

Plastic

*by Mike Harris*

This piece could be a tribute to the innovational attributes of the human race. Plastic is a purely man-made product. I could just make a list of the applications of plastic and have five hundred words, but that is not my way, I would be cheating, so that easy way is out.

The product became popular after it appeared sometime between the end of World War One and World War Two. Its unique properties of being water-proof, air-proof, and see-through addressed many needs. Its biggest assets, I guess, are its flexibility, its inexpensive cost and the number of ways that it is applied to everyday use.

Just in the kitchen, replacing silverware, forks, knives, spoons, storage containers of all shapes with lids, cooking utensils for micro-waves, nonstick surfaces to pans and pots regardless of shape or size. Here alone I could probably count five hundred words.

Then there is the application to the many uses in clothing. Zippers, buttons, the addition of spandex fiber allowing cotton and wool cloth to stretch, not to mention nylon which is a purely plastic fiber that is woven into cloth to make light weight clothing of all sorts. Up to now I have only mentioned domestic products that have obviously made our daily lives easier and pleasanter.

How about industry, say the building industry. I am not a builder, in my past I farmed and rebuilt a home and barn, put up buildings for stock, and I do not mind bragging but among the structures I conceived and built some have outlasted their original use and others are still being used some fifty years since I put my hand to them.

From cesspools for waste management, to feed storage silos. From the conveyance of water in galvanized pipe to rust-proof plastic pipe, from plastic sheathed copper wire for the conducting of electricity to fire proofing roofs, to insulating ice houses, plastic has found a place in the building industry.

Then there is shipping and travel. The cargo planes that bring products for example, from the southern hemisphere when our agriculture is in deep winter and the southern part of the planet is enjoying its day in the sun.

The amount of plastic that is applied to the manufacture of airplanes and the automobile, the conveyance of choice of the middle class of the world.

The application of plastic in the extension of our very lives. The medical appliances that extend our useful productive years, not to mention the prosthetics disabled individuals are using in their daily lives, eye wear, hearing devices just to mention two.

And I have not begun to talk about machines that make machines. I must be coming up on five hundred words, so this is still an essay, and I am not writing a novel.

