

After lunch on Wednesday, June 10, 2020, I said to Laini "I think I will take a walk around the block." "Wait a minute," she said, "I'll get ready and go with you." She stepped out onto our second story balcony and discovered she could get by with her short-sleeved shirt. As we walked through the lobby I said, "How about we go left and walk through Skyline Park." "Great," she said, "I love the trees in the park." We walked along the 15th Street side of the park and I saw two crude tent-like structures under the trees. Hmm, I thought, more evidence we need SOS.

I first heard of SOS from Tom Luehrs, Executive Director of the St. Francis Center, the homeless shelter where I have volunteered for over two decades. He explained that Safe Outdoor Space means places where homeless people could legally sleep. They could have tents, water, trash cans, toilets, and restrooms, all sanctioned by the City of Denver. He has advocated it to the Denver City government. As we walked across the park I tested the handle on the Men's restroom. Still locked. Why do they keep it locked?

We walked up to 16th Street and Curtis to check the temperature: 75 degrees at 12:28 p.m. Then we went down the sidewalk on 16th Street walking toward Uptown. When we got to Chili's Bar and Grill I saw the man I have seen and written about in two previous stories. But this time he was not sitting on the sidewalk with his legs crossed like Buddha, he was in the central part of the street between the two Mall Bus lanes. He was in a posture I have never seen before and would have thought to be physically impossible.

His legs were as if kneeling, all the weight on that front part of his leg from knee to foot. His torso was completely bent over, resting on his thighs. His head was just above his knees. "I would not have thought that posture to be humanly possible." Laini agreed. We walked to the opposite sidewalk to see him from another angle. Then a tall, uniformed man in a blue shirt with "Security" on his back walked up to the motionless slab and said something.

He raised his head and torso to say something to the officer. We could not hear them but the man on his knees seemed to disagree with the authority. I assume that he was being told that he had to get up and move on, but the man on the ground started shouting about food and where it could be purchased.

"I think I will get him some food," said Laini, "but I didn't bring any money." I pulled out some folded bills to show her a ten and a fifty. She took the ten. "I am going home to work on the book," I said and she nodded.

I got back to work on a difficult chapter dealing with the fiftieth anniversary of the killings at Kent State University. Laini and I met there on the faculty in 1968, did extensive research and wrote a book about the tragedy stressing the communication breakdowns that led to the shooting. We decided that if we could get through that ordeal together we could handle most problems. We got married a year after the tragedy.

Laini walked in and I looked at her with curiosity. "Did you get him some food?" "Yes, I got him a hamburger, French fries, and a coke at Chili's and he really appreciated it. And a man about 30 came up to me and said 'That was a good thing to do.'"

I agree, I thought, It was a good thing to do.