

Commentary... Of a certain age...

By Sue Stafford
Columnist

"No man (or woman) is an island; entire of itself."

— John Donne

When I was in high school, I sang in the a cappella choir. I remember one song in particular that always touched my heart. When one of my favorite pop singing groups, The Lettermen, made a recording of it, I played that 45 record over and over.

As I considered what I would write for this column, that song came back to me. I still remember every word, and even the alto harmony I sang.

"No man is an island.

No man stands alone.

Each man's joy is joy to me.

Each man's grief is my own.

We need one another...."

That sentiment certainly rang true for me over the last several weeks. Being a single woman, living on my own for many years, I have always prided myself on my independence and self-sufficiency. But occasionally life throws any of us a curve ball and that American

individualism crumbles, revealing that, indeed, none of us is an island and we do not, nor do I really want to, stand alone.

Nothing brings that message home more clearly than an unexpected medical emergency like the one I experienced several weeks ago. It took a few hours for me to believe the pain I was experiencing was not going to get better. Vanquishing the thought that it would probably turn out to be nothing (and how embarrassing that would be), I called 911 and in less than five minutes, the Sisters-Camp Sherman medics were in my living room — coming sans lights and sirens as requested.

I was no longer alone and frightened. Their professionalism and, yes, their humanity served to comfort and reassure me.

A trip to the emergency room that Thursday night, with a return home early the next morning by cab, was followed by another visit with the medics on Saturday morning, with more acute symptoms. But this time I had a friend with me when they arrived. She had instantly responded to a 7:30

a.m. Saturday morning call. I wasn't alone. She followed the ambulance to the hospital and stayed with me in my ER cubicle until they finally admitted me to the hospital early that afternoon.

For the next four days, I had doctors, nurses, CNAs, and food service people caring for me. Sure, that's their job, but most performed their duties, like the medics, with professionalism and humanity.

The phone calls, texts, emails, and Facebook posts from concerned and supportive friends and family both amazed and humbled me. My sons' genuine concern and offers to come to Sisters were especially heartwarming. One of them cut his two-week motorcycle trip short and came for a few days — under the guise of something else — and cleaned my roof and gutters, mowed and fertilized my lawn, and replaced my burned-out brake light. His actions spoke volumes.

Another friend took care of my cats and filled my refrigerator with comfort food. Someone else baked bread and made homemade soup. When I sat on my glasses and popped out

one of the lenses, a friend took them to get fixed. My brother brought me home from the hospital and picked up a prescription. The list goes on.

No, I am most certainly not an island. If I ever needed a reminder of that fact, this latest adventure certainly confirmed it. And I now really believe what I have always told others. I am being a good friend, not a burden, when I allow others to help and care for me.

Because I have been taking care of myself for so long, it is difficult for me to ask for help. In trying to figure out why that is, I come up with not wanting to appear needy or weak (my ego talking), not wanting to impose on others' time and space (not worthy), and perhaps closest to the truth, not wanting to have to admit to myself that I do in fact need to rely on others (humility).

So here I sit, humbled and thankfully admitting that I need you, my friends and family and strangers. Thank you for caring and not being rebuffed by my protestations regarding needing your offers of help and words of concern.

Jammin' for Nepal in Sisters this Thursday

Folks in Sisters can come out and enjoy local music while supporting a home-grown Sisters nonprofit that changes lives for the better in Nepal.

Hood Avenue Art will host "Jammin' For Nepal," an "empty cups" musical benefit for Ten Friends on Thursday, August 25, at 5:30 p.m., featuring local musicians in support of the Sisters-based nonprofit, which assists the people of Nepal.

Buy a cup donated by local potters and fill it with free beer, soft drinks, and distilled beverages. Snacks and appetizers will be available.

Bands to play are: Doug and Katie Cavanaugh, Brad Tisdell, Jim Cornelius and Mike Biggers, Bubba Clement and Margaret Wood and The Love Puppies.

GOT CATS?



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