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View  
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That things change is, I suppose we'd all agree, one of the unwritten laws of the universe.

Some changes are for the better; some, it seems for the worse. Some seem an improvement but after time passes a second look reveals the changes did more harm than good.

Some changes come through economic forces working upon the whole society; some, through new ideas and inventions, some, through changing standards and life-styles.

The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries brought more changes in the world than the previous 5,000 years. Changes in communications and transportation disrupted the patterns of human living that had remained quite static for hundreds of decades.

So much is this true, it's almost impossible for most of our planet's humanity to conceive of living without the advantages available as a result of the industrial revolution which began about two hundred years ago and as a result of modern technology.

Life without automobiles, airplanes, electricity, trains and buses, ocean liners, was simple for most people. They stayed home.

For those of a nomadic inclination, of course, life was infinitely more difficult than it is for such persons today. Not long ago, when it took a couple of hours to travel to Hyannis from Osterville or Centerville, behind a horse, over dusty or muddy roads, or frozen ruts in winter, the trip was made at infrequent intervals.

Boston was most easily reached from Cape Cod by packet out of one of the small ports on the Cape's north side; alternatively, by stage through the Plymouth woods.

New York and Washington were as far, in time and effort, as Peking and Melbourne are today. Those distant cities were further, in terms of getting there and back, than the moon is now.

Life without radio, television, telephones, or movies is hard to imagine, not only for those fortunate enough to possess great wealth but for most of us -- the lower and middle as well as the upper classes.

A few generations ago, most people depended heavily for news upon gossip or handbills and broadcasts -- for education upon a very few books and one teacher for all the scholars in the school -- for entertainment upon a home-made variety which, it must be recognized, was hugely enjoyed by all.

Reports of goings on beyond a village's borders came word-of-mouth, from itinerant peddlars, wanderers, explorers, and the men who went to sea.

These were the travelers. Seafarers picked up news from crews of other ships in distant ports-of-call where cargoes were exchanged as well as news. Itinerants brought messages and greetings, tales and hearsay, across broad plains, from one valley to another, up and down the rivers from one town to the next.

Europe lay weeks away from America's eastern shores; the Far East, months from our west coast ports. Such voyages were not undertaken lightly or without months of preparation and planning. Whaling vessels stayed away three years or more before returning to home ports.

Safety and security were uncertain in the extreme. When a ship set sail, the families left ashore knew well the sailor might never return. Storms, shipwreck, disease, enemy-encounter, accident -- all took their toll.

For those left at home, life was equally precarious. People did not enjoy the life-span common today; child, wife, parent, brot-

her or sister might never be seen again.

It's quite different today, a modern traveler may depart for almost any out-landish place with the full expectation of returning, and finding his family intact when he gets home.

Perhaps, though we recognize the value of devices and changes which have come about through technological advances, such as electricity, automatic appliances, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning, refrigeration, it would be useful to think of smaller things we take for granted now that didn't exist even fifty years ago.

There were no plastics, paper tissues or paper towels, no ball-point pens, ice cubes, or aerosol cans.

Frozen foods were yet to be marketed. Milk and cream came only in glass bottles -- non-homogenized and un-Pasteurized. Fresh fruits and vegetables out-of-season were unavailable.

Aluminum combination storm and screens had never been seen. Band-aids, zippers, fitted sheets, no-iron fabrics, nylon, aluminum foil, plastic bags or wrappers, radios, tape recorders, television, colored film, movies with sound -- all are new to the world in those fifty years.

Your car, alone, has undergone remarkable change. It may have power hydraulic brakes, power steering, a self-starter, directional signals, tubeless tires, shock absorbers, automatic choke and transmission, and windows that go up and down at the turn of a handle or push of a button.

Changes, Changes. You can probably think of dozens more.

The only thing that's really not very different, in spite of all the things that are, is people.

There's a remarkable sameness to them. Their basic qualities are, today, unchanged from the days of William Shakespeare or even Biblical times.

If humanity were to have changed, these great literary works would no longer be understood by modern man; we'd be unable to identify with the people of whom they tell us.

Because mankind is now precisely what he was then (in spite of all the technology he's surrounded by) fine literature, music, art and drama of any era, seem timeless.

Man changes everything around him but never himself. He likes himself as he is, likes seeing himself, with all his sterling qualities and faults, strengths and weaknesses, whether as an astronaut in outer space or a tradesman in ancient days of camel caravans, unchanged.

Yes, man changes everything around him but never himself -- yet only by changing hatreds to love, greed to generosity, sloth to industry, ignorance to knowledge, brutality to kindness, anger and impatience to understanding and compassion, can we ever achieve lasting and truly creative change.

When will men and women begin to take a good look at their emotions and responses to other people for ways they may be able to make a better thing of themselves, and a better world because of the changes they make in themselves?