

## Walter Doesn't like to Call Them Zombies



[Horacio Rodriguez](#), Yahoo! Contributor Network



MORE: [cam newton](#) [Obama](#) [john boehner](#) [macbook](#) [Brett Favre](#)

Recommend

Tweet

Print

Flag



Post a comment

On Thursdays, Walter burned bodies.

In a routine more apropos for 4<sup>th</sup> of July charcoal briquettes, he'd pile them up in the middle of his backyard, drenched them in lighter fluid and tossed in a lit match. Quickly after setting the corpses ablaze, he darted back indoors as was also the routine whenever he torched bodies because the smell of burning flesh was something you never get used to.

Once inside he stood guard behind the sliding glass patio door that looked onto the backyard to make sure there were no fire mishaps. As soon as the fire subsided and looked more like a

simmering trash pile than a snapshot from some horrible genocidal event, he went into the bedroom, sat on the floor next to the boarded-up window and opened a can of green beans for breakfast. Walter was tired of eating out of cans. He was especially sick of green beans.

He scooped out a serving of the green beans and looked onto the street through the sliver cut out of the plywood nailed to the window and didn't see any walking stiffes. He hadn't seen any in five days and his weekly backyard fleshy bonfire consisted of only two bodies today. Last week it was five and the week before that eight. Walter's record was sixteen. That was early on in the pandemic when the stiffes were still pretty meaty and burned longer, emitting a particularly awful stench. He vomited so much that day he thought he'd sprained a rib.

## Walter Doesn't like to Call Them Zombies



[Horacio Rodriguez](#), Yahoo! Contributor Network

May 27, 2011 "Contribute content like this. [Start Here](#)."



MORE: [cam newton](#) [Obama](#) [john boehner](#) [macbook](#) [Brett Favre](#)

Recommend

Tweet

Print

Flag

Post a comment

Walter didn't like to call them zombies even though that's what they were. He felt calling them stiff was more accurate considering their glacial walking speed and seemingly passive manner with which they tried to eat people. They wouldn't even attempt to bite you until they were inches from your body and even then it was a pace that resembled someone slowly opening their mouth before biting into an oversized sandwich.

The government, the CDC and the press called them zombies from the outset. The authorities probably adopted the term because it was already part of the vernacular and it was shorthand to a spooked public looking for a universal label to call the wandering undead. The press probably followed suit because "reanimated corpse human flesh eater" didn't fit on scrolling news tickers.

Walter was a little disappointed with the zombie apocalypse. He was certainly terrified like everyone else when dead folks started to reanimate. But he'd seen the [Hollywood](#) movies and expected more "glamorous" zombies. Aggressive. Hungry. Growling. Some movie zombies even had the ability to run. But these zombies didn't even resemble a rabid raccoon foaming at the mouth and violently tossing the contents of your trash can. In reality they more closely behaved like someone who'd just returned from gorging at a Hometown Buffet and had settled on the living room recliner and would not be convinced to move except to unbutton their bulging pants. They were dead and they were sloth. They were stiff.



## Walter Doesn't like to Call Them Zombies



[Horacio Rodriguez](#), Yahoo! Contributor Network

May 27, 2011 "Contribute content like this. [Start Here.](#)"



MORE: [cam newton](#) [Obama](#) [john boehner](#) [macbook](#) [Brett Favre](#)

Recommend

Tweet

Print

Flag Post a comment

And they were slow. Lumbering along akin to a baby taking its first steps. Walter began timing the walking speed of the stiffes like a high school track coach who regularly checked the pace of his individual team members in search of his fastest runner. His house sat at the end of a cul-de-sac with six houses separating his from the mouth of the street. He'd set his watch as soon as he saw a stiff pass the first house. The first time he tried this it took the stiff 34 minutes to reach his front lawn. After that, he started to record times and assign names. The slowest was "naked but for a pair of stilettos lady" who timed in at 42 minutes. Walter knew stilettos were cumbersome for a living woman let alone an uncoordinated dead one which is probably why she was so slow. The fastest time went to "heavily tattooed shirtless missing both arms guy" who clocked in at 25 minutes. He figured the lighter weight due to the loss of both arms accounted for his unusual speed.

In the beginning after he boarded up all the windows and holed himself up in his house, Walter lamented not having any guns. The closest thing he had to a weapon was the aluminum bat that sat idly in his garage, a remnant of his office softball league. After observing how slowly stiffes actually moved he knew a bat would suffice. He was further reassured when during one of the FEMA radio broadcasts it was announced the most efficient way to "neutralize" a zombie was with "blunt force

trauma to the brain" or "decapitation using a machete, knife or sword." The Feds also suggested that any bodies be burned relatively quickly so as not to spread disease or attract other zombies piqued by their rotting brethren.

Walter didn't receive any dead visitors on his property until about a week after he'd fortified the house. He was in his bedroom looking through the window plywood sliver eating a can of corned beef hash when he spotted one in his driveway, slowly making its way onto the front lawn. He wasn't sure if once he went outside with bat in hand if he'd be able to swing at its head and kill it. He recalled how uncomfortable he'd been shooting quail on a hunting trip a couple years previous that his boss had coerced him into. By the time he finally built up the required nerve, he made sure the stiff was still in the driveway before exiting through the backyard sliding door and making his way to the front via the side of the house.

That was another oddity about stiff. Upon spotting you they neither acknowledged nor made any aggressive moves towards you. They just kept wobbling along. If they managed to bite you it was because you had been careless or unlucky.

Walter took a deep breath (immediately noticing the stiff's pungent death odor in the process) and swung for its head, with the impact making a sound that reminded him of what lettuce sounded like when dropped on a hardwood floor. The stiff's knees buckled and he fell to the ground. It was still twitching a bit and before he lost his nerve Walter raised the bat above his head and once again delivered a blow. It was only after he was certain it was dead that Walter noticed the stiff had once been a young man with a thin emerging mustache he'd never get to obsess over or try to impress the ladies with.

He grabbed the body by the ankles and dragged it along the side of the house and left it in the middle of the backyard. That first week he repeated the process ten more times.

But that was in early spring. It was now creeping into fall and although Walter was encouraged by the fact that fewer stiff were showing up as a good sign that maybe the pandemic was nearing its end, he had to contend with the reality of temperatures dropping soon. He would have to start burning his furniture to stay warm and he wasn't sure he had enough to get him through the winter.

Walter finished his green beans and was about to open a can of peaches for dessert when he heard a low rumble coming from outside. He looked through the window and saw a heavily armored military Humvee stopped at the end of the street. A soldier wearing military fatigues and carrying a very large weapon stepped out of the passenger side of the vehicle, walked over to the first house on the street and knocked on the door, waiting for a response and not getting one before returning to the vehicle and moving on to the following house. Walter didn't know what had happened to rest of his neighbors but he was fairly sure he was alone on the street and the Humvee would get to his house fairly quickly.

Walter waited until the Humvee pulled up in front of his house and the soldier stepped out before shouting out from behind the door.

"Please don't shoot, I'm a live one. My name is Walter."

The soldier was startled and instinctively pointed his weapon at the door.

"Have you been bitten? Are you armed?"

"No," Walter responded.

"Ok, then come out slowly and keep your hands up!"

Walter followed the soldier's orders and slowly opened the door, emerging with his hands in the air. It was then he noticed the Humvee contained three other heavily armed soldiers with their [rifles](#) all currently aimed at Walter's head. Curiously, the driver was holding a machete instead of a rifle.

The soldier who had exited the Humvee walked up to Walter and checked out his eyes before lowering his weapon. He signaled the others to do the same. He then handed Walter a white peace of paper with the Presidential Seal on it.

"President's gonna address the nation next week. Orders were to do a house by house check of all surrounding neighborhoods and hand these out to any of the living. If you feel secure here you're welcome to stay or we can send someone back later for ya and take you to a safe zone."

"Yes. Yes. That would be good. Yes please. Thank you."

Just then Walter noticed a stiff at the end of the street walking towards the house. He gestured to the soldier.

"You guys mind taking care of that one on your way out?"

"Sure thing chief. Hang tight then. We'll call it in and we'll get you outta here soon as we can. Take care of yourself."

The soldier then turned around and took his seat in the Humvee. They drove off and headed towards the end of the street where the stiff was trudging along. Walter was expecting a guns blazing show of force but instead the Humvee stopped a few feet in front of the stiff. The driver stuck out his machete, positioned it about neck high and then slammed on the gas, slicing the stiff's head clean off before continuing on to the next street.

And with that, Walter knew the canned peaches waiting for him back in the house would taste especially sweet.