

It was our daughter Emily's birthday, May 6, and she has kept her aging parents from grocery shopping by doing it for us with her husband Tofer. They leave them at the door of our second story loft, then she calls us from her cell phone before they get in their car in front of the building. We take the call, then run to our balcony so we can wave and say thanks. Social distance at all times, no physical contact even with family.

I persuaded my wife Laini that we could put on our masks after lunch and walk over to the Walgreens on 16th Street and buy a card. After putting some money in the envelope with the card, and then driving our car to Lakewood, we could put the gift on the front porch, ring their doorbell and then run back to our car. So, we set out for Walgreens by walking on Curtis from 15th to 16th Street so we could hear what was emanating from the six grates in the sidewalk.

At some distance from the first grate we could hear that beautiful high pitched voice singing "Yo de lay hee hoo." Oh, it was the unmistakable voice of Eddy Arnold, country singer who appeared with symphony orchestras as well as in Nashville. Oh, and then the same beautiful sound from the second grate. Then from the third grate came "clop, clop, clop," and I asked Laini

"What is that?"

"Horses," answered Laini.

"Oh sure."

Then we turned right on 16th Street toward Walgreens. Blocking the mall bus route was a white police car. Six uniformed police saw me watching them and spoke to me. I waved back and then saw a man in ragged clothes walk with a limp, one leg not bending. His left arm was moving in time with his left leg as he dragged the other leg. There was a man lying on the sidewalk in the shade of the opening to an office building.

The corner door automatically opened at Walgreens and we walked directly to the gift card section, liked the first one we studied, even after looking at several others. I also wanted some toothpaste and lotion for the old, dried skin on my face. As I was walking toward the pharmacy area on the far side of the store, I saw an attractive African American woman with a mask to match her pretty light blue dress. As we neared each other she concentrated on my masked face and said

"Something . . . ?"

"What?" I asked.

"Do you have a dollar to spare?"

It took time for the request to register; I nodded, pulled a wad of cash from my right pants pocket and peeled off a dollar bill that I held out for her.

"Thank you," she said through the mask.

We found our other items and headed to a place where there should have been a line of customers, but instead we heard a voice from the heavens instruct us to "Proceed to number six." Laini paid for our items because I was still reflecting on the request.

We walked back along 16th Street, struck again by the lack of buses and shoppers, and at one of the first grates we heard the "neighs" of the horses that had been clopping along earlier. We also heard some birds chirping and then we were swooned again by "Yo de lay hee hoo."

We drove to Lakewood, parked in the kids' driveway, got out, put the card by the front door and moved back to a safe social distance after knocking on the door. She came to the door, picked up the card and waved and smiled as we sang "Happy Birthday to you dear Emily, Happy Birthday to you."

She then brought out several sacks for us, then retreated inside the door. As Laini picked them up, Emily said "Happy Mothers' Day."

We drove back to downtown Denver. One image kept coming back, that attractive woman asking politely, softly "Do you have a dollar to spare?"

The news on CBS and PBS combined for ninety minutes of perhaps the grimmest news broadcasts in my memory: Recession? Depression? Worse? We seem to be losing, not winning against the coronavirus. That strikingly attractive, polite woman may represent a new face that our church and homeless shelters might be seeing. Perhaps not, but we must be alert and ready to help people in need we have not seen before.