



Bob Lance, a man who works for a living (and says he always has and always will), must battle in court today

Ron Medvescek, The Arizona Daily Star

## Law, Bob Lance joust over right-of-way

Bob Lance, who sleeps on an old couch under a tree on the banks of the Santa Cruz River, or under a bridge when it rains, is engaged in a battle with the state.

The stakes, as Lance sees it, are a man's right to make an honest living and to wheel a grocery cart where he needs to go.

Lance, 54, says he works for a living, always has and always will.

He ran a construction company in Chicago, he says, until the 22-hour days and reams of paper work and worries got to be a gigantic hassle.

After seven years on the road, there is still no nicotine stain on his fingers, no boozy stare in his eyes. His hair is neatly trimmed.

Los Angeles, Barstow, Las Vegas, El Paso and Seattle were all stops where Lance supported himself by, as he calls it, "scrappin'."



R.H.  
Ring

### Commentary

In Tucson, where scavenged aluminum cans are worth 31 cents a pound, and a pound of cardboard will get you 2½ cents, Lance runs a daily route hitting certain dumpsters and roadsides on the near southside.

So many people are after cans these days that Lance had to diversify. He got into cardboard in a big way.

"Cardboard is too much trouble for most people," Lance says.

He used construction-job ingenuity to create the proper tool for the job. He got a grocery cart and removed the basket. It was still difficult to steer, so he chocked the rear wheels so they wouldn't swivel.

With his cart, Lance says, he could average 1,000 pounds of cardboard a day. Once he handled 700 pounds in a single load, picked up at a department store. He had it piled 5 feet high, 6 feet wide and 8 feet long, the bundles balanced.

Hauling his cardboard and cans on foot for

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## Scavenger challenges law on use of frontage road

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miles and miles to the recycling firm, Lance would average \$22 to \$25 a day. He says proudly, his record high was \$37 in one day.

"People think I'm strange," he admits. "Anyway, I enjoy it."

Just after dawn July 6, as usual, Lance breakfasted with a Pepsi at the Hi-Val gas station at West 22nd Street and the Interstate 10 frontage road.

He set out going north on the frontage road, pushing his 300-pound load, heading for the recyclers a few blocks away. He was on the pavement by the curb because the sandy shoulder impedes his cart.

A highway patrolman stopped and ordered him to get off the road. Lance explained he was just making his living, and he had to transport his load to the recyclers.

The patrolman said he didn't care. Lance called him a "sadistic SOB." You might say they got into a frank discussion about it.

The patrolman stayed cool and left without issuing a citation. But that wasn't enough for Lance. He walked back to the Hi-Val and phoned the officer's dispatcher. He snarled, "Get your people off my back."

A few minutes later, a second patrolman pulled over Lance and his cart. The patrolman, Lance says, grinned as he put the handcuffs on.

There was another frank discussion about what to do with the cart. Lance demanded it not be abandoned to thieves. So the patrolman called in a tow truck to haul it away to a storage yard.

"That's right, a shopping cart," the patrolman told his dispatcher when he ordered the truck.

Lance was in jail for a few hours and released without bond. But his dander was still up, and he decided to walk to the state police headquarters near the airport, to "talk to someone in authority."

The walk is 12 miles round trip. "You must be Mr. Lance," the receptionist said when he walked in.

Lance made no headway, but he is recognized now among the force as a very determined man.

Lance never did get his cart back. The past few weeks he's been scrapping by on cans alone.

Lance will be in court today fighting a ticket for walking on a freeway. He wants to get back into cardboard, and he says he can't do it unless he can use that stretch of road to get a cartful to the recyclers.

Lance has researched his case with typical diligence. He has maps of the I-10 right-of-way. He has copies of state and federal law.

And he has his ability to argue.