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UA37/2 Corona Paper

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In mid-December of 2019, I felt a bit queasy. It was the end of finals week at WKU and we were all off till the January term. I had a slight sore throat, some congestion and a general feeling of not being well. I had a very, very slight fever. It got to 99 but never went above 100. I went to get tested for the flu – I had had the flu shot but flu shots can be hit or miss. It wasn't the flu. I went back home and treated myself as though I had a bad cold. Mucinex, Tylenol, rest and lots of fluids. After about 5 days I began to feel a lot better and was thankful I wasn't sick at Christmas. Since the first appearance of Covid, I have talked to many people and quite a few of them have the same story as I did.

I went back to work in January and everything was preceding normally. We had plans for Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day, we had plans to have Can Doo the therapy dog come by during finals week of the spring semester, we had a program planned for Poetry Month and in the summer, we were making plans for VAMPY and MasterPlan.

Then in late February, I began to see news stories about a virus centered in Wuhan, China. It was devastating the population there and China was sealing off the city. President Trump banned flights from China and then I began to see more and more stories about people getting sick. Cruise ships, nursing homes, a terrible number of deaths in Italy and then, cases of what was now being called COVID-19 showed up in New Jersey.

When I read the symptoms of the virus I thought to myself, "this is exactly what I had last December" but without a reliable anti-body test I couldn't and still can't be sure. President Trump assembled a task force and they began to give daily briefings. The phrase 'social distancing' took hold (and I can't wait until it disappears from the language). There was a rush on toilet paper, sanitizer, soap and cleaning supplies as people began to hoard. Hoarding toilet paper was odd, because the virus does not cause diarrhea. There began to be some shortages of items. As I write this, it is impossible to find yeast. People started wearing masks. One day in Wal-Mart I saw a woman wearing a full gas mask. PSA's were all over the place and they were all alike. Sad, yet hopeful piano music, with voice overs all promoting social distancing and telling us we are all in this together and reminding us to wash our hands, don't touch our faces, keep our distance, don't go outside unless we absolutely had to and remember we are all in this together. I got heartily sick of them.

In mid-March the students at WKU were off for spring break, and the virus was spreading. WKU's administration decided to let the students come back and get their belongings from dorms, and that all classes would switch to on-line for the rest of the semester. Students began to use new programs like ZOOM to meet and got used to having all classes on-line. For some of them it was hard. You can't really do certain classes on-line: voice, dance, acting, musical instruments and science labs. For those you have to be there in person, but for the rest of the semester the students couldn't.

The library stayed open for a short time, but eventually closed to the public. Reference librarians went on-line to answer questions and the staff in public services stayed in the library, answered

phone questions, checked in and shelved book that were being returned and scanned articles, reserves and book chapters that were not on-line and mailed them to students who needed them.

The public schools closed and went to two different means of instruction. My granddaughter was in the 5th grade and she had all her work on-line. She would do the assignments and then submit them to her teacher on Google Docs. My grandson was in the 2nd grade and he got his assignments in a packet every week. He would do the assignments and turn them into his teacher then pick up a new packet. Both of them used Google Meet to talk to their teachers. My daughter's work allowed her to work from home. It was hard at times for her having to juggle Zoom meetings, phone calls and supervising school work. It was VERY hard for parents who couldn't get off work or who didn't have reliable internet especially since the public libraries were all closed.

As the virus began to spread, the governors of the states, relying on information from President Trump's task force took measures to protect people. Some of those measures were, I think too draconian. In Michigan the governor banned the sale of garden plants and seeds and would not allow people to travel in the state. For example, if you lived in Saginaw, Michigan and had a summer home in Marquette, you couldn't go there. However, if you lived in Cleveland, Ohio and owned a summer home in Marquette, you could go. That made no sense to me.

In New York, they waited for a longer time than other states to close and that, coupled with the governor's orders for long term care facilities to admit people suffering with Covid caused the number of cases to skyrocket. Good reliable data is still coming in but as I write this, it is apparent that the majority of Covid cases are in large, crowded urban areas. States where the population is spread out like Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota have not had many cases.

National Parks operated on a park by park basis. The Great Smokey Mountains were closed entirely because that park is one of the most crowded in the system. The same is true for Yellowstone Park. Here, Mammoth Cave closed the cave tours, the campgrounds and the visitor's center but the trails remained open. I took full advantage of being able to get out, and walked the trails several times a week. The wildflower display was spectacular and I found one species, *Synandra hispidula* that I had not seen before.

In Kentucky the governor ordered businesses that were considered non-essential to shut down like movie theaters, city parks, sporting venues, salons, barber shops, sit down restaurants and churches. Closing city parks really hurt some people since that's where they would go to walk or walk their dogs. Some people got around it by walking in the cemeteries. Lost River Cave closed. I live fairly near there and I couldn't help but notice that since people were not able to walk on the trails in Lost River Cave, they began to walk in my neighborhood. There were noticeably more people out walking, biking, walking their dogs. I was happy to see them and often joined in. Lost River Cave is open as I write this. Businesses are gradually opening. You can go to a restaurant and eat in although restaurants are limited as to the number of customers they can serve. FINALLY, you can get a haircut!! My grandson had not had a haircut for over 90 days and since his hair is curly, he looked like a wooly lamb.

There have been some restaurants that have closed: Moe's, White Squirrel Brewery, Long John Silver's, Brindee's and I fear the list will grow. Small businesses really have taken a hit from being closed down and some won't recover. The Bowling Green Hot Rods haven't played any games and major league sports have suspended their seasons. Some of my sports loving friends are suffering withdrawal.

Churches were closed for weeks. Missing church hurt me deep down to my soul. I am a Catholic and my faith is a huge part of my being. The shutdown of churches happened during Lent and I missed Holy Week and Easter. I was able to watch Mass every day from Bishop Robert Barron's chapel on YouTube and that was nice but I couldn't receive Communion. There is a group of priests at South Union, the Fathers of Mercy and they kept their chapel open for Adoration, they had Benediction and heard Confession every day. I went there several times a week. As I write this, my local church, St. Joseph's has been open for a month with some restrictions on the number of people who can be in at one time. I have resumed my normal Mass going and have been able to receive communion to my great joy! Sadly, during this time, my cousin Patty Reynolds died age 94. She had been declining for some time and just slipped away. Patty had eleven children – one of her sons died two years ago, and because of the shutdown, she couldn't have a viewing and only 10 people were allowed at her funeral. So, her 10 living children were there and one of them was her son, Father Pat Reynolds who conducted the service. No spouses, no grandchildren, no great grandchildren and none of the cousins who loved her like a second mother could be there. We had to watch it on YouTube. One of the priests from the Fathers of Mercy, Father Tom Sullivan died suddenly of a heart attack and his service was on YouTube. I wanted so much to be there.

I only know one person who had the virus personally, and he had it quite lightly. He stayed home for 14 days, got tested and the virus was gone. He is fine now and back to work. My sister works at one of the hospitals and she said they prepared for an influx of patients and it never happened. Most of the cases here have not needed hospitalization and, as I write this, we have had only 6 deaths. The hospitals are now scheduling procedures such as hip replacements and shunts that they had to postpone for the past few months. I was able to visit my optometrist and dentist.

My reaction to the Covid-19 has been tempered by my experiences from prior epidemics. I grew up before the age when the vaccines we have now were available. As a child in the 50's, I was vaccinated for whooping cough and diphtheria, but I had measles, mumps, rubella and chicken pox. We have vaccines for those now. I am so happy my children and grandchildren didn't have the measles. That was horrible. I ran a fever, was covered with a rash and my eyes were so sensitive to light I had to stay in the dark and there was no treatment for it at all. I was vaccinated for smallpox too and that disease is now extinct. My mother was a nurse and she vividly remembered polio and the devastation it could cause, so as soon as the vaccine for polio was available, she made sure we went to Dr. McIlvoy's office and got it.

I have never been prone to getting sick. I had some upset stomachs as a child and a cold every so often but those childhood illnesses were the only times I was sick. Then in 1968-69 the Hong Kong flu appeared on the scene. I was in high school and I got it. I was so sick. I had a fever

and I ached in every bone. The Hong Kong flu killed over 100,000 people in the United States and the numbers killed are close to the death toll from Covid, but we didn't close everything down for the Hong Kong flu. The Woodstock festival in 1969 took place during that pandemic and my high school closed for a few days. Since then, I've had a few bouts of bronchitis but I've never had pneumonia or any other lung ailment. My general health is excellent and I have no pre-existing conditions, so when it became apparent that Covid was going to be a pandemic, I decided to treat it as though it was a particularly bad flu outbreak. I wash my hands more often than normal and keep hand sanitizer in my car. I shop early so I can stay away from crowds. I make a conscious effort to not touch my face. One reason I hate to wear a mask is that I find I touch my face more often when I wear one. I keep my distance from people and take extra vitamin D. I don't act recklessly or rudely, but I refuse to live my life in fear. I think some of the initial reactions to the Covid were overdone since it was a new and unknown virus. I am so sorry for the people who have lost their livelihoods or have lost people they loved and cared for. I have two good friends who are in assisted living and they are not allowed visitors, they can't eat in the dining area or use the communal spaces. The only human contact they have is with those who come to clean their room. Frankly, it sounds like being in prison. I am happy the restrictions are being eased and I hope a vaccine gets developed soon. Men and women are social creatures – not many of us have the vocation to be a hermit and we can't live forever in fear of the 'rona (as my grandchildren call it).