

## A SNAPSHOT OF MY TRIP TO THE GROCERY STORE

BY Nancy Cramer

I recently made a trip to the grocery store. Not anything unusual, you do it often too. But while you are buying the items on your list, have you taken time to observe the store itself and the activities of the people? Well, I was in a motorized scooter this time, and whizzing around gave me time to stop and watch what other people bought. I could see what the employees were doing and take a look at the store itself. You say, "What's the big deal? A store is a store."

You are wrong. A store is a little community in which people interact with each other and with the stocks of food on shelves and in freezers. Let me explain to this you. In the fresh flower area, full of colorful blooms, exotic palms and leafy plants, an Associate was watering the many dozens of plants. Her watering can was not one you and I would envy for it consisted of a tank about 30 inches high on wheels with an extended hose that allowed her to reach up high and low and plants at the back. I commented that I had wondered how someone managed to water all those plants. She replied, "Yes, I wish I had this tank at home for my plants," and she squirted water on the potted lily and moved on.

I looked around and saw an Associate add apples to the stack on a slanted bin using some secret method so they didn't tumble to the floor as they do when I rummage among them. He built a beautiful tower of apples, then picked up his empty box and left.

Behind him a customer was inspecting small round containers in the deli. She picked up one, read the label, smelled it. I assumed it was sealed so what was she smelling? She replaced it with another, then another, and so on. I didn't wait to see if she ever made up her mind. I zipped over to the deli where mounds of meat, white, pink and brown sliced meat enticed my hungry mind. Then past the waiting donuts, buns, coffee cakes, brownies, cookies, and ever so many more plastic boxes of goodies. I exerted a will power never before used and zipped past them without taking a box.

At the meat counter the butcher was wrapping up some delectable red slices of meat for a waiting couple. Was their purchase the meat special or a more expensive \$7.95 per lb. What has happened to meat prices with hamburger at \$3.98 a lb. as a "special." I remember years ago when my baby and I, living temporarily in Louisiana, with a professor and his wife while my husband was on Army maneuvers nearby. I had bought some good looking red hamburger, but the wife told me it was "poor folks food. The store adds red coloring to a cheap cut." She was right for when I cooked it, the grease was streaked with red coloring. That was 50 years ago. I wonder if stores do that now.

Time to move on, so I pressed the yellow "Go" button and navigated around a stack of boxes of cereal. "Hmm, " I thought, "A good buy, why not get two and put one in the box at church for charity." Into my basket went the two boxes. In the next aisle a tall Associate was adding cans of condensed milk to the top shelf. Good, now he can reach the cooking spray on the other top shelf. I asked him and he politely obliged. With a thank you to him, I started to move. Halt. Another scooter was blocking my way.

What to do? An Associate with boxes stacked high on one side and on the other, a scooter confronting me loaded with food and driven by a determined looking woman. Where was my escape route? What are the driving rules in a grocery store? Is it the scooter on the right, and on whose right, or what. The problem was solved when she backed up and graciously waved me on. If I had a horn, I would have tooted "Thank you," instead I smiled and waved with my free non-driving hand.

I came next to where a mother and child were studying the shelf of cookies. The little girl pointed to one box but the mother shook her head. The child put her finger in her mouth and screwed up her face as if ready for a crying spell. I decided not to wait for the outcome and scooted on by. On to the eggs and milk which happened to be on the other side of the store. I put the scooter into what would be third gear if it had one and whizzed in the direction. If the store had speed limits, I was breaking them. But not to worry, the path was clear. No specials on ice cream today but a big sign declares "a price reduction" on veggies. Wistfully, I reached in for three bags and said goodby to the frozen delights, as I drove to a checkout line. I had too many items for the speedy check out, especially if the apples I bought are counted individually rather than as one item.

Here's an opening checkout, and I skillfully drove my cart into line and began putting items on the counter. "Paper or plastic?" the Associate asked. "Plastic and please pack them lightly." "Do you have a fuel card?" she asked next. "Here's your receipt. You saved 10 cents on gas today. Goodby. Next." I wondered if that was her entire repertoire of remarks which she repeated over and over for each customer.

Here comes a young man to help me. I graciously accept his kind offer and off we go to the parking lot. He swiftly loads the groceries into the trunk, and I press a one dollar bill in his hand. He tries to refuse it, but I am relentless. "OK, thanks, come back again," and he trots off to the next waiting buggy. I park the scooter in the special place and return to my car. "That was a pleasant adventure. I am so fortunate to live where food is plentiful, I have money to buy it, and people are polite and helpful. What more can one ask for," I think as I turn the ignition key and back out my car. Homeward bound in my car, not a scooter.

March 23, 2019  
1097 words