**Internet Etiquette**

Well, I did it again. Having been on line with a few people yesterday, some of whom didn’t bother to wait until I could politely say ‘ttyl’ or ‘goodnight’ or ‘have a good day,’ I went to fb after, as is my wont, to pose a generalized question. You’d think I’d learn, but no, all these pesky opinions just keep rearing their pointy little heads.

The internet gives us leave to do so many things from finding out that mermaids don’t really exist (that’s another column, but trust me, it’s interesting) to meeting and talking to people we’d never have met otherwise. It’s amazing this internet thing and I’ve come to realize it’s not just a fad, but is gonna be around for a while.

I’ve adjusted.

And I like it. Mostly.

So, my question to anyone out there was, is it okay to just sign off without waiting for a response? I didn’t get a lot of responses, but I got a few. Has the internet changed that? Have manners gone out the window to the point where it’s okay to bully, berate, haze, and just plain old be rude? I’m going with yes, for the most part. Yes, because I think we don’t think of the people we’re talking to as “real.” They’re in the ethernet, we can’t reach out and touch them or call them without dialing long distance. Like the cartoon says, “all my friends live inside my computer.”

To be fair, I’ve signed off without waiting for a response, usually when someone’s made me angry and I’m afraid my fingers (who have a mind of their own) will get me in even more trouble if I linger.

But, here’s the thing. It wasn’t offensive, it was hurtful and I wanted to know if I was the only person who felt like that. It was as if these people were saying, sorry can’t wait around for five seconds for you to say goodbye, my time is too valuable for that.

Maybe it’s me. I live happily in the modern world with all my techy stuff (you’ll never hear me say, gee I wish they hadn’t invented the remote control for the tv). On the other hand, I was raised by a Southern woman who believed in saying yes ma’am, no sir, please and thank you and you’re welcome whether you’re talking on the phone, on line or in person. I’ll still hold the door for an elderly person and if someone follows me on twitter, I’ll send a note saying thank you for doing so.

I’m not kidding myself, I know I’m not going to change the world. And frankly it’s not a task I can take on, since I’m still trying to figure out all the stuff on my phone and editing the last 50 pages of “The Novel” to try.

All I know is, mho, if you’re going to inter-act with people, offer them the same respect you expect to get. If someone helps you on something you’re writing, acknowledge their assistance. If someone brings you a cookie out of the blue for no reason, say thank you. Acknowledge that for the first time in a very long time, your birthday didn’t suck because people thought enough of you to make it not suck.

We’re all we have, stuck on this ginormous earth together, and internet or not, we need to realize that. Unless Snake Plissken is out there getting ready to push the button that will send us back to the dark ages, we really do need to learn to get along.