

CORONAVIRUS DIARIES DAY SIX: EPIPHANY IN AISLE 7

by Chris Kelly | Mar 21, 2020 | 9 Comments



The sign on the door and the empty parking lot told me the meeting was canceled. I left the car running and walked to the locked entrance to read the black words on white paper.

ALL MEETINGS CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS

Damn. I shaved for this. On a Saturday.

Since I was out and dressed like an adult, I called Chrissy to see if we needed anything at the supermarket. Our pantry is stocked for a nuclear holocaust, but I needed to do *something*, to be *somewhere*.

The Price Chopper on Taylor Hill is on the way home. Just a handful of cars in the lot. Plenty of carts to choose from. I picked one with squeaky wheels and trudged inside. The place was very quiet. I don't remember whether the Muzak was playing, but the silence was much louder.

Staff outnumbered customers, restocking shelves that lately have been emptied as quickly as they're filled. Everyone smiled and said hello. A few chatted amiably about how strange everything is now at distances far shorter than the recommended six feet.

A woman wearing a surgical mask walked past as I plucked two of the six remaining packs of toilet paper from the barren shelf. I smiled politely. The crinkles around her eyes said she did, too.

At the checkout, three lovely ladies of the age that makes them prime targets of the virus rang up orders and bagged the groceries we probably don't need. My cashier came around the register to scan the two packs of bottled water I left in the cart. They were all wearing purple surgical gloves. God knows how many customers they trade vapor droplets with on a given shift.

This one is very thankful they were there.

"Thank you all for being here," I said. "I don't know what we'd do without you."

"You're welcome," my cashier said, turning to the others to say, "It's nice to hear that."

I hope those ladies hear it many times today.

In the parking lot, I watched the young man who collects the carts. He sprayed his hands with sanitizer, rubbed them together and clapped like a quarterback breaking a huddle. I smiled and waved as he marched to the cart stall. He didn't notice, but I noticed him.

We talk a lot about the bravery of nurses, doctors and first responders on the front lines of this crisis, and rightly so. We should not ignore the bravery of those who stock shelves, stand at registers and deliver our takeout orders. The young man who collects carts is working through this, too.

So are we. The Times-Tribune will continue to provide the hard news coverage of the crisis you need, like Staff Writer Frank Wilkes Lesnefsky's interview with a Clarks Summit man infected with the coronavirus. Read the story [here](#).

We also want you to know not all the news is bad. We are committed to bringing you at least one story of hope in each edition, a warm smile tucked between the cold morning headlines.

Today, Staff Writer Kathleen Bolus reports on Scranton restaurants teaming with the University of Scranton, Scranton Tomorrow and the Friends of the Poor to help feed low-income residents during the pandemic. Read her story [here](#).

How did you spend this strange day? Maybe in the office, or at home with the kids. Maybe you're a service worker, first responder or medical professional. Maybe there's an unsung hero or someone who's really struggling in your neighborhood we should know about. Email me at kellysworld@timeshamrock.com or ckelly@timeshamrock.com and I'll share your stories here.

The Times-Tribune is still here, and so are you. We will get through whatever comes next together, one day at a time. Hang in there, hunker down and wash your hands. And thank everyone you see at the supermarket.