

When I Was Young

by Nancy Mann

When I was young, people had common sense. Perhaps it was because children saw practical solutions, and worked with their parents, daily, on farms or ranches. Nine-year-olds drove tractors and roped cattle and cared for animals, feeding them and grooming them.

Recently, some youngsters put their cat in the clothes dryer to “dry” after its bath. I wonder what setting they chose? I find it hard to believe children “back then” would have done something as stupid as that, even if they had access to a clothes dryer. In addition, there was a recent fiasco with a wet cat and the microwave, which I am far too sensitive to relate at this point. It was not a happy ending, though the animal survived.

Some prominent persons lacked common sense awhile back. Marilyn Quayle, wife of Dan Quayle (remember he said, “A failure is like a lack of a good outcome”) wore her bulky, strappy, wired orthodontic headgear to a diplomatic function in Europe! Her orthodontist told her that she had to wear the device a few hours every night. Marilyn thought of the time differential, from Indiana – to England; she wore her orthodontic retainer during the “day”, converting the nighttime hours! She actually wore this rubber-banded, ugly, contraption tightly over her head in a formal receiving line for Queen Elizabeth! Marilyn ignored remarks and suggestions by her Secret Service personnel!

Consider if you had a job cashiering at, say, King Soopers. Requirements might be: Wear shoes. Wear your name badge. Stock your counter with grocery sacks. Open up the register. Be polite to customers. Perhaps ready your station, and locate or provide a pen or two.

Recently, after gathering up my groceries, I unloaded them and the canned goods on the conveyor belt at the aforementioned, reputable grocery store. I asked for a pen, for the purpose of check-writing. The heavily tattooed, scantily clad, bored, and Walkman-wearing female clerk stared silently at me for several minutes. I politely repeated my request. She apparently did not know what to do. She did not search her apron pocket. She did not ask a co-worker for help. She did not buzz a supervisor.

Instead, to avoid me (?), she sank down slowly on the floor! Yes! She slunk gingerly down; she was then crouched quietly, under the counter! Her head was inserted under the counter shelf, by the trash can! Was she hoping I would go away? Was she waiting for me to unload all the food to someone else’s counter, though it had been rung up by yours truly?

What was her thinking? Was she waiting for magic or a “change of channels?” Was she texting the management from this position? Was I being unreasonable? But, I looked around, and there was no one arriving to save her, or me.

Beyond being puzzled, I was stunned by her response, and paralysis. In a few long minutes, I did manage to find a pen deep down inside a purse pocket, and saved the day!

I apologize if she was a part-timer ballerina, or was doing required deep-knee bends to return from a Workmen’s’ Comp. injury to the job.

It was indeed, strange, and left me with a mild case of bewilderment, or PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder) when I grocery shop and approach check-out (but not serious enough to force me to use the Self-Checkout).

Consider a recent, classic letter to Dear Abby, who recently passed away. It said “I celebrated my 21st birthday with 3 martinis, 1/2 bottle of wine, and several brandies. Did I do wrong?”

Abby replied: “Probably.”

What a witty, delightful, and smashing retort! I ask, should this letter ever even have been written? I say, “Probably not.” I thought to myself, “Use some common sense, folks!” But these three examples should demonstrate there is little or none of it around, nowadays!