

Armed with my cane, credit cards and grocery list (in order of importance), I climbed into my obliging neighbor's car and we headed toward HyVee on 40 Highway and Noland Road. It was Monday, March 23, the day before the city's mandated "take shelter" edict. That meant no unnecessary trips because of the deadly COVIT-19 virus infection heading our way. I wasn't sure if a trip to HyVee would be considered "unnecessary," but why take a chance, especially if you have a driver whose payment would be a can of HyVee chocolate coated almonds. I am nearing 89 years old and don't drive anymore, so a can of goodies is a good bargain for me.

I admit my crumpled grocery list had only seven items on it, but every one was important, I reassured myself, especially the frozen chopped onions. Who wants to chop those smelly bulbs anymore? We arrived to a full parking lot so he let me out at a door where inside several of the red chariots, I call them, were at my disposal. I tried to determine which one had the longest battery life left and climbed aboard. I waited for a lady coming out the door whose basket was piled high with packs of bottled water. Water? That wasn't on my list. Maybe I missed hearing news about a water shortage. Mentally I added the water.

Whizzing into the store, avoiding the line at the Credit Union window and over to the postal counter, I asked the clerk for "Two books of stamps, please." I think they are called "Associates" now. I have a lot of friends to write to during this confinement. With a smile and a "Thank you, take care," she handed me the stamps. "You, too," I replied, and headed toward the apple juice shelves, a long way. This was a poor choice for me because I coasted past the ice cream freezer, a place I can never resist. I noticed some delectable ice cream sandwiches I've never seen before. When I saw the price tag, I knew why. "Oh well, what's a dollar or two more, we will be cooped up for weeks." Into my basket went a box, followed by two quarts of ice cream, on sale of course.

As I was struggling to reach the top shelf, an employee, no, Associate, came by and offered his long arms to help me. "Thanks," I said, which was to be the first of many thanks I said that afternoon. "No problem," he replied, and with his long arms, he brought out the desired pack. I expect he had no problems unless he was buying a long sleeve shirt. After checking out the varieties of apple juice, I put a large jar went into my basket. Next, some napkins. I asked a young Associate (is there a feminine form for the word?) where I could find a particular brand. "I'll see and be right back." She hurried off, returning shortly with the aisle number.

I scooted my scooter over to napkins, and on the way passed lunch meat. "Now that might come in useful," I decided and several packages went into my basket. Then to where the milk is stashed. Too high, of course. A nice woman towering over me, reached in and pulled out the bottle from its shelf in the stratosphere and handed to me. I said, well you know what, and added "take care." I turned my wheel sharply to avoid a man slightly on the plump side, who laughed and mumbled something, probably about women drivers, but continued chuckling after his narrow escape. Meanwhile, processed meat caught my eye, and I recalled how easy that is to fix. Two packages were added which meant moving my purse and the giant bag of Cheetos to a safer place. Then the cart stopped running. I coaxed

it. I turned it off and on. And on and off. No good. Here comes a teenage Associate asking if I needed help.

“Yes, the battery has run down, I think.” “Never mind, I’ll be back with another cart,” he promised and whizzed out of sight. Meanwhile my eyes were on some nearby items. “Might as well get them,” I thought when he came driving another scooter. We piled groceries, cane, and purse and Cheetos into the other scooter. “How will you get it back?” I asked. “I can always drag it,” he answered, and with a mighty heave, he and scooter headed to the front door.

Relieved, I checked my list. Only two items marked off, I better get going, I thought. In the next aisle an Associate was unpacking some canned goods leaving a pile of broken down boxes. Several unopened boxes remained and I remembered my neighbor who is moving. “Do you suppose I could have 2 or 3 boxes before you break them down?” I inquired. “Sure thing, here you are,” and he swiftly unloaded the boxes and piled them empty into my cart. Stacked up, they formed a problem seeing where to drive to and what stack of boxes or cans to avoid. But it helped me shop as I was looking left and right, adding cookies, cereal, rice and noodles as I worked my way to a cashier. Lucky me, the lady ahead was finishing while behind me stood a man with a credit card in hand.

“You can go ahead of me, I have a few items,” I offered. He jovially refused my offer, saying he was in no hurry. But I urged him on, he accepted, and then started unloading my basket for me. The Associate rang up my items, her sacker put them into the boxes and hefted them back into my basket. Here comes my driver with an empty basket. He knows sometimes I indulge in more groceries than I intended. So he fills his cart. I explain I just need a few more things, and he says he will meet me in the usual area. Off I go to the egg cooler. The Associate kindly cuts open one of the large boxes, pulls out a carton, opens it for my approval, and on I go. The young man at the meat counter weighed up two pounds of ground round, wraps it and comes around the counter to put it into my basket. He hopefully asked if I needed anything else, but the price on those luscious t-bones made me drive on.

Thus went the rest of the hour, or was it two, with help from young and old alike, employee and customer, and replacing another cart that dies. I folded two receipts totaling almost \$200.00 and with my second basket of food, my driver and I prepare to exit.

“Wait a minute, ma’m, here’s your ice cream. it’s in a heavy bag, you don’t want it to melt, do you?” and the sacker hands me the second package of ice cream bars I couldn’t resist. I thanked her, thinking, not much chance of all of them melting, because we’re going to eat a couple on the way home. What a good way to start our weeks of separation. Friendly, helpful employees creating good will for customers. I’ve had an enjoyable afternoon, I thought, as I reached for another ice cream bar and handed the chocolate covered almonds to my driver.

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