

Jim's Perspective...

Reconnecting with The Past

I never thought I'd see the day where I would have to live as I am right now. I have always been pretty social, but now I can't be. No movies, no parties and no sports. Essentially, I don't see anyone outside of the immediate family and even that is not often. I hope your agency's business is running as normal as possible. Many insurers are offering various forms of flexible continuation of insurance coverage without payment of premium due. However, if coverage continues despite no payment of premium due, I assume there is no commission going to the agency. For clients in the restaurant business that is mostly shut down, I assume the workers' compensation commission is diminished because of a reduced payroll. Some insurers are returning premium dollars to policyholders. How does this impact commission revenue for agents? I just want to extend my best wishes to all of you, and I hope things return to normal soon and we can shift our attention to other things, say, perhaps, Cornhusker football!

Even though things are kind of solitary and not fun, I want to share with you a little something that I experienced recently that kind of surprised me. The stay-at-home directive is not fun, but I think this old saying applies to how I felt recently: "If you look hard enough, there is a little silver lining in every cloud." And so, I share with you a little of my life from many years ago with the hope that it brightens your day just a little bit!

Sunday, April 5th just felt different. It was as if I had been beamed back to the early 1960's. Most retail stores were closed. It was a nice day and many folks in the neighborhood were out working in their yards or doing something with their kids. Others were walking down the sidewalk just to get out for a little bit.

It all felt so late fifties – early sixties, and it prompted me to reconnect with the past for a while. It was kind of fun. In those days Sunday was a "day of rest." Most businesses were closed. Families stayed at home other than to attend church. I remember many adult men hand-washed the family automobile on Sunday. A bucket full of soapy water. A rag to scrub the vehicle. A garden hose to wash off the soap and a chamois to dry the vehicle. The husband might also mow the lawn and many did this job with a push mower with two wheels that rotated a blade which cut the grass. There was no gas-powered lawn mower blasting away. In the early evening, the charcoal grill was lit and hamburgers, steaks or chicken were cooked. No propane tanks back then. Many people still had clothes lines in the back yard, and Sunday was the day to get clothing ready for the coming week. In the fall, on Sunday most homeowners raked leaves into a pile in the gutter of the street and started the pile of leaves on fire just to get rid of the leaves. The neighborhood was filled with smoke.

In the early 60's, if you wanted packaged liquor to take home you had to go to a liquor store and purchase "off-sale" liquor or beer. You could not buy it in a grocery store or pharmacy store as you can today. Lincoln also prohibited the sale of alcohol on Sunday. Consequently, there were

some liquor stores located just outside the city limits. These stores did a booming business on Sunday. I remember one located on West Van Dorn Street on the way to Pioneer Park. (West Van Dorn was rerouted many years ago. I think the street where this liquor store was located is now called West Prospector Court)

A number of the liquor stores had drive-thru service which would come in handy today! One such store was Marion's Liquor Store on South Street just west of the intersection with Capitol Parkway. The owner was a nice guy who was a parishioner at the Holy Family parish where I went to school. He knew me and my other Holy Family buddies. He never checked our I.D.'s! Not that we went there in grade school, but he still remembered us when we were in high school. At some point, a grocery chain sued the city of Lincoln arguing that the off-sale liquor store business was unconstitutional because it gave special treatment to liquor stores to the disadvantage of grocery stores. There was no legitimate government interest in giving liquor stores this competitive advantage. The court agreed with the grocery stores. They started selling liquor too. Eventually, most liquor stores closed but a few remain open today.

Lincoln also did not allow liquor by the drink. If you went out to dinner and wanted a beer or cocktail, you had to join a bottle club. Back then, the Legion Club and Elks Club operated as social entities that you had to officially join and become a member. In doing this, you effectively belonged to a bottle club and could get mixed drinks at your table. As I recall, if you went to Tony and Luigi's on 'O' Street you joined their bottle club and you had a locker that contained the alcohol you wanted to drink. Both my parents and Janie's parents belonged to the Elks Club and Legion Club. The Elks club was located at about the northeast corner of 14th and 'P' Street in the early 60's. Legend has it that on one weekend night, my mom stepped up onto the top of the baby grand piano in the Elks Club and performed a dance. My goodness mom!

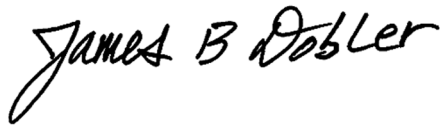
During the week, in my neighborhood, the milkman showed up once or twice a week and left bottles of milk in a wooden container situated on the side of our house. This too, would have been very useful today! Sometimes, my two little sisters, my little brother, and I would sit in front of the picture window of our house and wait for the milkman to show up. He usually arrived at roughly the same time each week. We bolted from the house and ran to the truck. We had nothing better to do, so we talked to the milkman and otherwise just got in his way. Milk delivery was a necessity because many families had only one vehicle and it was taken by one of the parents to go to work.

People just stayed at home on Sunday and that's kind of the way April 5th felt with the COVID-19 stay-at-home requirements. Life seemed so simple and innocent back then. There were only three television networks. There was no color TV. There was only one rotary telephone in a house and the phone was seldom used by the kids. In my neighborhood there was a group of six boys that played together. Four of us were the same age and the other two were two year's older. We often rode our bikes two blocks west to about 33rd and Van Dorn Street to play in Antelope Park. Once, we built a treehouse in a backyard, however this endeavor did not end well. One of the boys fell out of the tree and broke his leg. We all had typical nuclear families. All the dads had full-time jobs and all the moms stayed at home to cook, clean, and keep an eye on the kids. I liked cowboy television shows. I had a cowboy hat, cowboy shirt and cowboy boots! My first

bike from the 1950's was black and white, and it was emblazoned with the paraphernalia of cowboy television star Hopalong Cassidy.

And so I conclude with a song from 1962 that I remember from my childhood. I remember hearing it as we drove down the street in the car, or I heard it in the living room as it played on the Philco console radio. It is *Stranger on the Shore*, performed by a jazz musician who absolutely has the most unique name ever to be part of pop music. His name: Acker Bilk. As I listen to this song, I think back to racing down the street on my bike with my friends. I remember eating watermelon after Sunday dinner. Playing marbles with my friends in the front yard. Playing hide and go seek. It was indeed the good life, and I know that soon our good life will return!

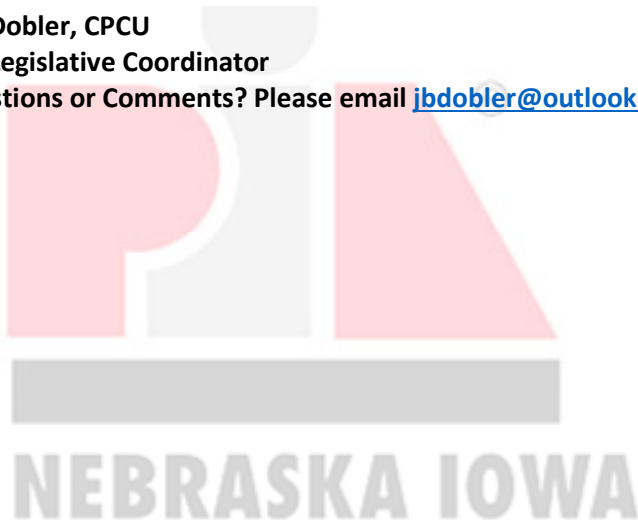
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJLJCctP6Rg>



Jim Dobler, CPCU

PIA Legislative Coordinator

Questions or Comments? Please email jbdobler@outlook.com



Local
Agents
Serving
Main Street
AmericaSM