

OPINION

THE ISOLATION BLUES



CHANGE

By Barry Cassidy

Life in America has changed for a while. Now we know how people encountering the black death (Plague) felt. When in school, we were all freaked out about learning about the Plague; the teacher said to us, "now it is not a problem we have antibiotics." Time is a cure-all, both in memory and in science.

As we get ready to enter the world again, this is my third column, and they all dealt with some issues relating to the virus. I have grown a beard, watched multiple series features on Prime and Netflix, reinvigorated my bread making skills, and moved into a repetitive replay of a YouTube video of BT Express performing "Do it, do it, till you're satisfied."

I have learned to appreciate my family, as my daughter Ellen got the virus, and I could not go out to see her. It was kind of chilling to know that your family is struggling, and you cannot help. On the other hand, a total of three trips to the

grocery store with my wife became almost whimsical in our selection process. It was questionably satisfying in terms of junk food consumption. Conversations like "We need more crackers," with a response "Want me to get two boxes?" and her responding "Better get four."

I spent a lot of time online, as I am writing a grant for the Phoenixville Passenger Rail Project. I would take a break and read the news where CNN said one thing, and Fox said the opposite. It was like I had to find someone that just reported the story, not interpreted the news.

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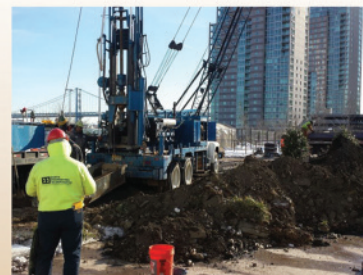
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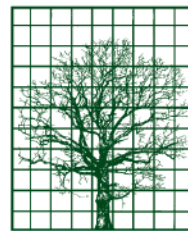
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CHANGE

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It made me more of an independent thinker. I was trying to assess the information critically. I found that many of the European and Australian sources were exciting and provided a different slant. Maybe the stories were not more accurate, but perhaps not as false.

I also learned to develop a jaundiced eye toward the Chinese. I remember back in the 1960s protesting pretty much everything and I have a copy of the little red book at my bedside. I have moved on and see things much differently than I did before, and time has intensified my thoughts on the matter. Posts concerning the 1911 Chinese Nationalist revolution resulted in a "This Day in History" page about Sun Yat-Sen on Facebook being viewed as a violation of community standards.

Another interesting development was that at least five people tried to blackmail me concerning the release of my sex tape. I was unaware that I had a sex tape, but I could pay \$2000.00 in bitcoin, and they would not show it to all my friends. Due to my physical limitations, I was reluctant to have this tape released. After carefully considering it, I chose not to pay.

Victor Cozzone wrote that he heard it was a comedy.

My thoughts were continually brought back to the fact that some people had less than I have and were experiencing hard times. I made a Facebook post about boiling some shrimp in beer with old bay, and I had referred to the fact I had 12 pounds of shrimp in the freezer. One of my friends from Ireland messaged me and stated I should not make those kinds of posts when people are not as well off as I am and were hungry. It hit home.

We can make all the jokes we want about sex tapes and new cooking techniques, but many of my 2,500 worldwide Facebook friends were hungry. It was as sobering as the news my daughter suffering from the virus.

If anything, the virus has made me appreciate life. I have been traveling the world living a carefree life. I spent a lot of time in England and Italy. It seems doubtful that I will be traveling abroad any longer. The trip to Ethiopia caused me to have all kinds of respiratory issues, and I lost a Christmas vacation dealing with the infection. So, life has changed in that way. I spent a lot of time in Columbia and Peru in the 1970s but never made it to Asia. It looks as if a trip to Asia will never happen. So, I truncated my desires for reality, and I am no worse for it as life is better than no experience.

In that vein, I gained a new respect for the medical community working tirelessly to aid us in the time of need. I do remember one nurse refusing to work because of the lack of masks, and I believe that was her personal choice, and she should be applauded as she worried more about living life than possibly dying. A lot of them showed up for work every day without a word, doing what they thought was right, and they should all be given a day of thanks. We cannot look down on people that did not want to work because it is a personal decision.

It will be engaging in the coming weeks when people start interacting more, and the death toll rises. I am not sure how that will work for everyone, but the whole virus issue keeps evolving. What was the "do not touch anything" strategy has been replaced with a being careful approach for inanimate objects interaction. I am still a little wary of public restrooms.

One prediction that I made is that we will have to wait until January to see if it is valid. I predicted a baby boom. No matter what, I am convinced during this whole episode that getting to know your significant other in a biblical sense may have been the most significant change in behavior. Even during the day, skyrockets were in sight for many.