

Be a Warrior of Strangeness

Readers, I've enjoyed writing this column for the past two years. But Salem Weekly is moving in a new direction, so this will be my last Strange Up Salem offering.

I will, though, be keeping my Strange Up Salem Facebook page active.

So give it a "like" if you want to get my posts about what's happening in town, strangeness-wise. And I'll keep on blogging at www.hinesblog.com

It's been tough to decide what I'd like to say in this final column. Which points to a truism that, though obvious, bears repeating.

Everything comes to an end. Including our lives.

So while we're here, enjoying our brief glimpse of a teeny-tiny corner of an unimaginably vast 14 billion year old universe, we need to live as vibrantly and intensely as possible.

Like soldiers going into battle, unsure whether they will survive to see another day. After all, one day — and we don't know which it will be — each of us won't.

Picture yourself as a Warrior of Strangeness. Bold. Confident. Fearless.

You are, as a recruitment saying used to put it, an Army of One. Nothing else in the history of the universe has ever manifested your qualities: mind, body, desires, talents, likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses.

Your moment-by-moment mission, because the cosmos demands this of every unique creature, is to fully express who you are.

Yet we worry, "Oh, but I can't. If other people saw me as I truly am, as I inwardly know myself to be, they'd think I'm really strange. I need to keep myself under wraps in order to fit in."

News flash: Everybody already thinks you're strange. Your hoped-for game of disguise is over before it had a chance to begin.

Ask your teenager. “Yeah, Mom, you’re strange.” Ask your spouse, your boss, your best friend. If they’re honest, everyone who knows you well enough to speak the truth will say, “You’re strange... in a good way.”

Each of us feels that our way of looking at the world is absolutely normal. After all, it isn’t possible to experience reality except through our own utterly unique consciousness and way of being.

Strangeness is our birthright. More: the essence of the cosmos.

Almost certainly, no complex collection of molecules capable of being called alive is exactly the same as any other living entity. Welcome to The Matrix: you are the One... the one and only.

This isn’t the whole story, though.

Every other person also is the One. We humans exist as the One and Many. Our strangeness is reflected and amplified as it is expressed in the company of our fellows.

Which means, don’t fear being different.

Embrace every thought, feeling, urge, emotion, action, compulsion, quirk, eccentricity, and whatever else that is now, and always will be, a gift from the limitless depths of your personal treasure chest, Only Me.

Warrior of Strangeness, smile on. Stay strong. Be happy. Hope to see you on the increasingly strange streets of Salem.