

When the Tide Goes Out

Category: Unvaccinated

written by Pam Montgomery | September 3, 2021

Bankers have a lot of sayings to describe the financial world; I hear them because my husband works in finance. One of my favorites, attributed to Warren Buffett, is “You only find out who is swimming naked when the tide goes out.”

At metaphorical high tide—when circumstances are comfortable and life is going smoothly—many seem to do well. From all outward signs, we assume they’re wearing expensive, stylish swimwear. Yet things aren’t always as they appear.

Still, we cling to our perceptions, admiring someone who may not deserve it while failing to see the true goodness of another, even of ourselves. It’s often when high tide ebbs—when a crisis occurs—that people’s true character is revealed.

The pandemic has been such an occurrence. Many seemingly obscure community members have revealed beautiful, vibrant swimwear. Notably, healthcare workers have risked their own well-being to care for those sick and dying from COVID, in addition to those afflicted with other maladies. Scientists quickly and miraculously developed a vaccine against the ravages of COVID. Everyday people have stepped up to provide love and service for those suffering during this difficult year. The list is long, their swimwear impressive.

But there have been disappointments, too. Not everyone has been a team player. What could have been a unifying experience of collectively overcoming the pandemic has become a war of words, of actions. There are more skinny-dippers than we might have imagined.

This is nothing new.

For many years, smoking was allowed almost everywhere, even on planes and in hospitals. When I worked as a registered nurse on the maternal-newborn floor, I often cared for mothers who smoked as their newborns lay two feet away in a bassinet. It broke my heart to discharge those babies, knowing they’d grow up inhaling their moms’ second-hand smoke. (I didn’t enjoy breathing it either.) I still wonder why it took society so long to recognize that personal rights end when they endanger others. I’m grateful we now have laws that make smoking in enclosed public spaces illegal (though that still doesn’t help babies in smoke-filled homes).

And whenever we venture out on the road, we know that some drivers won’t respect the laws designed to keep us all safe. Whenever someone speeds or drives recklessly, they place their desires above the right of others to travel safely. Streakers on the freeway.

So the bottom line is this: Wear the best swimsuit you can, even when no one can see it. Act with respect and love toward others, even when it inconveniences you. And if some don't return the favor, work to effect positive change and always maintain your integrity and your love, even if you're harmed by them. Anger doesn't change others' behavior, but it does change you—and not for the better. Sometimes there are long periods of high tide, but, eventually, the tide goes out.

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