

## LONG WALK HOME (5)

by: Roger Bernabo

WORD COUNT: 442

"Man I am tired," I said as I took a deep breath firing the basketball a last time at the goal.

"Me too and we're gonna have a hard time getting a ride this late," Jimmy said.

I knew we stayed too long playing basketball with our friends in their church's gym. One would have thought we'd learn since this was only the fourth week we had done or made the same mistake. (We had above average intelligence, we hid it most of the time.)

We walked about a mile to our hitch-hike spot. It was cold and the humidity was high. That was a brutal combination for my knees as they were already throbbing with a low grade pain from the evening's workout.

We stood across from the Carnegie Library where the boulevard was wide and near a stop light. It was a great spot for a ride to Greenfield but it was past 11 pm. The theory was either people were afraid to pick up at this hour, (4 teenagers) or the ones that normally would were with a girl. Forget about it.

We took turns poking our thumbs out in the wind while the rest BS'd. It did not look promising. We probably should have begun walking but we were tired and hoped we'd get lucky.

Then another group (hoods) from our neighborhood showed up and began hitch-hiking below us. Now two groups were asking for a ride. Our chances diminished by half (see, hidden intelligence) and I seriously doubted these guys cared if they got a ride.

It was getting colder, darker (if possible) and the cars were sparse. An old couple drove up to the red light and put their electric car door locks on. We all heard the sound. This always cracked us up as the people thought they were in mortal danger. Our friends trying to hitch a ride below us heard the lock sound too. Sure enough Andy snuck up to the car, none conspicuous, grabbed the rear door handle jerking it like he was desperately trying to break in. The old man left rubber as he sped away.

"We'll never get a ride with them near by," I said.

We turned and began the 3 mile walk home. My knees ached and ached. A wet snow began to fall and we shared teenage life as street lights showered dimmed light. As luck would have it our friends yelled and waved from a car as they passed us.

Today my knees don't ache, the cold and snow are gone. I do remember a slice of life we all enjoyed, male commarderie.

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