

Riding in the Time of Corona

Sometimes we over estimate our abilities. I know I did. Before Covid, I managed to make this particular bike ride with a lot of effort, but I did it. Railroad Pass Casino to the Veteran's Cemetery.

My bike group and I met up early; 7 a.m., apparently not early enough. It was about 86 degrees when we took off. Within the first half mile, I realized, hmmm, they don't call this Covid 19 for nothing. Covid found me in November; but the "19" found me little by little all year long. And between the weight gain, and the lack of exercise, I wasn't quite the person I was two years prior. I wanted to be. I tried to be. But as the morning wore on, it became apparent, that I wasn't.

We made our way to the Veteran's Cemetery. It was May 31st after all. And we did our patriotic ride a couple years back. At that time, as this time, I recounted with a sense of pride how my father-in-law Chuck Johnson, designed, raised the money, and dedicated the Korean War Monument. He served in Korea and Vietnam. But it was Korea that was known as the "forgotten war". So forgotten, that there was no monument for this war. And that wasn't acceptable to him. He enlisted the help of his veteran buddies and community support, and within two years of conception, mission accomplished.

We stood there having made the journey this far as a group, and took our "we were there" photo. We had all made it from Rail Road Pass and to the VA Cemetery. It was about 8 a.m. in the morning and we could hear bag pipes playing, watched families gathering, and looked out at the expanse of thousands of little flags placed with loving care on each grave. Each flag a testimony to love, valor, courage, and respect. No one was forgotten or invisible. Each person's contribution acknowledged and embraced.

There are times in our country we forget these simple values. We focus on our divisions. How much we "don't get stuff done" because we can't come together. Well, somehow, these men and women "got it together". And they did so, in order that we in turn would find our way to "get it together".

Sometimes we over estimate our abilities. We think we can do more than we can. But on the other hand, if we don't even try—who are we? And who are we if we don't admit that there are some things in life we can't do alone; we need our friends—whether in battle or on a simple bike ride that tests one's endurance and resilience.

In attempting the ride back, I didn't make it up the steep hill the way I had hoped. No, the heat got to me. And as the bike group waited for me, our morbid sense of humor got the best of us. Because yes, there were actual vultures—three to be exact—that were flying overhead. The group looked at me and said, "*Rabbi, you know Joni will be awfully mad at us if we let you just crumble in the heat.*" The vultures kept flying and my body temperature kept rising. It was time to call it a day. One of the guys who was riding an e-bike went on ahead and brought back his truck. And my journey on the bike for the morning ended.

We all will have a bit of a story to tell about this ride. Perhaps some will have a story to tell at my expense. They even teased me, "Rabbi, this would make a good story to tell in the 'In the Time of Corona' essay." But that's ok, because my story will be one that reminds me, everything I have done in my life, I have had the good fortune of good friends. Folks who have had my back, and kept those pesky vultures away, as together, we looked forward to another day of friendship.

I would say, that this thought is what Memorial Day is all about.

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