

# People Watching

Do you like people watching?

It's interesting and most have watched at some time or another.

Sometimes it's worth it to arrive at your destination a little earlier just to relax and take time to watch the people come and go.

One time in an airport, an elderly couple came along carrying some luggage, stopped in front of a storage locker and very carefully read the instructions. Then, as if he had an imaginary yard stick, the gentleman measured the locker space and then his luggage. After conferring with his wife, they decided to put one piece of luggage and a tote bag in.

He carefully put the 25c in the slot, closed the door and removed the key. He really questioned the security of the lock, giving it a few pushes and shoves and with a watchful eye started to walk away. After walking a little way down the hallway, he returned, gave the lock a reassuring pat and they were on their way.

At this moment two young jean clad youths arrived with collapsible luggage, stuffed it in the locker and finally, with the use of a foot, gave it a final push in order to close the locker door. Their big problem seemed to be the 25c. After going through all of their pockets they approached us to see if we could exchange their "chicken feed" as they called it for "one". We obliged with the 25c, they quickly removed the key and as they strode away from the locker one of them smiled at us and with a wide sweeping gesture of the hands said, "It's only for twenty-four hours — oh well, if we don't make it back — guess it will be somewhere, we'll take a chance."

Would you believe it, our elderly couple were back already. It appeared the wife decided it would be wiser to carry her umbrella. Another 25c to relock the locker but satisfaction surely means something. She tucked her arm around his and they leisurely walked away.

Did you ever stand in an elevator and everyone's eyes were glued on the flashing light indicating the floor numbers? Not much conversation ever goes on. It seems the first person to want off is always in the back. Almost like upset the fruit basket when people try to move aside, while the elevator door inevitably starts to close, someone usually mutters "hold the door." Luckily there is often a bright person who comes to the rescue and presses the "hold" button.

We all know the old saying which includes "smile and the world smiles with you." Did you ever try smiling at a complete stranger? Not often do you receive a smile, more often a blank look, almost the unspoken word "who me?" The reaction isn't anything like the song. Total bewilderment on behalf of the stranger, or even worse, the stranger turns and looks backward to see who you are smiling at. Then there is the other reaction — a withering stare.

Have you ever watched people walk? Some with such grace, some stride along with long steps you'd wonder how they could keep up the pace, some teeter along on the platform soles, unsure of their next step, but all have individuality of movement.

And so it is with the members of the Women's Institute, we've watched them stride along with sure and eager steps. We've watched the footsteps falter and sometimes the grace of movement, become uncertain. We've watched the nervous president gain confidence; we've observed the wise use of parliamentary procedure, change the total attitude of a meeting; we've seen the friendships grow and the learning experiences become meaningful. But always, we've watched the steps move forward.

Over the years we've walked and run, stumbled and crawled, always setting our pace to meet human potential but walking forever with a purpose.

*Margaret Zoeller*