

Learning New Tricks in a Bad Time

Old dogs can learn new tricks.

Here are a few lessons this old dog learned in the last five months.

Laundry. For years doing the wash was my most dreaded household task. When my daughter and her family moved north, leaving the house without a washer and dryer, I began using our local Laundromat. With space in that business limited to six customers at a time because of COVID-19, I did something I'd never done before. I asked the employees to wash my laundry and picked it up the next day.

Incredible. The clothes smelled perfumed, the socks were all turned right side out, even the underwear was folded, and the cost was only four dollars more than if I had done the job myself. Even with a generous tip, it was a bargain.

I'm never doing my laundry again, I told myself.

Three months later, I've happily stuck by that vow.

Haircuts. With the barbershops and salons closed, by mid-May I felt as if I were wearing a cap on my head. When I mentioned my hirsute mop to my daughter, she put me in touch with an acquaintance of hers who drives to her clients' homes to give haircuts. Again, this costs a few dollars more, but the haircut was wonderful and the conversation pleasant. No more barber shops for me, not while this lady is willing to work her magic.

Masks. In 2011, I wrote an article for *Chronicles* magazine about fitna, an Arab word for temptation. Apparently, some Saudis on the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the

Prevention of Vice – and no, I’m not making up the name – wanted to prevent some heavily draped women from flirting with men using their eyes. In the article, I, a connoisseur of female eyes, volunteered to fly to the Arabian Peninsula, meet with the accused women and others, and look into their eyes to determine their guilt.

The government of Saudi Arabia ignored my generous offer of aid.

Now we’re all sporting masks, which depresses me. I am one of those who doubt their efficacy and wear my mask only when required.

But I must say, the mask does add to the allure of certain women’s eyes. The Saudis may condemn that as fitna, but as for me, the eyes of some of the masked female faces in my local grocery store send me over the moon.

Inspiration. This past week, when I picked up my basket of laundry, one of the older employees, Viola, was talking to her daughter about a birthday cake she’d received.

“Happy birthday,” I said.

“Guess how old my mom is?”

“Fifty-nine,” I replied, lying generously.

“I could give you a hug for that one,” Viola said.

“She’s eighty-six,” her daughter told me.

Think of it. Closing in on ninety, and still working. You could have knocked me over with a feather. Her example made me consider amending some of my bad habits.

Lies and statistics. Never strong, my trust in government, the media, and “experts” has evaporated completely in recent months. So many of these people have dissembled and bent the

stats so often that truth has vanished. The Center For Disease Control keeps changing its stats and predictions regarding COVID-19 case numbers, the media promote Black Lives Matter without mentioning their Marxist roots, and the radicals who have spent the last month tearing up our cities pretend they are upset about racism.

I'm not buying what they're selling anymore.

The laboratory. The last five months have provided a lab for testing the knowledge and intelligence of our fellow Americans. The sloganeering, mindless rioting, corporate virtue signaling, the young woman I know who marched with Black Lives Matter having never read their declaration "[What We Believe](#)": on and on goes the list proving many Americans, especially college graduates, are ignorant as dirt.

Particularly telling is the "defund the police" movement. This one should take our breath away; it's certainly taking, and will continue to take, lives away, as may be seen by the recently soaring numbers of murders in cities like New York and Chicago.

Decency. The contrast between the news I follow and the people I meet in the flesh is glaring. On the screen are mobs, self-aggrandizing politicians who pass the buck when they are in the wrong, and cancel culture nasties who routinely utilize the F-bomb. (Please, can't we declare a moratorium on the use of that word in the public square?)

Meanwhile, the people I encounter at the library, the coffee shop, and the little country market near my daughter's house treat one another respectfully as they go about their own business earning a living, attending to their families, and making their way in the world.

Their example gives me hope and keeps me going.

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