

# CHANGE IN HABITS



## CHANGE

By Barry Cassidy

Change has hit the world. The Coronavirus has everyone in hiding. There has been a necessary change in the way we live our lives. All of the challenges and reactions around the virus are certainly dominating the news. The body counts, and the local effort will no doubt dominate the headlines for the near future, as no sports, no concerts or entertainment events will be happening.

Those living paycheck to paycheck will face real challenges, not being able to work, and then not being able to buy food. Some businesses will be walloped because of their fixed costs cannot be covered if they do not have the income. There are a thousand of these stories yet to be told.

When I was young, I had Scarlett Fever, and our house was quarantined. A man came to our house and tacked a red public notice on our door. My dad was upset because the public health guy put a nail hole in the door. My dad went to work anyway because he was the breadwinner, and he had to work. The new personal isolation model that has been implemented pretty much does away with the individuality of my dad putting food on the table.

Self-isolation or isolation with a family unit for two weeks or more could tend to bring a better awareness of matters that mean the most to yourself and your family. Many will be able to work from home, but for some, there is no work from home. Either way, it will intensify the relationships that you have with the immediate occupants of your dwelling unit. The sheer volume of time you will

share with these individuals will increase to the point that you will get to know and understand them better.

This sudden unity comes at a time where identity politics has played a significant role in the public dialog. Rarely is there an event that can gather the nation as a whole and, at the same time, isolate us with individual units of a familial or communal nature. This event is more than the sorrow, and vicious revenge of a 911 or a Pearl Harbor. Unlike the damage from a Hurricane like Sandy or Katrina, this uniting comes from fear of contamination of each other. We are one by being separate. In this instance, it is more like the emergency that was created in New York when the power grid failed. There was fear of being robbed or assaulted because there were no lights, but then again, many sat on their steps and chatted with their neighbor, and now we are distancing.

Time together could cure some family ills and exacerbate others. Still, the result will be better communication and a renewed spirit of family or a communal collective, in the case of roommates.

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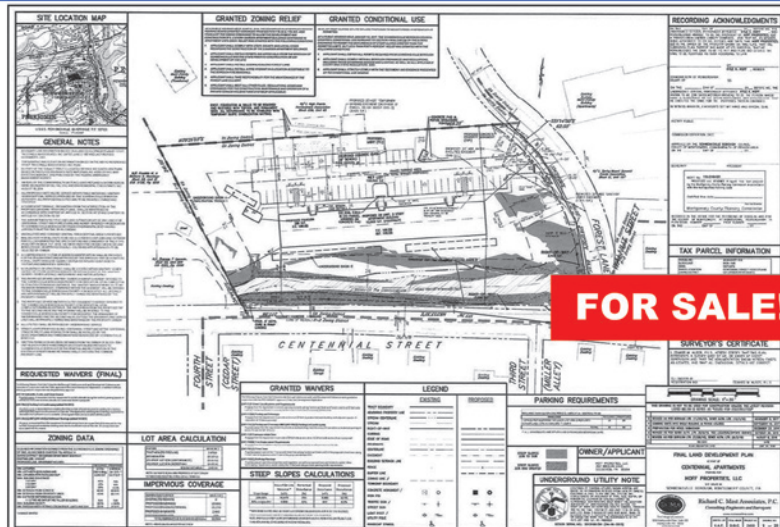


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## CHANGE

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Stories will be written about being isolated in some odd situation where they will get to know someone too well. I am sure there will be a Hallmark Channel movie on people being quarantined in a hotel somewhere.

A mini-boom in the birthrate followed the night without lights in New York City, and that is just one night. If the current isolation happens over six to eight weeks, we may be into a national increase in the birthrate in early 2021. But in some cases, being together locked up for a couple of weeks could lead to separations and divorce. Everyone has to become part of the whole to see their way through this coronavirus disruption.

The self-isolation could also lead to new ways to communicate electronically, and better monitor the work that you do at home as a telecommuter. Ways to monitor productivity and effort toward a job when you are telecommuting are being refined as I write this article. I view myself as lucky because I can work from home and be productive. But I think that I am more effective when I can interact and collaborate to bounce ideas off of Manny, Rita, Joe, and Patty in the lobby of 131 Bridge, where I usually work.

There is something about the interaction, something about getting a coffee every morning at Steel City, and they know I want a large Guatemalan to go with no room for cream. About 10:30 most days, I get an opinion from Jack Hall concerning the problems of the world or have him get into the details of a Celtics/Knicks game that was played in 1958.

I have been getting emails concerning some of the non-profits that have fixed costs that are paid upon reimbursement for services rendered. This issue creates a dilemma because the fixed costs were incurred under the assumption there would be a client fulfillment activity. The whole theory of government works like that, and the government has disrupted all of that. There is a real question of who is going to get hurt in a six week or more layoff.

There will be a stimulus and a rush to get money on the street (see related articles in this issue). The status quo may

be interrupted enough that some of the old ways will come to an end, and new and more effective ways to deal with some of the problems may be ascertained through the ordeal that we are going through. I watch my wife telecommute to Temple Law School as she tries to advise students concerning the one-line courses now being taught, and immigration issues concerning staying in the dorm versus going home.

If her ability to work at home is any indication, we may see a new decentralization of the workforce, which could be attributable to the processes developed during the isolation regimen. That could help smaller companies make an entrance to the market in an attempt to require less capital for a multi-person office.

Two weeks of isolation and social distancing has seen a run on various items at the store. Hand sanitizer and toilet tissue were the immediate items that were found to be of value. By the end of the first week, it appears ice cream was a favorite, with most stores sold out or there were just a few cartons left. People needed limits to protect the whole. Self-sacrifice the security of one for the betterment of the whole even if it is involuntarily enforced rather than a selfless act.

Because I am an at-risk person, I go out to the grocery store only and do that very infrequently. I noticed as time goes on, there as fewer pleasantries and more distancing than the first week. There are fewer people out and about as time pushes forward.

There has been significant progress on my train project with all three taxing entities signing on to the program. I was all ready to start a considerable work effort, and I was delayed again by the isolation. I sent all of the revised reports to SEPTA, and I am waiting for them to take the time to review it during the crisis. Although things changed significantly with the virus funding response (\$3548) there were two hundred and fifty billion dollars approved for transit, and I write grants...so.

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