

From the Desk of MAFCA's Chapter Coordinator

One phrase that is constantly repeated by friends and in print is "I can't wait for it to get back to normal." We all want that to come to pass. But really, what normal are we hoping to see return?

Normal has a variety of meanings depending upon the subject. I have been cleaning out some boxes stored since the last move some 5 years ago. I collect a lot of things and am very slow to sort thru them quickly. I came across a picture of friends at a gathering on the north end of the Golden Gate Bridge from about 25 years ago. The memory of that day, somewhat cold and windy as evident from all of us bundled up on a sunny day, brought a wonderful feeling of joy as I remembered each of the people pictured. That was a great day. everything in my life was great.....it was normal.

Some ten years later, there was another normal to which I had to adjust. I had changed jobs, divorced, and moved. My life had been in chaos and only now was it beginning to be calm enough to be considered normal. I had retained some of my everyday activities such as playing and managing a soccer league and driving my Model A. Most of the time everything was okay but once in while that feeling of insecurity crept into my mind and I was uncomfortable and anxious. I certainly longed for the old normal. Unfortunately, it was long gone.

An example of another kind of normal might help you to understand how complex normalcy is. When you drive your Model A you are constantly aware of the sounds - squeaks and rattles and thumps - that your car makes as you travel to the store or on a tour. When you hear a new noise, you spend time wondering what could be causing the noise. Once you get home, you lift the hood and look around to see if something has come loose. Next you might crawl under the car so see if there is something that is readily visible. Then you check the back seat and the trunk. How about all those tools that you carry along in the event of a breakdown? You take another short drive and try to pinpoint the exact location of the noise. Home again you now decide to look more closely at the engine and you remove the distributor cap. Ahh! With some relief you discover that one of the distributor lugs is worn down at an angle and makes a click sound every so often. You replace it and go for a test drive. Everything is back to normal but it is a new normal.

Many wish for the good old days. As we all know, the good old days are long gone. Normal is ever-changing. Our minds fool us into believing that things are the same as they used to be. Sheltering in place forces us to confront what normal really means. Normal is what the movie "Groundhog Day" brings to our attention. Normal is repeatabily unending. IT IS BORING, IT IS PREDICTABLE. What we really want is change, change that is positive and can be seen as an improvement. As I have already mentioned, I am ZOOMED out. Does this mean I am going to give up.

Damn the torpedoes, NO. It means that I have to work harder at making things work better for me and for my club and for those around me. I can make a difference and make a new normal every day. This is something that you can do as well. Take pictures and share them, telephone friends, write letters, play your ukulele with friends using Zoom or Skype.

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