

APPRECIATION 1

As I sit here and write this, it is New Year's Eve, 12/31/2020. Should I look backwards or forwards? Should I reflect or prognosticate?

Reflecting can be dangerous, as it was for Lot's wife. Lot was Abraham's nephew, who lived in the town of Sodom. When God decided to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for gross immorality and evil, He had to drag Lot, his wife, and his two daughters out of Sodom, to save them from the fire and brimstone with which He destroyed those two towns.

Lot's wife reflected back on her life in Sodom, decided that she preferred the routine and comfortable life she had been enjoying, and going against God's orders, looked back on the town as they fled. Her punishment was to be turned into a pillar of salt. Why would simply looking back at the town bring on her demise in such a manner? The only thing I can figure is that it was her spirit of longing for the old and choosing to go back instead of living in obedience to God.

2020 didn't offer us much reason to look longingly backwards, did it? In fact, I believe most of us are glad to see it go, and may it disappear into oblivion!

If I were to prognosticate, or foretell, what I think may happen in 2021, I'd be a blithering idiot. If there's one lesson to be learned from 2020, it's to expect the unexpected or not-even-imagined-could-ever-happen-to-us. So how could I prognosticate on something so unexpected that we couldn't even imagine it? (Don't you just love that word "prognosticate"? It makes me sound so . . . so . . . so up there with the smart people. Or else it sounds like cow chewing its cud.)

Since I don't particularly wish to be turned into a pillar of salt, and I'm not into chewing cud, maybe I'll just appreciate. There really are a number of things to appreciate.

Think about our little desert

town. Yes, it's limited as to what one can do for fun and entertainment, but only if you're into bright lights and city streets, which these days don't have much left to offer. But here we are in beautiful Lucerne Valley, sitting out of the way of mainstream Kalifornia, where we have space to move around, critters and animals if we choose, beautiful sunrises and sunsets, dramatic weather to watch, and brisk, crystal clear air to breathe.

We have a number of services available, sparing us extra trips to town, which recently have become a hazard due to impatient drivers who ignore double yellow lines and pass unsafely, causing a rash of nasty accidents. We have a number of handymen at the ready to do small and larger projects at your home. There are several auto repair businesses around, all of which have their fans who swear by the quality of their work. And three gas stations.

A few days ago, the battery on my Itty Bitty City started acting up. (That's what I call the little van, officially called Ram Promaster City, the dumbest name ever.) I would crank the engine to start it, but it got slower and slower, and then it ended with a strange rattle sound. I knew it was a death rattle, so I asked Sir William, Intrepid Explorer, to explore the battery to see if it was any good. Nope. It tested very bad. Did we have one at the store? Nope. It's not too common and maybe considered a truck battery, even if the car is an Itty Bitty City.

Internet time.



Where could I find that battery? Guess what came up? Napa Auto Parts, in LUCERNE VALLEY!! On the next Saturday morning, I went to Napa (Integrity Auto Parts behind Redhead Motor Sports), and was greeted warmly by people I see in the store. In just a couple of days, my battery problem was solved, without any nasty trip to town to find one. That's just great! Thank you, Napa!

More sobering is the recent news of the deaths of five of our longtime residents. One was a gal whose husband was the store meat cutter when we first came here in 1975. She herself took care of the meat and cheese deli. In those days, the store was located in the Lucerne Valley Shopping Center, in the large building now used by a medical clinic.

Another one who passed on was one of the founding Roadrunners, the ladies' organization that has done so many projects to benefit the town and especially to help the kids. One couple who had been active in community affairs passed on within a few days of each other. And lastly, another gal who had been giving MUCH time to town functions unexpectedly passed on a few days ago.

If this weren't a small town, where many of us have the privilege of knowing each other,

these things would pass by unnoticed, but as it is, it's almost like losing a member of one's family. One would like to offer comfort-

ing hugs to the families, but you know, the virus . . .

Think of the other great things to appreciate here. We have a great school district, headed by Peter Livingston, who has done everything in his power to open our schools for the sake of our kids' mental and emotional health and for their necessary preparation to enter into adult life. The mining and manufacturing operations on the mountainside contribute much in time and money, helping our community in ways you may not know.

Finally, I must say how much I appreciate our staff right here at this store. They work their tails off to keep this store stocked and in shape, under adverse circumstances, as they are understaffed and over-whelmed with the additional business from the virus disruptions, the marijuana growers (some legal, most not), and the increased amount of weekender traffic from people who have nowhere else to play and have a good time. Also, it seems more and more people are trying to escape the big cities where the lockdowns are more severe and governments more intrusive and controlling.

Our staff is composed of some of the most sincere and caring people I know. We used to hear especially from people new to the store how friendly, warm and smiling our staff is, but of course now you can't see their smile behind that #\$\$%&* mask. Trust me, it's there. I marvel at how well they work together to handle the elevated business level, at the mercy of the broken supply chain and the scarcity of good help. The staffers at the front end and in the Deli Café

constantly run around to cover the bases while the phone rings incessantly off the hook. The Hardware guys squeeze in doing orders and putting up loads around a flood of customers needing help with their projects.

The Apostle Paul's advice for 2021:

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-18)

Maybe that's the best way to approach the new year!

Linda Gammel

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