

How To Go Broke Selling 100,000 American Made T Shirts



By Scott Miller

Day 1 - Harford Republican Club - Belair, Md. - Shirt #99,126

I was eleven miles into Maryland when I began to suspect that my 10 year old IPOD had psychic powers. As I passed the wooden handmade sign that said "Toby Keith 7/28," the next song to play via auto shuffle was "Made in America" by Toby Keith. I thought about the school calendar. Yeah, there would still be time to set up at his concert, and get back in time for the beginning of the school year. And I knew at that moment, that for the second time, I would end my summer with Toby. This time was different than the last. This would be the last summer for My Liberty Threads.

Pulling into the seafood restaurant's parking lot took some careful maneuvering. My '98 Ford Econoline work van barely cleared the sign hanging over the entrance that advertised "Live music on Friday." I was about forty-five minutes early, so I went in to get a feel for the place. After asking the hostess, I was shown to the separate room that would be used for the meeting. I made a quick assessment of the layout, and decided to use the table to the left of the small stage to display my shirts on.

While going through the routine of bringing in the shirts and mannequins from the van, I reminded myself that I needed to accomplish two things. Sell some shirts and try out the new speech. I had gotten the speaking gig by selling the Republican Club in Belair, on a presentation called "What President Trump Needs From Us," but even after deliberating on it for the entire 882 mile drive up from Florida, I still wasn't sure what I was going to say on the matter.

Looking at the notes I had scribbled on the back of an envelope earlier, I tried to imagine how I'd connect the dots once I got on stage. Telling the stories would be easy, it always was, but connecting them to the idea of "What President Trump Needs From Us" was uncharted territory for me.

I was the second speaker of the night. The first guy was a local news reporter that had lost his job because he was speaking to political groups, giving his pro Trump message outside of work. He explained how he had made the tough decision to do the right thing, and not back down on his beliefs. His message to the Republican Club was simple, "We all need to get in Trump's corner and fight with him every step of the way, his detractors needed to see a unified front."

Since his message wasn't exactly what I had planned on telling this group, at the last minute, I decided to change the order of my presentation, and save "What President Trump Needs From Us" until the end of my speech. And the next thing I knew, the president of the club was thanking the former newsman, and introducing me.

It wasn't until I stepped behind the podium, and looked out from that 4 foot tall stage that I realized just how many people were there waiting to hear what I had to say.

Eight years and 99,000 American made t shirts ago, I walked around selling these shirts at an event not too far from here. Glenn Beck was having a big rally, he called it "Restoring Honor."

Six or seven different people gave a nod, or raised their hand, to indicate that they had been there that day.

Well, since then I've driven 300,000 miles, and set up booths at hundreds of different fairs, festivals and flea markets, selling these patriotic, freedom forward t-shirts.

I gestured over to my table.

I meet a lot of people. I hear about things happening on a local level all over the country. While I was setting up, I overheard a couple of guys over there,

I nodded towards the left side of the room.

talking about how some of your local politicians are going along with some of the new gun control legislation that's being pushed through in Baltimore. If I heard them right, they were complaining that the very Republicans that they had helped get elected, were now going back on their campaign promises.

Imagine that...

I paused for a room full of snickers.

Now this wasn't where I was planning on starting off tonight, but overhearing that conversation reminded me of this time that I was set up at a fair in Minnesota.

I gestured to the screen, as I looked down at my laptop, and clicked on a huge sign hung over a midway that said 'Olmstead Free Fair'.

I met a really cool Vietnam veteran and his wife. You see, this guy, Peter,

I forwarded to a picture of a stout man, with a gray mustache and beard.

told me about a problem he was going through. He suffered from some of the effects that had been brought on by having been exposed to Agent Orange in the late 60's. About a year earlier, his doctor prescribed medication for him to help him cope with some of the pain he was dealing with. The medication didn't work, and within two or three months, Peter stopped taking it.

He told me he got a letter the previous week from the sheriff's office. According to their records he had taken a certain medicine that was known to have the possible side effects of violence. Peter was directed to turn in any firearms in his possession to the sheriff's office. He was given a phone number to call if there were any

discrepancies with his medical records, but otherwise he was expected to turn in his firearms the following week.

I paused, and turned my head from one side of the room, to the other, and saw a room full of concerned faces.

Peter went to the sheriff's office the next day and sat down with the sheriff. He told the sheriff that he had last taken the medication almost a year ago, and then flushed the rest of the pills down the toilet, because they didn't do anything for him. The sheriff said that didn't matter and that by law, a new law, the sheriff had the authority, and that it was his 'duty' to tell Peter to surrender his guns.

Two days later, Peter received a certified letter in the mail. The sheriff would be coming to Peter's house on Tuesday.

Hopefully everything turned out OK.

Another time, while I was set up at the Arkansas state fair, I ran into another blatant case of government being out of control.

You see, long before I ever got there, the people of Arkansas had taken it upon themselves to institute term limits on all of their state offices. No state senator or governor could serve more than 2 terms.

Someone in the crowd yelled out "That's what we need around here!" To which, lots of people throughout the room sounded off in agreement.

Exactly, term limits are a good thing.

Well it turns out that the politicians in Arkansas are pretty good at looking out for themselves.

Imagine that. . .

The majority of exiting state senators took jobs with different companies as lobbyists within months of leaving office. Most of them had done so without even taking a break of time between the two positions. Just a smooth transition.

Can you imagine the things a politician might be able to do to favor a certain company that just happened to be their future employer? Or how easy it would be to get former colleagues to vote in favorable ways for the new company that they represent?

What could go wrong?

Through a grassroots movement, enough signatures were collected on petitions to add an amendment to the state constitution, in their upcoming election. If passed, the new law would institute a 'cooling off period' which would require that all state legislators would have to wait a minimum of 6 months before going to work as a lobbyist or in a similar field.

Great idea, Right

A room full of people seemed to agree with me.

Now here's the good part. Just six weeks before the election, the wording on the ballot initiative had been finalized, with one slight change. The six month cooling off period was still there, but so was a rider, mentioning that the term limits would be increased from two terms to three.

As you can see, the task of having to watch over your politicians, to hold their feet to the fire, isn't only a Northern Maryland thing.

I looked down at my laptop for a few seconds, enough time to shift gears.

Now I'm here to tell you, that just as there are these stories of government gone wild, there are even more stories that remind us of just what makes America great . . .

Our people.

I was set up at a big county fair in Monticello, Iowa. I had a great spot, I was right in front of the entrance to the grandstand. One afternoon, after the harness races ended, there were a lot of people milling around the vendor booths and food stands, when a man and a woman, with matching haircuts, came running up to my booth.

I clicked on the picture of a couple standing in front of my booth. Both of them had obviously uneven crew cuts, the man had freshly cut hair clumps on the shoulders of his shirt.

"Come on, the woman says, we just need nineteen more people to break the record!"

"What record?" I asked her.

The guy tells me, "Come on, it's for Austin. We'll tell you about it on the way."

Then both of them pointed at the grandstand entrance.

I put an exaggerated look of anguish on my face, and raise my arms, trying to convey how frantic this exchange really was

I tell them, I can't just leave my booth, the guy, Ron,

I pointed to the guy on the screen.

tells me he'll watch the booth. I tell him the prices, and give him some small bills to make change with, and the next thing I know I'm running over to the grandstand with Terry.

I pointed at the woman in the picture.

We get there, and there are 6 or 7 women with hair clippers shaving the heads of 6 or 7 men right at the podium area in front of the finish line of the track. There were 9 or 10 boys and men in a line waiting to have their heads shaved. I looked back and sitting in the seats of the grandstand were hundreds of people with shaved heads. Terry pulled me over to the line and then explained to me what was going on. It seems there was an eight year old boy named Austin who had a rare brain disease.

I clicked on a picture of Austin, in a superhero costume.

Apparently there was a local business owner who offered to put up ten thousand dollars towards the family's medical bills.

If they broke a Guinness world record.

Any Guinness World Record

Now I know this sounds crazy. Why wouldn't he have just given them the money? You have to remember, at this point, I was standing in line with a bunch of strangers, trying to piece things together. Hair was flying everywhere.

Then I come to find out that a local business put up another five grand to help the family break a record.

Now why these people didn't just donate the fifteen large is beyond me.

I hear the laughter as I look down for the next picture to click on.

The record they were trying to break was for the most haircuts given in one hour. The old record stood at five hundred. The barbers were from a couple of local barber shops that donated their time and equipment. They decided to use the five thousand donated by the local business, to pay the first five hundred people ten dollars each, if they would agree to have their hair cut. Or in this case, head shaved. These haircuts were taking no more than thirty seconds each, so it didn't take long until I was walking up the stairs myself.

I clicked on a pic of myself sitting in a chair in front of the grandstand, with a woman shaving my head with electric clippers.

Zip Zip Zip. I was bald.

I got out of my chair and joined in what felt like a welcoming line at a wedding. The first person took my picture, the second one nodded at me and notched another hashmark on her clipboard, and then a third person handed me a ten dollar bill,

I mimed each of the steps, first posing for a picture, the nodding my head down, and then taking the money, taking a step or two away from the stage with each gesture.

A little further down from the person who gave me the ten, was a card table with a cardboard box on it that said "Donations for Austin."

I walked two more steps and pretend to drop the money in an imaginary donation box.

There were hundreds of ten dollar bills in that box.

I walked back to the podium, noticing the 3 or 4 seconds of build up.

This is one family in one community, coming together. This is when America is at its best.

That was Monticello, Iowa.

I pointed to the next picture. It was a couple in their 60's or 70's wearing matching 'These Colors Don't Run' shirts from our assortment.

I met this couple in Friendship, Indiana. They wear the same patriotic shirt every year on the 4th of July. They look for a new one to wear throughout the year. The year I met them they decided to wear one of our shirts. I'm kind of proud of that.

I clicked on the next picture, a five or six year old boy in a plaid button shirt and a cowboy hat, showing off a medal hanging from around his neck. He's got a huge smile on his face, showing off his missing front teeth.

This is Eli, he just won second place in the sheep riding event at the state fair.

I paused a few seconds for the laughter to subside, and clicked on a picture of two women holding up a 'We The People' t shirt, with our display in the background.

Back in the early 70's, when hundreds of people were at airports protesting the Vietnam War by taking it out on soldiers as they returned home, these two sisters were at the airport everyday thanking those same soldiers.
Every Day.

Another time in Pall Mall, Tennessee, a woman came to my booth and bought a 'Freedom Isn't Free' v-neck, like the red one there.

I took a step towards the table and pointed at the red v neck.

We got to talking. Her name was Shirley. She told me that when her son was in the Army, stationed in the Middle East, she used to send him a care package once a month. The usual stuff, magazines, soap, toothbrushes. He wrote her one day telling her that most of the guys would get stuff sent to them from their families, but one of his buddies didn't have family back home, at least not anyone who sent him anything. So she started sending a second care package and became pen-pals with the guy. She found out about a third and fourth soldier that also never received stuff from home. And she expanded.

She said that the number grew and shrunk as new soldiers came and others got out. At one point she sent as many as twenty-two care packages out. She collects merchandise from local businesses, has garage sales, and even sells at festivals like the one I met her at, to raise money for the postage. Even after Shirley's son left the service, she continued to send the care packages, she started her own charity called 'Support Our Soldiers Ministries.' Over the years, Shirley has met five of the people she sent packages to. And told me that she had become friends with all of them. Shirley is older now, she lost her husband a few years ago.

I called her the other day. Instead of slowing down, she's doubling down. The number of soldiers that she sent care packages to had dwindled down to three or four, so she picked up other soldiers through an organization that helps match soldiers in need of care packages with willing volunteers. Between fundraisers and donations that she gets from local businesses, she sends out packages to about twenty soldiers every month.

There's a girl scout from the neighborhood that helps her pack everything up each month. With an experience like this. I like that kid's chances of turning out all right . . .

Now, I'm going to tell you something that I never really told any other group.

I paused, and made it look like I was convincing myself to go on.

I used to lay awake at night, trying to figure out how to connect the story of these great people, with the stories of the out of control governmental actors that I've come across. Like the politicians in Arkansas, or the sheriff in Minnesota, or even these representatives you guys are having issues with here in Northern Maryland. I

used to want to wrap up my presentations with a little bow, tying together the threat that these politicians pose to future generations' ability to go on with the freedoms that we're afforded as Americans.

I paused again, a confused look on my face. I visibly urged myself to go on,

I no longer feel the need to connect those dots. I can just say these people,

I waved to the screen as I quickly clicked through all of the pictures I just showed them, stopping on the Vietnam veteran from Minnesota

deserve better representation.

Ladies and gentleman, if your Republican club isn't doing what's necessary to help get us to the day that we have better representatives, I hope you'll take a second look at what you're here for.

After the meeting I walked the familiar tightrope between schmoozing with people who wanted to tell me that they liked my speech, and people that wanted to buy a shirt. 25 minutes, and 23 t shirts later, the room was empty, and the staff was just waiting on me to finish packing up the shirts, and clear out, so they could finish cleaning up the stage.

It wasn't until I pulled out of the parking lot that I realized that I had completely forgotten to mention what president Trump needs from us. There were still three other speeches on the summer's schedule. I'd get to it a few weeks down the road, at my next speech somewhere in Illinois. I pointed the van north on US 1, and headed for the field at the market in Leesport, Pa. The field I'd be spending the night in.

Still Day 1 - Leesport Market (somewhere in the field) - Leesport, Pa. - Shirt #99,149

I was still wired when I pulled into The Leesport Market. I should have been exhausted, and I knew it would catch up with me at some point, but the adrenaline was still pumping, as I drove around to the field in the back, the one where the yard sale vendors would begin selling in 2 or 3 hours. I'd be able to sleep a little longer than that, as the part of the market around front, where vendors sold new products, didn't get going until about 7 AM. I pulled into a space that was far enough away from the yard sale area, that my sleep would be undisturbed. Selling on Wednesdays at Leesport has become something I do about 4 or 5 times each summer, with the added benefit of saving on a hotel room by being able to sleep in the field around back.

I went through the routine of sliding the seat back, taking my sandals off, and putting them on the dashboard. Although I've gotten better at sleeping in the front seat, a second straight night of doing so already had me looking forward to the nights later in the summer, when my merchandise wouldn't always be in the back of the van. The rough plan I had for the next few months involved lots of short, choppy one day stops at flea markets and pre-arranged speeches. This meant a lot of sleeping in the front seat. Later in the summer, if I was able to get ahead of things, I'd sell at multi day festivals or county fairs, and then I'd be able to blow up the air mattress, and sleep in the back. For

now, the immediate plan was to sleep for three or four hours, wake up and sell at Leesport, and then splurge on a cheap hotel for a night.

As I sat in silence, waiting for sleep to come, my mind drifted back to the sign I saw on that two lane highway in Maryland for the Toby Keith concert. I thought back to the time that Toby's path crossed with mine five or six years earlier, when I had a space under the grandstand at the Kansas State Fair. The crowd sounded like thunder under the cement bleachers as Toby took the stage. The timing of ending my summer with Toby again, this time somewhere in Maryland, seemed perfect. I made a mental note to look into it later when I got to the hotel.

I thought about the speech I had just given, and the seven or eight weeks that laid ahead. Leaving Florida meant leaving my family. Again. But this summer was different from the last 8. In the past, I had left in late May or June, staying on the road, bouncing from one festival to another, until mid October, when the festival season came to a close.

Now I teach school, and sell shirts as a secondary form of income, so I have to get back home for the beginning of the school year, even though that means missing the best of the festival season. My eighth grade language arts class would appreciate the situation (we spend a few class periods each year on irony), in that here I am using the income generated from the summer's t shirt sales to try and dig my family out of the hole I had put us in by trying to grow the same American made t shirt brand.

Nevertheless, even with My Liberty Threads in 'mop up' mode, I had one thing keeping me going, giving me some reason for excitement. The 23 shirts that I sold earlier that night brought the total of American made shirts we'd sold up to 99,149. If everything went right, I'd sell number 100,000 before returning home, and getting on with my life.

Day 2 - Leesport Market - Leesport, Pa. - Shirt #99,149

Although it had been 36 hours since I left Florida, my summer didn't feel like it began until I got everything out of the van. Memories of sleeping in parking lots blurred together with those of mindless driving, with only the speech I had given in Maryland to break up the monotony. Spending a day selling outside, and airing out in general, was therapeutic, and it was just what I needed.

The sun came up as I placed the last of my mannequins on my display table. Like most flea markets, the rent at Leesport is cheap enough that I had paid for two spaces, so I could really spread out. I dug through my small cardboard box full of old 8 by 11 signs from over the years, until I found the same one I had used the year before. It said "Come hear MLT owner Scott Miller's presentation about American Exceptionalism at next month's meeting of the Berks County Patriots at the Leesport Market Community Room"

As I placed the sign between two of the mannequins, an older couple stopped in front of my table.

"Have you got any new stories for us?" The older gentleman asked, as he pointed at the sign.

Although I didn't remember he or his wife specifically, it wasn't too difficult to deduce that they had heard one of my previous speeches with the Patriots, as the speech I'd be making the following

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month would be the 4th time I'd speak with the group. The fact that they had approached the table right at the moment that I was putting that particular sign out, was one of those coincidences that occur pretty frequently at my table.

"I've got a new presentation I'm giving these days, it's called What President Trump needs from us."

"Oh I bet that's going to be great!" His wife said with enthusiasm. "I just loved the story you told us last time, about that one family that gets together to sing those beautiful gospel songs every summer."

"Oh yeah, Pall Mall, Tennessee. I need to get back to that festival one of these years."

While we were talking, there was a customer waiting to be helped. He wanted to buy a 'This is my gun permit' shirt.

The couple waited around while I helped him find the right size. After paying for his shirt, he said, "The three of you guys should come to Mimmo's next Tuesday to hear Trump make the announcement that he's running in 2020."

Before any of us could say anything he went on, "I'm on the board of the County Committee, and we're putting together a watch party, they're gonna put the details on the website."

"Do they have anyone speaking at it?" I asked.

"I don't know many of the details, you should contact Linda," he said, making it sound as if we all knew who Linda was.

"I was there when we decided to have the watch party. Linda's taking care of the details." He looked up Linda's number on his cell phone and gave it to me before he left. I knew I'd call her the next time I had a free minute.

Meanwhile, the older couple who had been mildly listening to my conversation with the committeeman, decided to buy a 'Home Of The Free Because Of The Brave' t-shirt. As he gave me the money the gentleman said, "I'm looking forward to hearing what you've got planned for the Patriots this time."

I laughed because I knew I had no idea what I was going to say.

His wife said, "Honey, your stories make people feel good about America. And we need more people doing that right now"

"We sure do" her husband chimed in, as they walked off.

I pulled out another sign, one that I had printed before leaving Florida. It was bright yellow, with Block letters in black ink. It said:



**our 100,000th American
made t shirt**

The plan was to write out the next number on a white square of paper with a black marker each time I sold a shirt, and then tape the new number onto the sign. I wrote out number 842, taped it to the sign, and placed the sign front and center on my display table, so that customers couldn't help but see it among the assortment of shirts.

I was listening to a Grateful Dead show from '91, and the way they ping ponged from an upbeat song, to a ballad, then to outright funk, was similar to how my mind bounced from one thing to another that morning:

-The Trump watch party would be a great addition to my schedule. Meeting that committeeman might work out well. Not only would I have a chance to get my message out, but it's a great way to sell shirts without having to pay for rent.

-'How the mighty have fallen'. As recently as 3 or 4 years ago, my summer tours (I called them summer tours even though they usually lasted into the fall) had been fully booked and paid for before leaving Florida, and consisted of a steady diet of state fairs, major country music festivals, and huge regional festivals. Not this summer. This summer would be low budget, with lots of short choppy visits to flea markets, speaking engagements, and hopefully some last minute entries into small festivals or county fairs. I still had permanent spaces at two festivals that I was too stubborn to give up, but aside from them, the rest of the summer would be decided on the fly.

-What a rush it was to run into that couple that remembered me from speaking with their group each of the last few years. I'd be lying if I didn't say how much I dig that 'stoking of the ego'.

-What exactly was I going to talk about when I returned to Leesport for that meeting with the Berks County Patriots in July? Now that I had spoken with them on 3 other occasions, they had heard most of my 'go to' stories and anecdotes, picked up from my years on the road.

These thoughts led to a bigger question. Just exactly what was I going to talk about at my other 3 (4 if I could get into the watch party) speaking engagements that I had lined up? Over the years, regardless of what my 'speaking topic' was, all of my speeches focused on two themes:

-America is great because of our people, and our concept of freedom. (not our politicians)

-The biggest threat to our future comes from politicians that do things that cut into that freedom.

When I had lined up the three upcoming speaking engagements in the spring, I told the groups that my speaking topic was "What President Trump needs from us". I had avoided the topic when I spoke in Maryland, but I knew I'd have to figure out how to make the connection, somewhere along the way. As I was pondering this dilemma, something happened in the Grateful Dead concert I was listening to. They went from 'Going down the road feeling bad' seamlessly into 'Not Fade Away', and then back into 'Going Down The Road Feeling Bad' again, (GDTRFB into NFA and then back into GDTRFB) in Deadhead (*footnote the endearing nickname given to devoted followers of the Grateful Dead) terms. One of the things that made the Grateful Dead so special was the way they used to

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change up their set lists every night. Something clicked. Maybe I could try something like that with my speeches? The Grateful Dead changed things up every night because they had a faithful following that would travel to see them night after night, and the band wanted to keep the music fresh for them. In more than 2300 shows they never played the same set list twice. I decided that afternoon to take a page out of the playbook of the Grateful Dead and not repeat a single story or anecdote once in any speech that summer.

The Grateful Dead, and all of the doors their music opened up for me, had dominated my musical interest ever since my friend Jon turned me on to them while at college. Why not take a page out of their playbook, and switch things up at each speech I would give that summer.

As usual, the morning rush, mostly made up of retirees, and parents looking to get their kids out of the house, tapered off. There was still an hour or two before the next wave of customers, the people getting off of work, would come through. After leaving a voicemail with Linda about selling at the Trump watch party, I took advantage of the lull, and worked my way skillfully up and down the main aisle. Over the course of the next hour, I dropped about 40 bucks on beef jerkys, different kinds of cheeses, and all sorts of fresh produce. Everything necessary to fill both my cooler and food pantry.

I learned early on that if I kept a well stocked cooler and pantry box (this year the pantry was a 12 by 16 inch cardboard box, double enforced with packaging tape) with me at all times, I could save a lot of money, and eat healthier than if I had to rely on fair food, gas stations, and restaurants. The Leesport market sits adjacent to a large Amish community, and as such, the assortment of meats, cheeses and produce is only paralleled by the food I find at the other 2 or 3 markets I set up at each summer that are also in Amish communities. The bulk of my food dollars are spent each summer at these markets, and I eat well.

My weaving in and in and out of customers as I picked out my produce had a rhythm to it. There was something about the idea of mixing up my speeches that had me floating around the Market in Leesport that afternoon.

When I pulled out of the market at around 7:00, I had sold 28 shirts, filled my cooler and pantry box, and left that market with a new purpose to the speeches I'd be giving throughout the summer. I even had the luxury of a night at a cheap hotel to look forward to before heading back to DC...

Day 4 - Stealth selling - Washington DC - Shirt #99,177

The parking space I eased my van into, was only a block or two away from the one I had parked at the last time I tried my hand at Stealth selling in front of the Lincoln Memorial. When I was there 8 years before, it was for Glenn Beck's Restoring Honor event, this time, I was just trying to kill enough time to avoid spending money on another night in a hotel. I had a car show to go to, outside of Philadelphia the next morning. If I could spend 3 or 4 hours in DC, and then find a rest stop to sleep at on the way, I'd consider the night a success. If I sold some shirts while passing the time, all the better.

Saving money on a hotel room wasn't the only reason to go back to DC. Being as how it was my last summer on the road, it only made sense to go back to where it all began.

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I grabbed the backpack that I had prepared the afternoon before while at Leesport. It had only the necessities, two dozen shirts, spread out over three different designs, a 4 inch by 4 inch Made in America sign, and a handful of the tri fold brochures, that served as my business card. I wanted to make sure I could pack and run quickly at any point if I had to.

The sense of *deja vu* overwhelmed me as I walked through a gap in the brush, towards the Lincoln Memorial. The hooting of an owl broke the silence of the night. The only other sound was my footsteps on the path that lined the reflection pond. I thought back to that night...

Even though the event was on Saturday, I came out on Friday at three in the afternoon to scope out the scene in front of the Lincoln Memorial. They had built a temporary stage, and to my surprise, there were already several hundred people beginning to congregate and set up lawn chairs and blankets in front of it. I spent the next hour or so getting a feel for the layout, keeping an eye out for police or park officials that could get in the way of me selling shirts.

By about five o'clock, I noticed that two button vendors and a guy with 'Don't Tread On Me' flags, were selling their merchandise out in the open. When I saw two policemen walk by them, without saying a word, I knew it was safe to sell. I went back to my van, loaded up my backpack with t shirts, and started selling. Over the course of the next 20 hours, I made trip after trip to the van, refilling the back pack with more shirts each time.

*A few hours into that selling marathon, as the sun was about to set on the eve of Glenn Beck's historic event, I realized that this scene reminded me of the time that Jon and I first waited in line for concert tickets to go on sale, back when we were 15 years old. (*footnote-Jon, my high school best friend who would later turn me on to the Dead right after high school) While waiting in line in the Musicland parking lot across the street from the mall, with dozens of other RUSH fans, we learned how much fun it is when you surround yourself with like minded people.*

We went on to wait in line for other concert tickets. Sometimes we even waited in line for tickets that neither of us would end up purchasing. The anticipation that built in the parking lot among the hardcore band enthusiasts as the hour that the tickets went on sale got closer, was similar to the anticipation leading up to the beginning of Glenn Beck's event.

There were two notable exceptions:

- 1, This crowd was already 5 or 6 thousand strong.*
- 2. The commonality among this group of people wasn't a rock band, it was their love of country and the desire to have their voices heard.*

It was obvious that there would be no need for multiple trips to the van on this night. There wasn't much foot traffic, and the people I did encounter didn't seem to care about looking at t shirts. I used a temporary railing that was sectioning off the front left corner of the stairs of the Lincoln Memorial, to display my shirts from. I draped three styles across the top bar of it. There weren't many people milling around in front of the memorial, but there weren't cops, or park security guards shewing me away either, so I hung around for a while.

Eventually, twenty five or thirty people approached the stairs at the base of the monument. The group appeared to be loosely following a woman who was giving a guided tour of DC, an odd

sight in the otherwise quiet, dark evening. Most of the members of the group that was following her were older, and weren't paying much attention to what she was saying. As I waited for the group to pass by my display of shirts, I looked out over to the right front corner of the stairway in front of the monument, and thought back to the time I stood on that second step and delivered my first speech...

The anticipation that something big was about to happen, grew with the arrival of each additional person throughout the night. I ate it up. The previous year and a half had been a political awakening for me. After never paying any attention to politics, I found myself actually caring for the first time in my life, as the 2008 election came around.

I wasn't thrilled with either of the candidates, John McCain or Barack Obama. Our country appeared to be going through a financial meltdown right in front of our eyes, and neither one of them seemed to have any answers that would help.

Shortly after the election, a friend of mine lent me a copy of 'Atlas Shrugged', Ayn Rand's novel that teaches what socialism can do to a country. After Atlas Shrugged, I read several other books by authors and great minds such as Milton Friedman, Thomas Sowell and Mark Levin. I educated myself on how our country was founded, and began developing my own ideas on things that every day people could do to get us back to a more limited government.

I began listening to what politicians were saying and doing. I began reading the bills that were being proposed and passed by the newly elected Democratic Congress, and I realized that we were moving in a direction that is rooted in big government, and socialistic policies. I had, (and still have), the simple notion that our founding fathers crafted a near perfect document that is so simple, yet it's concepts are so important. Our government holds no boundaries over us, we're free to live our lives however we choose, as long as our actions don't impede on the freedom of others. And for the first time in my life, things like this mattered to me.

So when I saw a woman standing on the second step on the corner of the Lincoln Memorial at about 2:00 AM talking to a group of about 8 or 9 people, I went over to hear what she had to say. She was an expert on the ills of Obama Care. She and 3 friends had printed up fliers, and drove in from Ohio to pass them out in an effort to raise awareness about the bill that was being rammed through by Congress. When I arrived, she was discussing how so many people would lose their existing coverage under the new bill. Every so often someone would layer onto a point she had made, or ask her a question.

When there was a break in the conversation, I said, "You know we aren't doing anything here that's going to make a difference?"

I wasn't sure where that came from, I was as surprised to hear it as were the 8 or 10 people that had been listening to the Healthcare Flier lady.

"There are so many people out there that don't pay attention to any of this stuff." I held up the flier that she handed me when I walked up. "I know. I didn't pay any attention either. Until after I voted for Barack Obama in the last election."

There was a stunned silence.

"I wish there would have been people like this trying to open my eyes before the election. I didn't realize how many of our problems are the result of We the people letting our government get too big and controlling."

I stopped for a second, and noticed that the people were waiting for me to go on.

"Conversations like this are great, and educating people is so important, But unless we're talking to the people that just aren't paying attention, and trying to open their eyes, we're just preaching to the choir. I bet each one of us has people we know, friends and family members that are probably where I was at a few years ago. We need to be spending the same amount of energy, trying to open THEIR eyes."

I could tell I had gotten through to them.

"Hey You selling those shirts?" Asked a woman standing on one of the steps to my left, and pointed to the We the People Shirts that I had forgotten I was holding. "How much?"

"They're just \$18 and I have your size," I said to the thin older gentleman who had broken off from the group to check out the shirts hanging from the rail.

"Hey I just noticed your hat. Thanks for your service. With your military discount, it will only be \$15. My whole family appreciates you." I said shaking his hand,

"I'd do it again if I could." He said. "Have you got one in an XXL also? I want to get one for my son. He's got his own little arsenal going back home. He needs that shirt."

He told me that he was part of a church group from Kentucky that had bus trouble, and arrived in Washington 10 hours later than planned. Their resourceful tour guide had changed it to an evening tour on the fly.

"And thanks for using American made shirts. Not too long ago you used to signs like that everywhere." He said pointing to my tiny Made in USA sign.

I mumbled some response, my mind already lost in another memory that he had triggered...

As the event was winding down, so was my inventory. I sold about 150 of the 175 shirts that I had brought, and most of what was left were smalls, mediums and XXXLs. As my last customer of the day was taking the money out of her purse, she made a suggestion.

"You know, you never see American made stuff any more. Statements like these ought to be on American made shirts" I stored it away, knowing I'd think about it later.

After 48 straight hours of being awake, I only made it about two hours south of DC before I could go no further. That was the first time that I ever slept at a rest stop. As I drifted off to sleep, my mind went back to that last customer of the day. She was right, shirts like these ought to be made in America.

Just like that night 8 years ago, I found a rest stop an hour or two after pulling out of DC. Now it was old hat, I've probably slept at a hundred rest stops since then. I made a mental note to add the two shirts that I sold to the countdown sign when I set up in the morning at the car show. I put the seat back, and the sandals on the dashboard. Again, like that night 8 years before, I fell asleep thinking about that one decision we had to make early on. The decision of whether or not to go with American made t-shirts for this new endeavor.

Thank you so much for reading the beginning of my book. I'd love to hear any feedback you may have. Feel free to send all questions, comments, and critiques to scottmillerwithmlt@gmail.com.

If you'd like to continue reading, you can purchase an autographed first edition copy of "How To Go Broke Selling 100,000 American Made T Shirts" at our website: Mylibertythreads.com

In addition, I hope you'll consider supporting our Gofundme account. The proceeds will go to raising money to print the first edition of my book. Any money raised above our goal will go towards buying more American made merchandise, and resuscitating our American made brand.

Here's the link: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-scott-publish-book-about-american-greatness>

Thanks again,
Scott