

Humankind

Written 30 March, 2020

I wonder if we really are, we humans. Kind, that is.

I'd like to think so.

When I went to the grocery store the other day, I didn't really know what to expect. Some aspects were disappointing, to be sure. The empty shelves provided evidence of hoarding. (Toilet paper, really? I mean, I get gloves and wipes, even paper towels. But TP?) And there was the woman who lunged past me to grab the last can of something before I could. Couldn't tell you just what it was because I wasn't reaching for it anyway, but the self-satisfied smirk she gave me as she turned away seemed to indicate it was something important.

And there was the guy at Home Depot last week who forcefully grabbed a lumber cart away from the other guy who had brought it in from the parking lot. The cart grabber had his young son in tow. A teachable moment, but probably not one of which he should be proud. The son seemed embarrassed and if so, good for him.

The selfish have always been among us and this new reality hasn't made them less so. But those aren't the folks I want to talk about today or the actions on which I choose to dwell.

At the same Home Depot, management and workers have devised an efficient and fair system for keeping the store population down to numbers that allow social distancing. One in; one out. And for the most part, folks are being respectful, lining up and waiting their turn. It helped that the store staff was clearly concerned with doing things well. And I've never had so many workers ask if I needed help finding something.

The clerk I dealt with at the grocery was especially pleasant and helpful. We conducted our business at an unaccustomed distance but she went out of her way to be friendly, and lit up when I thanked her for working. A truly nice moment in my day.

Those two trips have been my sole direct contacts with strangers in the last several weeks. I made a delivery run of staples to a friend who's blind and with her husband in the hospital, badly needed some stuff. Mary and I took a load over to my daughter's new house. In both cases, the urge to touch was strong but we minded our manners. (Note to self: I will never again pass up a chance to hug, having gone through a time when it's not allowed.)

The younger guy on the next block with whom I've chatted from time to time because we share the woodworking bug texted to ask if Mary and I needed help with anything. And am I noticing more people smiling and waving as they stroll by?

John Krasinski has started his 'Some Good News' programming and I was delighted to watch the first episode.

Folks on the block have clearly embraced the concept of keeping their children home which has to be a tough thing. On a day such as today it is the norm to hear the shouts and laughter that signal kids at play but for at least the last week, the 'hood is silent. Thanks to those parents who are protecting us all and I hope they keep their sanity.

I saw a piece about a microbrewery converting to the production of hand sanitizer. Because that's what's needed and they have the equipment to do so. And get this – they're giving it away to those who can't pay.

Lots of shuttered or severely curtailed businesses in our town. I hope they make it through. And I am thrilled that very few of their marquees and reader boards carry woe-is-me messages, most of them opting for encouragement of the 'we're all in this together' variety.

A high percentage of Facebook posts I've seen of late offer suggestions for staying well and happy, encouraging thoughts. Or recipes. What is it about sharing a recipe or a picture of homemade anything that seems so exuberantly affectionate? Not sure, but the pics of Rick's scones and Michael's bread warmed my heart.

I'm going to stop here and just leave you with my hope that you give and receive random acts of kindness.

(Okay, that sounded nice but really, I'm gonna go bake something.)