

TESTIFY

1. To make a declaration under oath; give sworn testimony;
2. To serve as evidence;
3. To declare publicly

Welcome.

We hope you are enjoying your stay.

Now is the time to sit back, relax and reflect.

We are pleased to provide this true story. Perhaps after reading this piece you will want to pick up the pen and write your own life story.

**A story that shaped
and embraced
you.**

Possibly, you'll want to share your story with others. An opportunity to submit your piece for upcoming Testify pieces is offered.

It is not complicated.

Just write from your heart.

Even if you decide not to pick up the pen, we trust the story you read in this little book gives you a moment of reflection.

Enjoy.

PLUGGED IN AND TUNED OUT

After a long exhale in an attempt to relieve the stress of a grueling week, my nose wriggled with the tingle of the not-so-fresh air that had entered on the inhale. The aroma medley consisted of

**McDonald's fries,
Cinnabon sticks,
cheap cologne,
stale cigar,**

and a worn carpet in need of cleaning after the treading of too many suitcases and shoes.

I sat in a black vinyl chair attached to a metal post along a rail with five others. Several people sat in similar rows of seats facing toward and away from me at various angles.

Upon entering the departure gate area and eyeing a spot between two fellow passengers, I smiled and said "excuse me" before sitting. Neither person responded, nor did they make eye contact or even flinch to acknowledge my presence. One looked to be traveling on business, like me. He wore a suit and had his noise-canceling BOSE headphones covering his ears while his fingers forcefully and frantically attacked a laptop's keyboard.

The other was a tall, lanky teenage boy with stringy straight brown hair that covered his eyes and ears. His head bobbed, either rocking out to the tunes playing on his iPod®, or perhaps dodging whatever "being" he was simultaneously competing against on his PlayStation® Portable.

Next to him sat a woman whom he resembled; I assumed it was his mom.

She was engaged in a loud, gum-snapping conversation with her friend, sister, or some such person she liked to call “girl” and “honey.” Phrases like “Tell me about it!” or “Can you believe that?!” finished off nearly every statement she uttered. While chattering, she flipped through Oscars outfit reviews in a *People*® on her lap, and continually weaved gown-dishing commentary into her conversation.

Roller boards and backpacks were lumped in a pile between their seats and the two that faced them. I now believed this supposed son and mom duo next to me rounded out a party of four with what looked like the daughter and dad seated across from them. All were either lounging with feet up on their makeshift carry-on mountain, or periodically going into one of the bags. The “tween” daughter and her dad also listened to iPods®. While doing so, he intensely thumb-keyed his BlackBerry®. Her foot rhythmically tapped, while she intermittently read the latest Harry Potter between giggles from text messages she received and replied to on her Razor cell phone.

Funny how differently today’s family of four travels together. What happened to

**playing cards,
Travel Parcheesi®,
or maybe even speaking to each other?**

Remember road trips in the family station wagon where every passenger played along to “I See

Something ...” or the License Plate Game? Today there may be different DVDs playing for each row of seats in the minivan, and usually portable players or other gizmos on kids’ laps in planes, trains, and automobiles.

Yesterday’s imagination has given way to today’s technology.

The world of business travel has also changed noticeably in recent years. Aside from adjustments in security procedures after September 11th, it seems there are huge differences in how people interact with each other—

**or rather,
how they don’t.**

Everyone is so engaged with the technology du jour to keep in touch elsewhere while on the go; they often end up isolating themselves from their surroundings, and may even forget that they are in close proximity to actual live human beings.

These power tools of communication and entertainment are alienating people from each other.

Just a few years ago people generally exchanged a few brief hellos, or at least smiles, to fellow passengers when traveling. Today one could visit three cities in a week, and (aside from small tots who are still friendly and wave or exclaim “HI!” to almost any passerby), the only other smile or verbal recognition of one’s existence usually comes from travel industry personnel.

Who knew crowds could be so lonely?

Is it possible to resist complete absorption in, and addiction to, these technological devices?

The percentage of people who briefly connect through a smile or nicety while traveling, or even while doing errands around town, seems to be shrinking rapidly. People talk on cell phones and/or read messages while purchasing retail, placing orders at the deli, checking out at the supermarket, paying the parking attendant, or eating with friends/family in a restaurant. Service personnel often gab on phones during transactions.

Will common courtesy soon become extinct?

A nasally voice came crackling over the scratchy P.A. system and I deciphered that my flight home to Boston was running an hour late. The fact that this is a common occurrence on Friday nights (regardless of what city I wish to depart) may have aided in my understanding of the somewhat garbled announcement; but I was among a small minority of passengers who heard or took notice of this update.

Near our originally scheduled boarding time, several folks looked at their watches and then out the window, finally realizing there was still no plane at our gate. Some approached the podium to inquire and quickly became disturbed, and somehow surprised, to learn of our impending delay.

I wonder how things would have played out if they hadn't been so completely plugged in, yet so completely tuned out.

TESTIFY

It's your life, live it.

When you need a break, pick up a pen and
TESTIFY on your own behalf

If you care to submit your piece for upcoming
TESTIFY books, please send it to Howl Press,
P. O. Box 425, Needham Heights, MA 02494 or
online at: www.howlpress.com

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Plugged In and Tuned Out
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