

by Bill Hunter

What did we miss during the time we could not get together?

Most people see me as a glass half full kind of guy. The time and events during Covid pushed me toward half empty. Much of what I missed, when I look back at 2020 and 2021, I am still missing. When I think about what I missed the words civility, graciousness, openness and nuance are among the first to come to mind.

My fear of the virus and need to protect myself manifested themselves in anger at people who were: not wearing masks, talking loudly, and not respecting my space. I went grocery shopping during "Senior" hours once. The store was mobbed with masked seniors who were not civil toward each other and I was not civil toward them, particularly around the toilet paper display. Not feeling safe created much of the problem. Things have gotten better, but civility and graciousness seem to remain significantly lowered in our lives. I miss them.

However, when I meditated about my topic my peaceful self suggested that I leave my anger behind and focus on the positive and on my behaviors that allow me to retrieve those feelings of togetherness, connectedness and belongingness that I missed. I reflected on some experiences I have had at Keepers that didn't or most likely would not have happen on Zoom, masked and six feet apart. I agree with Joni Mitchell that... "You don't know what you've got till it's gone," Here is some of what we had at Keepers that I missed.

I remember at my first keepers during the Thursday cocktail reception, I bumped into Suzanne and Dwight Frindt. Suzanne had asked me to be a reader of a draft of their book. I knew Suzanne pretty well, but Dwight not at all. I felt some trepidation because I had suggested a different perspective or focus for their book. Then, they both thanked me for my contribution and told me what changes they had made. That exchange would not have happened without the casual opportunity to "catch up" with friends during a reception. I missed the possibility of bumped into conversations encouraged by the Keepers agenda.

At another keepers, I was walking down the hall listening to a message from the son of one of my best friends telling me that my friend had died. Shaken, I looked up to see Bob Corruthers walking towards me. He stopped because I looked troubled. He heard me and hugged me to comfort me. That moment, those friendships can't happen remotely. I missed the love and care of friends.

Boulder is such a wonderful venue for Keepers. I make it a point to take long walks up Pearl or along the Boulder Creek Trail with old friends and new while I am here. Les Smolin and a Tom Leonard are a couple of Keepers who have joined me on those walks and we were rarely six feet apart and wearing masks. I missed walking with friends.

A few years ago Janet Fogarty asked me to take a group of Keepers to the mountains for an adventure, a short hike. We drove, way longer that I thought we would have to drive, to the Wild Basin entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park. Then we hiked up the North St. Vrain

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Creek aways. That whole idea and execution would not have happened on Zoom. I missed adventures with other keepers.

For four of the six years since I retired from Vistage I have doubly appreciated reconnecting with the Colorado chairs who still mean a lot to me. I saw and spoke to many of those chairs during the Zoom Keepers, but, there were others that were either Zoomed out or not visible to me during those two meetings. I missed catching up with my Colorado buddies.

One year Les Smolin was headed to the Tetons after Keepers. His route took him through Fort Collins, where I live. So, on the spur of the moment, we agreed that we would have Sunday breakfast and he could meet my wife. During breakfast we told him we were going to cruise in Alaska in a couple of weeks. He then introduced us to his sister who lives in Juneau and who ultimately drove us around Juneau in the pouring rain for a wonderful tour. None of those events could have happened under pandemic guidelines. I missed that spontaneity.

Keepers rejuvenates me. My wife insists that I come and join this amazing group of people. I love the presentations in the large room, but it is the small groups and after where I have met and enjoyed interacting with many of you. Most of that occurred after the small group or during cocktail hour or during meals. We didn't have that opportunity on Zoom. I missed untended time.

Let me summarize - I missed:
bumped into conversations;
love and care of friends in time of need;
walking with friends;
catching up with my Colorado buddies;
adventures with other keepers;
spontaneity.

AND most of those happened during untended time where we had no agenda, other than getting to know and enjoy each other and limited relationship with our devices. We were able to just be with one another.

I'd like to add a coda about missing.

While I was preparing this brief talk about what I missed, my sister, my only sibling, was dying of terminal cancer complicated by some dementia. I wanted to write a memorial for her and asked her children and close friends what made her special. Their unanimous answers told me that I had missed my sister. We grew up together, but apart - boy/girl she was four years older and physically restricted with scoliosis, she was hard working, a great student and very nice and giving. She set a standard I could not fulfill. The years and distance separated us and for some reason I still saw her through my adolescent eyes. I missed who my sister really was. From this new and different perspective I saw that her behaviors that bugged were manifestations of her finest attributes. I had missed them.

When I shared my memorial with other people, I repeatedly heard similar stories of family members stereotyped by adolescence so that their relationship was not as rewarding as it

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should be. They did not know the other person for whom he/she was today with life changes and maturity nor did they recognize that they had changed as well. They missed each other. I share this because I missed my sister and you might be missing someone important to you. If you were to get to know them anew you might find a missing treasure before it's too late.

Form groups of 4-5 with people you do not know very well - create some new connections. I am sure you will find the time to be with the people you know well during your time here.

1. What were some of the important things you missed during the dark days? What strategies would you use to mitigate your missing these if there is another pandemic.?
2. How has untended time served you here at Keepers and elsewhere? How can insure that you will have untended time?
3. What did you miss about live Keepers and your relationships here that you want to be sure not to miss this year.