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The Finer Points of Poverty

By Timothy Ward

I'm poor. And I'm not ashamed of it. Actually, I'm kind of proud of myself for being poor. It's an accomplishment that many people will never attain. Some people will go through their whole life and never know what it's like to experience some of the finer points of poverty like eating ramon noodles for breakfast, lunch, and dinner 5 days a week. My heart goes out to these types of people. The Fourtunate Ones. People who've always had electricity, nice cars, and proper clothing.

I wasn't always poor. I had to work hard at it. I had to quit several jobs without finding new ones. I had to spend 75% of my paycheck at the bar when I knew my bills would have easily taken 90%. I had to max out credit cards and never pay on them. I had to give money to females that I knew would never pay it back. And most importantly I had to move to a small town where \$6.00 an hour is considered 'good money'.

I didn't know that I was putting myself in line for poverty while I was doing all these things. I just woke up one day and realized that I couldn't pay my car note because I only had 11 cents in the bank. And that's when it hit me: I'm POOR! It took me 25 long years but I finally nose-dived below the poverty line. I was now in the same category as the homeless and welfare recipients. No more was I hindered by riches. I had shed that lifestyle. I got up and fixed myself a mayonaisse sandwich to celebrate. Delicious!

As a poor person I am entitled to certain privledges to which the well-to-do won't every be privy. I decide haved to list a few:

– Instead of lugging around a wallet full of heavy dollar bills I now pay for important purchases like gasoline and food with spare change that I scavenge up around the

house.

– I get to shop at stores with improperly spelled titles like Sav-A-Lot, Thrif-Ti-Mart, and DisKount King. These stores offer a wide variety of out-dated, slightly damaged merchandise that Wal-Mart shoppers can only dream of.

The Finer Points of Poverty

– I get to drool at restaurant commercials on TV because I know I will never be able to afford meals like that again unless a rich relative dies

– I get to wear my friend's hand-me-down clothes and shoes. This means that I rarely match and my feet ache constantly from wearing shoes that are three sizes too small.

– I get to freely engage in the official sports of the National Poor People's Association: begging and borrowing.

– I get to go to bed every night with the comforting thought that if I ever do meet Ms.Right I can't afford to date her.

I'll stop there because I see the envy rising to dangerous levels in a few reader's eyes. These readers

probably have steady jobs and nice homes or apartments. Their bills are probably caught up. They probably have an immense wardrobe with properly sized shoes. Their bank account probably never drops below \$5,000. I apologize to these readers if my boasting about my impoverished condition has made them feel inferior and totally removed any self-esteem they may have had left. All I can say is that I never meant to be poor. I was just in the right places at the right times. Maybe one day all of you will find yourselves on the Road to Rags as well. Until then you can check in with me if you want to know what it's like. I'll be the guy on the side of the interstate off-ramp with the 'Will Work For Food' sign. Pull your Mercedes right up and ask me anything. I promise I won't laugh.

Timothy Ward has decided to go on a hunger strike until his humor column, 'I Never Said I Was Normal', gets over 1000 subscribers. You can help to end his fast by visiting

<http://www.timothy-ward.com>

and signing up. Please hurry, his ribs are already showing.

Marble And Granite - What Produces The Shine?

By David Andrew Smith

Many people make the assumption that marble, granite and other finely polished natural stones shine because a `polish' has been added to them. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Natural stones are made of crystals. The crystals are made up of different minerals. Each mineral forms a different crystal shape. These different crystals interlock together to make up the stone. When stone is first quarried it has a very rough texture to its surface as it breaks along the crystal joints. By using a series of graduated grinders the stone is ground down. The grinders are normally made from industrial diamonds and to start the process a very rough one is used. It is the same principle as sanding down wood. You start with glass paper that is very coarse and gradually use finer and finer glass paper until you have a fine, smooth finish to the wood. With stone the glass paper is replaced

The Finer Points of Poverty

with diamond studded pads and these get finer and finer.

What the grinding is doing is cutting the rough edges off the stone by scratching it and as the diamonds become smaller and smaller the scratches become finer and ultimately microscopic. What you end up with is a very smooth surface to the stone. The crystals have by a slow process of finer and finer grinding been worn down until on the surface they are all perfectly flat and smooth with each other. A perfectly flat surface will reflect the light uniformly and will look like glass.

Consider a mirror that reflects light uniformly giving you a clear sharp image. Make the glass curved or rippled and you get a less clear, less sharp image reflected back. The same applies to stone. If the crystals are flat then you get a perfect image reflected back and the stone looks incredibly shiny. Roughen the surface slightly and the reflected light ceases to give you a perfect reflection and the stone begins to dull. Any interference with the stones surface can cause this dulling to appear. It could be a series of minute scratches made by dirt or it could be caused by acid materials etching into the stone destroying its shine in that region.

To get the shine back the stone must be ground down again. Consequently the shine on a stone is not the product of adding some chemical to the stone but is a property of the stone itself.. The harder the stone the more difficult it is to grind but the greater degree of shine that can be achieved, which is why polished granite has the greatest degree of shine, followed by marble then limestone.

David Andrew Smith runs

<http://www.wesparkle.co.uk/>

a contract cleaning company which specialises

in cleaning and polishing natural stone as well as providing cleaning services throughout the UK



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