

Boston in the South

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By James Collins

I heard this story from a New Englander, who worked for me, about a Boston salesman named Jerry who obtained a district down South off I-95. He packed all his belongings up, put them in his Volkswagen and headed down South. He got a room in a motel on Sunday and started into the backwoods on Monday. By Thursday he was desperate, went back to the motel, and had a conversation with the manager, Rufus.

"Rufus, I am sure glad to see you and have the opportunity to fill up the tank of my car."

"What's the matter? Are the good old boys in the backwoods giving you a hard time? They don't want to talk to you. They don't want to sell you any gasoline. They don't want to give you a room in the area you are working in and they won't sell you any food in the local cafés."

"How did you know that? Does that happen a lot here? Why are they like that ,Rufus? What can I do about it I have got to a make a living?"

"Well, I think I can help you with this and I have a solution that makes all of this go away. Just step into my store here and go over to the counter. In the back I sell small American flags; you need five of them. On the other counter over there is a ball cap with an American flag on it and you need one of those. Don't worry, this is not very expensive, and I'm not trying to put one over on you."

"I've got them all, now what I do with them?"

"Tie one of the American flags to your antenna. Put two on your dashboard – one on each side. Then take the other two and put them in your rear view window one on each side so they could be seen from outside. Then put on the ball cap and wear it all the time. Go inside, grab a hot meal, get a good sleep, and first thing tomorrow go back into the backwoods."

Late the next afternoon Jerry pulled into the motel all smiles. He went in to see Rufus who was behind the counter.

Rufus asked, "How did it go?"

Jerry who was quite excited, said, "Everything was perfect. People would smile and talk to me I took a number of orders. I had a great meal at a little café in the back woods, and I had no trouble getting gasoline so I was able to expand my area searching for customers. It

was like night and day from what I experienced all this week. What happened ? Why is everything different now with just a few small flags?"

"You've got understand how things look from their perspective. You come down here with a northern accent, sporting Massachusetts plates, which indicate you are a Yankee, and you are driving a foreign car. To the simple boys in the backwoods you are a foreigner! You are not an American. You are the enemy. You don't speak like an American and you are not to be trusted or helped in any way. Now, however, you're an American, sporting American flags and wearing an American flag on your hat. You are one of us, and many are now willing to do business with you and welcome you with open arms.

Jerry ended up being very successful selling in that part of the South and eventually became a district manager. His backwoods customers always viewed him as a nice patriotic American with a funny accent.

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