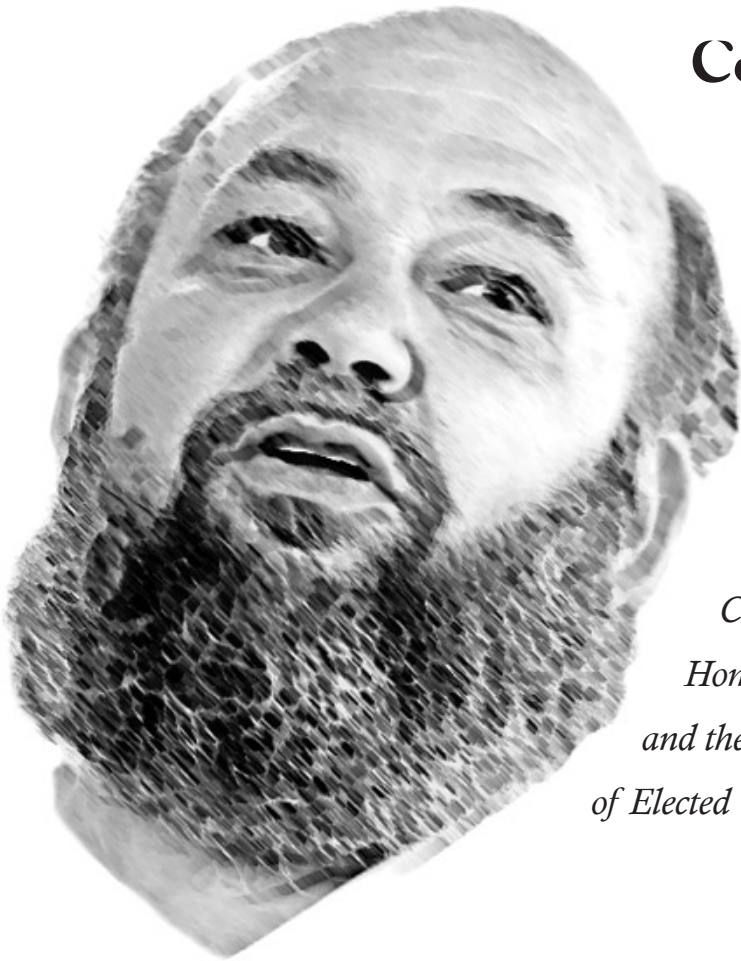


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Commander Rollo Gets the Troops Oriented x 4

*Roland Sykes speaks
on a number of topics
including Ed Roberts,
Cadillac Jack,
Homeward Bound versus Hissom,
and the Total Helplessness
of Elected Officials*

Contents of this article are excerpts from a talk at the 2006 annual meeting of Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living, the CIL of Washington, Pennsylvania.

Tom Olin took the photos in 2005 at the Mouth House.

When we go to meet our elected representatives, I am the guy that's known for making them have to change their pants.

I'm one chromosome short of being a coal miner's daughter. I became a coal miner just like my dad and joined the Union — and praise the Lord for the Union, because the mine owners would have buried me if it hadn't been for the Union boys.

I got crushed in a coal mine back in 1972, so I have been at this disability business for a little

while and I wear lots of different hats.

The ADAPT folks know me as the bus driver because I drive a big white bus — it used to be a regular city bus — around the actions and everybody wants to line up to ride the bus.

So that is a little orientation about me and how I got involved in disability.

Anybody know what X4 means in the case notes?

Now I would like a little orientation from you. You know, kind of like in the nursing home. In the nursing home they call it, “Are they Times Four?” Anybody know what X4 means in the case notes?

If they are oriented Times Four, they know their name, they know what day it is, they know what time it is, and they know where the hell they are at. So that’s called Times Four. If you are times four, they think you are all right.

I want to check out how oriented you are because when I was driving last time in Nashville with the ADAPT group, I tried out this question on them and I was a little dismayed at the answers.

As everybody got on the bus and we were taking them to do an action or from the jail or wherever, I would ask them. You realize, now, that when the bus driver asks you a question, you have got to answer cuz he has got his foot on the brake and you ain’t goin’ nowhere ’til the bus driver gets the answer, so I would ask them this question.

I would say how many of you here on the bus are union members? Please raise your hand. How many of you are union members? Please raise your hand.

I don’t see no hands! I’m confused by that, so maybe you could help me with it. Let me try that question right here. How many of

you in the room are union members? Please raise your hand. Okay, we’ve got maybe ten. Hmm! Well, alright, alright.

So let me ask you another question: Does anybody know of this document called a Constitution? [Counting] One, two... we got a few now, a few more than what we had before.

Now, so what does it say in the Constitution right there at the beginning: “We the people ... we the people... what does it say?”

[An audience member recites the text verbatim: “We the People of the United States, in order to form a more Perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”]

There she goes! There she goes! No, no, I did not bring her, she was here. She was not a plant. Thank you, thank you. You did real good. So, like she said, we formed a union right off.

Let me ask you the question again: How many union members have I got in here?

[All hands go up.]

See, the problem was that you were not properly oriented because before you came in the door, if somebody asked you were you a member of a union, you wouldn’t even put your hand up.

They asked me to come here today and talk to you about power

They asked me to come here today and talk to you about your power and how you can utilize your power to your best advantage.

Well, first you have to understand that you are powerful, very powerful. I am very

powerful myself. As an example: When we go to meet our representatives, I am the guy that's known for making them have to change their pants. It don't matter whether they were male or female. Once I got done talking to them for a few minutes, they were in need of a change of undies, you might say.

Now. Can anybody tell me what the difference is between an intellectual and a politician?

[RD says, "One thinks for themselves and the other thinks for other people."]

Now that might be true but there is one other major difference between an intellectual and a politician. The intellectual will tell you the truth. The politician will lie to you at the drop of a hat and try to get you to believe he got your best interest at heart.

If you go for it, woe be on you because they don't have your best interests at heart. They never have, they never will, it is not possible.

It is like Chris said earlier, the Department of Justice is not going to do anything to stop the oppression of our people. No, they are not, they're not, they can't.

We can. We can.

Laws do not enforce themselves

Laws are not self-enforcing. Laws are enforced by the people who have been wronged under the law. That's when they go to see the dude with the hammer. They say, "I ain't going to let them do this no more and this guy up here with the hammer is the one who gets to decide."

Everybody tells you be nice, be nice, but our whole legal system is based on the adversarial system, the one where the dude with the hammer gets to say, "You are right and you are wrong and this is how it is going to be." I mean, how much more adversarial

can you get? other than to start flinging ammo... and we don't do that because we still got the domestic tranquility part here, right? We still got the domestic tranquility part. Well, I am here to tell you that there is far too much domestic tranquility, far too much.

In the days of the Jeddi Knights

Let me tell you a little story about the olden days and the Jeddi Knights back when disability was new. No, we're not talking 'bout far, far away in another land, we are talking like twenty-six years ago here in America. I mean, twenty-six years ago here in America, it was 1980, right? There was no ADA, there was no Air Carrier Access Act,



there was none of this stuff.

And we had just got them to issue the regulations on 504 on what they had to do in federal programs and it took us five years to get them to issue those regulations, and they only finally did issue them because there was sit-ins in every Health Education and Welfare office in this country! They were closed down, closed down.

People, our people, were saying, “You will not do business as usual until you spell out what my rights are. Ain’t gonna happen.” That wasn’t long ago, either. Not so long ago.

Back in those days — that was 1978, right, in 1979 I went up before Congress, at congressional hearings, and basically told them I thought that they all had a rectal cranial inversion. When you get your head that far up, you can’t see that you have got a problem, you know you can’t, you really can’t.

My university president had testified right before me and he was telling them, “Aw... don’t make all them college campuses accessible, no, no, no, no. I have a model program here! Heap all that money on me and I will take all those folks with disabilities and I will take care of every damn one of them.”

Congress was in a quandary, saying, “Wait a minute now! Does this 504 thing mean that we have got to spend all this money to make all these colleges accessible?”

And here is my university president — I am a graduate student at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois, and he is setting there telling them, “No, don’t bother making them all accessible. We have got a model campus here, give us the money!”

Well, I was next on the agenda. They had picked me because of my having been a recipient of rehabilitation services when I got injured, and now being trained to be a rehab provider. They thought I was pretty safe.

The faculty had picked me from the graduate school to be one of the people who got to testify. That was right after Paul Simon got to be chair of the Select Subcommittee on Education in the House, and he had his first hearings right there in southern Illinois, his home district.

He was in safe territory ’til he called on me. He asked me, “What did you think about what the president just said?”

The man is a bigot

I said, “Well, I do not mean to be rude, sir, but the man is a bigot. He is a flat-out bigot. I should be able to go to any college. I want to know why should I have to kiss this guy’s backside just because he’s got a ramp. That don’t make no sense!”

Didn’t make sense then, it don’t make sense now. That was 1978 or 1979.

In 1980, they had the very first meeting on independent living — in Kansas City, Kansas. And at that point I was working for the VR agency in Illinois, cuz when the VR Director heard me give my testimony and tell them boys that they had a rectal-cranial inversion, that they could not see that they had a problem, he approached me. “You got to come work for me, man, come help straighten out my VR agency.”

I said all right, I’ll come and do what I can do. So I was working for them then.... and... I’m telling ya I done forgot where I was! Oh, yeah, much too much tranquility and the Jeddi Knights.

What I’m going to share with ya now is the story of the twenty-seven doors. Everybody remember that, now: Twenty-seven doors.

Let me paint the picture for ya. It was the first meeting on independent living in America. Ed Roberts, God rest his soul, who was

known as the father of independent living, he was the keynote speaker. There was two hundred and fifty of us that went to see and hear, like the disciples coming to hear him: What's he got to say? What are we going to hear? What's he going to teach us?

So at that point I was working for the VR agency and there was only ten independent living centers in the country because the Feds had only funded ten of them.

The people at the meeting, they kind of made it clear that I wasn't one of them — I was one of those *VR people*, so don't come with us. And I thought, well, I'll have to do something to get over this. So when I went to the conference I took a couple of my buddies with me and we rented this great big suite up on the top floor. It was like the thirteenth floor, fourteenth floor it must have been the fourteenth floor because there would not be a thirteen — they never do that, you know.

So we are on the top floor and we have got this suite with a living room that is about half the size of the room I am looking at here and it has got a big balcony that goes outside so you can look at Kansas City at night from outside on the balcony, and it has two bedrooms on either side, with private bathrooms, right?

So I was trying to get in good with these famous independent living folks, so we were hosting a party. We had stocked up the refrigerator, we had invited everybody to come on up.

Party time and can't get no relief

It was kind of like an ADAPT action, you know. There were two hundred and fifty folks that needed an accessible bathroom and the hotel had a total of eight — counting the ones in the lobby. The hotel people expected everybody to line up for the two accessible

bathrooms that they had down in the lobby. That was their solution, right?

So here I am with a whole hotel suite full of drunks who all got to go to the bathroom and ain't none of them want to stand in line downstairs in the lobby because the lobby line is pretty long by now because all the folks downstairs have been partying, too, right?

Well, I am sitting there, confronting this problem, and I said to myself, "Hey, wait a minute! I know how to solve this!" I said, "You boys, hold on, don't do nothing rash. Hold on, I will be right back."

So I was driving a Chevrolet convertible Super Sport at that point, beautiful car, and I went out to where it was and I got my bumper jack out from under the spare tire and I wrapped a bag around it to try to make it look like cripple equipment, you know, so I



can sneak it through the lobby without anybody stopping me.

You know, they'll go, "Hold on, wait, oh... oh it's okay. Go ahead, sir, go on."

So I managed to sneak that in the hotel and I took it up to the suite and I threw it on the floor and I said, "There you go. There's your freedom, boys."

They said, "What are you talking about? What the heck are you going to do with that bumper jack?"

I said, "You don't understand, man. That's an environmental adjuster!"

Jack that puppy out

They said, "What are you talking about?" And I said, "You take this here bumper jack and you make sure that plate is on the bottom there and get that hook on the top," I said, "and get up there right in the doorway and put that end up agin the door on this side, you know, and put the other end up agin the door on the other side," I said, "and get that handle in there and start jacking."

And you all know how they build them doors, they got the metal frame, you know, and the wood, and then the plaster, around behind you know, so ...

[A contractor in the audience says, "They are crepe paper!"]

Yeah, you know it. I told them, "And you get to that last notch, when you hear the pop? When you hear the pop go, then you know you are there."

"So you just keep jacking that puppy out, you know, until it is about wide enough to get your shoulders through. Then you can release the jack and take it down a little ways, you know, to about where your knees are, and you gonna have to jack that dude out again, you know, down there."

"Then you go on down to the bottom and jack her out again so you have got three curves in the door. But, by golly, you're going to get relief! Gonna get relief! Trust me."

So we did the one door and everybody lined up for that one and I said, "Oh no. Nah, nah, nah, this is not right. This is not right. You can't use my bathroom all night. Let's go do that other one, too."

And then everybody's going and I said, "Okay now, who wants to borrow my bumper jack? Everybody's hand in the room went up and I said, "Alright, you got a deal. You all can borrow my bumper jack but we all got to go together and whenever we hear the pop, everybody got to cheer and as much as possible, everybody go to do their own door."

"This is independent living! So, you know, get ahold of that handle, feel the freedom."

Now we started like I said on the fourteenth floor and out of all the people that was with us we started on the fourteenth floor and we did three of four rooms on that floor and then we went on down to the next floor. Everybody took a while, you know. Then everybody would assemble around the elevator and we would go to the next, you know, put your key in there, fix the door, everybody cheer. Any more on this floor? No. So go down to the next floor.

'Hold it right there!'

So we had made it all the way down to like the fourth floor when hotel security busted us and he's going, "Hold it right there." And we are going where in the hell are we going? He got control of the elevator, you know, I mean, get serious, man.

So hotel security is lookin' at us, going, "Boy, are you in big trouble now."

And we're sayin' "Naw, we can pee,

man! We got no problem. We got no problem. Our room is A-1 for tonight, buddy. Yep, no problem.

So we sat there and waited with security and he brought the hotel manager up. Twenty-seven doors. We had thirty-five people, so there was eight of them poor folks had to use somebody else's bathroom that night because we didn't get to them. But we managed to do twenty-seven doors before hotel security busted us and here come the manager, he come running up, "You got them!"

Well, big deal, great detecting. We come to find out right off at the beginning they did not realize what we were doing to the doors. They were just getting phone calls from everybody about this party that kept moving from floor to floor to floor.

So they were trying to figure out where these party folks are and can we catch them it was only when they saw the plaster dust... you guys know about that. The plaster dust tracks from the wheelchair tires, you know, coming out the hallway and down the rug. That clued them in, you know, and they said, "Wait a minute! What's that! What's that!" And then they had to go in the room and look, you know, and since they were security they had keys. They went in there, right behind us, and they found all them twenty-seven doors by about the time they got down to where the manager was.

'What you gonna tell the judge!'

You know he done talked to them on the radio and he is coming up there and says to us, "Man, you guys you can't do this! I am going to put you in jail! You can't do this! You done tore my hotel up. I can't rent none of them rooms until they are fixed! We're looking at hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of damage!"

"Now I'm going to call the cops and I'm going to have you all arrested and I'm going to have you all hauled off to jail." Right about that time he looks at the crowd and he says, "And what are you going to tell the judge?"

Ed Roberts rides the Iron Horse

And Ed Roberts — remember, he is the father of independent living — he rides this chair they call the Iron Horse. Since he traveled all around the world, he wanted a wheelchair that was made out of plate iron one inch thick. The chair itself weighed twelve hundred pounds, right? That was the reason why they called it the Iron Horse.

So here is Ed, he is in the back of the crowd and he is full-sticking it frontwards, right? Bouncing people off of him like pinballs in a pinball machine to get right up to the manager. And he looks right up to the manager and he says, "You know what we are going to tell the judge?"

And the manager says, "No, what are



you going to tell the judge?”

And Ed answers, “We gonna tell him we had to pee.”

And the manager just broke down. Fell to his knees and started crying right there in front of us. And he is thinkin’, “Oh my God, I can never win this one!”

Well now. Well now, none of us ever got a bill. We never got a bill.

[An audience member asks, “Did you pee?”]

Oh yes. Yeah, we got our relief.

Cadillac Jack

Now I want to try one out on ya. I am getting ready to do this weekly radio show and how many of you have heard of the Prairie Home Companion?

We gonna be brought to you by sponsors, too, and you all know Woody Osburn, right? Well, I was just recently out in Tulsa with him and I told him that he had to help me with this. So this is the first commercial we come up with. Let me lay it on you:

Ever been frustrated? Ever can’t get relief? Ever find environmental barriers blocking your way? Don’t get depressed — fight back! Call Cadillac Jack. Cadillac Jack’s environmental adjusters will get you freedom. Cadillac Jack’s new high leverage model with the extra long handle will allow you to breach any barrier that confronts you.

And with your new width numbers painted on there by the Norwegian bachelor farmers who refurbished them bumper jacks for your pleasure, use, and enjoyment by having your width number, you will know when you are there. You can jack it right out to your number and you’re there.

Kind of like the comfort number on the sleep number bed. Well, you got your width number on the Cadillac Jack’s environmental

adjuster so that you can be sure that you are there.

In order to get one, you call one eight hundred BIG-DOOR. Don’t be frustrated! Fight back! Call Cadillac Jack! We’ll be sure you get relief.

That is our first 30-second commercial.

Uncle Fud’s First Law of Opposition:

**If you push on it hard enough,
it will fall over.**

Now. What happens when the unstoppable force meets the immovable object? It’s kind of like that bumper jack and that door. The bumper jack is the unstoppable force and the immovable object is the door.

But what is gonna happen? The immovable object is going to move.

It’s the same way with you all. It’s the same way. You have to remember that an army on the march is an unstoppable force.

An army at rest is nothing more than chaos, but an army on the march toward the goal is an unstoppable force. I’ve seen you all at TRIPIL be that before.

Like I said, there is much too much tranquility. And how come everybody is tranquil? It is not because they got fluoride in the water. No. It’s because the politicians lie to us every day all day long. They tell us, “Oh it’s unfortunate that your infirmity keeps you from gettin’ in that building.”

Not only that but they want you to be-lieve that you’re unfortunate because you’re not able to get in the building. They want to get you to believe that this is something that it is just unfortunate, that they can’t do anything about it!

Well, that’s bunk and you all know it is. Why do we put up with it? Why do we put up with it?

Here we are like Bob was talking about here earlier, not having accessible polling places. I mean, how many years is it past when the law said that they had to be accessible!

[Bob Romero answers, "Sixteen."]

Sixteen! Right! So we have been patient for sixteen years and we still can't vote! What does that take?

All it takes is for the polling place people to be finding a new building to put the polling place in that is accessible!

I mean, I've got nothing against accessible voting machines but if they are going to put it in an inaccessible building, don't bother. Don't waste your money, man.

The reality is that if you as a group came together and said this is totally unacceptable... if you made it a goal to go and publicly embarrass every election official who has not found accessible places for all their polling places... Just go and put a flag up in front of their house that says *No Leadership Here!* Because there ain't any!

And if they want you to believe that there is any leadership, how come they are sixteen years behind the times. There ain't any. The reality is that if you undertook that campaign and you did it effectively, you would win. You would win because they are helpless! The facts speak for themselves!

The only way they manage to keep things this way is by lying to the public, lying to you, and convincing you that there is nothing they can do about it.

Going to meet a politician

Well, every time I go see a politician... I started to tell you why I was the one that usually makes them want to change their pants. And it is because I walk up, look them right in the eye, shake their hand real good

— and since I have been pushing a wheelchair for thirty years, you know once I get ahold of their hand they ain't gonna get it out of there unless I want them to get it out.

And I'll usually hold their hand real good, stare them right in the eye and don't say nothing. Just keep looking at them and they will eventually, well, you know, ask "What brings you to my office today?" And then I look them right in the eye and say, "Employee supervision. It appears that you are in need of some. We the boss and you the worker and you are not doing a very good job.

"Let me ask a question," I say. "How come in Pennsylvania today there are local representatives and local senators that still have offices that aren't accessible? How come how many don't have TDD's, how many can't produce braille? Why are they permitted to continue to behave as if we don't exist!"

Who's letting them!

Why, I mean, in Oklahoma we closed down all the institutions for people they



called mentally retarded. We did that in Oklahoma in 1983! Right! We're talking about a time when there were no disability rights laws, there was no *Olmstead*, there was none of that in 1983.

We closed down Enid, Hissom, and Pauls Valley in Oklahoma and moved everybody back out into the community.

**Uncle Fud's Second Law of Opposition:
Nobody can do it to you
unless you let 'em.**

At that point, I was director of a center like this one, only in Tulsa, called Ability Resources. And I had a group of parents whose kids were in those places and they kept coming over to me and going, "Get them out! We want you to rescue them! Go and take care of this! Slay the dragon for us!"

And I kept having meetings with them once a week where I would tell them some simple facts. You know, "Nobody can do anything too you unless you let them. From what you're telling me you are obviously letting them! So I can't help you 'til you figure out why you're letting them. The only thing I can do is help you figure out why you're letting them."

Well, it took two years they tried to get me fired. They went to my board and said, "He's not doing anything. He won't go over there and he won't escape them all."

Two weeks after they tried to get me fired, they didn't show up for their weekly meeting on Thursday afternoon. They called me on the next Monday and said, "We're sorry we didn't call you or nothing but we got a lawyer."

That was when they hired Tim Cook over there at the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia and he came out to Tulsa and

did a case called Homeward Bound versus Hissom Memorial Center in the early Eighties and basically put the state under court order to close down all the institutions.

Today in Oklahoma there are no institutions for mentally retarded people. The people are moved out into the community because the judge said, "You not only got to move them out but you have got to move the money with them. If it costs you one hundred and twenty thousand a head over here in the institution, you have got to spend that kind of money over here to fashion a program for this guy if that is what he needs."

And the only reason that that happened was because those folks were willing to look them in the eye and say, "We ain't gonna let ya do anything else."

**Uncle Fud's Third Law of Opposition:
Always prey on the helpless.**

That is exactly what you all got to do to make them helpless against you. I don't have to tell you what the issues are. This woman back here had some issues, there are some issues over here, there is plenty of issues, but you gotta move! Remember: An army at rest is nothing but chaos. The army at march is the *unstoppable force*.

So pick your goal, organize, and all you gotta do, all you gotta do — this is so easy because they are helpless! I'm talking about the politicians now, right? Because their whole power base, their whole existence, their whole reality is based upon a lie. It is based upon the lie that you don't matter

Well, when you make the lie manifest, you make the truth manifest. You go out there to that representative's front door and say, "You will not occupy this inaccessible office any longer. Period. End of discussion."

Do them one at a time if you need to, but the reality is that they should not be permitted and you wouldn't have to do very many of them before the rest of them will all be looking for new office space real fast.

The reality is that if you can work on those two things — I realize you have got other goals — but if you can work on those two things: on the fact that every polling place has got to be accessible and that every person has got to be able to vote based on the verifiable and accessible system that has been required for sixteen years.

The Battle You Cannot Lose

I think sixteen years is long enough. I think it is way too long, but I am an impatient fellow. That issue, that voting issue. Make the voting issue public, make John Q. Public understand that sixteen years after you have a right to vote, you are still being denied the vote based on this pack of liars over here. Do that and you can't lose.

You cannot lose. The only losing move is not to play. And your other issues with the representatives? Trust me: You can go over and talk to them all day with give me more money for attendant care, give me more money for transportation, give me more money for something else, but, trust me, if you go over there and get clear with them that none of you, none of you — I'm talking to the reps and senators — none of you tomorrow is going to occupy an inaccessible office. It ain't gonna happen. Ain't gonna happen.

And if it does we will close you down.

The reality is that if you took on that one issue — the inaccessibility of their offices which they are probably spending your tax dollars to rent, right? — all these other issues will suddenly become give-aways if you hit them real hard on the fact that they have

demonstrated disrespect for you.

Because they are in a building where you can't get in! And there is absolutely no excuse for them to have done that.

Well, anything else you ask for is going to be like, "What do you want? Huh? What do you want? What can I do to help you out here?" Because you will have communicated to them clearly that you will no longer be disrespected.

Definitely. Within your power, they are helpless. The facts are on the ground. I mean, they can't legally do what they are doing.

The only way they are doing what they are doing is because they are willing to violate the law! They are willing to lie and they are willing to disrespect you in the process and if you can't get a grip on that simple of an issue then we need to talk a little more.

But it's that simple. The reality is that if you put your army in motion on that one issue, you cannot lose and they cannot win. They cannot win. ❖





ON THE ROAD WITH ROLLO

Commander Sykes, seen above in the role of fabricating fool, has completed the fabrication of The Cloud, his live-in coach (seen in heavy traffic at left.) Today he's totally on the road with his van, The Shadow, in tow.

If you'd like to sic him on your locals (as Kathleen Kleinmann sicced him in the preceding pages), he says you can give him a call at 724-413-3375 and see how the weather is wherever he happens to be at the moment.

ON THE ROAD WITH KEEF

Life's Little Victories

New Orleans Style!

THE **K** CHRONICLES

BY **KEITH KNIGHT**

OBTAINED FROM REAL RESIDENTS!

#1: FINDING A PLACE TO DROP YOUR MAIL...

9-09
4-0

Where are the MailBoxes?

© 2006 K. KNIGHT

#2: THE LOCAL GROCER HAS FRESH FRUITS & VEGGIES...

Yes!!

#3: WALKING OUTSIDE THE FRENCH QUARTER...

Am I in IRAQ?

WITHOUT SEEING A HUMVEE...

#4: DESPITE DIRE PREDICTIONS, THE LOCAL SPORTS TEAM AIN'T LOOKIN' TOO SHABBY....

REGGIE #5: THE ONLY BUSH THAT'S WELCOME IN NEW ORLEANS!!

#5: A CONTRACTOR HIRED TO REPAIR YOUR PLACE...

No prob, bro.

Gracias.

..COMES THRU ON TIME & UNDER BUDGET...

#6: THE WATER LEVEL IN YOUR DEVASTATED HOME...

YES!!

COMIX

..STOPS JUST BELOW THE BOX OF CHERISHED COMIX & GEEKY TOYS...

#7: FEMA =GASP= ACTUALLY HELPS!!*

Here is yer check & a list of resources that'll...

Hello? Hello?

Fainted

*Super GIGANTIC VICTORY...

STOP

Writell P.O. Box 591794 San Francisco CA 94159

send STAMP FOR CARTOONS...

keef@kchronicles.com www.kchronicles.com send in YOUR LITTLE VICTORIES!!