

Reflections on a Pandemic

By Michele R. Punturi



COVID-19 has universally affected everyone in some way, shape, or form. This unique and unprecedented time in our history has me contemplating the following three questions:

- What it was?
- What it is?
- What it will be?

For the past 30 years, I have commuted to my Center City office, arriving by 7:00 a.m., no different than what my parents did until they retired from their jobs. As my legal career progressed, so did my personal life, including marriage, children, and the tricky proposition of balancing career and family. I recall many occasions of leaving the office to rush home for a family dinner, playtime with the kids, or, as they grew older, attending one of their many activities. As the years went by and technology advanced, the concept of working remotely gained in popularity. The legal profession was slow to catch on, but eventually my firm began to allow the new generation of lawyers to partake in this process. I, however, remained the same “traditional” lawyer who left my house before daylight and often returned home after dark. While many lawyers were working remotely, it was not my cup of tea. To me, “what it

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was” was working just fine!

Then, like a lightning bolt in March of this year, life changed dramatically for all of us. For many, the “what it is” had a paralyzing effect. The realization of what was happening caused drastic modifications in our daily lives, both personally and professionally. Fortunately, my firm was ahead of the curve and had an established remote work policy. Within days of the state-wide shut down on non-essential businesses, almost all my firm’s 1,200 employees were working remotely.

While the technology side of working from home was quickly mastered, the mental gymnastics have been an ongoing process. We have childcare issues and the responsibility of ensuring that elderly family members are safe and protected from the virus. There are uncertainties surrounding how the 2020–2021 school year will unfold, and other challenges associated with managing a household during a pandemic. While we are all operating under a new set of rules, the “what it is” is not exactly what we bargained for, but it is what we will have to live with for the foreseeable future.

Despite these trying times, the legal community has rallied with the support of a variety of resources, many of which have changed the way we practice law. The COVID-19 pandemic has given us a time to pause and has helped us to be grateful for the people in our lives and our family connections. As a society, we have reconnected, albeit from a distance, with friends and loved ones and tested our own resilience. I am hopeful we do not lose sight of what truly matters in life and that we continue to value the

“human” element. While our situation is real and serious, it appears we are moving ahead in a positive direction. We must continue to focus on what we can control and never stop believing we can make a difference. When we adopt that mindset, the “what it will be” is okay.

Michele R. Punturi (mripunturi@mdwgc.com) is Director of the Workers’ Compensation Department at Marshall Dennehey Warner Coleman & Goggin.

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