

On a Reply to a Social Service Check-In, 2 pp., February, 2024
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Every once in a while, social service people check up on me via email—how are you doing? Today's reply to such an inquiry:

Hi Sarah,

Uplifting to hear from you.

You asked how I'm doing. I seem to be fading toward imminent oblivion [I'm 83]. Weaker and weaker, housebound, don't feel well, slight nausea, aches and pains, shortness of breath, constant state of vague dis-ease/upset, scary tests coming up next week (cancer remission, possible prostate cancer, aneurysm concern), though periods of peace and calm give me hope. Isolated except for contact, mainly email, with my daughter in college, good connection, gratified with how well she is doing, what she is becoming, feel good about looking out for her. Reading good books, streaming good films, keeping up with the news, eating well, keeping the apartment clean. Mentally clear, though perhaps the beginnings of a cognitive decline, fogginess, cotton-headedness. I'd been doing a ton of writing for a personal website and webzines that has stopped like turning a water faucet off. Initiative impulse gone, not trying to make anything happen with anybody--which is fine with the people in my context, has been for as long as I can remember, I'm finally mirroring them. Agoraphobic tendencies, which along with a general inertia was the cause of missing your meditation classes [at her social service agency], though I did go this week and was informed that the class had been cancelled. Perhaps next week.

I don't know if you follow the Grammy Awards, but the highlight of the show a few days ago was Tracy Chapman singing an old

song of hers, from 1988, I think it was. It prompted me to refer to a brief personal website entry from March of 2015—I was about to retire that June and would be free to move on—I called "On a Ticket to Anywhere."

With thanks to "Fast Car" by Tracy Chapman:

I had a feeling that I belonged
I had a feeling I could be someone
I want a ticket to anywhere
Want to see what it means to be living
Start from zero got nothing to lose
Leave tonight or die this way

As it turned out, I didn't leave, and now I don't have the energy to leave, or the desire, and I'll die this way.

I hope this finds you and yours happy and well.

Robert