

'Jingles' demonstrates God's love

by John Prin

A young man, tipsy and disheveled, walks into the White Castle near Nicollet and Lake after 1 a.m. when the bars close. He orders two burgers and some fries in a loud, abrasive voice. The security officer walks up and politely asks him to tone down. The man spews back profanities, calling him, "Fatso!"

"Listen, son," the pot-bellied man in uniform says, "I'd sooner be flabby than crabby, I'd sooner love ya than shove ya."

The young man bursts out laughing. The security officer pats him on the shoulder, smiles, and chats amiably until the amused youth takes his order and leaves...another potential spark of trouble extinguished.

"I have enjoyed the privilege of protecting the rights, dignity and property of patrons and employees of White Castle restaurants for three years now," says Roy Arnold, 56. Arnold works the night shift at the white formica, stainless steel, fluorescent emporium of takeout food on neon-lit Lake Street. "My secret?" he grins, eyes twinkling. "If you can make a man laugh, You cut his strength in half."

He lets loose a huge belly laugh, one of his many of the evening. Arnold describes himself as 302 pounds of jolly, jovial blubbery bouncer. The crowd that frequents White Castle — whites, blacks, American Indians, teens, the elderly — know him as "Jingles." "They call me, 'Officer Jingles, the Poet of Lake Street,'" he beams.

But things weren't always so rosy for Roy Arnold. Much of his life he felt misunderstood, maladjusted. "I had no idea becoming a security officer would drastically change my life in so many ways," he says. "In the beginning, I almost backed out because I felt it would be a drag and bore me to death. But God had other plans."

Arnold tells about the night

he was on duty ten months after starting his job. It was during the slack morning hours, when Steve, his manager, was about to go off duty. "Steve looked me straight in the eye and asked simply, 'How is your relationship with the Lord, Jingles?'"

Arnold answered, "Not so good, Steve." He had already made six commitments to the Lord in his life. He considered himself a backslider and felt he was wasting the Lord's time.

"Why not give it one more try?" Steve said. Arnold replied, "Okay." For the next twenty minutes they prayed together.

In his painfully awkward school days he'd clowned around to gain acceptance by using cheerfulness to cover up his insecurity. Now, finally, at 54 years old he had come to the point where he could acknowledge the generous gifts of humor and poetry God had given him.

Arnold soon began to pray for wisdom, courage and strength before starting work each evening.

The most "action" occurs between 1:00 and 3:30 a.m., when local bars close. "That means 85 percent of customers are in varied degrees of intoxication," he says. "It means good business, but that's when I really earn my money."

Like the time a bearded drunk beleaguered a high school-aged cashier. "He raged like a volcano. I was more scared than I'd ever been in my life, but I just kept smiling. The Lord helped me stand my ground and face fear, and He kept me from running. Me, a former coward. Now by faith, and the power of God I was as brave as a lion."

Or like the time five young men were squeezed into one booth talking loudly back and forth about race cars. One of them asked an elderly patron for a cigarette. The older man cursed, then swung his fist, shattering the boy's glasses. Officer Jingles intervened and suc-

cessfully calmed them down.

"Once I lacked courage and had no feist, now I've got plenty in Jesus Christ."

Arnold, a lifetime bachelor, is one of four brothers and four sisters raised on an Iowa farm. His family moved to Pennsylvania while he was still young, where he enlisted in the Army after high school. He served two memorable tours of duty in West Germany and Korea as a cook and medic in his twenty years of service.

Arnold's farm background is evident in the advice he offers. "If you don't feed on the Word, It's just like having a bag of fertilizer in the barn," he muses. "If you don't take the fertilizer out to the cornfield, the corn ain't gonna grow!"

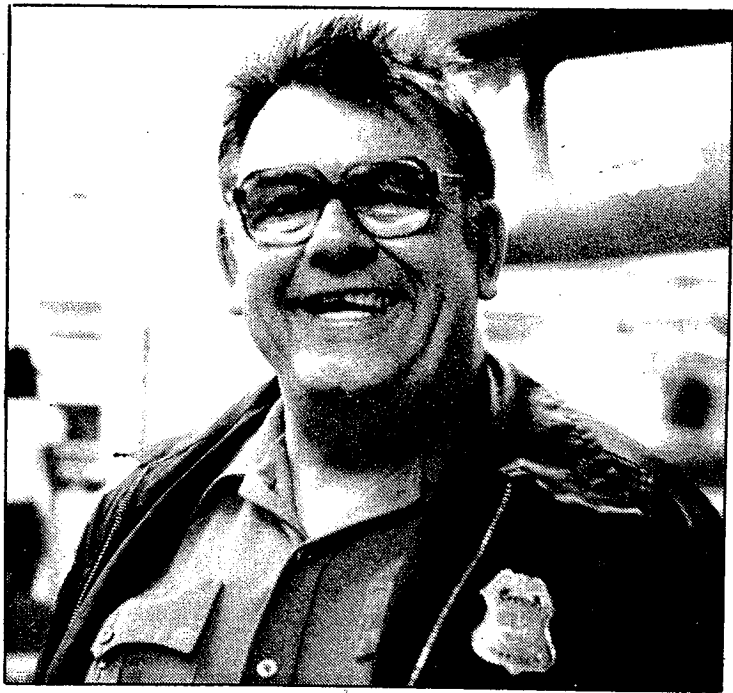
Besides preventing disturbances, Officer Arnold actively demonstrates positive values to patrons. He has the rare gift of being very funny and very serious at the same time. Often he "works the room," roaming between groups of customers sitting at the yellow and blue tables, sprinkling his humorous verses around like a Johnny Appleseed. The majority laugh and interact openly. Only a few, perhaps a tad unsure of his unorthodox manner, tend to hold back.

With ornery customers he says: "If somebody's huntin' for a tussle and I'm the first guy they grab; I don't have much toned-up muscle, but I can cover 'em with a lot of flab!"

Perhaps his greatest feat exemplifying God's love came when a teenager he had to evict kicked him outside the store. A fracas resulted, requiring the police to frisk, cuff and arrest the teenager.

The next night buddies of the arrested youth taunted Arnold, "Do you think you can get away with putting a true American Indian away in jail?" Arnold answered back, "No matter who breaks the law, regardless of ethnic origin, if I

'Poet of Lake Street' knows Christ



Roy Arnold says knowing God has given him courage in his job as a security officer (John Prin photo).

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can't settle the situation here with my own talents then he takes his chances going to jail."

After twelve months of harassment by the buddies, during which they saw with their own eyes Arnold's decency (self-sacrificing, without malice, "to be brutal is futile,") the reward of Arnold's efforts came when the arrested youth returned from detox and counseling.

"The change in him was outstanding and delightful. His buddies were now quite different too. I went over to him and said, 'What a marvelous difference.' He was very moved and even apologized for his terrible behavior a year before. 'Will you forgive me and let me start over?' he asked 'You sure better believe it!' I said, and hugged him warmly."

Proof that love is more effective than shove.

Arnold refuses to carry weapons (except a rolling pin once in a while, just for fun) and uses as his manual the Holy Bible and the Book of Proverbs. "There's nothin' like God's Word for knowing what's best to do."

He sighs, turns sober. "There's one thing I feel convicted about, though. So many folks hee to witness to. I can reach some, but I just can't get to them all."

Over the sizzle of fries in the frier and burgers on the grill, he thinks back again to his corn fed farm days: "Yep, faith without action is like a tractor without traction."

Heading over to the folks at the counter, he chuckles to himself about "carrying a lot of weight around here," then this "gentle giant with a ministry" blends in with the people of the night.



Security officer Roy Arnold is a Christian witness while working the night shift at White Castle. Known as the "Poet of Lake Street," Arnold uses wit and kindness rather than violence to maintain order in the restaurant (John Prin photo).