

Crippled Communication

By Pete Clark

Technology is advancing in a geometric progression, making life more comfortable, more entertaining and much more dangerous from within and without. Instantaneous communication has done much to eliminate the influence of traditional leaders by illuminating their human frailties, and to advance the agendas of demagogues, dealing in hate, fear and greed. Rabid racism appears to have become an integral part of the beliefs and activities of a significant portion of today's population, along with governmental organizations like the Storm Troopers of ICE with their private prison system that has little to no oversight.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter look very appealing on their surfaces. They allow you to instantly, painlessly communicate with family and friends and your friends and family can be spread across the globe. There should be no complaints about that, at least on the surface, because these services empower you to keep track of everyone in your circle with little effort. Hand written letters and personal notes, mailed invitations and thank you cards are fading into a hazy past. Email, Evite service, texting and cell phones with free long distance have largely replaced words written on paper. Using these means of communication requires less effort and provides immediate delivery anywhere in the world.

Social media has two faces. The sunny side lets you broadcast anything, be it written, drawn, photographed or digitally created. Anything goes and that is the downside of social media. On the internet, propaganda is an art and social media platforms provide the canvases for ugly scenarios designed to spread fear and contempt. In that respect, social media is like rivers or other bodies of water that can have undertows that drag you down, but the Internet will drown you in confusion and disinformation. These Internet trolls can be gamers, living in their parents' basement and delivering pizzas for pocket change, feeling rejected by society, or other misfits who wish to legitimize the fascist movement in the United States; or they may be domestic political or foreign governmental organizations who wish to influence the outcome of an election through the use of racism, hate and fear. Be dubious of what you see on social media, as sharks and bullies are out there in force.

One thing social media, email and texting have accomplished resoundingly, is to take humanity out of human communications. It is very nice to be able to communicate with family and friends at astronomical speeds, but the words and pictures you send depart without the essence of you. They are totally electronic and mechanical. Electricity will give you a jolt if you touch a bare wire, but other than that, it is cold and impersonal. You might have hundreds of friends on Facebook, but if you have no personal friends with which to interact, you are isolated in reality. Isolation is not good for anyone and for people with mental or emotional problems this can be a very bad situation. Put away your phone and get to know the people around you. Don't be afraid to take the time to write and mail a letter or a card. Begin the healing process.