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As I See It...

By Jim Lee

A Dispatch from the Bunker

The number of grandchildren has multiplied and most have reached an age where they seem to enjoy our company. Thus, when March rolls around each year, we head off to Georgia for two months. Our arrival is timed to coincide with the start of the youth baseball and soccer seasons. We typically stay through the end of season playoffs (By the way, down here they can get three seasons in each year). This being our third year, and the competition getting tougher, it figured to be a fantastic spring.

We arrived on Friday, March 6th, mid-afternoon, with enough time to unload and get ready for a double header (each boy had a game). Northern Georgia was experiencing a cold spell, which translates to mid-50s at 6 PM game time. Each game ran an hour and fifteen minutes, with the second game ending in a tie, which of course forced extra innings. The weekend games were rained out, but the fun resumed on Monday night. I got to see my seven-year-old stretch a single into a double and slide under the tag at second base, something I will never forget. Unfortunately, that has become the highlight of the season.

Then a few days later, school had been cancelled until April 6th, all youth sports were cancelled, the U.S. had begun to shut down around us, and I stopped writing this column.

I started back writing this morning, April 3rd.

We are now three weeks removed from that last out and the changes that we have experienced are staggering. School is canceled for the balance of the school year. Both parents working from home; two of the three boys are being home schooled. Lucas who just turned five, works on lesson plans that his mother has put together. He starts kindergarten in the fall. Parker, a second grader has lesson plans to follow from his teacher and connects with her through a tablet. The balancing act between work and assisting with schooling, by both parents, is a sight to behold!

All the local restaurants are closed except for carry out, curbside pickup. We support one or two a week with the hope that they will make it through this crisis. Grocery shopping is another chore that must be well thought out. Since Melanie and I are over 65, we qualify for “senior shopping hours” at Publix. We arrive there every Tuesday morning at 7 AM. It is still dark out and quite eerie. There may be 10 people in line to get in. Once inside it is as quiet as an empty church. Still no toilet paper, paper towels, meat is in short supply, as well as canned fruit and vegetables. However, there is plenty of fresh produce.

For a while I made daily trips to FedEx and the Post Office. By the way, it took almost two weeks, for the P.O.D. to see that their window staff had protective gear. The lines were long, so I had to find a time to go when it was empty (9:30 in the morning seemed to work best).

This week my daily sorties were curtailed by my son (so I am truly feeling my age). He thought it too risky for me to go and, bless his heart, he makes the trips once or twice a week for me.

There is a time of joy in each morning. Melanie and I go out at first light and “walk the hills” for 45 minutes. North Georgia has some formidable hilly neighborhoods and we are camped right in the middle of one. This is a great form of exercise and a real saving grace. It works in concert with the gratitude that we feel since we have our health and a family that cares about us.

My office is off in the corner of the basement and has the look and feel of a bunker (see photo). There is no outside light, I stand at a metal desk to work at my computer. By noon when school is over for the day, my space can become the center of the field of fire for laser tag. Fortunately, there is a backyard, and plenty of sunshine to ease the difficulty of quarantine.

I am sure that our experiences are not a whole lot different from yours. The one aspect of this that is hard for me is not being able to see our other son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren, just thirty-five miles to the south in Atlanta. It also applies to Adam and Becky in Portland, and Kristen and Christopher in Downers Grove. Fortunately, cell phones and face time help to fill in the void for us, as I am sure that it does for all of you.

May all my friends, and clients, reading this be well, be safe, and hopefully things will be turning around by the time this reaches you around May 5th when we originally scheduled our return trip to Oak Brook. At this point we do not know when we will return home.

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