

Even in the most difficult times we seem to learn something. Maybe, it is during these periods that we acquire knowledge most rapidly and effectively. It does not appear that all of us of varying degrees of normal intelligence absorb these truths equally. A few years from now when we look back on the Year(s) of Covid—the duration depending at least partly on our own behavior—what will we remember as the lessons of the times?

People who have lost family and friends from this virus will have far different memories than those of us for whom mourning loved ones is not a part of the equation. For them, and also for people who have seen jobs and livelihood disappear, school time reduced or eliminated, childhood learning reduced to a simmer—for all kinds of folks who have encountered practical difficulties due to the constraints of trying to manage this pandemic, the memories of 2020 and 2021 will forever be painful.

Beyond that, and especially for us who haven't had a great deal of difficulty dealing with the changes in lifestyle we have had to embrace, there is still a massive amount of learning that has occurred spontaneously.

For one thing, I now have a glimmer of insight into the process of development of the vaccines. The single-mindedness of scientists has always been an inspiration, and the women and men who have spent the last many months in solving the puzzle of bringing immunity to the world's population are heroes for our times.

I have learned that wearing a mask when going into an area with other people can become routine, habitual, and unremarkable. I don't even think about going into a public place, though the necessity has been infrequent, without putting on a mask. And, I also found that feeding sheep from big round bales—something that always left me coughing and with eyes and nose running—is also a great place to wear a mask. It, too, has become a regular habit.

This past year has taught me that demagogues can make anything—even wearing a mask or receiving a vaccine—political. Though I realize this now, I still cannot understand it.

Telephones and the services we have on the internet have proven to be a big help in keeping friends and relatives in communication with each other. I am not a social media person, but for those folks for whom real visits have been replaced by virtual meetings and socializing, it has become so apparent how much the world has changed since most of our ancestors came to this country. Many of them—including my grandparents and great-grandparents—left their homes in other countries and never saw or spoke with their families again. Think what a difference a Zoom meeting or a Skype visit could have made a hundred years ago. Our forebears were hardy folks, seldom complaining about the isolation from family that was a part of their lives in this new country.

I have learned this year what a solitary person I am. For all that has happened in the lives of other people to cause heartache and loneliness during the Covid pandemic, I have to admit that isolation is of no personal concern to me. We have never been people who leave home a lot, and this past year, we

have not gone anywhere except for unavoidable appointments, and there have not been many of them. Instead of “chomping at the bit” to just “go somewhere,” a phrase I have heard friends mention this year, I don’t want to go anywhere. I can’t think of a better place to be and to stay than on this quiet farm.

For all kinds of reasons, I hope we will soon be in a better situation, one in which people can live their lives in ways that are much more like pre-Covid years. But, as far as changing our own lifestyle very much, I don’t believe that will be happening.