

The Nicest People in the World

Written by Dale Potruski

Monday, 03 March 2008 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 14 January 2010 19:31

Can you explain the “random act of kindness”? What might be the motivation, the cause, and the consequence of such unexplained behavior? I understand that there are places where such occurrences rarely happen. However, here in my home town of Saluda, North Carolina, these unprovoked events occur daily.

My first experience was only days after my wife, Donna, and I had taken ownership of **The Oaks Bed and Breakfast**

on Greenville Street. We were living among a labyrinth of cardboard boxes. Before the task of unpacking was to commence, I decided to make my way to the front verandah to clear my head with a breath of invigorating Blue Ridge Mountain air.

Slowly my vision cleared and the synapses began to fire. It was better than a double espresso! Fearful that I may get too much of a good thing, I turned to reenter the inn. There on the antique doorknob hung a familiar looking item—it was a plastic grocery bag.

In the bag was a collection of produce from some neighbor’s garden, all fresh and fragrant. No note. No card. No one to thank.

Interesting.

Another time, the lovely gal from across Greenville Street brought over the most delicious Coconut Cream Cake. Now I am not wild about coconut, but I have to say, this was the most amazing cake ever! An old family recipe she told me. (I think I detected the slightest bit of rum!) Was it my birthday? An anniversary? None of that—it was a “welcome to the neighborhood” cake.

Then there was the time my wife and I were visiting a neighbor (we will call her Wiggie). I had admired an antique ceramic bud vase in the shape of a playful kitten. I complimented Wiggie on her exceptional taste. She invited me to take the piece home. I figured it to be a cherished part of her collection. She insisted. The kitten now looks at me from beneath the glass on my living room coffee table.

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And we are not the only recipients of such acts of generosity. A husband and his wife staying at the inn had decided to spend their afternoon shopping the galleries, bistros and boutiques down on Main Street. Having lost track of time, the couple noticed that an unexpected cloudburst would make their walk back to

Oaks

a soggy one.

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It was then that the shop owner closed his place of business and drove the couple back to the inn. Did the shop owner lose revenue? Maybe. Did he make new friends? Definitely!

So what inspires this kind of behavior in the residents of this historic mountain village? (Even I have started dragging my neighbor's trash cans back to her garage after pick-ups on Mondays.)

Is it something in the air? Or is it some rule of the Blue Ridge, handed down from one generation to the next? Maybe it is rooted in the area's religious beliefs. Or is it *because **only the nicest people in the world live in – and visit – Saluda!***