

Being Among the Vulnerable Elderly

This is a new label I had not previously used for myself until CoVid-19 arrived. Am I getting used to it? Yes, especially as I am more and more cautious about going to the grocery, post office, gas stations, etc. and am using some of the small amounts of hand sanitizer, alcohol, and peroxide I have. I do like the Vulnerable Elderly grocery shopping hour, but do not like getting up in time to use it at 7-8:00 a.m. A couple of younger friends offer to pick up needed items for us, because we are old.

My husband and I have made numerous changes in our lifestyle and habits, such as entertainment, socializing, travel, and dealing with new fears. Bob has spent a great deal of time cancelling reservations for basketball and golf tournaments, reunions, plays, vacations, etc. Identifying as the vulnerable elderly helped to get full refunds in some cases. Instead of going to movie theaters, we are watching more Netflix and Amazon Prime. The popcorn isn't as good, but the chairs are more comfortable and we control the Pause button and the room temperature. Of course, we are doing more reading, but we are also taking more walks around Jonesborough and riding around the county, exploring areas we had not previously seen much. This is a beautiful Spring with spectacular Redbud and Dogwood trees that lift our spirits.

Another change is personal appearance. It doesn't matter what I have on or how I look if I have nowhere to go or anyone to see. I wonder how much money I'm saving by not wearing makeup or not using hair products. I am, however, wearing deodorant. So what if my hair isn't styled; I can put on a hat when I go to the grocery store. I'm glad I don't dye my hair and need to be concerned about white roots showing. I'm accustomed to looking old. Zoom meetings do require some attention to personal appearance, but my comfy drawstring pants aren't visible.

Since I am not going anywhere, there is no need to look at my calendar to see what is in store for the next day or week. However, I have missed, or almost missed, some birthdays I needed to acknowledge. Remembering what day it is can be a challenge, but the newspaper has it right on page one. But what about leftovers? Recalling what day I cooked that chicken and if it is still safe to eat, is more of a challenge. Every day is just about the same.

I have missed getting my second cataract removed. On March 4 the first one was removed. The second one was scheduled for April 1. Approximately one week before, the second surgery was cancelled because it was non-essential. I wanted to say “non-essential for whom?” I fully understand the need to preserve PPEs and other supplies for virus patient treatment, but my cataract seemed pretty essential to me, especially since I still don’t have a new prescription for the first eye. I’m thankful to have a magnifying glass and do not need to be driving much right now.

I don’t delude myself by thinking this will end in a few weeks. Until there is a vaccine and cure, I suspect this will be our new normal for the next 18 months, at least for those of us who are the vulnerable elderly. The social distancing is more routine now than it was one month ago, but I miss dinners with friends and other activities. At least the activities are not happening without us. Everyone is staying at home. My husband and I have stayed in good moods with no arguments or deep sadness. We really are trying to make the best of the situation. Having attentive friends and family members makes a big difference, and I highly value them all.