

A note to Mateo (My 3-year-old grandson) for 2035

Mateo,

I'm writing this on April 25, 2020 during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Retirement was supposed to be filled with travel – Miata's (small sports cars if they are ancient when you read this), curvy roads, hotels, fast food, slow food, friends from Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Michigan, Tennessee and of course here in Kansas and Missouri.

For a time, it was (I retired in Sep 2018, Carol in Jan 2018). We left the day I officially retired on a trip to Las Vegas. Our plans were for a significant trip (days rather than a day) at least every 3 months – sometimes extended days, more often a couple days.

We visited Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, lots of Missouri. We became closer to many friends during this time.

We went to visit my sister, Marie in Austin and took her in our Miatas on a trip to Port Arthur and Texas City and back to San Antonio and Fredericksburg for a Miata roundup (hundreds of cars meeting).

And then the pandemic hit. Everything changed suddenly. Stay at home orders from local, state and federal officials were issued. Tensions and anxiety rose. Seniors and folks with pre-existing conditions (such as lung issues and diabetes – Carol and myself) are supposedly more susceptible to the effects of the virus.

First there was social distancing (keep people 6 feet apart). Then came the shutdown. Every non-essential activity (basically grocery stores, gas stations, home maintenance stores, and similar stores could remain open – but with social distancing. Restaurants we limited to curbside or drive through service. Grocery stores could only have a certain number of customers in the store at one time.

The financial impact on the economy is impossible to quantify but imagine everything not essential being shut down! Unprecedented is all I can think of. People are in panic mode hoarding things like toilet paper (yes that); cleaning supplies (disinfectant); a run on baking supplies like flour, oil, eggs.

There have been massive layoffs. Millions of unemployment claims each WEEK!

The politicians say, "we're all in this together!" but the boats are not in the same ocean! College age kids (your age when I expect you to read this) were blamed early on for not taking this seriously. Parents (early indications were that children can come through the disease with less impact – some never know they had it) suddenly and without warning lose their jobs. Everything comes to a halt.

Congress passes a law to essentially "print money" and give most adults \$1200 and dependents \$500. There are other provisions for business to continue payroll (if they choose).

Millions of people don't know how they will pay for food and housing this week, much less in two weeks.

Once you get past the shock of the financial, immediate impact [impossible, but there is a point to be made] the next hurdle of having nothing "productive" to do. Think about the anxiety of job loss under normal circumstances. Those of us who have been unemployed for extended times (more than a few

days) are better prepared than others from an emotional point of view – and we retirees have even less emotional toll from being idle – not that I have ever been OK with it. I mean if nobody is hiring, even the most glowing resume is useless.

The real, serious emotional toll of being the “bread winner” and suddenly not being able to do that – and knowing that there are millions of others in the same situation – and knowing you don’t know what and when the situation will change – I just can’t imagine how many serious emotional and physical tolls will show up (plenty of babies, plenty of ulcers, a number of family member assaults among other problems).

I guess the point of this letter is this: The Pandemic Flu of 1918 killed a lot of people. The COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020 has killed thousands in the US so far out of more than 300,000,000. In 1918, the mistake society made was to come out of isolation too early. In 2020, logic [stay isolated] and practical, financial along with emotional stressors are now in deep conflict.

For me, the isolation is extremely difficult, for Carol, not so much. Granted we don’t have to worry about income, unless the federal government suddenly stops paying our pensions. That security makes the equation easier as well.

So, I’m ready for prudent relaxation of travel restrictions at least! I’d like to visit friends and family, even if social distancing remains in place!