

Where everybody knows your name.

I don't often mosey into a bar, plunk down my cash and drink a beer or two. In fact, going to bars is generally foreign to me. Before the Ohio smoking ban, I couldn't stand to be in one for more than 30 minutes. But, I occasionally enjoy a quiet evening at a local establishment. The reason is quite simple, I know the bartenders. Since we have all been involved with the theater, I've known them for years. I knew them before they tended this specific bar.

Anyway, every once in a while, I will stop, get a bite or two to eat, and enjoy a drink. Then more often than not, I sit with a water while watching Jeopardy. I happened to be there this evening, since after my eye exam, I wanted someplace dark to sit. It started out as a nice quiet evening.

Then one theater person came in, and shortly left. We talked a bit, but he couldn't stick around too long. Then another theater friend came in, and we talked 'shop' for quite a long time. More theater people came by and everyone ordered their dinners.

To me the surroundings seemed like a friendly family dinner. We laughed, sighed and some even shared a song or two. Yes, I was in that place where everyone knew my name. Fun evening.

Now for me, this will never be a weekly event. I still tend to like quieter places. I have been, and probably always will be a 'small group' person. The fewer the people, the more I like it. Yes, that goes down to sitting by myself. I've never had a problem being alone. I guess growing up in a larger family helped me cherish the alone time. Good thing that I honestly like myself. □ From the years I spent with my wife, I learned to like that one on one time. Time to get to understand and

know one other person. Time to listen and sometimes to share. Smaller groups allow some of this sharing, as we can all be part of one conversation. Everyone can be included

Larger groups, the conversations scatter in the wind. They tend to break up into those smaller groups. The unfortunate thing is that sometimes people are left out of any of the small groups. And no one seems to notice it. Except those that are left out, and those that choose to remain aloof. This happens in many large gatherings. No known cure, it is human nature. The extroverts have no trouble adapting. The introverts have trouble joining the gathering or like to observe. And then there are those, like me (now), I can join the group, or I can sit on the outside looking in. I have no trouble joining a group (after many years of theater), but I've always enjoyed watching people.

(I think my randomness tonight is flowing well. I went from a topic of dinner and bars on to personality types.)

Back to the bar...

I was a joiner/observer this evening. I enjoyed my salad (yes, I was slightly healthy tonight, ordered deep fried mushrooms later), my drink and the company. I watched, I listened and I learned a thing or two. I interjected, talked and shared one or two things.

I enjoyed the similarities and shared the differences. I said many times that my theater family helped me in troubled times. I was not troubled today, but the theater family gave me an hour or two of fun. Today was a good day to live.