

Dear Friends,

I thought you might like another walk in downtown Denver. It was so sunny and bright this morning I asked Laini to join me in another walk; she still felt rather tired from our long walk yesterday. Cherry Creek comes within two blocks of our home. We enjoy walking in both directions along the creek, enjoying a commune with our urban form of nature: Budding trees, greening grasses, rippling waters and a goose or two. Today I decided to turn left after exiting Brooks Tower, walking down 15th Street. My goal was Larimer Square, just two blocks away.

It is the oldest block in Denver. According to the histories I have read, the Urban Renewal folks wanted to tear down all of Larimer Street to get rid of the cheap, fleabag hotels that housed people for a few cents a night, thus preventing them from being homeless or “sleeping in the rough” as the Brits put it. It was the destination, the goal of the author of *On the Road*, Jack Kerouac, as he hitchhiked from New York. Upon reaching it he reveled in the Beat Bars and the cheap rooms with a toilet down the hall. A woman, whose name I should not have forgotten, saved Larimer Square as the earliest buildings still standing in Denver. She was successful even though the rest of the street was leveled, creating a surge in our homeless population.

Today the square had street-wide banners about Denver and one that said “We’re all in this together.” I turned left again off 15th Street and studied the signs on the doors of the many restaurants in the block.

Osteria Marco is a favorite of ours. Osteria is an Italian word meaning the neighborhood place, where everybody knows your name, as they used to sing on “Cheers.” There is The Market (that sadly just announced they are closing) and then the favorite of our family: Rioja. Oh so Good. We respect chef Jen and the places she has opened in downtown Denver. I walked up to read the sign on the door and discovered Rioja is delivering food between 4:00 and 8:00 p.m.! We are only two blocks away so that should include us. I made a mental note of RiojaDenver.com so I could check the menu when I got home.

I continued down the block toward the Auraria Campus, looking pretty as usual but unusual for the lack of students during the school year. I got to the corner where they sell buffalo meat. Yes, it is Ted Turner’s place. The last time we ate there I asked if Ted Turner was still alive.

I did not tell him that I was curious about Ted after Laini and I became hooked on "Grace and Frankie" on Netflix. Jane Fonda is looking good at 82 and I wondered about her former-husbands, a trio that includes Ted.

Back I walked with my facemask up when I saw a large black man coming toward me. He seemed to be a policeman and I put up a hand in a half-salute. "Good morning," he said in a pleasant voice, and I echoed the remark.

I pulled my mask down from my nose when I saw no one else because breathing out through my nose with the mask up makes my sunglasses fog up. I felt a kind of natural high as I pictured Laini and me having a kind of banquet after ordering food from Rioja. When I got to Arapahoe, I realized where I was so I looked up and to the left and, yes, the Stars and Stripes were on the D&F Tower again! Again I had a surge of confidence that things will get better and we will have learned how to live better lives after getting past this Pandemic and find the vaccine.

Phil Tompkins