

CUDDY'S CORNER
A SUMMER MOSAIC

Summer rumbles by, like the freight trains outside my window at the Dennison Crossing. Sometimes I watch them, wondering where they have been and where they are heading.

Occasionally I focus on each car - tanker, box car, flat bed, and imagine them as a unique life experience I have observed on this occasionally hot, but more often slate grey, cool and unusually wet season.

A child of about eleven, mahogany from the sun, launches himself cannonball style into a pool sparkling blue at its surface, a look of pure bliss on his face.

Able to forget for the moment the homeless shelter he will return to in a few hours.

A young woman, sitting in front of a computer screen, green dragon on her arm red butterfly on her leg, an assortment of hoops in her ears and eyebrows and a look of "I've got it." on her face.

Knowing that the skills she grabs a hold of mean no more waitressing to pay her rent when she leaves the group home.

The man who first I took for 45 from the gray on his temples and lines etched in his face, but is only 30, shyly but proudly showing me the first chip he has ever earned. I return his gaze and smile "You earned that one day at a time my friend."

A young mother of four looking at her reflection before she opens a glass door and saying to no one in particular "Wow, the circles under my eyes are starting to go away."

Silently I urge her to keep looking, knowing that finally free from abuse and fear, she and her children are sleeping through the night.

An old man, bowed in body but not in spirit, seeking and finding an audience of one, speaking of his terrifying experiences during a summer now more than half a century removed and of how those days shaped the man he became.

The satisfaction resonating in the air between us.

I have long thought that the core of helping centers on a string of individual experiences linked together like the freight cars that pass by as I muse. The helping responsibility rests in coupling these life experiences together and working to point them in an agreed upon direction.

While trusting and believing without ever knowing that the agreed upon destination will be achieved.

Jim Cuddy
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