from St. John's Episcopal Church had his home burglarized last week. Gone were all the usual electronic devices, as well as some gold memorabilia. When the local police arrived, they could find little evidence of who might have committed the crime. As they were about to leave, the detective saw a note written on a pad near the telephone. Just out of curiosity, he asked the reverend if that was his note. When the Reverend Tucker said he didn't recognize it, the detective wondered aloud if it could be ...

The note read, “Meet at Stony’s Junkyard tomorrow at 3 o’clock. Ask for Buddy. Call when there—287-555-2367.”

Yes, the burglar had written himself a note and left it on the pad. The police arrested Jackson Cory at the junkyard shortly thereafter.

From Georgia:

The head teller at First American Bank in Harperville called the sheriff’s office to report a young gentleman trying to make an unusual deposit. When the man approached the teller, he had a properly completed deposit slip in hand and a paper bag filled with money from weekend sales at the flea market. A problem arose, however, when the teller opened the bag to count the money and found a bag full of marijuana instead of money.

Yes, the man in question had mistakenly grabbed the wrong bag off his car seat. Police found the bag with the money still on his car seat. Rufus Culhane remains in county jail until somebody comes forward to post his bond.

From Tyler City:

Jaspar Mitchell stepped up to the counter of the car rental agency to return the rental car from his weekend trip. When the attendant came back to the counter from his inspection of the car, he asked where Jaspar had driven, noting that the odometer only showed ten miles as the mileage. The discussion quickly became heated as the attendant questioned how all four tires on the car became bald after only ten miles.

Apparently, Jaspar had taken the car home, switched out the new tires from the rental car to his car and then put the bald tires from his car back onto the rental car. To him, it seemed like a good plan. Unfortunately, the man standing behind Jaspar in line at the rental counter was a state trooper. Jaspar ended up getting a free ride to the county jail.

From Forest County:

A purse snatcher had been plaguing the county park recently. On Saturday afternoon, Doris Smith had her purse ripped off her arm by a speedy young suspect. The thief quickly outran the

plainclothes detective on watch in the park. While dodging a group of boy scouts on the path, the thief dropped his cell phone. One of the boy scouts picked up his phone and hollered at him that he dropped it. The thief stopped and felt his pocket for his phone and noted that he didn't have it. When he went back to retrieve the phone from the boy scout, the detective caught up to him and arrested him.

From Paris County:

Reverend Tucker from St. John's Episcopal Church had his home burglarized again last week. Having not yet gotten his goods back from the police from the last burglary, it didn't seem like there would be anything valuable left to take. He did find his brand-new gray suit gone from the closet. When the police arrived, they found an old ratty shirt and a pair of sweatpants in a heap on the floor. Inside the pocket of the sweatpants, they found a wallet with the driver's license of the suspect. The police contacted the owner of the wallet and told him he could come down to the station and pick it up.

Randolph Cory, the brother of Jackson Cory, dressed in a sharp looking gray suit, went to the

police station to get his wallet back. He looked good for his mug shot with the gray suit.

I look at these guys and I see fools—okay, such stupid fools that you have to laugh. I feel pity, sorrow, and disgust.

Lest I laugh too much, though, I fear that looking at them too closely would be like looking in a mirror with God on the other side watching me and all the dumb things, sin-wise, that I have done. But then, of course, we have grace. So, I am free to learn from my mistakes and, hopefully, minimize the number of times that God has to laugh at any foolish things I do. Sometimes you have to wonder if guys like Randolph, Cory, Jaspar, and Rufus will ever grasp the meaning of grace. It is an eternal hope, I fear.

Perhaps you wonder if God really has a sense of humor. If in doubt, I invite you to come to the Chit Chat Café and sit down with Deputy Crawford. His files contain a mountain of evidence to support the thought.