

Sonia
HOLLIMON-STOVALL

Our Town

Lincoln small businesses in danger of extinction

Because of the darkness of the day, I was forced to wear black — it was a tight squeeze into the matching shoes, but no sacrifice was too great for this particular appointment.



Sulkily, I gave the waitress my order, wondering at her friendly smile and easy manner. How dare she be so happy, I

thought.

During spring break I was able to really get around town, and I noticed something pretty alarming. All the little Mom and Pop places I've frequented during the years seem to be disappearing.

Case in point — Victoria's Cousin, a curiosity shop in the Haymarket where I used to go, leisurely nursing cup after cup of English breakfast tea, while talking to my friends about things that only seemed important because we were drinking tea served by little old ladies in frilly aprons.

“All the little Mom and Pop places I've frequented over the years seem to be disappearing.”

Besides my memories, I only managed to rescue two of the establishment's aprons for keepsakes. They're hanging in my kitchen right now — I'm not actually going to use them; they just happen to match my curtains. I've never even turned on my stove.

Drive around Lincoln and look for your favorite out of the way hang out, and then ask how business is going. Want that favorite egg roll? You'd better get it to go — small business in Lincoln doesn't seem to be in for the long haul.

All those little bookshops that would special order things for you and gave you that hometown treatment may not be around for long. Rumor has it that Borders Books and Music will move in to town to battle it out with Barnes and

Noble. Kind of like the cola wars, except with cappuccino. I wasn't sorry to see Blockbuster Music close while Disc Go Round is still standing. Even though I'll admit, it was nice to go and listen to an entire CD before going to buy it at Target.

East Park Plaza is the perfect example — you would think that a mall located next to a pharmacy, a grocery store and a video store would be in a prime spot to make money. It doesn't seem to be working out like that, however, because the place is like a ghost town. There's a great little bookstore there, though, and if you ask for Thaida she can help you find just about anything. I asked for help at Barnes and Noble once and all they could say was “Yeah, I'm sure we

have it.” Well, I'm sure you have it — but where the honk is it?

Everyone complains about how “small town” Lincoln is, and it would be nice to do something entertaining after 9 p.m. But at the same time, it's that small-town atmosphere that makes it semi-safe to walk to your car in the Village Inn parking lot after 11.

Even though it would be nice to go to the mall and see the latest fashions instead of waiting for my Victoria's Secret catalog or watching “House of Style,” I don't mind living down the street from a pharmacy that still delivers, even if they aren't open 24 hours.

I feel like my grandparents must have when they told me about milk delivery, and now I realize that it isn't just getting older — it's everything else getting to be so new. Perhaps if I make some tea in my apron, it'll make me feel better — oh wait. Then I'd have to turn on my stove.

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Kasey
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Tale of tragedy

Cult is aspect of humanity better left untouched

There are a lot of crazy people out there.

Yep, lots of disgruntled postal workers, academy award nominees, professional athletes — and lest we forget — anyone who would admit to watching “The Pat Sajak Show” while not intoxicated.



But humanity is really in trouble when these

people join a cult.

I'm speaking of course about Heaven's Gate, where 39 members of the cult killed themselves in a Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., mansion using sleeping pills.

And while mass cult suicides might not be unusual in a world that does have a new Power Rangers movie, this cult's demise was a little bit different.

Or shall I say a little bit crazier. And quite possibly — really, really stupid.

And why? Because each cult member consumed more than 50 sleeping pills because he or she wanted to join the space aliens hiding in a spaceship behind comet Hale-Bopp.

Huh? Yes, they wanted to join space aliens that are apparently hiding behind a giant ball of ice that's streaking across the universe.

Can you say Stoopid with a capital “S” and two “o's”?

Did this group honestly think that astronomers would not be able to see a UFO hiding behind Hale-Bopp? Or does the cult think the UFO is like Wonder Woman's invisible plane?

Or, more realistically, did the group just watch one too many episodes of the “X-Files”?



MATT HANEY/DN

And here's a fact to chew on — many of the cult's members joined after checking out the cult's home page on the Internet.

Yes, there were souls from across the nation that downloaded a web page, saw the “light” (which was probably just the glare from their computer screen) and left everything they knew a heartbeat later.

According to the Associated Press, one man was a prior political candidate who missed getting into the Colorado house by 20 votes.

Another woman left her five children with relatives the day after viewing the cult's web page. Two of these children were newborn twins.

And lest we forget the cult's leader — Marshall Applewhite. This man left his five-year-old to start the cult and 35 years later — this same son was apologizing for his father's actions.

So ask — what does it all mean, Kasey?

Hell if I know. All I do know is that the world's

population of crazy people is really beginning to scare me.

Whether it's a band of devil worshipers who sacrifice vegetables because they're vegetarians or the followers of David Koresh/self-proclaimed Messiah.

How do these insane people find each other anyway?

Dating services? I can see it now ... a classified ad in the newspaper — “Tall, dark-haired guy who happens to be Jesus. Searching for a SWF who thinks she's Delilah and has a real thing for pumps. Must be willing to 'share' Jesus. Must be handy with an AK-47.”

Or maybe they meet in chat rooms on the Internet. I can just imagine that one. Some kid clattering away on his keyboard suddenly looks up and yells out:

“MOM!!!! Some guy named Marshall just private messaged me and says I can live in a mansion and worship UFOs! Can I go? Oh wait a minute — Jesus is private messag-

ing me again!”

Yet beyond how they met — there's a looming question that has been bothering me. And it might seem even crazier than Heaven's Gate itself.

What if they were right? Now I'm not claiming that they were — but just think about it. If they were right, they're on an alien spaceship right now. And they're ... the sole representatives of humanity.

Now that's scary. We're talking about people who cut off all contact to the outside world for two decades. They have no common sense to begin with and now will be representing billions upon billions of us in space?

What if they piss off the aliens by popping in that “War of the Worlds” video one too many times? Suddenly we're having “Independence Day” on far too big of a screen.

Or what if the space aliens take them back to a council of other aliens from all across the universe? You mean my species will be judged by 39 souls who honestly died with \$5 bills in their hands — never fully realizing that their currency won't buy crap in the intergalactic shopping mart.

Yet hopefully the aliens will be smart enough to realize that they picked up a few dozen duds and will put Heaven's Gate in some kind of zoo.

But until the day we can one day throw peanuts and food pellets to them, we must wait. And watch the multitude of new crazy cults come and go.

And say the one thing to ourselves that might bring certainty to an uncertain world: “Please tell me they were on drugs ...”

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