

## All That is Not Awesome

1852 - Francis Wolle patented in the United States, and later in France and England, a machine that he devised for making paper bags.

1870 - Margaret Knight invents a device to cut, fold and paste paper bag bottoms, essentially, making her the “mother of the modern grocery bag.”

1883 - Charles Stilwell was awarded a patent for making a square-bottom paper bag with pleated sides that folds flat.

1912 – Walter Duebner invents a reinforced paper sack with a corded handle, the prototype of the shopping bag.

Early 1960’s - Swedish engineer Sten Gustaf Thulin invents the first lightweight plastic shopping bag.

**Disclaimer:** This history of bags was produced as the result of a quick *Google* search. I’d prefer not to stake my overall credibility as a researcher on its accuracy. Still, I suspect that a more precise history of the common shopping bag would remain adequately mundane that my point in putting these words on paper would remain intact - that point being; there is nothing breathtaking in the year 2010 about a shopping bag (unless, that is, one puts it over one’s head.)

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The Snyders graciously invited Linda and me to a video shoot for the current *Sight & Sound* production of “Joseph.” Before the show started, while my companions were already in their seats, I was standing in line waiting to pay for my *Twizzlers*. The young man in front of me was paying for a pack of honey-roasted peanuts as well as three or four other snack items that I cannot specifically recall.

The nice young lady at the register asked, “Would you like a bag for that?”  
To which the very nice young man enthusiastically answered, “That would be *awesome!*”

Something welled up within me that was dying to say out loud, “Awesome?? NO! It’s really not.” I restrained myself. In the meantime, I thought of many adjectives that could appropriately have been applied to the scenario. *Awesome* was not one of them. As for the bag itself, I thought of *convenient*, even *handy*. As for the offer of a bag, I thought of *courteous*, but more likely, assuming the young lady’s training for her job, I suspected *obligatory*. Still, nothing about the offer to bag the snacks struck me as the least bit *awe-inspiring*.

*Awesome* once meant that which gave rise to wonder, amazement, fear, terror and/or trepidation. A truly *awesome* event would have inspired me to remember and never forget those other three or four snack items.

Now, I realize that for as long as there have been youngsters and crotchety old geezers, the latter have always chafed at the language of the former. I know that even my wife, who has to endure my obsession over words more than anyone, may shake her head and dismiss all this to my standing as an “old poot” (That’s what she calls me when I resist accompanying her and the grandkids to amusement parks, laser tag outings, or even refuse to play *Phase 10*.) And, I have reconciled myself to the possibility that the word *awesome* has possibly been diluted beyond recovery to the point that it may one day join the likes of *cool*, *groovy*, *gnarly*, *rad* and *badd* (with two d’s, which apparently was a synonym for good) upon history’s ash heap of discarded slang.

Still, in defense of crotchety old geezers and old poots everywhere, allow me to pose one observation and one question:

1. If *awesome* can be applied to everything, including snack items in a bag, then eventually it does not mean anything.

2. What words do you reserve for those times when as a believer you reflect upon God and ...

... praise Him for His creative might?

... contemplate His redemptive works in the past?

... bask in the reality of His unfathomable and yet, tender mercies?

... consider His unnerving holiness?

... rest in His unmerited grace?

If *awesome* is lost to the ages, then at least try to reserve *some* good adjectives for your Creator, Redeemer and King.

<sup>1</sup>The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble;  
he sits enthroned between the cherubim,  
let the earth shake.

<sup>2</sup>Great is the LORD in Zion;  
he is exalted over all the nations.

<sup>3</sup>Let them praise your great and awesome name –  
he is holy. – Psalm 99:1-3

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