

UNSUNG HEROES
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BUYER OF TADPOLES

They were so eager; it was hard for their father to refuse them. His three small sons had worked hard at a nearby pond to gather a canning jar full of tadpoles. With expectations in their hearts and the joy of capitalism on their faces, they set up a roadside stand to sell their catch. At twenty-five cents each, these prized pond dwellers were a catch for anyone on this poorly frequented road, needing tadpoles in Rush, NY. They waited outside; sure they would soon sell out. We adults waited inside, watching and wondering at the optimism of youth.

Enough time passed without a sale, they were beginning to become discouraged. Then a long white car pulled over and up to their stand. Several of us stood up, prepared to move quickly if need be. Three small boys, apparently alone at the side of a road, saw nothing peculiar about a total stranger in a large vehicle stopping to inquire about the price of tadpoles. The world their adult relatives inhabited was a little more dangerous. Both worlds were kinder than I would have anticipated.

The elderly stranger bargained hard. He was in serious need of tadpoles. He knew how valuable they were, but he only had one bill on him. It was all or nothing, one price for the entire collection. The small board of directors discussed it among themselves and agreed. One slightly rancid jar of water and tadpoles was exchanged for a single twenty dollar bill, and their customer was on his way.

Who knows why he did it. Perhaps he had just dug a pond he needed to stock with future frogs. Perhaps he had a restaurant at which he could offer a frog leg special sometime in the future. Perhaps he had passed in one direction, and upon returning, had admired them for their perseverance. Maybe he just remembered what it was like to be young with a dream, and did not want to see that dream crushed. If he was as kind to frogs as he was to children, I believe somewhere down the road, he released those tadpoles back into nature. If so, they have a story to tell to others of their kind. They know something from personal experience.

Kindness and mercy are alive and doing well in Rush.