

Write Your Life

A micro memoir writing project

Recall a social interaction to triggered memories

See You Next Time

“Let me do that for you,” she says.

I’m standing at self-check-out, holding two D’Anjou pears, one in each hand. It’s 6:15 a.m. I know her name is Lois. Like me, she must be a morning person. She has a helmet of white hair and appears to have a bad knee. I see quiet, gentle church lady, nurturing retired kindergarten teacher going back to work, putting on a Kroger smock every morning.

I’ve just come from bottle and can return. Once a month, usually at 6:00 a.m, when the store opens, I bring a bag of cans or a case of bottles to the store and feed them, one at a time, into the machine. It rotates each item, searching for the bar code on its label, and, finding it acceptable, tosses it into the bin, squashing the cans and smashing the bottles. I’m still just enough of a kid to feel a guilty thrill in the smash. When I’m done, I push a button on the bottle/can counter and, next to it, a receipt pops out.

It’s like a squalid Las Vegas back there. I win!

When I was a kid we bought 16 oz bottles of Royal Crown Cola at Pat’s Food Center and drank them sitting on the sidewalk outside the store. When we were done, we went to a window at the entrance of the store and traded the bottles for two cents each. Jack Reines took them from us and scratched the return amount on a scrap of paper for us. Two cents a bottle.

Lois takes a pear from me, shoots it with her digital reader pistol, and asks how I am today.

I hold up my receipt. “I just won \$2.70.”

She takes the second pear from me and then lays them on the scale. I hand her my coupon, which she shoots with the reader.

“There you go,” she says, and walks slowly back to her post, leaning against the counter.

The pears come to \$3.20. My coupon is \$2.70. Who carries coins these days? My dad jingled coins in his pocket, called it silver. I reach in my pocket now for my wallet, considering my options. There’s something about putting fifty cents on a credit card. I can’t do it. I take out an actual dollar bill, old school, press a button to light up the slot, and feed my dollar into the machine, new school.

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It takes a few seconds. My change drops into the cup. I jiggle the coins in my hand, pocket them, and pick up my pears.

“Don’t forget your receipt,” Lois says. “And have a nice day.”

I tell her I look forward to seeing her next time. I really do. And I almost don’t.