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# Living Through the Covid 19 Pandemic Through the Eyes of a Young 75 yr Old



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Never thought I'd live through a quasi twilight experience in my life time. From being totally free to roam around to try my hand at different social, educational, and faith filled interactions to staying home, sheltering, social distancing, sanitizing, and using technology for daily living within one year was a marathon of changes.

I've lived an exciting and challenging 75 years. There have been many twists and turns in my life which is what makes me think is the reason for my young can do spirit. The Covid 19 experience is yet another one of those twists that I never imagined. In a matter of weeks our country was practically shut down. The challenge of not being sure who to believe regarding the pandemic was disconcerting. I had just lost my husband and went from living in a beautiful neighborhood, El Dorado Hills, with lots of friends and a wonderful husband at my side who could always help me keep things in perspective. I sold my house and went to live with my daughter in Sacramento. My daughter, Monica, was so generous and tried to make me feel at home and never complained about my "intrusion". Then when things were getting a tiny bit better for me, Covid rears its ugly head.

The news media reported how the Covid pandemic started. But wait, then the news reported the way it started was not the way it was reported. No one knew the best way to protect anyone. It was new and devastating. People were getting the virus from mild to severe symptoms. Many people were in need of respirators and many died regardless. Conspiracy theories were popping up. With all of this confusion people were getting more and more angry. Watching, hearing, or reading about the events around our country were discouraging. Protests and riots were happening. My immediate neighborhood was never in danger of rioters but the down town area in Sacramento was affected. Were we ever going to heal as a nation? Would we be able to trust again?

What could I do about anything? I kept my eyes and ears open to whatever I could do to improve our situation. I could no longer visit the elderly in the rest homes by bringing them spiritual comfort and friendship. The rest homes were one of the first hardest hit with Covid. I used to take Holy Communion once a week and would try to make conversation with the patients. It was good for them but it was also good for me to be in a position to bring a little joy into their boring lives. Service to others is a

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value I cherish. A friend of mine said she started to help making the mandated masks that we are to wear whenever we go outside. It was a great opportunity to help others, keep myself busy, and feel I was contributing to fellow man.

The Sacramento Face Mask Project gave me the opportunity to serve again. A group of people donated the materials. Other groups cut the material to standard sizes, while another group delivered and picked up the finished masks. I was able to sew about 200 masks (see pictures). I never met with a person to show me how to sew the masks so I looked on line (something new to me) and figured out how to fold, sew, and press the masks. These masks were put into plastic bags, left outside my door, and picked up by another person. That person would also leave me another supply of materials to make more masks. The finished masks were given at no cost to organizations like the Veterans Administration and other institutions. Our project ended early January since masks are now available for purchase almost everywhere. Wearing face masks is essential but so is hand sanitizing, and social distancing.

As a practicing Catholic I went to Mass every day. We social distanced, 6 feet apart, sanitized as we walked into the church building and signed in so that if there were someone infected we could be informed to quarantine ourselves or even get tested. The governor of California eventually closed all churches. We eventually opened for a small limited number of persons in the church building together with the protocol of social distancing, sanitation, mask wearing, and signing in. Opening up for indoor Mass or services again was prohibited. A federal mandate was given in January so places of worship are now able to resume as long as the protocols are followed and a certain percentage of the capacity is enforced. To live my faith and receiving Holy Communion on a daily basis is a privilege I hold dear. It does for my soul what food does for my body. Going to church is important to me but so is being part of a community.

Zoom enters my world. I resolved to be “techy”, learn more about how to use technology. It was a steep learning curve but I approached it valiantly. My daughter, granddaughters, and other family members help me navigate the web. The trick for me was to “just do it”. I experiment and did not give up pushing buttons, or keys. Zoom is now a part of my life. I meet with

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friends and relatives about five times a week through Zoom, Duo, telephone conferencing, internet, email, messaging. I do most of my bill paying by phone or internet. I buy products and gifts through Amazon. Almost all business is conducted by phone or internet. If I don't know how to do it I just "do it" by calling the company or by asking my daughter, son, or friends how to do it. They walk me through it and it gets done. It's not always easy or smooth.

Scheduling a Covid 19 Vaccination was a long process. After the first targeted group, first responders, was met the next tier was the 75+ yr olds. I'm obviously in that category. Kaiser Permanently got their share of vaccines but not enough. I called several times but they were no longer taking appointments until they got another batch of vaccines. "Don't call us, we'll call you" seemed to be the message. I tried two counties and other hospitals that were providing the vaccines. I couldn't get an appointment for different reasons. Finally my doctor gave me the link to be able to sign up for an appointment. I am one of the people who welcomes the vaccine but there are those who are not comfortable with the vaccine and oppose it. Respecting differences is something I think we are learning to do or at least realizing that it must remain optional. Flexibility of mind is as important as elasticity is for the body if we want to stay young.

Greatly limiting our family interaction is heartbreaking. Visiting, hugging, and just hanging out together whenever we want is almost impossible without great risks. Our holiday gatherings and birthday celebrations are kept very small or non existent. Not being able to see our elderly and/or sick family and friends is very sad for all of us. I've always been a part of my three eldest granddaughter's lives. They range from 8-17. I have not been able to visit my fourth granddaughter who is now two years old. She doesn't know me except through video and Duo phone calls. I am almost a stranger to my youngest granddaughter. I have the hope that after I get vaccinated and our situation improves I can fly safely to visit her in Idaho.

We never stop growing. Things are not just black and white. Finding the truth or the best solution for a community takes flexibility. We hear each other. We work together. We take chances. We risk. We admit our failings but we don't give up. It's never too late to improve. This world wide pandemic experience has allowed many of us to discoverer our priorities.

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There are so many aspects in our lives that have been affected by the pandemic that it would take books to describe how deep and wide this affects us all. My immediate surroundings that I've described here in this little essay is not all that has affected me. I have friends in other countries that have even less ability to help themselves. I am connected to them. I grieve for them and for us, but I won't give up.