

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.

WALKING ON L.I.

“Where’s your car?” the girl in the seat across from me asked back in 1989, and my answer is the same now as it was then.

A shrug.

We were on the bus, going to high school, and it had come out that I was the only senior on the bus, and likely the only senior on any of the buses headed toward Comsewogue High School that morning, or any morning, ever.

Twenty years later, I still shrug, and I still walk.

**I’m a rare Long Island bird:
the pedestrian.**

This is not to say that I didn’t try to drive. I failed a couple of road tests and lost interest. A brisk mile walk could get me to the LIRR station, and from there it was only one stop to Stony Brook, where I attended college. The only thing standing between me and King Kullen supermarket was four lanes of Nesconset Highway. If I wanted to do anything fun, it was easier for me to take the train to Manhattan than it was for me to get to the Smith Haven Mall just ten miles away.

In the same way left-handed kids are able to rattle off the names of famous lefties—

Darryl Strawberry, Benjamin Franklin, Joan of Arc, Larry (from the Three Stooges)—

I can name famous non-drivers.

Like Einstein.

Well, he had a chauffeur, and a bicycle.

Moe (also from the Three Stooges).

Ray Bradbury.

Then the list starts getting a little short. Bradbury doesn't drive and he's from Los Angeles, which may well be the only place in America with a more entrenched car culture than Long Island.

In his short story "The Pedestrian" Bradbury stand-in Leonard Mead is pulled over by a robot police car for walking in the Los Angeles evening. Unmarried, without a destination, and a writer — "no profession" the automated car declares — Mead is arrested and taken to "the Psychiatric Center for Research on Regressive Tendencies." On Long Island, we don't need robot police to harass walkers and enforce car culture.

Drivers do it.

**I can't remember a walk, and I walked every day on errands when I lived on Long Island, during which I wasn't harassed or accosted by drivers and passengers in passing cars.
Some just screamed.
Others shouted,**

"Ha, you're poor!" or

"Get a car!"

After a heavy rain, or during a light one, some drivers liked to veer toward the side of the road and kick up a wall of gutter water.

Sidewalks are few and far between, so every walk is a nature walk. Usually dead nature. A dead bird is an awful thing to stumble across, as birds always seem to die with their eyes open and staring.

At me.

It's startling to see a dead bird at your feet, but the worst is the walk back. The shock of the unexpected decays into a dread of seeing the body again. *Is this where that thing was? No, it must have been further along the road.* Then the ground gives way by just an inch.

No, I was right.

A few years ago I briefly moved back to Long Island and experienced my own Bradbury moment. Despite owning a home in Jersey and awaiting publication of my first novel, I was in a bad way and staying with my parents. The burbs are tedious enough for a kid who cannot drive, but for a grown man it was the sort of torture-via-tedium one normally finds in a dentist's waiting room. I was reduced to calling ahead to the local International House of Pancakes to find out if they were open all night. It was somewhere to go! (It closed at 9 p.m.)

Bored, on one steaming night I walked down the block and across Route 25A to an underused strip mall, just to check the posted hours on a comic shop.

A police car appeared and pulled me over.

**The cops wanted to know what I was doing,
at night,
alone,
staring so intently at the door of a place of business.**

They wanted ID.

**I had none, having walked twenty yards from
my home in the shorts and T-shirt I had been
(trying to) sleep in.**

**My mother's family had lived on Long Island
for a long time, and is a bit of a fixture. The
street on which I lived is named for my maternal
great-grandfather.**

**From where I was standing I could see the street
sign, featuring my mother's singular Greek name,
in a pool of light. I wanted to march over to it, tear
it down, and present it to the cops. "I belong here,"
I would have said. "This is my home and has been
for generations. And you?"**

But I didn't.

**I had no ID, but also no weapons, and no stolen
comics secreted on my person. They ran my name
through the onboard computer and got a hit. "You
don't drive?" one of the cops asked. "Says here
you..." he trailed off. The only record of me in the
system was for my learner's permit, which had
expired fifteen years before.**

"You can go," I was told, and I walked back home.

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

TESTIFY

Walking On L.I.
Written by: Nick Mamatas

Howl Press
P.O. Box 425
Needham Heights, MA 02494
(www.howlpress.com)

TESTIFY. Copyright 2008 by Howl Press. Published by Howl Press, P.O. Box 425, Needham Heights, MA 02494 (www.howlpress.com). All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems without written permission from the publisher.

This is a quarterly publication.
2008
ISBN: 978-0-9793216-0-3



This book is printed on Green Seal Certified Wausau Paper, Royal Complements, containing a minimum of 30% post-consumer fiber.