

village view

by Andrea Leonard

Probably everyone has fleeting thoughts at time, thoughts that seem to float into our consciousness while we're busy with everyday chores, thoughts that rise to the surface of our minds even as we're in the middle of conversation with someone else, thoughts that are totally irrelevant to what we're talking about or listening to, saying or doing.

Have you ever wondered who pastes those labels on bananas, for instance? There you are, buying a bunch of bananas, peeling or eating one; you notice there's a brightly colored sticker on the skin. How did it get there? Does someone stand, sheet of stickers in hand, while the bananas are hacked from trees on a banana plantation, and pop a sticker on every third or fourth piece of fruit?

You know the way potatoes start to sprout this time of year. Even when you store them in a cool dark cupboard, buy only as many as you'll use quickly, you must select the ones to cook, each night, from those that have begun to grow, or the sprouts start coming through the cracks in the cupboard door. Now how does a potato know spring is just around the corner?

If you keep a birdbath filled with water in summer, you probably drain and store it in the fall so ice won't crack the bowl. When you set it up in late spring, how long does it take the chickadees to find it? Ten minutes? Aren't they clever?

Who invented scissors? Knives were tools of all primitive peoples, along with hammers, chiseling instruments, anything that could be made from stone or bone. But scissors must have come into use fairly recently. Strange, isn't it, no one seems to know their origin?

In all fifty states there are traffic regulations. Many are the same in every state. Keep to the right. Stop at stop signs and red lights. Go on green. Obey posted speed limits.

Some states, however, permit right turns on red lights after a full stop, if the road is clear. Others permit right turns on red where posted signs indicate it's legal at that intersection. This latter regulation is now in effect in Massachusetts; we're beginning to see the signs. Other states allow right turns on red only if a green arrow flashes.

Another recent change in Massachusetts traffic regulations governs rotary circle traffic. A year or so ago, traffic entering a rotary had the right-of-way. That's been reversed; now the right-of-way should be yielded to traffic already in the rotary. There's been precious little publicity about either of these recent changes. How is a stranger driving in our state to know what to do?

Wouldn't you think it a good idea for a list of important traffic regulations to be distributed, particularly on interstate highways? Perhaps toll booths would be good hand-out points.

If, after you've had roast chicken of a Sunday, you take the meat off the bones for pie or sandwiches, and boil up the carcass for soup, you end up with a sievelful of bones. If you toss them into the compost heap, they take forever to decompose. If you put them out for the birds, the crows find them as quickly as smaller birds locate the birdbath the first time you set it up each spring. Do crows have a wonderfully acute sense of smell or is their eyesight superb?

Isn't it strange harmful drugs like alcohol and nicotine are legally produced, prepared for human consumption, and even, in the case of tobacco growers, subsidized by tax dollars, while another harmful drug, marijuana is illegal to grow or possess, let alone consume? I'm not an advocate of using marijuana, but making some harmful drugs legally available to the citizenry while outlawing another seems illogical.

If prohibition of the sale of alcohol was unenforceable, why is it believed feasible to outlaw a similar drug?

Do you suppose anyone will ever invent a use for snow? The machinery to make it when nature doesn't cooperate by supplying fresh powder every night; but wouldn't it be marvelous if snow like some other natural materials such as cork, metals, oil and gas could be put to purposeful use, especially in cities like Buffalo and Chicago?

without sand, we couldn't make glass. If we eliminated

glass, consider how different our lives would be. No windows in our houses or in our cars. No crystal on our tables. No bottles or jars to contain foods. No spectacles for those whose eyesight is less than perfect. No microscopes, no telescopes, no light bulbs. What a peculiar world we'd have!

If you're of the opinion a glassless world would be unfit for human habitation, on the other hand, give our Pilgrim forefathers some credit for enduring the unendurable. They didn't bring with them to Plymouth Colony a supply of window panes, and when they arrived there were no glass factories in operation, nor was there a friendly neighborhood hardware store where they could purchase sheets of glass. Teepees have no windows and the Indians didn't feel deprived of any life-necessities because glass was unknown to them.

This series of apparently disconnected thoughts is a composite of a few ideas that drift, unbidden, through one person's consciousness. Any one of them, given study, could form the subject of an article.

People sometimes wonder how ideas for articles occur to columnists; they come from all directions. They grow out of conversations, experiences, and interaction with other people. Listening to comments people make and trying to understand their viewpoints stimulates thoughts, impressions and, sometimes, counter arguments.

Even more frequently, an idea just seems to bob up like a bit of flotsam released from the bottom of the sea.

Such apparently disconnected ideas must occur to other people. While it's impossible to know what unexpressed notions float through the heads of others, it stands to reason if one individual experiences this phenomenon, most others must have similar perceptions.

Maybe not everyone gives such thoughts recognition; maybe seemingly irrelevant ideas are ignored instead of considered with curiosity and wonder. You could, of course, dismiss them with a shrug of disdain but behind every idea there's a reason. Something, somewhere in your brain, triggered the production of that thought. If there hadn't been an impulse inside your head, the questions wouldn't have arisen in the first place.

The next time you reach for a banana you'll join me in wondering how those stickers are applied. The next time you snip a clipping or wash a window, you may entertain yourself imagining you live in a scissorless or glassless world.

And when your potatoes sprout, you, too, may wonder how a potato knows spring is coming. Perhaps if you pay more attention to random thoughts that pop into your own head, you'll discover a whole new world of creativity.

Ideas, like people, are unique and special. No one else has the same thoughts you do, just as no one shares your fingerprint patterns and just as each snowflake is different from every other.