

My Upside of Covid

Covid has killed millions, and trampled the freedom of billions. For me, the main horror has been the paranoid *reaction* to the disease, rather than the disease itself. Much of the social life I built for myself before Covid evaporated during 2020. But since this is Thanksgiving Week, I'm reflecting on all the ways that my life has *improved* since Covid. And the list is not short. Necessity is the mother of invention - and never before have I felt such an urgent need to reinvent my life.

Here are my top positive changes since March, 2020.

1. As a direct result of Covid, I spent about three months in Texas with my family. A great chance to savor this beautiful and action-packed state - and to escape most of the Covid madness of northern Virginia.
2. During my visits, I made dozens of new friends, and taken several pre-existing friendships to the next level.
3. My best friends in Texas made herculean efforts on my behalf. The great Steve Kuhn lent my family his house, and my friends at UT offered ample office space and lunch companionship. And they were happy to let their kids play with my kids before any of us were vaccinated. The same goes for Ben Powell over at Texas Tech.
4. I've spent far more time than ever before with successful entrepreneurs. I've gotten to see first-hand how they think - and how much they do for all of us. Quick version: When I hear normal people tell me their business ideas, my reaction is almost always, "That's a terrible idea. Don't waste a penny on it." When I hear brilliant entrepreneurs like Steve Kuhn tell me their business ideas, my reaction is almost always, "Maybe!"
4. My six-year homeschooling experiment came to a resounding success when Vanderbilt accepted my twins with full scholarships. Hear more about it on Freakonomics.
5. I worked out a new deal with the Cato Institute to write another graphic novel. Just finished the storyboards. This will definitely be the most exciting book ever written on housing regulation! More educational graphic novels may follow; wait and see.
6. I worked out a deal with Middle Tennessee State University's Political Economy Research Institute to visit eight times per year. A great chance to make new friends, exchange ideas, see my sons, and get to know Nashville very well. All thanks to one of my star students, Dan Smith!
7. I ran an online art contest to illustrate my first fictional graphic novel, *Amore Infernale*.

The winning artist was excellent, and I hired him to draw the whole book. Progress has been slow, but time will tell.

8. My first art contest was such a great experience that I've run several more, meeting a bunch of promising artists in the process. One of them, Ady Branzei, is illustrating *Build, Baby, Build*.

9. Another contest winner, @sengsavane, is drawing book covers for an eight-volume series of my all-time best EconLog posts. Mike Huemer had a great experience self-publishing his new intro philosophy text on Amazon, so I'm going to try the same approach.

10. I homeschooled all four of my kids during the first 15 months of Covid. While aggravating in some ways - I was clearly not born to teach arithmetic - it did bring me even closer to my four favorite humans. Furthermore, homeschooling allowed us to take long trips to Texas and the Yucatan.

11. "Never let a crisis go to waste." I used the crisis to convince my wife to get a second freezer, which I quickly filled with bulk meat purchases from Costco. I was shocked to discover that their bulk meat tastes a lot better than their regular meat. Indeed, bulk Costco steak tastes better to my family than anything we get in any restaurant.

12. Closely related: My cooking skills improved markedly during Covid. Besides cooking the best steak of my life, I mastered the grilling of fish. And I added multiple side dishes to my repertoire, including grilled peppers and Texas toast.

13. Early in Covid, I started doing about five minutes of weight-lifting per day, and was amazed by the dose-response function. Now I do about ten minutes a day, and seem to be in the best shape I've been in thirty years. I got much less bang for my buck back in high school, when I averaged about thirty minutes of weight-lifting per day. Odd, but fortunate.

Yes, I know awful stuff has happened all over the world. I suspect more awful stuff will happen this winter. There will probably be another seasonal Covid spike, leading to another grotesque overreaction. Still, I strove to make the best out of a bad situation, and things have worked out far better for my family than I expected. Remember: Self-help is like a vaccine! If tried, it works.