

---

---

# The Voluntaryist

---

---

Whole Number 162 “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself” 3rd Quarter 2014

## “You’re Not My Master; I’m Not Your Slave”: Voluntaryism and the Story of Absolutist Objectors

By Carl Watner

The Voluntaryist Statement of Purpose concludes by advocating the withdrawal of the cooperation and tacit consent on which State power ultimately depends. This conclusion, in turn, rests on the voluntaryist insight: the understanding that all government is necessarily grounded upon general popular acceptance. In short, the majority of the people themselves, for whatever reasons, acquiesce to the demands of their government. All governments depend upon the cooperation and compliance of those over whom they rule. Governments require the sanction of their victims.

What if, instead of complying with the law government agents are trying to enforce, a person asks, “What is the punishment for refusing to comply, for refusing to do what you say?” [1] What if the citizen says, “No!”? How does a free man react to those who might imprison him for failing to follow government rules? What does he say? How does he act toward his would-be enslavers?

In his essay on how he became a voluntaryist, Peter Ragnar observed that he became a voluntaryist the day that he fully realized that no one could force him to do anything he chose not to do. To illustrate his point, he recited the confrontation between Alexander the Great and an old Indian sage, as Alexander’s army was about to cross the Ganges River. “Alexander questioned the sage about what to expect after he crossed the river.” When he was told that his army would be defeated, Alexander threatened to decapitate the sage for his insolence. The sage was unmoved, replying Alexander could watch his head fall. Then he, the sage, would be dead.” [2] This spirit of voluntaryist resistance has been repeated many times. William Grampp in Volume I of his book on the history of economics tells the story of an ancient Stoic “who was captured and told to renounce his beliefs. He refused and was tortured. Still unable to make him recant, his captors told him he would be put to death. He answered that they could do whatever they wanted with his body, but whatever they did, they could not injure his philosophy, which was in his mind. Their authority, in its physical and moral aspect, did not extend [that far].” [3]

What these anecdotes describe is the idea that while “physical freedom can be curtailed by force,” one’s voluntary acquiescence can never be coerced. One might

be killed, but one can never be forced against one’s will. [4] This lesson is repeated over and over again as one reviews the histories of conscientious objectors to conscription and war. Peter Brock, in his book *LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE*, cites many such instances. Jonathan Whipple (1794-1875) was an 18 year old carpenter and member of the Rogerene religious sect from Mystic, Connecticut. During the War of 1812, he refused to perform any military duties or pay any fines. As he related in his diary, “Of course they could imprison me, or do what they would. But they could not make me do what I thought wrong, and wicked.”

Tilghman Vestal was a Quaker conscientious objector during the Civil War. Some time after November 1863, he was court-martialed by the Confederate army “and sentenced to be punished until he would bear arms.” He was repeatedly beaten, abused, knocked down, and then stabbed numerous times with a bayonet for his refusal to obey orders to fight. Vestal remained calm throughout his ordeal, and told his tormentors “that he was a Christian and could not fight.” Once when arguing whether his position was sustained by the Scriptures, an army chaplain told Vestal that he “wouldn’t give a cent for a religion that [wa]s opposed to his country.” Vestal replied, “I wouldn’t give a cent for a country that is opposed to my religion.” Vestal was sent to brigade headquarters, and “every effort was made to induce him to go and perform the duties of a soldier, but he was firm and as inflexible as the everlasting hills. He was told that if he persisted in his course he would be subjected to severe punishment, and would finally be shot for disobedience to orders. He replied that they had the power to kill him, but neither the Federal nor the Confederate army possessed the power to force him to abandon his principles or prove false to his religion.” [5]

I could by no means bring the Quakers to any terms. They chose rather to be whipped to death than bear arms, ...

- Colonel George Washington to Gov. Robert Dinwiddie, August 4, 1756, in *THE WRITINGS OF GEORGE WASHINGTON*, ed. John Fitzpatrick, Vol. 1, p. 420 (1931).

Another Civil War objector was William Hackett, a North Carolina farmer who was conscripted into the Confederate army in June 1863. “He was then 36 years old. He refused to bear arms and refused to purchase

*(continued on page 3)*

---

---

# The Voluntaryist

Editor: Carl Watner

## Subscription Information

Published quarterly by The Voluntaryists, P.O. Box 275, Gramling, SC 29348. A six-issue subscription is \$25. For overseas postage, please add \$5. Single back issues are \$5. Gold, silver, and bitcoin readily accepted. Please check the number on your mailing label to see when you should renew. Permission to reprint granted without special request. THE VOLUNTARYIST is online at [www.voluntaryist.com](http://www.voluntaryist.com).

## Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

### No.1 "An Anarchist Is One Who Minds His Own Business"

I believe in every man working for the good of self; and in working for the good of self, he works for the good of all. To think, to see, to feel, to know; to deal justly; to bear all patiently; to speak cheerfully; to moderate one's voice - these things will bring you the highest good. They will bring you the love of the best, and the esteem of that Sacred Few, whose good opinion alone is worth cultivating. And further than this, it is the best way you can serve Society - live your life. The wise way to benefit humanity is to attend to your own affairs, and thus give other people an opportunity to look after theirs.

If there is any better way to teach virtue than by practicing it, I do not know it.

Would you make men better - set them an example.

- Elbert Hubbard, JESUS WAS AN ANARCHIST (1939), pp. 6, 8-9.

### No. 2 "What My Father Knew About Politics"

When I was growing up and got old enough to think I knew something about politics and to express opinions about politicians, he [my father, Jess] used to infuriate me by simply saying, "They're all crooks." I'd think, "What does he know about it?" Fifty years later, I am inclined to think that he knew practically everything he needed to know about politicians.

- Robert Higgs, "William Jess Higgs," THE INDEPENDENT BEACON, March 31, 2009.

### No. 3 "Work and Character"

Joblessness is a personal crisis because work is a spiritual event. A job isn't only a means to a paycheck, it's more. "To work is to pray," the old priests used to say. God made us many things, including as workers. When you work, you serve and take part. To work is to be integrated into ... daily life ... There is pride and satisfaction in doing work well, in working with others and learning a discipline or a craft or an art. To work is to find out who you are. In return for performing your duties, whatever they are, you receive money that you can use freely and in accordance with your highest desires. Work allows you to renew your life, which is

part of the renewing of civilization. Work gives us a purpose, stability, integration, [a] shared mission. And so to be unable to work - unable to find or hold a job - is a kind of catastrophe for a human being.

- Peggy Noonan, "Work and the American Character," THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, August 31-September 1, 2013, p. A13.

### No. 4 "Chicago's Archbishop at the Barricades"

Cardinal Francis George takes a particularly dim view of what ... intrusion by government could mean for church and state relations. More than once he has warned for dramatic effect that, "I expect to die in my bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square.

- Nicholas G. Hahn, "Houses of Worship," THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, August 23, 2013, p. A11.

### No. 5 "An Early Example of Political Jugglery"

About 16,000 people out of a total population of 363,000 voted on the Massachusetts Constitution of late 1780. ... An examination of the Convention's methods of tabulating the popular vote raises the suspicion that the [required] two-thirds majority was manufactured. ... The ratification committee adopted a system of tabulation which to-day would be called political jugglery. ... I leave it to your judgment to decide whether the constitution of Massachusetts ... was ever legally ratified.

- Samuel Eliot Morison, A HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION OF MASS. (1917), p. 21, and "The Struggle Over the Adoption of the Constitution of Mass, 1780, 50 MASS. HISTORICAL SOCIETY (1917), p. 354.

### No. 6 Smartphone or License Plate?

The smartphone you carry in your purse or pocket is essentially a tracking device that can make telephone calls. GPS (global positioning systems) allows your location to be ascertained by your cellphone carrier, which information can then be turned over to the police and government authorities, much as spotting a license plate on your car allows them to identify its owner and where it was seen.

- Peter Maass and Megha Rajagopalan, "That's No Phone; That's My Tracker," THE NEW YORK TIMES SUNDAY REVIEW, July 13, 2012.

"Once you have government health care, it can be used to justify almost any restraint on freedom: After all, if the state has to cure you, it surely has an interest in preventing you needing treatment in the first place. ... And if they can't get you on grounds of your personal health, they'll do it on grounds of planetary health."

- Mark Steyn, "Live Free or Die!", IMPRIMIS (April 2009), p. 4

---

---

## **“You’re Not My Master; I’m Not Your Slave”: Voluntaryism and the Story of Absolutist Objectors**

*(continued from page 1)*

exemption, although he could have afforded to do so.” The officer to whom he reported told him that if he did not comply with orders he would be shot. “I told him I would not take gun nor march in the drill, so he said, ‘Which will you choose, to be shot in the evening or in the morning?’ I told him I should choose neither, . . . . He said he had full power, without permission, to kill me if I did not comply. I told him that I did not deny that he had, so far as the power of man extended, but that there was a power above man’s, and he could not remove a hair of my head without my Heavenly Father’s notice.” The next day, June 24, 1863, Hackett was ordered to fall in line with his company to drill. He refused. As he relates, “They tried to make me, and I sat down on the ground. They reminded me of the orders to shoot me, but I told them my God said to fear them not that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; . . . .” A firing squad was then formed and ordered to “Load; Present Arms; Aim.” The guns were pointed at Hackett, who then raised his arms and prayed, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” Not a shot was fired. The men of the firing squad lowered their rifles “without orders, and some of the men were heard to say that they ‘could not shoot such a man.’ The order was then given, ‘Ground arms.’” [6]

One of the best-known stories of conscientious objectors during World War I involves two Hutterite brothers, Joseph and Michael Hofer, of South Dakota. They were court-martialed for refusing to put on military uniforms and obey orders. Sent to a prison on Alcatraz Island in California, they “were stripped to their underwear and thrown into the dungeon where there were no sanitary facilities and sea water oozed across the bare floor on which they had to sleep. Given only a little water each day, they were manacled standing with their hands high above their heads so that their feet barely touched the floor. Beside them on the floor were soldier uniforms and they were promised relief if they would put them on and agree to obey. They persisted; and the authorities could not continue their brutality. When the Hutterites emerged from the hole, their arms were hideously swollen and they were scurvy-ridden and insect-torn. Then they were transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where they again refused to wear the army uniform and to work; they were confined in solitary. In two days, Joseph Hofer was taken to [the] hospital and died of pneumonia; Michael followed Joseph a few days later. Joseph’s body was returned to the Hutterite community dressed in the military uniform which [he] had resisted to the point of death.” [7]

During World War II, there were a number of conscientious objectors who took what they described as an absolutist position against war and conscription. The

consistent absolutists refused to cooperate in any way, shape, or form with the American government or its representatives. Corbett Bishop (1906-1961) was one of the most famous non-cooperators. His story is related in the book *CONSCRIPTION OF CONSCIENCE* by Sibley and Jacob in their chapter “Certain Absolutists.” Bishop registered as a religious objector under the Selective Service Act and “was inducted into the Patapsco, Maryland Friends Civilian Public Service camp on March 19, 1942.” When he realized that he would not be allowed a furlough to wind down his business affairs, and when he saw that he would be forced to work without pay, he began to fast in protest. This was on June 26, 1942. “Day after day the fast dragged on, Bishop continuing to work on the camp kitchen crew for three weeks, despite increasing physical weakness. At length he was admitted to the infirmary [and] listed as ‘Sick in Quarters.’ Five weeks of fasting had now elapsed.” [8] On August 3rd, Selective Service ordered him to report for work on the camp project, but due to his condition his crew leader listed him as unfit for work. He was persuaded to end his hunger strike on August 7th, after forty-four days of continuous fasting. The camp director took him to a Baltimore hospital where he recovered his strength.

The state, in [Tolstoy’s] view, represented an instrument of oppression based solely on armed force. This held not merely for autocracies like tsarist Russia but for democracies as well, for every state was inevitably a slave institution, its laws in the last resort enforced by soldiers and slavery the condition in which its citizens lived (though they were usually unconscious of the fact).

- Peter Brock, *FREEDOM FROM WAR* (1991), p. 193.

At the end of August 1942, he was transferred to the CPS camp at West Campton, New Hampshire. There he “began the practice of attacking at mealtimes the ‘slavery’ of Civilian Public Service.” He objected to the futile work done in the camps, and he “quoted from religious leaders like E. Stanley Jones: ‘Let anyone be saturated with the thought of the Sermon on the Mount and he will not only not try to argue a man into slavery, but he will not rest until every man is free, including himself.’” [9] By June 1943, he had reached the conclusion that the American Friends Service Committee was conspiring with the US government to enslave him and others. At this point, the Friends Service Committee wanted nothing more to do with Bishop, and turned him back over to Selective Service, which assigned him to a government camp at Mancos, Colorado on July 7, 1943. Later he was transferred to another government camp at Germfask, Michigan, where “he took furlough days which he had accumulated.” He resolved not to return to camp voluntarily.

When he was arrested on September 9, 1944, “he announced that his spirit was free and that if the arresting

officers desired his body, they would have to take it without any [as]sistance on his part. Transferred to the Milan, Michigan, federal prison to await trial, he refused to eat, stand up, or dress himself. The slightest degree of 'servility' or seeming acquiescence in his captivity would, he maintained, compromise his case." He was being force fed by the end of October, by having a tube pushed up through his nose. On December 6 he was brought before federal Judge Fred M. Raymond in Grand Rapids, MI. Bishop admitted that he had refused to return to camp, "but pleaded that the whole system of alternative service was unconstitutional" and violated his moral rights as a free man. [10]

He was told to appear in court on January 17, 1945, but he ignored this order. A new court date was set for January 25th. Again he refused. He was finally arrested by three FBI agents, when they appeared at his rooming house in Philadelphia, PA, on February 20, 1945. He refused to cooperate with them. Encountering his passive resistance, they dragged him from the house and drove him to the Federal Court House, where "they had to carry his limp form into the building, deposit it in the elevator, and carry it into the room of the United States Commissioner." There was no response when Bishop's name was called. Finally he responded "I am here -- in body only. ... I am not going to cooperate in any way, shape or form. I was carried in here. If you hold me, you'll have to carry me out. War is wrong. I don't want any part of it." [11]

Bishop was taken to Moyamensing prison where he continued his passive resistance and his refusal to feed himself. Again, prison officials resorted to forced feeding. On February 26, 1945, he was carried back into the Philadelphia court room of Federal Judge George A. Welsh. "When the judge asked whether he opposed his removal to Michigan for trial, he opened his eyes and replied: 'What you do with me is your own responsibility.'" On March 15 he was returned to Grand Rapids, still maintaining his passive resistance and still being forcibly fed. He was sentenced to four years in prison and fined one thousand dollars. Returned to prison as a sentenced offender, he continued his strike and complete non-cooperation." He was still being tube-fed and was becoming weaker. Finally federal officials granted him a parole with the condition that he work on the Morris Mitchell co-operative farm in Macedonia, GA. "Actually, however, Bishop had signed no papers, made no promises, and regarded himself as absolutely free. Upon release he brought to an end his passive resistance, which had lasted for the almost incredible period of 144 days. During that time he had done nothing to assist prison officials, even to the extent of walking or rising from his cot," eating, or using the prison toilet facilities. [12]

In September 1945, FBI agents found him in Berea, OH where they arrested him, once again, for violating his parole. He was not supposed to leave Georgia without government permission. When asked whether he was

ready to come along with them "he gave what was by now the expected reply - that he would not cooperate in any way with the government's restraint of his body. Hearing this, the agents picked up his suddenly limp body" and drove him to the Milan, Michigan prison. There the old story repeated itself. He resumed his fasting and non-cooperation; he was force-fed and again lost weight and was weakened. Finally, the Department of Justice decided that there was no point to his continued incarceration. The publicity his case was generating was negative and the war was over. He was again paroled on March 12, 1946, and again, there were no conditions, and Bishop signed no papers. [13]

"Bishop had fasted 426 days since entering prison. [He] followed, to its logical conclusion, the proposition that man should not, in any way, cooperate with the State in the waging of war, and that persons who by reason of religious training and belief are opposed thereto should not be imprisoned." [14] The most important idea in his philosophy was the distinction between the soul and the body. "Corbett Bishop as a person was found entirely in the soul. The government could gain complete control over the body that was known as Corbett Bishop, but couldn't control his soul, which was the real Corbett. As soon as the government began to coerce him, he responded with non-cooperation, leaving responsibility for the 'body' in the hands of the government." [15] He wouldn't do anything: eat, walk, or go to the bathroom. Bishop realized that governments can "terrorize individuals into submitting to tyranny by grabbing the body as hostage, and thus destroying the spirit. His body was taken by the American despots to conquer his spirit. They might have his body as hostage, but as long as they have it, he repudiate[d] the body, and w[ould] have nothing to do with it. Thus his spirit remain[ed] free." [16]

"There can be no greater stretch of arbitrary power than is required to seize children from their parents, teach them whatever the authorities decree they shall be taught, and expropriate from the parents the funds to pay for the procedure. ... "Free education" [is] the most absolute contradiction of facts by terminology of which the language is capable. Everything about such schools is compulsory, not free; ... . A tax- supported, compulsory educational system is the complete model of the totalitarian state."

- Isabel Paterson, THE GOD OF THE MACHINE (1943), from Chapter XXI, "Our Japanized Educational System."

[Ms. Paterson failed to note that the expropriation was from all taxpayers, not just the parents.]

Other conscientious objectors have recognized this, too. Henri Perrin was a French Roman Catholic priest imprisoned by the Germans during World War II. In his autobiography he noted that the Nazis "could keep me locked up; they could take me to a concentration camp tomorrow, they could torture me and make me cry out

with pain, but they could never touch the sanctuary where my soul watched, where I alone was master. They might deceive me, abuse me, weaken me; they might get words out of me which they could take as an admission; they could kill me. But they could never force my will, for it could never belong to them; it was between myself and God, and no one else could ever touch it.” [17]

So what does all this mean for voluntaryists, who object not only to State wars but to the very institution of the State itself? It inclines them toward thinking that total, absolute non-cooperation with one’s oppressors is the most potent method ever devised to counter the State. The State is not my master; I am not its slave. It does not own my body or my soul, and while I sometimes cannot prevent it from kidnapping my body, I can always counter its attempts to control my soul. As Peter Ragnar put it: “physical freedom can be curtailed by force, but coercion can never buy willing acquiescence. ... You can chop people’s fingers off so they can’t write. Then you will have to cut out their tongues so they can’t speak. But ultimately you will have to cauterize their brains so they cannot think.” Or as William Glasser wrote in his book, CHOICE THEORY, “In practice, if we are willing to suffer the alternative - almost always severe punishment or death - no one can make us do anything we don’t want to do.” [18]

“Only those who know for sure what [is] essential and what [is] ephemeral in themselves and in life” can resist in this fashion. [19] Other objectors have noted that “My will power is stronger than the bayonet, and my ideas will not be shot out of my head.” [20] Another recognized that “The power of fearlessness is astonishing. They could threaten me with anything at all and not get me, because I wasn’t afraid. This was immensely liberating to me. I could be the person I was without fearing them. They had no power over me.” [21]

#### Endnotes

[1] This approach, of asking those who claim authority, “what is the punishment for violating this rule, so that I may decide whether to follow it or not,” was suggested by Dave Scotese, voluntaryist webmaster.

[2] Peter Ragnar, “So, What Is It About ‘No’ That You Don’t Understand ... ?” THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole No. 125, 2nd Quarter 2005, p. 7.

[3] William Grapp, ECONOMIC LIBERALISM, (Vol. 1: “The Beginnings”), New York: Random House, 1965, pp. 11 and 26, cited in Carl Watner, “The Voluntaryist Spirit,” THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole No. 124, 1st Quarter 2005, p. 7.

[4] Peter Ragnar, op. cit.

[5] Peter Brock, LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN AMERICA THROUGH THE CIVIL WAR, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. For Whipple, mentioned in the previous paragraph, see pp. 78, 91; for Vestal (this paragraph) see pp. 160-163.

[6] Geoffrey Bould, CONSCIENCE BE MY GUIDE: AN

ANTHOLOGY OF PRISON WRITINGS, London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1991, pp. 59-60.

[7] Yuichi Moroi, ETHICS OF CONVICTION AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY: CONSCIENTIOUS WAR RESISTERS IN AMERICA DURING THE WORLD WARS, Lanham: University Press of America, 2208, p. 121.

[8] Mulford Q. Sibley and Philip E. Jacob, CONSCRIPTION OF CONSCIENCE: THE AMERICAN STATE AND THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR, 1940-1947, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952, p. 402.

[9] *ibid.*, pp. 402-403.

[10] *ibid.*, p. 405.

[11] *ibid.*, p. 406.

[12] *ibid.*, pp. 407-408.

[13] *ibid.*, p. 409.

[14] *ibid.*

[15] Letter from Brad Lyttle to Carl Watner, June 20, 1986.

[16] Julius Eichel, ed., THE ABSOLUTIST, OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE ABSOLUTIST WAR OBJECTORS ASSOCIATION, Volume III, No. 4, May 22, 1945, p. 2.

[17] Bould, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

[18] William Glasser, CHOICE THEORY: A NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSONAL FREEDOM, New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1998, p. 332.

[19] Bruno Bettelheim, THE INFORMED HEART, New York: The Free Press, 1960, p. 281.

[20] Moroi, op. cit., p. 120.

[21] Bould, op. cit., p. 234. 

#### Why Don’t You Propose Something Constructive?

From time to time, readers of ANALYSIS urge upon me the espousal of some program they are pleased to call “constructive.” Every one of the proposed reforms has something to commend it, while the sincerity of the proponents makes one wish they might succeed. The fact remains, however, that the reform invariably rests its case on the goodwill, intelligence, and selflessness of men who, invested with the power to do so, will put the reform into operation. And the lesson of history is that power is never so used. Never. I am convinced, on the other hand, that all of the evils of which these honest people complain can be traced to the misuse of power, and am therefore inclined to distrust political power of any kind. ... The only “constructive” idea that I can in all conscience advance, then, is that the individual put his trust in himself, not in power; that he seek to better his understanding and lift his values to a higher and still higher level; that he assume responsibility for his behavior and not shift his responsibility to committees, organizations, and, above all, a superpersonal State. Such reforms as are necessary will come of themselves when, or if, men act as intelligent and responsible human beings. There cannot be a “good” society until there are “good” men.

[Reprinted from THE FREEMAN, November 1974, p. 690 and originally excerpted from ANALYSIS, July 1949, Frank Chodorov, editor.]

---

---

## 'A' Was For America: My Journey to Voluntaryism

*(continued from page 8)*

including the College Libertarians.

Thought-provoking discussions at our meetings caused me to question the status quo. I took my views on drug policy to their logical conclusion - get the State out of the way. The same happened to marriage and education and other issues. I quit thinking about working for federal law enforcement agencies since I couldn't support any of their missions. Still, I thought I could have a positive impact working at a big police department. After all, wasn't protecting people and property a proper role of government?

I tested with New York City Police Department, Seattle PD and LAPD, and scored at the 94%, 98% and 100% levels, respectively. But, after a questionable reading on the lie detector test administered by the LAPD, they found that I hadn't been truthful about my use of "illicit" substances. Consequently, they dropped me from consideration. I thought more about my future. I withdrew my name from consideration with the NYPD and Seattle and interviewed and was then offered a job in the private sector working for a surveillance company. I had my choice of placements around the country and was to be given a car and quite-decent salary, but then I received an email that changed the course of my life. I had previously applied for an intern position at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., thinking that such an environment would be very beneficial to my intellectual development. I didn't know anyone in Washington, D. C., but I knew it was an awesome opportunity, so off I went into the belly of the beast.

I exited the train in Union Station with two bags and my boxed-up bicycle in early January of 2005 and began my internship in the Foreign Policy & Defense Department. The caliber of those I was surrounded by was impressive. Most of the other interns came from big-name schools and were well-read. I felt like I had some catching-up to do and I worked hard to get the most out of my time there. Weekly seminars by Cato staff on public speaking, op-ed writing, research techniques and more helped me become a more effective communicator of liberty. In-house events and those around town exposed me to a lot of ideas and policy proposals. After a short time I got up the courage to question those I felt were less than consistent. And for the first time I was exposed to economics (I hadn't had a single class in high school or college). Austrian economics specifically opened up to me an entirely new perspective on the world, one centered on the actions of individuals rather than on mega-data like GDP or nation-state imports/exports. This was instrumental in my progress to seeing political boundaries as arbitrary.

That summer I was fortunate to be one of about 40 in the Koch Summer Fellow Program (KSFP). John Hasnas

led one of the sessions during our opening week, and though I wasn't assigned to his group, I made time to talk with him at the suggestion of others in the program. I found his views thought-provoking and today continue to share his essay "The Myth of the Rule of Law" with others who believe law created and interpreted by man is a good thing. Through the KSFP I interned at the Drug Policy Alliance. While some colleagues there advocated for the government to be completely uninvolved with drug policy, most sought to redirect government involvement from enforcement to treatment. Healthy conversation ensued and working through political channels to bring about systemic change became even less attractive.

I read ATLAS SHRUGGED for the first time and finally understood the "Who is John Galt?" reference I had months before seen on a t-shirt. In June, I went to the Porcupine Freedom Fest (PorcFest), the summer event hosted by the Free State Project. Its founder, Jason Sorens had addressed our KSFP class. It was the first time I had been around people who openly carried weapons and were living the free lifestyle. Their attitudes were very infectious. In August 2005, I was hired by the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS), which I still believe is one of the best bang-for-your-buck non-profits advancing liberty.

I worked at IHS for over 2 1/2 yrs, last serving as director of the campus outreach program, which demonstrated to me the benefit of coupling online and in-person communications. While there I read Bruce Benson's THE ENTERPRISE OF LAW, Carl Watner's I MUST SPEAK OUT, the Tannehill's THE MARKET FOR LIBERTY, and Brian Doherty's RADICALS FOR CAPITALISM just to name a few. At some point while at IHS, I realized that I was an anarchist, although I initially hesitated to describe myself as such, fearing I'd do more harm than good since I might fail to adequately address the critiques posed by others. That self-censorship soon passed.

In early 2008, I left IHS for Bureaucrash, a then-principled activist-oriented organization. It was a tough decision, but it was my logical next step. The intellectual foundation and skills I'd acquired over the past few years and the discretion afforded in my new role facilitated the creation of tools and content that helped advance the voluntary society. A vibrant social network meant individuals could connect online, share ideas and even meet in-person. Events, videos, merchandising and other efforts reinforced this community's growth. A year later, I left DC to "search for freedom in America" through the Motorhome Diaries (MHD) with my friend Jason Talley, who, too, had been active in DC's libertarian think tank world.

We set out in our RV, dubbed MARV, the Mobile Authority Resistance Vehicle, and pointed our cameras at those advancing the freedom movement. We held meetups in over 50 cities and did media and outreach.

Shortly into the tour, we received an email from Adam Mueller, who I subsequently nicknamed Ademo, and who later changed his last name to Freeman, to show that he owned himself. He expressed interest in joining our project. A week later he took the train from Milwaukee to Chicago and we picked him up as we headed west. A month later we were stopped in Jones County, MS for having a temporary, rather than a permanent, metal license plate. This led to our unjust arrest and the search of MARV, and underscored why we were doing what we were doing - the police state was alive and well. But so was the liberty-oriented community, who made hundreds of calls to our captors, raised bail money, and helped get more attention on our rights-violations. I still get teary-eyed when talking about the spontaneous nature of the support we received from friends and other lovers of liberty. After seven months we had visited 41 states, met thousands of people, and uploaded 200 video interviews from policy wonks, activists, thinkers and, yes, three politicians (including Ron Paul and Adam Kokesh).

In early 2009, I joined Ademo at Cop Block (CB), a police accountability project he'd started after being harassed by an individual working for his local police department. Its tagline, "badges don't grant extra rights" and proactive tactics have resonated with a lot of people, including a growing number of contributors. Though everyone approaches the issue from a different angle and with a different tone, we all seek to communicate that it's the monopoly on the provision of law enforcement that must cease in order to end the rights-violations from those wearing badges.

A couple of months later, after I bought Jason out of his half of MARV, Ademo and I founded Liberty On Tour, through which we sought to advance the voluntary society. Taking what we learned from MHD, we spent a few months on logistics for our next tour. This time, over 30 organizations such as FEE, FFF, Freedom's Phoenix, Free Keene and Strike The Root stepped-up. We included their brands on our video intros and outros, wore their swag, adhered their graphics to MARV (a rolling billboard for liberty), distributed their materials, and more. By this time we had relocated to Keene, NH, to be involved with the growing community of doers on the ground seeking to achieve "liberty in our lifetime!" A few weeks before we hit the road we traveled to Greenfield, MA, to bail out a friend. We were filming, as we often do, which eventually led to us being kidnapped and caged by aggressors wearing badges.

Together we were threatened with three felonies and five misdemeanors. After over a year of legal hoops, we had a trial. By that time, only three charges remained (including the wiretapping). We represented ourselves (though the judge assigned us lawyers over our objections) and communicated that it wasn't us but those wearing badges that were the criminals. People were supportive and emboldened to stand up for their own rights. The jury found us not guilty. When the jurors left,

they received a standing ovation from those present to support us.

We completed another cross-country tour - 13 cities in 13 weeks - that departed from Keene and ended in Miami, complete with more unfounded arrests. This past summer (2011), we did a shorter tour focused mostly on the growing liberty community in New Hampshire. My experiences in these roles only further strengthen my belief in and advocacy for consensual interactions.

Right now, I'm brainstorming with Ademo about future plans for Cop Block and Liberty On Tour. The former has had enormous traction due to its decentralized nature and the sheer number of people whose rights have been violated by those wearing badges, so it's likely we'll focus efforts on that front.

The ideas of liberty and of voluntaryism specifically have made me a better person. Most individuals mean well, but they've only been exposed to the misinformation peddled in gun-run schools and by the mainstream media, which communicate that it's ok for people working for the government to do things that would be wrong for others to do. Introduction to the ideas of self-ownership, one mind at a time, can only encourage the peaceful evolution toward a more free and prosperous society. And oh yeah - that American flag tattoo is now covered by a big circle-A, which has been an excellent conversation starter about my journey, and the ideas of liberty. ▣

#### To Risk

To laugh is to risk appearing a fool,  
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.  
To reach out to another is to risk involvement,  
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self.

To place your ideas and dreams before a crowd  
is to risk their loss.

To love is to risk not being loved in return,

To hope is to risk despair.

To live is to risk dying,

To try is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken

Because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.

The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing. He may avoid sorrow,

But he cannot learn, feel, change, grow, or live.

Chained by his servitude, he is a slave who has forfeited all freedom.

Only a person who risks is truly free.

The pessimist complains about the wind;

The optimist expects it to change;

And the realist adjusts the sails.

- Attributed to William Arthur Ward

---

---

## 'A' Was For America: My Journey to Voluntaryism

By Peter Eyre

I was born in 1980, in Ponca City, OK, a town of about 25,000 two hours north of Oklahoma City. My old man - a chemist graduate from Madison by way of Purdue - worked at the Conoco refinery, the area's biggest employer. My mom - who'd been a nurse at the hospital - opted to stay at home with me and my older brother.

Growing up I played sports (sometimes poorly) and inherited my dad's love of riding bicycles. My folks were supportive. One book they gave me, *THE WAY THINGS WORK*, instilled in me an interest to investigate what was beneath the surface. When I was ten, a tree house we'd started building wasn't getting finished, so I knew some change was in the air.

We moved 700 miles up the road (I-35) to a suburb of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Save for math, school was easy enough but I tended to get into trouble. When younger, I got nothing more than checks next to my name on the blackboard. When older, I did nothing serious enough to get me caught up in the legal system, but I have had to apologize for some things I did in 11th and 12th grades.

Though I spoke with Army and Marine recruiters in 10th grade, like most of my classmates I ended up heading off to college. My worldview at the time was aptly summarized by my second tattoo, an American

flag surrounded by the text "Love it or leave it." I majored in Law Enforcement. A mandatory class in the Ethnic Studies department was the impetus for that becoming my second major. In both programs I found that more and more, I was often the lone voice of dissent.

Drug policy was the issue that got me into the ideas of liberty. James P. Gray's *WHY OUR DRUG LAWS HAVE FAILED AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT* was one of the assigned books in a Sociology class I took, and provided me with a logical framework of potential alternatives. I consumed other books on the issue and in a Law Enforcement class, wrote a paper calling for the decriminalization of drugs. My Ethnic Studies classes caused me to question democracy, after it became clear that a majority doesn't make something right. It didn't make sense to me that people should celebrate the political victories of women's suffrage or the ending of enslavement, but ignore the fact that it was the same institution that had "legalized" such inequalities in the first place. Ride-alongs and time spent as an intern with the St. Paul Police Department only reinforced my belief that systemic changes needed to be made.

I went off to grad school at Western Illinois University, where I majored in Law Enforcement and Justice Administration. The program was geared for those heading into the field rather than academia. My grades were good - 3.85GPA in undergrad and 3.91 in grad school. I attended conferences around the country and was active with many organizations on campus,

*(continued on page 6)*

---

---

## The Voluntaryist

P.O. Box 275 • Gramling, South Carolina 29348



### FIRST CLASS

Please renew your subscription if the number on your address label is within one digit of this issue's number