

The Mayflower Log



SUMMER 2020 VOLUME 20, NUMBER 3

LIFE at MAYFLOWER during the coronavirus pandemic

When you live at Mayflower, you are old enough to have seen a lot in your lifetime. You may think you've seen just about everything. But none of us has witnessed the changes that took place when COVID-19 took hold of our world. The polio epidemic of the early 1950s was a public health crisis in the United States, of course, but it was not accompanied by 24/7 news coverage and endless amounts of data. In the spring of 2020, the coronavirus was all-consuming.

This issue of the *Mayflower Log* attempts to give a glimpse of our lives in the spring of 2020. It is not meant to be comprehensive, only snapshots of what some of us did and thought. In some cases, the stories exemplify what others also did. For example, several residents besides Alicemary Borthwick sewed protective masks. (But no one else came close to her output!)

Every one of us at Mayflower is fully aware that we are living through a period of time that will be discussed and analyzed for years to come. This is our small contribution to the historical record.

Mary Schuchmann

An Abrupt Change

About the middle of March, 2020, we were suddenly thrust into a new world. We had heard about the COVID-19 virus that apparently started in China, but had no clue as to how transmissible it was and how dangerous it was to older people or those with existing health problems. Now, in a matter of just a few days, schools were closed; non-essential businesses were closed; churches were closed; we could not eat in the Buckley dining room; all special programs were cancelled; we could not visit friends or relatives in the health center (except for family visits during a resident's final hours); we were strongly encouraged not to have outside cleaning help or visitors to our apartments; we were urged not to go to any stores that remained open, but to take advantage of grocery delivery to our doors by special arrangement, or curbside pickup from stores or restaurants. We were urged to wear masks away from our homes. By the end of May, some restrictions had been lifted, but many people still felt fearful of going any place where there would be many people, and Mayflower restrictions remained the same. Then, a new and terrible problem erupted when a black man in Minneapolis was killed by a police officer who held his knee on the man's neck for nearly nine minutes, and all kinds of protests, most starting peacefully, but some turning violent, broke out all over the United States and even some places in the world. No doubt all the violence was fueled by the frustration, isolation, worry, and stay-at-home orders of the pandemic. At this point, it is difficult to guess what final outcomes/changes will result or how long we will be encouraged to stay in our own homes with no visitors.

Marge Graves June 4

A Memorable Discovery

Like many others at Mayflower during this time of isolation, I have been sorting through boxes of random memorabilia I have collected over the years. My biggest "find" to date has been a pristine Kennedy for President bumper sticker. The sight of the vintage campaign piece brought back instant memories of me as an idealistic college student in Appleton, Wis., in 1960. It was a time when life seemed simpler, issues more clear-cut, and politics less divisive. I put the bumper sticker in my front window *Kennedy for President!*

Mary Schuchmann April 22



Liam's Story

We knew this would be an unusual spring when our German grandson Liam decided he would like to live with us and spend a semester at the Grinnell Middle School, but no one could have predicted what a strange semester it would turn out to be. Liam arrived at the end of January, soon after we were first hearing about the deadly new virus emerging in China. Our daughter arrived with Liam, and we had a lovely two weeks with them both, before Laura headed back home to Germany. Liam quickly integrated himself into middle school life, signing on as a manager of the eighth-grade basketball team within the first week. February was a blur with 6 am practice and games that kept him out until after supper. In retrospect, we are so glad he jumped into his experience with both feet. The Middle School began its spring break on March 13th, and that turned out to be the last day of school for the year. Liam wistfully remarked that it was the first time he really liked school, and then they had to cancel it. April and May became months of home schooling, baking and quiet walks. We loved the time with Liam, and he was a really good sport, always cheerful in spite of the circumstances. This week we drove to O'Hare so that he could get a direct flight to Germany. He is sorely missed here, but his parents are incredibly relieved to have him home.

Katherine McClelland, June 4



Liam and Kent both get haircuts. Likely cutting hair was not a skill Liam anticipated learning during his American semester!

Photos by Katherine McClelland

Dear Diary

Dear Diary:

Thought I would just try and keep you informed about my existence since this hoax virus ascended upon us. I have been confined to my cell for the past two weeks, but I am allowed to walk around in the yard for as long as my aching back will let me. It is not easy to get to the yard these days as the door leading to the elevator is now locked. I am not sure why it is locked



as the only people who use it are the other seven people confined on this level. And if you really want to get in, the doors on the first floor are open to all, so why would you ever be on the second floor. Oh. I know this is probably for our protection, and I really do appreciate the ways in which the Mayflower Staff are trying to protect us. However, getting back to my original thought that it is not easy getting to the yard. In order to get this door opened I have to use both hands and one knee for this operation. It is not an easy door to open. The door swings back, and I try to get my key out of the door and this takes several seconds, and so I push the door back and start to pick up the papers that I am taking to the recycling bin, but of course, before I can pick them up the door swings shut hitting me on my butt, catapulting me into the door jam. This is not serious as I just hit my head which is somewhat protected by my hair which by

now is seriously long. After hitting me the door swings open and I am able to get my papers and escape into our lounge in which the elevator is located. I spend several seconds trying to punch the down button with my elbow and finally I am successful and get into the elevator. Now I have to try and punch the down button in the elevator with my elbow. This time it is easier. I must be improving my skills. Arriving on the first floor I now can put my papers in the recycling bin. Mission accomplished. Now, I will see if I have any mail. The usual, which I now take to the recycling bin. Now I am ready to return to my cell and see what I can find to entertain me. I could do some cleaning, and probably should as the woman who cleans for me is no longer coming, but I probably won't. First though I wash my hands.

So, I decide to play a little solitaire as that sometimes is entertaining. So, I play about 20 rounds and don't come close to winning. I guess some would just say I'm being stubborn, but I like to think of myself as optimistic and persistent. Once I thought about cheating, but what fun is that?

I finally give up and turn on the TV as I really do enjoy watching sports. And these days there are all kinds of sports events that I can watch and who cares if I have seen it before as I certainly don't remember having seen it before. Somehow just knowing that this has already happened and no longer counts *seems* to affect my interest. So I turn on CNN but you know who is having another of his enlightening reports to the nation. Don't need that. That is way too depressing.

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Traveling during COVID-19: Two Perspectives

For almost 20 years, we have made a return trip from Tucson to Grinnell in late April or early May. Sometimes there were weather-related challenges: a severe dust storm, heavy thunderstorms, extreme wind, tornado warnings, early morning fog. This year, with fear and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the constantly changing information available, the 3-day drive was an entirely new experience.

We ate only the food that we carried with us, and it was far from enticing! During the day we survived on Ensure, high quality energy bars, BelVita Breakfast Biscuits and bottled water. Our evening meal 3 nights in a row featured peanut butter, honey and dried cranberries on whole wheat bread, with cookies and tea for dessert.

We're guessing that we interacted with not more than 7 or 8 people the whole trip, counting 3 motel desk clerks. At the first night's motel, only 3 rooms were occupied; the second had 10 or 11 rooms reserved. None had their coffee area open at all, even for hot water and packaged beverages. Before moving our bags into motel rooms, we used our own supplies to sanitize door handles, light switches, bathroom sink handles, micro-wave touch screen, desk and bathroom surfaces, etc.

It was a huge relief to be back in Grinnell and at the Mayflower. Even before we left Tucson, it was common to hear the phrase "We're all in this together." Here, the phrase had much more meaning. The Mayflower's protocol precautions were extremely reassuring; staff made sure that we had everything we needed. Being quarantined for 14 days felt like the best vacation!

Nancy Reinecke, May 28

UNCERTAINTY? How to get back to Grinnell the safest way, leaving as soon as possible? Every aspect of the 1500 mile return trip from Tucson, AZ, to home is up for grabs: Air travel or auto? If airplane, there are risks in accommodating cheek-by-jowl proximity to hundreds of people on the plane and in major airports. If by car, will gas stations be open and supplied? Will motels be open? What food to pack? Will we need cash or will credit cards still be accepted? There are hundreds of miles of wide open spaces highways--will we be safe from truly desperate people who may rob to survive? What about emergency service if our eight-year old car needs repairs?

REALITY: turned out to be minimal traffic except for semi-trailers. Credit card purchase of gas was readily available. Gas station employees were all masked and shielded by plastic enclosures with social distance marks on the floor. Hand sanitizer we had with us and was provided most places we stopped. We wondered what we would find life was like in returning to Grinnell? Life as we now know it continues to unfold as our shared Alice in Wonderland adventure—for now and the foreseeable future. It is so good to be adapting to our new normal here at Mayflower!

Warren Reinecke, May 28

Life on ZOOM

Entombed outside my window Redbuds bloom.
Sheltering in place where we can be safe.
Anyone for a game of bridge on ZOOM?

A girl is sewing in a room in Fayum
A blue bandanna to cover her face.
Entombed outside my window Redbuds bloom.

The girl in Fayum has a loom I presume.
She makes a dress that is covered in lace.
Anyone for a game of bridge on ZOOM?

The lace is on her face, the loom is in her room
But, there is no place to shelter in place.
Entombed outside my window Redbuds bloom.

Syed Khalid sets out from old Khartoum
To buy a new bride to shelter in place.
Anyone for a game of bridge on ZOOM?

Seven professors together on ZOOM
Confer with a poet in cyber space
Entombed outside my window Redbuds bloom.
Anyone for a game of Bridge on ZOOM?

Gene M. Rohr May 2

Washing My Hands

The bar soap
With its firm slippery softness
Massages my palms
And erupts with suds.

This soap lubricates
My supple hands as they swaddle
And chase each other
Around and around
Like playful otters.

Then I
Intertwine my fingers,
Cleaning between them,
Front and back.
After which I gather
Fingers, palms, wrists and all
In hand-some union.

I like the twisty gliding swivel
As my right hand twirls around my left thumb
And then my left hand twirls around the right:
Milking my thumbs.

I make a point
By gathering
The fingers of each hand
To scratch the other palm.
You scratch my back
And I'll scratch yours.

I finish with a flourish,
Floating my hands under
The frothing water.
My hands snake slide slip
Playfully around each other:
The otters
Once again
Gamboling.

At last,
The fun-filled play complete,
I celebrate
The brief unique ecstasy
Of hands that are
Clean momentarily.

Judy Hunter June 4

Diary

(continued from p. 4)

Ah, I know what I will do. I will have a little snack. Snack is over so my next attempt at entertainment is my trusty Kindle. I clean it in case something dangerous sneaked in. So for a couple of hours I am settled in and enjoying reading—which I enjoy even when I am not in solitary confinement.

I suddenly realize that it must be time to eat dinner. That creates a dilemma for me. Do I want to try and find something in my slowly depleting larder, or should I call Buckley dining room and have them bring me something? Maybe I will just have a glass of wine and think about it.

That's it for now diary. Looking at previous pages of this diary I realize that my life is not a lot different than it usually is. C'est la vie.

Roberta Atwell April 8

Clean Up on Aisle 3

For me it started with a "YouTube" video posted on Facebook. It showed a man demonstrating how to disinfect his groceries just purchased at the store before bringing them into his home. There was a dedicated disinfecting station, complete with a large bowl of bleach/water mixture and sponges to wipe down each article of packaged food. The fresh fruits apparently were ok to just rinse off in the sink. I immediately set up such a staging area in my garage, and put myself through all the tedious steps each time I went to the grocery store. Of course I wore a mask and gloves!

Yes, 2020 brought us questions we did not know the answers to: how long does the COVID-19 virus stay viable on a cereal box? Should we shop in a grocery store where only some of the workers are wearing masks? Is ordering on-line and having a worker touching all our groceries really safer than just going there and getting what we need ourselves? Why isn't there ever any toilet paper on the shelf?

We have answers now to some of these questions, but each one of us has to have a strategy for getting the food we need. We can go on-line and order some basic grocery items from the dining services, and they will be delivered right to our door by a masked and gloved staff whose eyes are smiling.



Karen is going to be sure everything is clean!

We also have grocery stores that will deliver to our home, or will bring groceries that were pre-ordered right out to the trunk of our car. In addition, many local restaurants are making meals to go.

We have relatively safe ways to get our food, and for now, we have few shortages. Maybe it is time to thank those who take such good care of us: our Mayflower staff, our local businesses and restaurants, and those front-line grocery workers who are working so hard to keep us safe and fed. Thank you!

Karen Phillips May 15

Masks and More Masks

In the middle of March I noticed stories on TV of seamstresses sewing fabric masks to donate to places that needed protective equipment to fight the coronavirus. I thought to myself, "I can do that." I called Kellie McGriff and offered to sew masks for Mayflower.

As a longtime seamstress I had some suitable fabric on hand, but by the time I checked Walmart for the elastic that is needed to secure the mask across the face, they were out of stock. I sent a request to Mayflower residents for elastic, and was pleased to get several donations. As time went on, I received donations of fabric, too. In addition, five friends offered to cut the fabric pieces to the proper size for me to use.

It was wonderful for me to have a project at this time, since there were no activities or events at Mayflower to attend. And, as a former home economics teacher, I was *made* for a sewing project like this. It has been so generous of friends to donate time and materials with no intent for any credit –just thanks.

As of May 22, I have made 558 masks – and I am still sewing. These days, I am giving the masks to a group in Grinnell that is distributing masks to industries in Grinnell and Marshalltown. I don't feel I need any recognition. In fact, I almost feel guilty when people express amazement at the number of masks I have made. I have loved the work and, as we all know, time passes quickly when you are having fun.

Alicemary Borthwick May 31



Alicemary is one of several Mayflower residents who helped sew masks or gowns, but she likely has set some kind of record. Residents and staff all over the campus have benefitted from her work.

In the Cloud

Who would have guessed that the “social distancing” dictum would bring four generations of Greenwalds CLOSER together? We are separated by thousands of miles physically, yet we “see” each other at least weekly. Of course the electronic technology has a lot to do with it. We use Zoom, FaceTime, 23snaps, email and smart phones. [Most of the 19 members of our immediate family are staying at home.] Travel from Ames and Northfield, homes of the grandparents, to Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Madison, Fort Collins, Portland and Nashville is practically impossible.

So, why do we seem “closer”? Because we care deeply, and the means to “see” each other are so handy. Even our youngest great grandchild, at seven months, *recognizes us and smiles* when our faces appear on her mother’s phone! Big decisions will have to be made this summer when three new great grandbabies are due, a time when grandparents are recruited to the care team.

Gail Greenwald, May 5



Signs of the times: Steve Langerud points out the off-limits library collection: no books to be removed or returned until restrictions are lifted. Note the Plexiglas shield in front of Deb Jack’s reception desk, but also note the smiling eyes. The Mayflower staff has been unfailingly consistent in answering questions, making necessary additional plans, and carrying out additional duties in a very pleasant, smiling manner.

Lockdown

Yes there is fear. Yes there is isolation. Yes there is panic buying.
 Yes there is sickness.
 Yes there is even death. But,—

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
 You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
 The sky is no longer thick with fumes
 But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi
 People are singing to each other across the empty squares
 keeping their windows open so that those who are alone
 may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
 is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know is busy spreading fliers with her number
 through the neighborhood
 So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples are preparing to
 welcome and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary.

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting.
 All over the world people are looking at their neighbors in a new way.
 All over the world people are waking up to a new reality
 To how big we really are
 To how little control we really have
 To what really matters.
 To Love.

So we pray and we remember that
 Yes there is fear
 But there does not have to be hate.`

Yes there is isolation.
 But there does not have to be loneliness.
 Yes there is panic buying.
 But there does not have to be meanness.
 Yes there is sickness.
 But there does not have to be the disease of the soul.
 Yes there is even death.
 But there can always be a rebirth of love.

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Photos by Bill Pollak

Lockdown

(continued from p. 11)

Wake to the choices you may as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again.
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able to reach across the empty square,
Sing.

Fr. Richard Hendrick, OFM

Richard Hendrick OFM -- Cap Brother Richard is a priest-friar of the Irish branch of the Capuchin Franciscan Order. He shared this poem on Facebook. For over 20 years he has worked to bring the insights of the Christian contemplative tradition to greater public awareness.