



Photos & text
by
Ed Breen



Rediscovering solitude

Isolation. Insulation. Quarantine. Social distancing. Call it what you will, the end is the same: An opportunity to link with the world around us in a way that most of us have not since childhood. All in the absence of others. In solitude.

An experience to which most of us had become unaccustomed until two months ago, when, in search of preservation for ourselves and each other we sought that which had become so alien in most of our lives: Solitude. Aloneness. The absence – or at least distance – of others around us.

A blending of time, anxiety and a dash of boredom sent some in search of the nooks and crannies of the rural roads and landscapes seldom seen. A chance to get out of the house and crisscross Grant County at an unhurried pace, but not before the cinnamon rolls emerged from the oven.

And even that exercise, the transformation of wheat flour into bread and other baked goods became an exploration not joined by many in the frantic days of so long ago – maybe January or February or even early March. Grocers this spring have reported off-the-charts sales of flour and yeast, ingredients in a lesson to learn or relearn.

From the blooms of the redbud in the backyard to the pastoral silence of the Rowland Cemetery, a tiny burial

plot along County Road 600 W. in southwestern Grant County, it was the absence of people that became the norm in the spring of 2020 and provided the solitude and the visual emptiness of which photographs can be made. A challenge: To photograph the absence of activity.

And when people were in evidence, it was mainly with serious intent, as reflected in the focus on the face of Marion Mayor Jess Alumbaugh, under the watchful eye of Health Officer Dr. David Moore as the mayor prepared to go on television last month to explain what was to come.

When folks ventured out, it was mainly alone and mostly an exercise in distancing, such as casting a line into the Mississinewa River in the northwestern corner of the county. The catching of fish was only an incidental attraction.

Patriotism did not lose its edge, with flags in evidence across the landscape. Here and there, political statements began to take shape in this election year, such as the banner affixed to a semi-trailer east of Marion on Ind. 18.

All in all, not a lot of commotion, but rather an opportunity to put into the memory bank some images of solitude from that COVID spring that seemed to have no end.

