

The Best Days of Our Lives? No, Not Really.



SHELTER IN PLACE

As I write this column, we are on day 65 of sheltering in place in Illinois. I am watching friends in other states across the country slowly opening up — going back to church, eating out in restaurants, even making plans for cattle shows to resume.

It's incredible. Truly, I'm happy for you all. And, truly, I'm ready to move. Here in Illinois, well, we're on the slow track. The very, very slow track.

Of a five-phase plan, we're on phase two.

Maybe by the beginning of June, we will be able to get a haircut again.

Maybe by the time this magazine prints, we'll be able to eat in a restaurant again. But, our governor says we could easily move backward in our state's five-phase plan, rather than forward. State fair? Don't get your hopes up.

While I write this, we are waiting, as patiently as we can, for the announcement that our state Hereford preview show and the Junior National Hereford Expo are truly going to happen. We've made our entries and are working our cattle every day, being optimistic.

And we know that those in charge of these shows are doing everything in their power to fight for our youth — to ensure these hardworking kids

have their chance in the ring. My husband, Craig, and I know these folks want nothing more than for the shows to go on.

We've had many conversations with our kids about that fact. If it were up to the national and state boards? No question. The shows will happen. But there's a lot more to it than just what our boards want. There's more to it than what we want. And, sometimes, that's tough for a young person to understand. Honestly, it's a tough pill for the adults to swallow, too.

But, it's the reality of the times we're in.

Our TVs and social media news feeds are filled with what should be inspirational sayings that have become truly cliché.

"These are unprecedented times."

"We're all in this together."

If you're like me, those sayings are like nails on a chalkboard. And then, a Facebook contact made this post the other day: "If you don't look back on these days as some of the best days of your life, then that's on you."

Oh, how that misses the mark for so many. Yes, we absolutely can choose our attitude during these times. We can choose to make the best of a bad situation. But let's be honest. If these aren't the best days of your life, that's OK.

These days are hard — downright hard — for many of us.

We've been forced into becoming our children's second teachers overnight — without training and without necessarily wanting to do it. The biggest arguments and frustrations in our home during the past 65 days have come from mom and dad trying to get children to do their work. For most of us, this is not easy or fun. We are surviving.

In the meantime, many of us are also trying to work our full-time jobs right in the middle of the "classroom" while also being "teachers." So much for regular office hours. It's now squeezing in work whenever there's a moment of quiet for many of us. And don't forget the bribing and threatening children to stay quiet when regularly scheduled Zoom meetings and calls occur.

Then, there's the stress of so much "togetherness." Yes, I love my people. More than anything on the earth. But 65 days with nothing but our little family of five — in our 1,800 square-foot house? Well, that's been a little too much togetherness. My husband typically travels for his job, and we have all gotten used to him being away for periods of time. And we're used to running to numerous activities for the kids, especially during the month of May with all that the "end of the school year" brings. That routine was brought to a halt overnight.

Thank heavens, truly, for living in the country. And thank heavens for our cattle to keep the kids busy and occupied during this time at home.

As I wrote in my last column, we can choose our attitudes. We can choose to find the good. We can teach our children how to react to adversity in times like this. I still truly believe that, with all that I have.

But these times don't have to be the best days of our lives. They really don't. We can try to make the best of the situation. We can wait (as patiently as we can) for life to slowly return to a more-normal pace. But we don't have to love it. If all we're doing right now is surviving? Well, that's good enough. **HW**

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