

## **Profile of a Civil Man in a Rude World**

By Mary Mitchell

This is a profile of a civil man, a man named Clarence. He is my hero, my "Angel of Civility".

Clarence reminds me, just by his daily example, of the inherent dignity of each and every human being. And in this world of pandemic rudeness, this is a very good thing.

### **First Impressions Aside ...**

Clarence's patrician voice and language put me off at first. Tall and silver-haired, with dancing blue eyes, he was pretty tough to miss at our neighborhood market and coffee shop. And he was compelling; I found myself listening to his every word.

Eventually, it dawned on me that I had never once heard a mean-spirited remark from this gentleman. In fact, he always had positive things to say, and - no wimp, he - said them with such delicious wit that after every encounter, I emerged a better person.

### **A Retired Corporate Lawyer, Clarence Pays Attention**

Clarence is, by training, a corporate lawyer. His wisdom, experience and erudition are genuine and vast.

Now retired, he spends his days doing whatever he can, large or small, to better the lives of others. Things like: preparing a perfect pot roast for a weary friend; painting this writer's office to bring "color and order" to the environment - "all the better for producing meaningful work"; untangling a friend's nightmarish (and erroneous) five-figure bill from the phone company.

His Ivy League pedigree aside, Clarence just seems to know everything, including where to find the most intoxicating olive oil, and how to build a gizmo to extract a long-dead mouse from behind a refrigerator. When I asked him how he knew so much, he replied, "I just pay attention."

### **An Infectious Laugh and Compassionate Heart**

Clarence brims with gusto and contagious laughter. And yet, he is compassionate and wise to the core. This is the man who consoled a bereaved friend, "Perhaps now it's up to us who are left to love one another a little bit more." And to me, at one downhearted moment: "Think about it ... Don't worry about it."

When life's insanity and emotional chaos surround him, he finds intellectual refuge in books like David McCullough's biography of John Adams. Now there is a sane alternative to being on tilt!

### **A Man of Action**

We all wring our hands and rant about the rudeness that seems to be eroding our lives: the cell-phone intrusions. The stolen taxicabs. The nasty salespeople. The littered sidewalks. The jaywalkers. People who don't show up for work on time, if at all. People who abuse themselves and others by blaming other people for their shortcomings. People who, by always putting themselves first, strain important relationships, even with people who love them.

But hasn't anyone noticed that if we want things to change, we must begin with ourselves?  
Haven't we learned that we learn best - and thus, teach best - by example?

That's why Clarence is an Angel of Civility. He doesn't preach it; he practices it - every day, in every interaction. He believes with every molecule of his being that every living thing deserves respect, and he gives it generously.

Clarence knows that a person's true worth is measured by the quality and integrity of his or her relationships. Our relationships are the most important components of our lives.

### **An Inspiration**

Good manners are based on the simple good deeds and words that spring from our hearts that nurture those relationships and keep them in repair.

Watching Clarence humbles and inspires me. I am grateful to be reminded that there are people in our midst who make our world a more civilized place - a better place.

When we look for Angels of Civility in our lives, we can and will find them. Better still, we can grow into such angels ourselves.