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Better think before you spread this around. Delray Beach is such a vigorous place because a quirk in Florida law (custom) allows Oxycontin pills to be prescribed legally under circumstances that never seem to be fully explained or addressed. But I'm here to go to poetry readings, not to be slugged for nosing into somebody else's drug choices.

You also are going to have to look elsewhere to learn how these pills affect the users. The medical dictionary says "Oxycontin, an opiate used as a substitute for heroin." Were you really curious, most likely the troubadours performing on the sidewalks in late evenings might give a lead. A dollar bill tossed in the hat will spring those guys into playing longer than a symphony lasts, including intermission. No telling what a fiver would bring up to answer a question that easy for them to address.

The hip music from the outdoor joints blares so loud that you'd need to take a course in sign language to find out inside where the restroom was, much less interview a patron on drugs. Hearing aids attuned to an evening knell in Mertzon, Texas, or adapted to reveille at Fort Concho in San Angelo, back-drag on such a wild, raucous atmosphere.

Street people might tell you the pills are called "hillbilly heroin" if you look like a prospect. Old fogies from Texas here for a poetry festival are not going to be on the inside of any drugs past the antacid section on the pharmacy counter.

Reason this subject comes up is that on last trip down here three years ago, newspaper editorials railed and roared and predicted the legislature was going to pass a law regulating the pills. Up on the 09 Divide, we'd be the last to know how long a bill takes to pass through a state legislature. It's been so long since any subject in our state benefited herders, it's a wonder we haven't taken up selling pills as a sideline. Does seem like in Florida, the worthies might fault the sale of pills that the national press thinks could run into millions of prescriptions.

I repeat, the bars are no place for an outsider to ask questions. Folks seated on the stools, swinging their hind legs in high-top boots, would choke on their olives and toothpicks laughing at the question of why the legislators hadn't outlawed a pill that draws people from many as five states to town to blow piles of dough.

Look at the subject from a writer's view, please - change places, so to speak. Are you going to go down to the Delray police department and say: "Hey, Chief, is it still

against the law to sell or take Oxycontin around your town?" Likely, Chief has a back room special for smart-aleck scribes to be cooled off, especially little leaguers from the sticks.

Twice this week the principal street, Atlantic Avenue, has been closed to traffic for booths to sell local crafts and organic foods. The hottest night spot up by the railroad crossing on the way to the poetry festival can occupy one lane of the street during those celebrations.

Big signs in front say, "No beer or alcoholic drinks served on the sidewalk." The signs do not say you can't drink on the sidewalks or out in the street. Nor does the sign say "Music overflows so loud from our bandstand, you not only can't hear the train whistle, but the sound blast may make the signal light blink on and off at the crossing."

Other than watching for the train, don't worry about passing through there. The youngsters on those stools and out on the sidewalks would come closer to going to the roundhouse to talk to the engineer than to speak to a graybeard or granny on the way to a poetry reading.

On the nights the streets are open to cars and motorcycles, a back street goes to the hotel from the auditorium. The walk is dark, but like skipping along to

"Mary Had a Little Lamb" compared to wading through the street crowds.

If you choose to brave the crowds, you can squeeze up against buildings and dodge by doorways. Sum total, most of us old editions are too polite to be out in such a maze of humanity. In rare breaks in the melee, you can catch glimpses of couples nearly blocked (stranded) on the sidewalk. Cigar smokers, by the way, command premier space.

The way to tell you have had enough is that the urge hits to start waving goodbye once you break free at the hotel steps, or the rare times you mount a cab. You sense the fight is gone. And you know the truth is, you better raise hell while you are still young.