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VILLAGES**

Our Paths - Our Choices

Empowering older adults to be active,
connected and independent in the place they
call home



TWIN CITIES VILLAGE NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2020

Welcome to the dog days of summer. We've muddled along since March, and, all in all, we've found a sort of groove. We just have to remember that it won't always be this way, that there will be happier days—and let's steep ourselves in gratitude that we live here with the blessings that surround us. My precious mother used to say, "It will all be better in the morning, Susie," and she was right. It may not be as soon as morning, but it will get better.



Pandemic jargon

If Only...

Editorial by Sue Sommer

Collectively, America guffawed and chortled for the people of Italy, then

felt sorry for them, forced by law, as they were, to be strapped into their homes like riders on a roller coaster. We smiled at the charming videos of them, balcony-bound, singing songs of country and arias from Italian composers. We tsk-tsked at the severity of their lockdown, pitied them—everyone needing to carry a special pass to go outside their homes for necessary-only jaunts, like grocery shopping, pharmacy trips, or doctor visits, with a hefty fine for breaking the rule.

And now I Zoom a writers' workshop with a friend in Rome. She sits at the Fountain of Santa Maria in Trastevere at dusk, sipping an Aperol cocktail as I sip a coffee latte here, tightly ensconced in my home. Bells from the ancient cathedral dulcify the Roman air. The heartwarming intensity of the Italian language surrounds her as friends greet one another in the comforting twilight. She goes to the beach with her family, and meets friends in the lush parks, surrounded by those ubiquitous pointed cypress trees. Restaurants and *caffes* are open and vibrant. People only need to wear masks inside buildings. Schools will begin in September.

It's not all perfect; she is a tour director and there is no work, but she is taking this time to travel to Berlin with others in her profession, no border restrictions along the way.

So, who feels sorry now? If only we had been forced to be so restricted, had the leadership to demand the difficult. I just saw Harry Smith report on the 75th anniversary of World War II's ending. What the people did to survive the destruction; what sacrifices people made to keep America secure and safe! And now, during *this* destructive period, some folks are reluctant even to bother doing the two main things it would take to quell this enemy: wear a mask and keep their distance. I find it self-centered and narrow-minded, and am left thinking that if the war were today, these disbelievers would turn on the lights at night and use as much metal as they needed, light a cigarette in the dark "because they needed one, and damn the blackout," eschewing the common good. They wouldn't have been those who volunteered to go to the front to save democracy.

But this is a different time.

Much of America has become complacent and divided and selfish, conspicuously entrenched in the pronouns *I* and *me* and *mine*. Failure to wear a mask doesn't universally have consequences, nor does

keeping a proper distance; no tickets, fines, or jail time. But the prospect of this half-baked shutdown *has* already had consequences: no spectators at sporting events or theatre or opera, no large celebratory dinners, no sacred congregational gatherings, businesses opening then closing again, no exuberant weddings, no carefree family gatherings. School: virtual or in-person? Had we done it right, as did the Italians and much of the rest of Europe and Asia, we'd be much closer to celebrating the upcoming holidays with our families.

If only there were a solution, a way to have us all comply as a united people to quell this monster. I don't know what it is. Do you?

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS!

Volunteers: We want to acknowledge our volunteers who have joined since January. Despite the brouhaha of breaking in a new editor and organizing around the pandemic, we want to publicly thank you for giving your time and energy to our village!

Stacey Lecht, Caroline Silverman, Beth Sherry, Johann Timmerman, Angela Barlow, and Steven Ramirez

Felicitations and birthday greetings to this month's 90s and 100s!
September 4 – Inna Mink

LOCAL VILLAGE EVENTS (open to all, unless noted)

To join Zoom events, watch for an email from Larry Meredith, then click on the link.

Food & Drink

S.I.P. and Sip – virtual Happy Hour
Tuesday, September 15, 3:30 – 5:00pm

Meet virtually to see Village friends again, tell stories, and talk. The August gathering provided the S.I.P. and SIPPERS' advice for tasty take-out dining sources. Google them for details: Amy's, Antica Roma, BJs Chinese, Burma Town, Caffe Verde, Harmony, Marin Joe's, R'Noh Thai. Our favorite hikes and walking areas? Baltimore Canyon Circle, Corte Madera Creek (behind Mollie Stone's), the top of Christmas Tree Hill,

Tennessee Valley Trail, and, before 4:00, the Marin Art and Garden Center. Have others to add? Join us this month, or email ssommertime@sbcglobal.net.

“Chat and Check In”

Tuesday, September 22, 3:30 – 5:00pm

Another chance to get dressed, at least on top! At this gathering we discuss nearly anything but politics. Share your opinions, stories, and feelings about this very different reality we are in.

Groups

Men’s Coffee Group

September 2 and 16 at 11:00am

The Men’s Group meets twice a month, on the first and third Wednesdays. Join us for informal and free-ranging discussions with no agenda, including current events, respective activities, health issues, or whatever lands on the table. Men from other local villages beyond Twin Cities are invited to participate. Check with Alan Hayakawa, alan.hayakawa@gmail.com for information.

MARIN VILLAGES EVENTS

Be sure to read the Marin Villages newsletter, chock full of information and ideas for keeping busy and healthy during these curious times. Also, check out the following:

Library websites (marinlibrary.org)

The Buck Center informational lectures and events (buckinstitute.org/events)

Age-Friendly Corte Madera (agefriendlycortemadera.com)

Parks and Recreation departments of our sister cities

There is truly so much available out there, and now that you have the time, jump in; virtually, of course!

BITS AND PIECES

Invite to Write

Express your creativity in writing! Don't be shy; each of us has a story to tell. Create a short story, a paragraph, a poem, a memory or incident, an editorial of your own choosing—politics excluded. Make it around 650 words. Submit to ssommertime@sbcglobal.net with "Invite to Write" in the title bar. Have fun!

This month's moving story comes from Dee Fratas:

I was surprised and delighted to see William Butler Yeats's masterpiece of Irish poetry, "The Second Coming," printed in the August newsletter. I've had a copy of that poem hanging on my refrigerator for years and read it when I'm feeling especially pensive which, thanks to being stuck at home by the coronavirus, is about every ten minutes.

Famous for its dramatic, foreboding imagery of approaching evil turned loose upon the world, "The Second Coming" was written after World War One had devastated parts of Europe and killed or maimed a generation of young men. "The Second Coming" of Yeats is not the biblical prophecy. He describes the coming, not of Jesus, but of a metaphorical beast who will bring chaos, pain, and destruction to mankind. (Interestingly for our times, the poem was written during the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918.)

Yeats, born in 1865, founded the Abbey Theater in Dublin in 1904 and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923. He died in 1939 and is buried in Saint Columba's graveyard, Drumcliff, County Sligo.

On a trip to Ireland some years ago, I persuaded my husband to drive to the cemetery in Sligo, so that I could pay my respects to the great poet. Indulging his insistent wife, my dear Don obliged, and I snapped a photo of Yeats's headstone, with its inscription:

Cast a cold Eye
On Life, on Death.
Horseman, pass by.

It was also in Sligo that I saw men who were the mirror images of my late Irish grandfather, Bill McCauley. His parents had emigrated to America during the Irish potato famine of 1845 – 1849, when over a

million of their countrymen died from starvation.

During our stay in Dublin, Don and I attended the Abbey Theatre to see the play “Da,” by famed Irish dramatist, Hugh Leonard. Although not the original site of the Irish National Theatre, it was nevertheless thrilling for me to be inside the Abbey, founded by Yeats himself.

While driving through the English Cotswolds on a later trip, Don and I stopped at a pub for lunch. The bartender took our order and then asked if we had visited Churchill’s grave yet.

As it happened, the cemetery he spoke of was just across the road from the pub. After we ate, Don and I walked over and found the graves of Winston and his devoted wife Clemmie, side by side.

At Blenheim Palace, ancestral home of the Churchills, I was fascinated by the strawberry-blond curl snipped from the head of baby Winston, tied with a ribbon and hung on a palace wall in an ornate gold frame. I don’t remember the furnishings or the paintings in the house, but I remember that curl vividly. The baby who grew up to be Lord of the Admiralty and a wartime prime minister was, first of all, the beloved infant son of an American mother.

Later that same trip, Don and I visited Churchill’s cramped, underground World War Two bunker in London. We saw the cot he slept on, one of his cigars in an ashtray on a table near a large battle map of Europe.

To my surprise, we learned on a tour of Saint Paul’s the next day that behind the main altar of the cathedral exists a smaller altar, dedicated to the American GIs who fought and died in Europe during World War Two. One of those GIs was my uncle, Barney McCauley.

Wounded in France, Barney was sent to a military hospital in Bath, England to recover. There he met a local girl named Mavis. They fell in love. After his wounds healed, my uncle was ordered back to the battlefield. He was killed in Germany nine days before V-E Day, when his jeep ran over a mine.

My grandmother received the telegram while she was hanging out the laundry, weeks after the war had ended in Europe. A neighbor heard her screams and pried the clothespins out of her hand. Anna McCauley

never recovered from her loss and died six months after her son's remains were returned to her.

The second coming of a devastating world war did, indeed, bring chaos, pain and destruction to millions of families, just as Yeats imagined. They came to mine.

HELP US HELP OTHERS

For more than two decades the belief that it takes a village to raise a child has become embedded in our culture. Not as embedded but equally important is the village it takes to provide a comfortable, nurturing, and safe environment for people as they age. You can help.

We need more caring volunteers to be part of this thriving nationwide movement, a movement that's dedicated to strengthening bonds between generations and building strong, vibrant communities that provide continuity to all ages.

Marin Villages is looking for volunteers to provide a variety of support to older adults. Our goal is to match skills from volunteers with the needs of members. Volunteers sign up for visits that fit their life and lifestyle, but we ask for a commitment of two assignments a month.

If you know someone who is interested in volunteering, could use our services, or would like to donate to an organization serving older adults in Marin, please have them call the office at (415) 457-4633, or visit our website (www.marinvillages.org) for application forms and online donations.

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