

RON NORTON REEL

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Help When You Can

Ron Norton Reel, and this is Brookings Harbor Voices.

The year was 1970. The college junior had transferred to Fresno State. He found himself completely alone, without a single friend, and without a job.

He found a job at a mortuary where his responsibilities were to show families into the viewing rooms of those who had recently died.

As payday got closer, he found himself without food. His family had from time to time had been on welfare, and he knew they had been given food in the past.

He got up the courage to go to the welfare department. He took a deep breath and began to explain to the receptionist why he had come.

"I get paid in two days and won't need any further assistance. I just need a can of meat, some vegetables, and perhaps some cheese."

She smiled and said, "Oh honey, we don't just give food away; it will take at least a week before we can process your application."

"But I won't need anything after I get paid in two days. I have not had anything to eat for three days."

"That's just not the way we do business." she said as she went back to typing.

Once he got his paycheck he decided to go back to the welfare department. He approached the receptionist who recognized him. He handed her a brown bag with a can of meat, a can of potatoes, and a can opener.

He spoke, "Do you know how much courage it took me to come here and ask for help? If another person tells you they need just a bit of assistance, please give them this care package and let them leave with their dignity."

I don't know if the receptionist ever gave that bag of groceries to anyone, but the lesson I learned that day will stay with me until my death. Help when you can!