

# my Personal side

By Craig Hastings



So the country is about three weeks into the self compliance lockdown imposed by Mayors, Governors, and the President. Depending on which news you're paying attention to we're either doing well or we're a complete train wreck. There isn't much room in between. I think both are probably correct. If you're living in New York, Chicago, or New Orleans you're experiencing the train wreck scenario. Those of us living in the rural communities of the Midwest are doing as well as could be expected I think. There are certainly exceptions to the rule even here. I feel bad for any of our local workforce that have been laid off without pay for an undetermined number of days, weeks, maybe even months. The federal government

passed a two trillion dollar stimulus/loan/unemployment compensation bill today but I feel it is a "closing of the gate after the horse ran away" instance. Why wasn't there a compensation plan in place for a catastrophic event such as this before it took place?

Why haven't prior administrations not addressed the possibility and probability of a pandemic event taking place in America? It's not as though a viral pandemic hasn't already been discussed and predicted by health experts around the world for fifty years or more. I have my own beliefs as to the "why not". I'm suspicious of everyone and everything though so maybe you'd be better off paying little attention to me. Take a look at what and who is affected the most by COV-

ID-19. Make no mistake and don't come to the defense of our government here. Of course closing down every place where people gather together in large numbers for food, drink, entertainment, worship, or any combination of these four would take the first hit. Therefore, anyone employed relative to the function of these four would also be affected; immediately! Why isn't there emergency legislation in place in which state governors and the president could act on immediately when Congress declared a national emergency? Legislation that would allow the president to immediately distribute money to states in which the governors could see to it that people immediately put out of work could be compensated.

How in the world are any of these Americans who are vital members of our workforce going to pay their everyday living expenses and feed their families without immediate assistance? We are in week four of this pandemic and just today, Friday, the President signed a bill passed by Congress that will

finally trigger a mechanism to get money into the hands of those most needing assistance. But, it will take at least another three weeks for any of this money to start landing in the bank accounts of those desperately waiting. Oh yes, I watched the grand press conference today where the President, while surrounded by people who have never missed a meal or a night's sleep so far because of COVID-19, signed a giant piece of paper that provides for out of work employees a chance to eat again. Well, they will have to wait at least another three weeks to get any money to buy any food!

And everyone in that room standing behind the President was smiling and appearing to be in the grandest of moods for what a great thing the federal government had taken so long, too long, to accomplish. Those with the power were quick to wreck the lives of those most financially affected by their decisions but oh so slow to react with a fix to the mess they caused. "No Craig, it was the virus that caused this mess; not our state and feder-

al governments." I disagree. There should have decades ago been a plan to get lost wages back into the hands of those that lost it within no more than fourteen days which I think is also too long. I remember being one of those people that had no savings of any kind to fall back on to pay my monthly bills and buy my groceries. Even with a full time job I remember back in the day not being able to make ends meet some months.

I feel horrible not only for the people I do know but also those that I don't know that were told not to come back to work with absolutely zero notice it was coming! Those people that get to make these life altering decisions should have to suffer some of the consequences themselves. Trust me, not one of them went without a meal, heat, water, gasoline, or prohibited from gathering in numbers larger than ten to do any socializing they felt they wanted to do. But the rest of the population was ordered to abstain from normal living until such time we're told differently. I'm in a pro-

fession where I must continue to work and do so without complaint. Others, mostly in government jobs, are staying home but are fortunate enough to still get paid and accumulate benefits. Finally there are those in the lower income brackets who were laid off without pay and benefits with no idea when they might get to return to work... if ever. These people make up about one third of the American workforce.

The only sunlight in this story is that I really believe the Trump administration will draft legislation that will better prepare the American workers most affected by such disasters in the future. These American workers and their families that are suffering this time will not be forgotten and ignored should this happen again. And it will happen again. "We're closing all non essential businesses, sending workers home, and this is how and where these workers can be compensated for their sacrifice." "Yours truly; The Congress of The United States of America."

## Hook, Line and Sinker With Tony Hooker

What to write when our world is at a standstill? All I can do is talk about it from my own self centered perspective, right?

Living in a city is a vibrant experience, with non-stop adventures of every stripe waiting around every corner. When I lived in San Diego, the beach was the main distraction, followed closely by the music scene. There were small clubs like Mary's by the Pier, where local artists stopped by for open Mic events. There were larger venues like the Bacchanal, where lesser known regional and national acts plied their trade. The Balboa Theater housed the big name acoustic acts, and I remember enjoying John Prine and Arlo Guthrie, among others. Finally, the San Diego Sports Arena was the site for the biggest names on tour in the 80's. And for a young sailor and his cronies that meant metal. Dio, Scorpions, Judas Priest, Maiden, Van Halen. We caught them all. Living in the city as a youngin' was as vibrant and fun as one could imagine.

What it didn't have, even thirty-five years ago, was a

sense of community, really. There was an overarching sense of civic pride, to be sure, but I never, in any of the places I stayed, knew who my neighbors were, Base Barracks notwithstanding.

And that's not how I was raised.

Here in Villa Grove in the 70's, we knew all of our neighbors. Heck, I probably knew who lived in 500

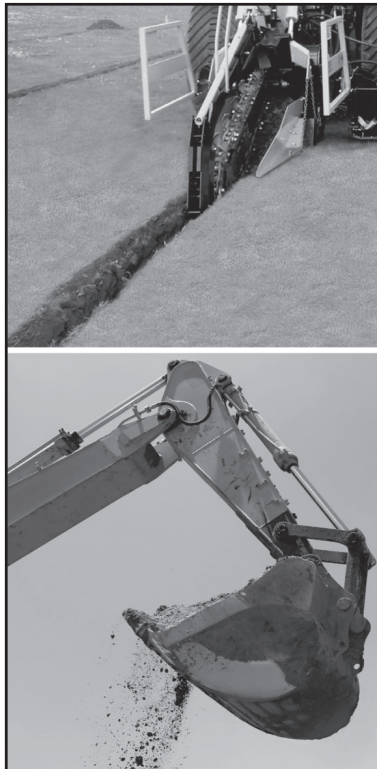
of the houses in town. And one thing I remember most is how we stood up for each other in times of need. In the first years of the decade, my step-dad was buried up to his chin in a construction accident when the wall of a sewer line he was excavating collapsed. He was off work for several months. Back then, single income families were the norm, and we were no exception. Mom stayed home and cooked and cleaned and wrangled us three knuckleheads, (for years the family joke was that knucklehead

number 4 was proof that Dad was fully recovered!) and for our neighbors it was the same. So when dad got hurt, times were a little tough. The cool thing is, I don't remember them as such. I don't ever remember wanting for anything. Family and friends took care of everything while Dad was in intensive care for 6 weeks, with mom by his side constantly, and for the ensuing months of recovery. That's how it is in a small town.

That's how I was raised. Fast forward to 2020,

and things are different, and yet so very much the same. Maybe we aren't as open with our neighbors, but then again, maybe we are. In this time of social distancing, we have to spend time apart, but I see people having long distance conversations from their respective back yards. I also see them coming together to support their friends and neighbors who are in the local restaurant industry. I did an informal poll on Friday, and the home town restaurants served well over 300 dinners. Accord-

ing to the googles, there are around 900 households in the river city, so that means that on that one night, somewhere near one third of our households chose to support our local venues. Of course, all of the folks ordering dinners from the local establishments are not a panacea, it's a much more complicated issue than that, but it's a bandage during these trying times, and it's one that makes me proud of our hometown.



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