

## COVID-19

### Reflections from My Living Room

By J. Carter Thompson, DRI National Director

My family and I are in our 13th week of COVID-19 quarantine/lockdown/stay-at-home. My wife, who is a tax lawyer, works in the room formerly known as my study; I work in the living room (after spending the first five weeks working on a small computer table in the kitchen), and until two weeks ago, our 13-year-old twins were back in their rooms doing “distance learning” on their laptops. After the first couple of weeks, the walls were closing in, but we have now settled into a nice routine.

From my new work station, I see walkers, joggers, bikers, and dog walkers up and down our street, I see a wild rabbit and a hawk every couple of days, and squirrels and birds every day. A couple of weeks ago, our across the street neighbor had some big trees taken down. As a defense lawyer, as I sat here and watched, all I could think about was what am I going to do if one of those guys gets hurt. Nobody did.

We miss seeing friends and going out to eat, but I have been trying my hand at cooking. Early on in quarantine, I made deviled eggs for the first time. I have since perfected my technique by making them three more times. My mother-in-law loves them. I have also prepared blackened redfish, deer tenderloin, sausage-cheese balls, pancakes, and omelettes, including a chili-cheese omelette that rivals the one I always order at Camellia Grill in New Orleans. I am going to try my hand at prime rib this weekend.

Before quarantine, with all of our respective schedules, we were lucky to have a couple of family meals together a week. Now we have one or two meals together a day. I view that as the

silver lining of this whole pandemic thing. We are spending a lot of family time together, whether we want to or not.



The twins have missed school (makes me wonder if they're really mine) and their friends, but the biggest loss for them was their spring middle school baseball season. They were going to be eighth graders on the 7-8th grade team and had put in a lot of effort working out, taking batting practice, and even taking a yoga class in preparation for the season. They will be 14 on the Fourth of July and have grown a lot this year. They were also planning on a high-adventure Boy Scout sailing

trip this summer in the Florida Keys, but that did not happen. And we had planned to tag on a few days of vacation after a trip to Banff Canada for the DRI Board meeting in June. That won't happen either, but we are hoping to reschedule the board meeting for later in the summer.

After missing middle school baseball season, the twins started summer baseball practice and football workouts last week. The combination of the two keeps them pretty busy and has cut down on late nights on the Xbox. I guess the most unpredictable thing we have done since this all started was adopt a kitten. I have always been a dog person (we have two of those), and I have never owned a cat. I can only surmise that my boys must have been COVID-lonely and looking for a new friend when one of my wife's Facebook friends posted a picture of a rescue kitty up for adoption. Next thing I know, Tux (as in Tuxedo, or Gooba, as the boys have nicknamed him) was at the front door. It proves parents will basically do anything to keep their kids happy.



The last time I was on an airplane was the first week in March, when I returned from the winter meeting of the DRI Board of Directors. That has got to be a record for me. I sorely missed not getting to see friends and clients at the DRI Drug and Medical Device Seminar in May, but I have been lucky to keep up with DRI friends through coffee with Emily, and Zoom calls with fellow members of the DRI Drug and Medical Device Committee and my fellow third-year board members. The benefits of DRI membership keep coming.

Other than a few quick trips to the office to put a wet signature on a pleading or pick up a file, I have not spent significant time in the office in almost three months. Who would have imagined? Fortunately, with the technology we have today, many practices can go on without being physically in the office on a daily basis. For example, I participated in a Zoom deposition a few weeks ago. I was skeptical about it, but the court reporting service hosting the deposition provided a tutorial on some of the Zoom tools that make for a successful deposition, including how to upload documents and use them as exhibits. We had over ten lawyers participating, and I thought it would be a zoo. But, we stipulated that one objection to form was good for all, and that kept us from talking over each other. It went off without a hitch.

My office has entered phase 2 of our return to work process, which means that up to 50 percent of the lawyers

and 50 percent of the support staff can return to work on a voluntary basis. We have to take our temperature every day before entering the office and wear a mask anytime we are anywhere in the office other than our own office with the door closed.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the recent deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. I am proud of the statement of support and solidarity our CEO, Dean Martinez, issued on behalf of DRI last week. Given our honorable profession and commitment to the rule of law, we must do more to lead in the fight against racism and injustice. As Dr. King said in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” “[i]njustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

One of my twins’ best friends is a 14-year-old African-American young man. Up until COVID-19, he spent a lot of time, and often several weekends a month, at our house. He’s like a member of our family. It breaks my heart to know that his father has and will have conversations with his son that I will never have to have with mine.

Y’all stay safe, and please stand with DRI and others in the fight against racism and injustice. I look forward to seeing you at a DRI meeting once all this is over.