

## Into thin air



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By Nate Smelle

There is nothing more valuable than the time we spend with the ones we love most in this world. Without those shared experiences of the good, the bad, the ugly, and the beautiful moments in life our existence becomes somewhat hollow. When we reminisce about such memorable and monumental moments, we come to understand the true value of time. In recognizing that not every memory we share with our loved ones is beautiful and good, we realized that it is how we handle and help each other through the hard times that we connect and go together. In establishing this kind of bond, we in turn make the good and the beautiful times that we do share together the best they can be.

To varying degrees, thanks to COVID-19 we have all had to distance ourselves from the people we care about to protect each other, and prevent the spread of the virus. Seeing that now everyone alive today will have the chance to one day reminisce about the good, bad, ugly, and beautiful aspects of their experience of the pandemic, I also see an opportunity that exists worldwide for people to connect and grow together.

I started writing this editorial over a month ago following the sudden death of my uncle. Although he did not die of COVID-19, his quality of life and the care he received at the end of it was tragically diminished by the pandemic's overwhelming impact on the health-care system.

Sadly, he spent his final days being transferred from hospital to hospital ? four times during his last five weeks of his life; repeatedly moved from room to room, or room to hallway; and, unable to spend time with his wife of 49 years and family. Imagine not being allowed to hold the hand of the person you love the most; or have an opportunity to say ?goodbye? and ?I love you.? Now imagine how much you would pay to ensure that you have these opportunities when you are on your deathbed.

These types of shared experiences during the pandemic help show us what matters most. They highlight our wants and our needs in a unique way that every one of us can appreciate, and benefit from. Monumental moments in our history like the ones we are currently living through, define us as individuals, as communities, and as a species.

What the biggest lesson we will learn from this pandemic will be once these hard times have passed, who knows? Nevertheless, for me now it is the value of time and our fragile state within its' scope. And, that we should never take the time we have with our loved ones for granted. Otherwise, we risk allowing these precious and irreplaceable moments to simply slip away and vanish into thin air.