

Losing a Friend Over Covid-19

By Rod Fraser



Rod Fraser carving with Don in 2020

From the time of the initial Covid-19 lockdown in early 2020, Don and I played a game of hide and seek with those that wanted us to 'stay home and be safe'. While we didn't flout the law, we skated very close to the rules, in order to pursue a social life and indulge our love of woodcarving.

In the cold weather, we met outside in our cars, opened our windows and conducted a decent conversation from car to car. And when it was too cold for that, we would find a private corner of the

parking lot, sit in Don's car and chat about the news, our world, and all that seemed to be wrong with it. A Tim's latté in hand – we would hold court and engage in the greatest of conversations.

The Covid-19 lockdown rules changed often, so our approach varied to meet the circumstances of the time. When it seemed that meeting in our cars was no longer permitted, we met in our respective basements for a time, carving our lil' figures and continuing our discussions.



And when the warm weather beckoned in the Spring of 2020 and 2021, we relocated to 'Grass Park' in Brooklin, where we occupied a picnic table under a gazebo – just a five-minute walk from the local Tim Hortons. At lunchtime, we packed up our

carving gear and drove to Tim's for a greasy lunch, a lovely latté, and still more conversation. During all these months, our friendship deepened and our discussions got better and better.

All this changed somewhat, when vaccines became available in mid-2021. Don and his wife opted early for the jab. They were both over 80 years of age with a number of medical conditions. It just made sense for them to follow the advice available at the time, and protect themselves against Covid-19.

I chose to remain unvaccinated. I was in pretty good nick, coming up to 75 years of age without any health issues. I calculated Covid-19 was much like the flu. Statistics available at the time indicated I had a better than 95% chance of beating it (if infected), with the added advantage of gaining natural immunity.

In addition to this, my wife and I had what was likely Covid in February of 2020 and we breezed through what was a normal flu without difficulty. I have no independent evidence of it being Covid, but I later learned the virus was circulating around the world as early as the last two months of 2019. If this was the case, we likely had one of the earlier infections.

There was another reason for my reluctance to

get vaccinated. It was widely known at the time this vaccine was experimental and had no long-term safety record. I thought it made sense to wait a few months to see what happened.

Current statistics tell us a number of the vaccinated have experienced serious side effects from the jab, others have died from it, and still more have suffered breakthrough Covid-19 infections. It seems my earlier decision was prudent.

A [study](#) this week (November 24, 2021) from the Center for Disease Control ('CDC') has also confirmed vaccinated people to be "no less infectious" than unvaccinated people.

With all that as background, this article is really about a serious upset in my friendship with Don – largely due to our differing vaccination status, and the recent Ontario rules to restrict the lives of the unvaccinated.

Don lives in a community of seniors in a nearby town, where he tells me many are uncomfortable when they cross paths with an unvaccinated person. When the new lockout rules for the unvaccinated came into effect this fall, it was clear this would be a problem.

Because of the above noted sensitivities in his community, Don told me he keeps his knowledge of

his friendship with me (i.e. an unvaccinated person) to himself. He depends on these neighbours for recreational and social activities, so he doesn't wish to cause them upset or concern.

With these new lockout rules for the unvaccinated now in place, Don and I can no longer lunch indoors at Tim's (or any other restaurant offering indoor seating).

If we want a lunch break during our carving sessions, we can buy our lunch through the drive-thru and eat it in the car. Or we can enter the premises, order and pay for food, use the washroom, but we can't sit indoors. Given the colder weather coming soon, these new rules were likely to inconvenience Don, and embarrass me for putting him in that position.

When I discussed this with Don, he thought it might be best discontinuing meeting for the duration of the lockout. After hearing him out, I agreed with his reasoning, and appreciated his candour.

Privately, I was disappointed. When a friendship is interrupted in this fashion, it's hard to predict how the future will unfold. Don joined a new carving group within a few weeks, and I moved on as well.

Fortunately, I have another good friend with whom to carve and share conversation. And I have

sought out others to fill this gap in my social life. My Tuesday meetings with Don, have now been taken up with another. And I often meet for coffee with a friendly neighbour who likes to chat about politics.

There is a useful lesson in all this. Friends come and go in life, and it is important not to become too dependent on any one individual for company. Death, changed circumstances, or estrangement can end any friendship, and we must still soldier on.

But on a societal level, there is something seriously wrong when government policy separates us from our fellows, and demonizes good people who have done nothing more than exercise independent judgement.

I suspect I am the stronger for all of this. Telling this story and posting it on my website has certainly helped.

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This article has a few details changed to make the story clearer and more interesting. No one should assume it is true in every particular.

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