

THE DASH

Recently, I watched Moses raise his knife and part the doughy waves of a to-die-for Dutch crunch roll.

It was on the late side of 6:15pm and I was dashing to the doors in desperation. Lights were off, chairs were on tables and I am sure I heard the fat lady singing. There would be no Dutch crunch delight tonight for me. Yet there was Moses, the proud and enormously pleasant owner of Mr. Pickle's sandwich shop matching my dash to his door to let me in. The tastiest treat was the pause; the shared moments of listening and learning about his dreams and hopes.

Earlier that day, Madame P had pried me from my beloved rocker recliner command pod where I commune with the universe and ponder the magnificence of life. She announced, "Alright Cosmo, enough with all the creative crap, we're dashing off to Costco before it closes for fine dining and discounts!"

It turns out that the Goddess of all that is holy and half priced had committed a mortal sin; her Costco card had expired. Moved by her sadness, which was unfazed despite my lovingly pointing out to her a Daily Republic Mr. Pickle two-fer coupon, I let something slip. I confessed that my "I'll die before no discount" Sicilian tsunami mommy of 89 years had said something about making me her Costco cuddly. A free card awaited me.

Imagine Madame P's joy; not having to pay for another card, surgically excising me from the command pod and a two-fer Mr. Pickle's coupon! She whisked me away in giddy stupor like a mythical Bacchus of bulk buying. We were in a hurry to collect my plastic pearl of great price.

As I rocked in line like the idiot I felt I was, Joyce, who patrolled the counter as only retail royalty can, gave me the silent nod to enter her domain. In hushed tones, afraid I'd be spotted as still suckling the maternal bosom for my freebie card, I told my tale. Routine investigation failed. So I asked what it cost to join. You would think I had shot the pope

The legendary bonding of consummate discount divas followed. Joyce, her mates and my wife laser locked eyes and sizzled in the heat of a Tom Clancy-esque search for my free card. Being no fool, I knew this was no time to call mommy back east. Shaming eight bar blues of "why did you wait so long", complete with surgically accurate infantilizing instructions, would have drained my testosterone reserves.

After the clucking, clicking, incredible camaraderie and puffs of smoke issuing from the keyboard, there I was, card in hand, ready to assault Costco cornucopia. Well almost. It was late.

Never nonplussed, Madame P tactically assessed time, calculated the caravans of fellow shoppers and announced triumphantly, while brandishing her Mr. Pickle prize like the high bidder at Sotheby's, "Off to Mr. Pickle". I love this woman.

Friday evening, after a week of dashing about trying to change the world, I saw our city manager, poured into relaxed clothes, strolling and holding his bride. After a quick hello, I was warmed watching the task they did not dash to do. Bucket in hand, the peacocks they fed may have dashed, but they didn't.

Remember the dash to the ticket booth at the world's best amusement park. You know the one. It's near every town USA, across the bridge from adolescence and just around the corner from infancy. Richness resides within. It compounds exponentially when we stop, connect and pass time; maybe with a peacock or a pickle. The last dash of our lives has already been decided and will be etched in our tombstone between the first and last of our days.

How we connect those days is where the money is. Thank you, Moses. Thank you, Joyce and thank you City Manager, peacocks and Madame P.

Kevin Ryan is a retired Colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield.