

WHO'S THAT MASKED MAN?

To give my always-busy cook a breather, yesterday I pulled into the drive-through line of one of our favorite fast-food suppliers. I was pleasantly surprised at the efficient way they processed my order. It actually was “fast” food.

But I did encounter one problem. When I drove up to Window #1 (the one where they take our money), the sharp gal at the cash drawer said something to me. I’m a deaf old man, and this soft-spoken lass was wearing a virus mask, so I didn’t understand a word she said to me. “Huh?” I replied. “I can’t hear you.” She told me again. I think. Still I could not decipher even one word. I handed her a twenty-dollar bill and she smiled and gave me my change. But our mask-muffled conversation during that transaction was lost to me.

Masks. Through the years they have had lots of connotations. If you can remember the masked man and Tonto, you won’t have to worry about the draft. We older folks know that the Lone Ranger wore a mask because he was the good guy, not because he was a crook. Long before the coronavirus outbreak, hoodies and masks became the costume of choice for hoods who hold up banks and convenience stores. Of course, the masks seldom work. Almost always we catch the bad boys anyway.

But thanks to COVID-19, today half the people in America are wearing masks, and half of those without them are fuming because they can’t get one. On a quick visit to Google you can find hundreds of posts telling you how to make (or how not to make) your own mask at home.

It’s beyond my octogenarian digital expertise, but I saw on the news that some computer guru has figured out how to produce medical-quality virus masks by pushing a few keys on his computer.

In almost every town—mine included—public-spirited owners of a wide array of businesses that had never thought of making or selling a mask have quickly adapted their equipment and raw materials to manufacture them. Last night’s newscast told of some generous donor providing much-needed masks to our local hospitals, and this is happening nationwide. And some of the newscasters were wearing masks, which made their reports unintelligible.

I predict that masks will vanish almost as quickly as they appeared, and I’ll be glad when they’re gone. A huge part of our communication consists of what we see and not just what we hear. How can I tell if you’re sticking out your tongue at me if you’re hiding behind a mask? And how can I tell if you’re glad or sad if I can’t see your expression.

Proverbs 15:30 says, “Smiling faces make you happy.” I’m ready to see them again.