

With the Grain

## Who is that masked man?

### COMMENTARY

*John O. Marlowe*

Well, I've done it. I purchased my first cloth mask to wear during the COVID-19 crisis. I wasn't going to do it, at first. I didn't like the idea of the government telling me what to wear in public. Personal liberties, and all, 'ya know.

Then I remembered that the government has been requiring us to wear clothes in public for years. I don't recall it causing much fuss.

I was really proud of my purchase, initially. The mask is jet black, with long black straps that lace around the ears, and fasten at both the base and top of the skull in back. The front panels, instead of being pleated, meet in a sharp seam over the nose, much like an axe blade is shaped.

Very masculine, I thought.

I was further convinced that the mask was designed for men, when I saw that the ends were equipped with two Velcro™ strips, making it easy to secure the mask without having to tie it up. Men don't have much luck connecting loose ends behind them. I assume that's because making two ends meet behind their back is a skill that's been genetically passed down to women.

I chose this mask, because I consider it to be an extension of my personality. I was looking forward to seeing the reaction to it, especially among the ladies — that is, until my eight year old neighbor, Stevie, suggested I looked just like a protoceratops.

"Cool," I thought. "I like being compared to a beast. After all, I can bench press 140 pounds, now."

Stevie loves dinosaurs, so I was willing to take him at his word. But like most kids, he felt obligated to explain. "The protoceratops," he continued, "eats grass. They protect themselves by running away from danger, and the sharp, flat horn is intended mainly to scare off opponents, rather than commit actual harm. They may be related to today's sheep."

Great. I'm Beaky Buzzard™ in a wool sweater.

Nevertheless, I'm planning on wearing the mask. I paid ten dollars for it. I thought that was a real bargain, until I had to cough up \$300 for damage caused at Dollar General, after I knocked over two shelves of Monster™ drink when my glasses fogged up.

I'm already counting the days until I can retire my mask to the closet next to my leisure suit. Oh, I'm sure I can get used to wearing it. It's just that people who wear masks seldom end up on the right side of history.

It's ironic, actually. This may be the first time since the Lone Ranger that the "good guys" are the ones wearing masks.

Social distancing and washing your hands still seem vitally more important to me, but I'll play along. After all, we are in this together. That's at least until the experts tell us wearing masks are a big mistake. Then I'll be the first to break ranks.

Or, as Tonto put it at The Little Big Horn ... "What do you mean 'we', *Ke-mo sah-bee?*"

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