

Back to the Truck

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It was stupid to come out here alone. This hike is too long. I should have waited until I had lost some of this fat before attempting to haul it up a mountain trail. I didn't take any of the precautions I should have. I didn't think, and I am just not ready for this.

The water fall out at Feather River was beautiful. I got there but my feet told me to turn back at the third mile marker. The Trail Head to the water fall lookout was five miles, mostly all down hill. I was drenched in sweat and hardly able to keep a regular breath for more than a second. I had made it and I was proud.

I should have turned around when I started to feel the rubbing on my heel. Should have broke in these boots, should have wore the wool socks, and should have brought the moleskin.

On the platform the Forestry Service built, I stood hundreds of feet above the river. The water fall was only three arm lengths away. The water was falling like diamonds in the sunlight and I could feel the glassy spray cut the hot air around my face. It was a welcome pleasure from the heat. I hobbled around snapping pictures on my cheap Kodak disposable. No one would be able to say I didn't make it down here, I had my proof.

After a lengthy rest and eating my lunch consisting of Powerade, almonds and a turkey sandwich, it was time to start the five miles back to the Truck. My Blue Truck. It got me out here and it was waiting to take me home. All I had to do was get there.

All up hill. My feet feel like I'm walking on hot coals. I'll never be able to make this. I can barely walk now. I should find a place to wait, the pain is too much. I'm going to have to be carried out. This is going to be the most embarrassing shameful day if I don't make it. I think I'd rather just die out here in the Forest. Let my body go back into Mother Natures earth; don't make me face my physical weakness.

"The weight will never hold me back," I would say. This affirmation was the perfect social defuse when I felt the awkward lull in conversations about my interests in Backpacking. I could always feel the judgment and the snickers, no matter how subconscious they were. Men of my stature and size are not meant to walk more

than the distance to the fridge or the bathroom. Hiking ten miles in the summer heat on a trail with a considerable rate of difficulty was a death wish for a man like me. I would show them, and more importantly I would prove to myself that I am able to accomplish what others would consider impossible.

I have to stop every thirty yards. Every step hurts worse than the last. The absence of my ability to control my bladder renders me unable to stand still for very long. I'm peeing all over myself when I stop, just great. God my hands hurt. They are puffed up red and swelling. I need to hold them above my heart and let the blood drain out.

It was taking me twice as long to get back to the Truck as it did to get to the water fall. The pain was becoming unbearable. I'm walking on shards of crushed glass. You know how a foot covered in untreated blisters can get. I had two feet being rubbed raw in blood soaked socks. My focus redirected from the natural beauty around me to own survival.

Can't pass out, must try to focus the mind away from the pain. Must not cry these tears of agony and certain defeat. I don't have the fluids for tears right now. What is that? One mile to go. I'm not going to make it. I can't make it. I have not the strength or the tolerance for this pain. My knees are buckling; here goes my ability to stand.

In my life I have never been tested to my limit in any single area. Oh sure, maybe I had a "near death" experience in a car crash one time, but the truth is I never reached that brink of facing my own mortality, or summoning a required will to live. No one out there was going to save me. I was alone, injured and I couldn't hardly walk. Certainly couldn't wriggle my great girth over sharp rocks - in an attempt to crawl. The heat was at its peak and I was with out water. If the heat stroke didn't get me, I was sure to be torn apart in the night by the wild life, this was Mountain Lion country.

No. There is no way this is going to happen to me. Not like this. I have much to do in this life, too many people to see one last time. I'll meet whatever end, but it is not time for that yet.

After I had resolved that it was better to die trying than to sit and do nothing - my body granted me a shot of endorphins and adrenaline for the last mile trek. As I stumbled out of a clearing I saw my Truck in sight. I wanted to fall to my knees and thank whatever power was up there helping me. But I knew I would not be able to stand again if I did that. I had to keep going the last short distance, unlock the door, sit in the driver seat, get

hydrated, get these boots off, and get back home to heal. I made it.

Every part of my body hurts and I had my brush with death. That higher power that "he" was babbling about? It exists at about chest level my friend. It is me.