# Reflections of a Pandemic

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#### ties that bind

I've been a class officer for all of my years as a Princeton Alumna. A great many of my volunteer hours have been spent on Reunions but I've also served as Class President, Treasurer and Reunions Treasurer. While most of my volunteer work has been rewarding, working on reunions can be stressful because of the financial responsibility to the class.

Nothing that I've ever done has been as stressful as what I call, 'the unwinding of reunions'. We had a phenomenal team organized for our 40th reunion and started working on plans more than two years before our 40th. By mid February, we had nearly 450 individuals registered for reunions and were heading towards a record turnout. Our theme was "The Ties That Bind."

Once it became clear to us that Reunions would be canceled, we had to make decisions about refunds, and what to do with the 500 sets of costumes partially completed. We decided that our theme was meaningful and important and that the costume would be an important connection, 'tie', for classmates as the pandemic raged.

We finished production and had everything shipped to my house. My husband and I single handedly packed 400 costumes and with the assistance of my wonderful co-president, Deb Kushma, as well as a few other classmates in different regions, we shipped out the hundreds of boxes and bags. We decided that "The Ties That Bind" will be our theme for our 45th. We all need "The Ties That Bind" during these most trying times.

- Arlene Pedovitch '80

#### healthy & virtual

My work in healthcare consulting must now include a focus on COVID-19 for all of our clients. Also, my freelance work in teaching and speaking about nutrition and healthy cooking has all needed to become virtual. I greatly miss interacting with students and coworkers in person, but I am glad that so many practitioners are taking advantage of this opportunity to generate evidence on the importance of nutrition in healthcare, including through virtual services, to ensure they are prioritized going forward.

Outside of my work, the pandemic has made it harder to maintain relationships and establish new ones, but I am thankful for the several friends with whom I have safely been able to connect over the past year (particularly because they work in public health) as well as a few opportunities to spend prolonged periods with family members in other cities.

I have greatly appreciated opportunities to connect with fellow Princeton alumni in DC in safe, outdoor events over the past year. While it has not been feasible to go on hikes or participate in other social events in groups, I have enjoyed several opportunities for outdoor picnics and hikes with my fellow Princeton alumni and I appreciate their leadership and tenacity in organizing these events. I have also joined the Christian Union Nova Alumni Board to be able to better serve Christian students on campus and fellow alumni in DC and around the world.

- Christina Badaracco '12

#### war stories . . .

Except for complications of travel between Florida and New York City, having to do with testing and quarantine, the pandemic has had little effect on my life, and with Zoom-type communication, it has made things a bit easier in terms of "meetings." Simply stated, this is because my present life involves getting to know and living with the widow of a Princeton classmate who lives in NYC. We have all we need in both places, which is to read, eat, sleep, do our "games" – Sudoku and crosswords - and share our existence. We have done online jazz, ballet, movies, you name it. We have outdoor exercise in Florida - biking, swimming, and walking - and somewhat the same in NYC, though much beyond walking, indoors. This might not be "exciting" for others, but in our case, it is close to paradise, because at 78 and 83 we do not need to take on the world.

As for impact on our connection to Princeton, yes, of course, we miss "oncampus" activity, after being able to attend our last major Smith and Princeton reunions, but of course, "we" are our major connection to Princeton, and memorabilia are extensive in both households. There is considerable email back and forth, and there is a granddaughter who is presently back at Princeton as a sophomore. We thus even have had the flavor of the present condition of "life at Princeton," including the virtual aspect of it, and some degree of war stories. I write obituaries for the class column, and we both devour the PAW. I work with the Florida Princeton club to which I belong in developing virtual programs, one involving a Zoom meeting based in Austria, so we are staying close to "the Source!"

- Jim Bennett '59

#### crippling but okay

I have been among the very lucky, living in a village and working remotely. Life in the Village of Brockport, 20 miles west of Rochester, has been relatively safe. In fact, Covid has boosted the sense of community. People wearing masks greet others noticeably more warmly and a successful "Shop Small, Shop Local" campaign has sustained Main St.

However, Covid undercut the final semester of my 50-year teaching career. I was still teaching in my mid-70s because classroom teaching was still rewarding. Teaching remotely in Fall 2020 was hardly the same. Zoom worked surprisingly well, but talking to a screen lacked normal classroom engagement and student achievement suffered. Although chatting with a few students after classs lightly compensated, this was a disappointing way to conclude teaching.

Covid seriously undermined my Princeton experience. Professionally, the closure of Mudd Archive has crippled my research. Personally, one Reunion, and probably a second (my 55th), have been cancelled, as were Fall weekend tailgates and Homecoming. When venturing out from my Princeton pied-à-terre in Princeton it was disconcerting to find the campus deserted and the village largely shutdown.

On the other hand, my class has stepped up its virtual communications, especially with a weekly contest to guess the identities of masked classmates. In addition, the Friends of Princeton University Library has hosted exceptional events. I continue to be among the very lucky. No close friend or relative has had Covid. Hopefully Princeton will soon return to its vibrant self.

- Bruce Leslie '66

#### delaying life

One major impact of the pandemic was delaying the start of my post-businesss chool job, meaning I had to find a different job to bridge the gap. The biggest difference in my social life is how I now interact with friends. Whereas before, I used to host many parties, gatherings, dinners, etc., now I'm mostly limited to outdoor walks/hikes/picnics. At the same time, the pandemic facilitated a faster progression of a new romantic relationship, which wouldn't have reached this level of commitment if not for the more purposeful and intentional nature of dating in the current circumstances.

I have stayed connected to Princeton, although I miss the inperson alumni events, Reunions, Annual Giving Bootcamp, Alumni Day, Blitz Interviews, and other events and engagement activities I used to attend on-campus or in my local city. However, Princeton has done a good job switching to virtual events and keeping alumni informed of current protocols on campus.

- Hilary Bernstein '14

#### 2020 Hindsight

Tis the year of the Covid, and strains at the poll
Do you hear those outvoted, the pains, the bell's toll?
A great pestilence claims many souls and career.
What is best are new reins and uphold what's arrear.
Mr. Madison, what's left of your life? Last best Hope?
It's all sad, maybe nuts. Civil strife! How to cope?
We await a vaccine so we can safely roam,
And for greatness once again to gleam from our Dome.
We embrace kin and friend, those so dear. Bear this test
With God's grace. So to end the Old Year, All the Best!

- William Cunningham '70

#### sudden

On the first day that Covid-19 was found in the US, my father died of a sudden heart attack. It was a shattering loss that changed the passage of time. Suspended in grief, I was mystified that ordinary life continued all around me.

Little did I know that Covid-19 would soon alter everyone's lives and sense of time. Last March, life in NYC officially came to a standstill. For almost a year, I've been teaching violin lessons on Zoom, my husband's been working remotely, and we've been cooking breakfast, lunch, and dinner together at home. It's hard to imagine our former lives of vacations abroad, business trips, concerts, parties, restaurants, hugging and seeing family.

My daily life during the pandemic is marked by stillness and quiet. I know that I am not alone in experiencing that. A year into the pandemic, my personal grief has morphed into a collective grief for all of the deaths, illnesses, and lost opportunities.

I've also learned to appreciate what I have. The pandemic has brought me closer to my mother and my in- laws. We never used to talk or see each other that often, and now we talk almost every day.

The pandemic has also strengthened my connection to Princeton. My mother and I regularly attend Princeton Art Museum online lectures and have enjoyed streaming Princeton University concerts. My daughter and son will both be at Princeton next year and we can't wait to visit them on campus!

— Yolanda Wu '89

#### impact

What impact has the pandemic had on my life?

I retired June 2019 and my wife and I had travel plans for 2020 that were put on hold. We consider ourselves very fortunate in that my retirement made it easier to adjust to the pandemic restrictions. And we are fortunate that no one in our extended family contracted the virus. But we've gone through our share of health and economic troubles with family and friends made worse by the pandemic. We increased our charitable contributions, and political ones to remove pandemic deniers from office. Grateful to all of the researchers and scientists who developed the vaccines that will allow life to resume, not like the past, but better as we recover.

The pandemic had no impact on my connection to Princeton.

- John Unger Jr. '74

#### one cheer

I admit it; I'm old – well past the biblically-allotted three-score and ten, though not yet four-score. This means that I am among those considered most vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19. My wife and I have been careful. We've stayed away from large gatherings, we don't go shopping except for essentials, and we haven't yet eaten indoors at a restaurant. We have socialized with friends, though always outdoors and at a distance. I play the occasional squash game, but with people I know and at a time when our club tends to be empty.

For old folks, we have always led pretty active lives. For example, before the pandemic hit, we had five separate vacations booked between April and August, three overseas; we are avid movie-goers; we often go out to dinner with other couples; we frequently spend the night in New York to see a show; and we have children and grandchildren in New York and Washington, D.C., whom we visit reasonably often. Add to that the various games, lectures, and performances offered by our hometown university, we are always busy.

No longer. Since hosting our New York City-based daughter, her husband, and two children from late March through mid-August, our lives have settled into a routine – regular meals at home, the occasional shopping trip, squash games (only me), walking the dog, writing, reading, and watching TV. Like Poor Richard, we are early to bed, early to rise.

For years, I had promised myself that I would write a personal history, but it always took second place to whatever else we might have had planned. I have now completed the first draft of a manuscript, roughly 170 pages long. This would not have happened but for Covid-19 and the unencumbered space it has provided. And I've become more contemplative, keeping a journal every day since March 12th.

At our age, my wife and I don't have to worry about jobs, we don't have responsibility for young children, and we are fortunate to have sufficient financial resources to get us through. Other than reading about our dysfunctional government and the related mishandling of the coronavirus, we lead reasonably sane and stress-free lives. Likely because of social-distancing, we haven't been sick, either from the virus or anything else, and we generally feel better. I've even lost a few pounds.

Do I miss the various distractions that characterized our prepandemic lives? Yes. But maybe when a vaccine kicks in and things return to a semblance of normalcy, we'll give some serious thought as to whether that contemplated trip to New York, London, or the movies is really worthwhile, and remind ourselves of the pleasures of an inactive life.

#### assaulted

Early in March 2020, I was assaulted while I was walking my dog in broad daylight, just because I am (and look) Asian. The number of hate crimes against Asians due to the coronavirus was rapidly rising. I believe that much of these horrendous behaviors stem from ignorance and fear, fueled by a single story about a cruel and deadly virus originating in China.

So I set out to change that single-story narrative by sharing the stories and music of outstanding classical musicians of Asian descent (I am a concert pianist). In collaboration with WQXR, I created Heritage and Harmony, a video series, each of which includes a performance, the musician discussing his/her heritage, as well as their connection to the piece they've chosen. The concert is both a recognition of the tremendous contributions to the musical canon by AAPI classical musicians and a reminder of the need to stand together against mindless intolerance.

https://www.wqxr.org/story/heritage-harmony/

My latest project, Heritage and Harmony: Her Words, Her Voice, is a poetry/music program dedicated to empowering schoolage girls of color. I am truly grateful to Professors R.N. Sandberg, Stacy Wolf and Paul Muldoon, who have advised and introduced me to incredible poets who will join me in the project, including Tracy K. Smith.

The silver lining through it all is that my connection to Princeton is stronger than ever. Our great Class of 1980 holds monthly virtual Tiger Chats that truly reflect our class theme: The Ties That Bind.

- Donna Weng Friedman '80

#### with my kids

- 1. I've spent more time at home with my kids: an 8th grader and a collegian.
- 2. It's been weird conducting alumni interviews over zoom. Also, I haven't been able to travel to campus, which I tend to do at least annually.

- Vin Shelton '80

#### empty city

When the pandemic started, I was a Consular Officer in Abu Dhabi, issuing (or not...) immigrant and non- immigrant visas. The travel bans on people from China and Iran made me aware sooner than some of my friends in the U.S. of how quickly it was spreading. Visa demand plummeted, and I realized that my hopedfor job extension was unlikely to happen, so I started looking for a new job, and now am in San Francisco at the Passport Agency

As an essential worker, I have to go into the office every day. I arrived as the latest lockdown started, and it's been strange being in an empty city with boarded-up storefronts and restaurants. I'm supposed to get a vaccine through work, but there's no timetable on that. The UAE was able to enforce masking and other rules, and I felt safer there than I do in the U.S. right now. I try not to do much other than go to work and stay home.

Last year was supposed to be my 40th Reunion. I haven't missed one, but as I kept hearing news, I wondered how Princeton could possibly host 25,000 people from all over the world. I think it took them too long to make the call, but it was the right decision, and I think remote Reunions worked out fine. I'm relieved that they made the call sooner this year, but suppose once it's safe to gather in person again, I will want to keep my record intact!

- Sharon Keld '80

#### lens of literature

When the pandemic emerged, I was working as a freelance writer. I had spent the previous twenty years with a research team at Emory University, until my supervisor retired and the group was dissolved. With the unique freedom that unemployment offers, I found a deep satisfaction researching and writing articles for a variety of publications. Then the virus shut the world down. By all appearances my life didn't change drastically. I was still at home, writing, although now with the added stress of imposed quarantine, concern over the vulnerability of loved ones, and anxiety about the devastation this plague was wreaking. Among its many effects, the pandemic also shut down the job market, making my search for more steady employment even more challenging.

But Princeton had formed in me a habit of looking at the world through the lens of literature and accepting a sense of social responsibility. I remembered a book I had read in Prof. Fleming's medieval history class, Boccaccio's The Decameron, a collection of stories told during the Black Death that celebrated art and life. I felt like I needed to do something of value during these days. So, inspired by Boccaccio, I coordinated, contributed to, edited, and saw to publication Viral Literature: Alone Together in Georgia, an anthology of the stories and poems of 32 among the best writers in Georgia. With this project, Princeton provided me a lifeline, an intellectual framework, a hope. And for that I will always be grateful.

- Clayton H. Ramsey '89



Twenty-six and one
Just in time for March Madness
Of a darker kind

- David Bonowitz '85

## the company of music

I just made it back from Cairo when my travel-heavy job ended with the closing of airports.

On the side I am an artist (stcelfer.com). One of my sound projects was getting local radio play as avantgarde classical. In the first days of the pandemic continuing my work on the side, specifically, Suites #1-9, I made this track which was featured in virtual art exhibitions once visiting galleries was no longer possible: https://stcelfer.bandcamp.com/track/suite-8-march-of-the-covids

Now faced with the realization that it would take most of 2021 to emerge from the pandemic, I needed the company of music. From April to November of 2020 I assembled an instrument, homemade, or more accurately, "gambiarra," in Brasilian Portuguese, to be played and heard live. This maintained my interest as I substituted "exploring" for "making" thus transitioning from an in-studio process of tracking and then arranging, as in the Suites, to a live and improvised situation, making music in real time. My energies focused on the interface between man and machine. This instrument creates an instantaneous recording to two tracks, left and right, that can't be mixed later. It all mounts to a single mic stand with interconnected gear attached to it which I have arranged so I can best play it live. It's a future folk machine made of redundant or repurposed musical parts, capable of the most complex jazz phrases. I call it the Step.4D<sup>TM</sup>.

From December 2020 to June 2021, I performed 280 single edit live performances, to myself, keeping roughly one-third of them. The editorial staff at bandcamp.com named a release, "NEW & NOTABLE", placing it alongside well-known popular acts: https://stcelfer.bandcamp.com/album/stc-lives-51-61-74

Who would have known that taking Music 101 at Princeton would have such a long range and essential impact on my life under these unusual, 'once in a century', circumstances? At unforeseeable times like these, I am grateful for the opportunities created by my having attended Princeton.

#### humbled

#### How I was impacted by the pandemic environment:

Changed rhythm and use of our house once my husband, who travels regularly for his job, had to work from home;

Worried more about family members who have difficulty accessing goods and services for both survival and safety;

Ceased some volunteer activities but disability advocacy became more critical than ever;

Missed social activities despite increased craving for them since many people online all day for work cannot take another minute of virtual connection. It became a sheer delight if virtual connections could be had;

Happily, I appreciate my church, neighbors and neighborhood more;

Intensified use of photography to seek and capture the beauty of nature in my own yard and giving photos as gifts. Humbled to be included in several virtual exhibitions of Black artists to express the inexplicable grief of the current race relations moment during a pandemic which affects my people more savagely;

Released fears for my sons who are both essential workers in food service jobs.

#### **Connection to Princeton:**

Strengthened through virtual offerings: Reunions (so much fun with P-Rade Marshals group);

Following the Art Museum from home, loved being in session with Sir David Adjaye;

Fun and informative discussions with the Class of 1984 ranging from campaign finance to submarining to butterfly science to housing policy as a tool of systemic racism;

More personal calls, cards, texts of encouragement from my dearest Princeton friends and eating club buddies.

I hope to THRIVE! though uncertain.

# busy and ... happy

As the 2020 began, I had concluded that it was time to find a new law firm where I could practice my craft more productively. My wife was happily occupied with her work as a corporate trustee, and our daughter was beginning the second semester of her freshmen year at a college in Cambridge, MA so lacking in imagination that it chose a color as its mascot. The job search was reaching a happy conclusion; Zeina continued to enjoy her work, and May seemed to be tolerating the bitter cold. It was at this moment that the 18-wheeler called COVID-19 crashed through the front door.

May was summarily evicted from Harvard. Zeina was now working from home. And I had just given notice to my old law firm on a Friday afternoon. Early Monday morning, I received an email from my new firm inquiring whether I'd consider delaying my start date by 90 days if I hadn't already given my notice. Bullet dodged.

A new laptop, monitor, wireless keyboard & mouse and my little girl all arrived in short order. All six of us (including our three dogs) were at home, busy and, most importantly, happy. Especially the dogs. Maximum lockdown still permits Face-Time cocktails with distant classmates. And my new lap-swimming/neighborhood walking regimen is off the charts so my weight won't be. A new normal, but, all in all, a happy one.

- Crawford Moorefield '84

### Multi-generational

We will always remember where we were on March 11, 2020, when the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global "pandemic" and Princeton University declared that "all students who are able to must return home and stay home for the rest of the semester." Just three days later, our youngest daughter was packed out of her dorm and our home became her satellite campus for Princeton's now-online courses.

My husband and I, who joked for years that we "lived on United Airlines", adjusted to becoming "homebodies". My Princeton college roommate and her husband had just visited in February. "Lockdowns" ended these visits, and we continued our relationships virtually on "Zoom" while striving to avoid "Zoom fatigue."

Our new life became all about multi-generational living as my Dad moved in with us in May and April, my son and his girlfriend in June and July, my Mom and her dog in July through October. We became three generations and two dogs quarantined under one roof, obsessed with watching the daily news and peppering our conversations with the recent catch phrases "social distancing," "viral loads," "super-spreader events" and "the new normal."

When we ventured outside, we were strict about wearing the very masks that we now admitted we had shunned on our past visits to China. We voted-by-mail and we wrote reams of postcards to voters in swing states. We celebrated milestone birthdays and anniversaries in isolation and with deeper appreciation. And we ended all of our conversations with dreamy phrases about seeing our friends and going back to cherished places like Princeton in "the post-COVID world."

Janice Levy Block Chaddock '82 P22

#### magical

"We just got the death notice" he said. My son, a member of the Class of 2023, and everyone else, had to pack up and leave.

I drove thirteen hours to collect his belongings and him. We would turn around and drive another thirteen hours back to Chicago suburbs and quarantine.

The scene on campus was at once familiar and foreign. We've seen the dance of packing up before, but the energy was decidedly different.

Sadness hung heavy in the air.

Susan Teeter, the retired women's swim coach, had stopped by his room in "The Monastery" — the all-male and ostensibly substance-free 1915 Hall — earlier; she offered to store some things. She coached my wife and is our dear friend.

The place is magical that way.

His gear was surprisingly well-organized, the previous night's partying notwithstanding. Social distancing is apparently unnecessary when you're a bulletproof teenager, and I gather P-Safe knew they were ill-advised to attempt to disrupt the beer-soaked goodbyes.

I watched the boys — hell, they're men now; Princeton men — exchange handshakes and hugs ... and wept, awestruck by the depth of the bonds that they had developed in just a few months.

The place is magical that way.

We left Old Nassau without visiting John Logan '66 and his wife Jan. John was my academic advisor and French professor. They live across from the E-Quad and have become lifelong friends.

The place is magical that way.

As we drove away, the seniors, robbed of the centuries-old traditions of Princeton's spring, were walking out Fitzrandolph Gate ...

#### open to change

(1) What impact has the pandemic had on your life? Response: While my wife and I have shared in the disruption that affects us all, we are truly blessed by the responsiveness and resilience that our innovative nation has made possible. We order groceries and more from Shipt® and Amazon. We have enjoyed many hours of Zoom connections.

The primary impact of the pandemic has been to accelerate change and to make the nation and the world more open to change. Most of the changes are positive. Increasingly, people work from home, sparing us the carbon footprint of commuting. Services have cropped up that weren't there in the conventionality of an earlier era.

I'm old enough to remember World War II. While the war was devastating, and was comparable to the pandemic in impact, the post-war era blossomed in a way that would not have been possible had there been no crisis. Unfortunately, while the crisis of war brought people together, the crisis of contagion has driven us apart. We have a crisis of leadership worldwide and that may be a bigger crisis than the crisis of disease. Our world needs education now more than ever to give us leaders for our future.

(2) What impact has the pandemic had on your connection to Princeton?

Response: With Zoom, Princeton is now more accessible than before. We've greatly enjoyed Rory Truex's lectures on China. Maybe lifelong learning can now become a reality.

- Jack Cumming '58

#### reach out

The pandemic meant facing unemployment, yet again, in March 2020. Although I disliked it, I applied for unemployment benefits to help us through what seemed at first to be a short-lived ordeal. Pension benefits also helped, so from the financial perspective, I cannot complain.

In mid-October 2020 I got a call on WhatsApp from a doctor in Quito, Ecuador to tell me that he needed my authorization to intubate my father, who was dying from COVID-19. The prognosis was not good for a man of father's age (93). My mother (90) also tested positive for the virus. Fortunately she was being cared for by a nursing student, who shortly thereafter also caught the virus. My challenge was to manage the situation from Waxhaw, North Carolina, some 2,500 miles away from Quito. The doctor advised that I should not rush to travel at that moment. Fortunately, my father recovered after a week without intubation and returned home. My sisters and I arranged for nursing care and rehabilitation for both our parents.

I was able to travel to see my parents in mid-November, and I spent two months with them, helping as much as I could. Although COVID-19 left both of them very frail, I thank God that they survived this deadly virus.

From a lifestyle perspective, COVID-19 taught me that we cannot take our health for granted and encouraged me to reach out to as many family and friends as possible. Thankfully we now have internet technology like WhatsApp, Teams, Zoom, and so forth that allows us to video conference easily and cheaply over long distances. The pandemic has forced us to reevaluate the need for face to face business meetings. Although there is no substitute for a good, warm hug, being able to see people on a screen is better than just hearing their voices over the phone.

I am saddened for college students like my son who will graduate after an academic year completed virtually. I worry about the long term impact the pandemic will have on young generations. My wife and I mourn and pray for the friends and relatives we have lost to this disease, as well as for the countless casualties in the United States, Ecuador, and the rest of the world.

God bless,

John Rojas '77

#### slow down

This has been an unforgettable year. One year ago today (March 4th), I anxiously decided not to take a well-planned trip to India because of the pandemic (some four hours before I was supposed to leave for the airport), forgoing the opportunity to see the Taj Mahal and a dear friend's wedding. That was the beginning of a cascade of cancellations — next, my Princeton roommate's wedding in Chicago, then my 15th Reunion in May.

I did schedule a Zoom call with a group of old friends for the Friday of Reunions, and we had a wonderful time. I dressed up in orange and black and cheerfully watched the P-Rade online, feeling somewhat of the usual buzz of excitement.

Despite missing those big important events, one small silver lining to the pandemic has been being forced to clear my schedule and slow down. At certain moments, there was an unusual calm about having no other task than getting through the day. Over the winter — particularly after the holidays — it's like we've all gone into hibernation mode. But it will make it all the more joyful (I hope) when spring comes — literally and metaphorically!

I do wish that we had more collective spaces in which to mourn all we've lost. While I missed out on some trips, others lost their parents, neighbors, friends. We need to create space for all that grief. I hope we can learn to honor it.

- Melissa Galvez '05

#### Corona

In the beginning it was just a word — some kind of bug, a blip in the news, another ambient danger, like murder and bad service and diaper rash — the dues for being alive, one more thing to think about. It began to cover the sun and we said this isn't happening, sinking into the sea isn't happening, none of this is real, unpredicted eclipses cannot occur, we will not allow it. Then all at once night fell — time was stripped of meaning, birds stopped singing in a cloudy, starless sky. No hint of dawn. We must have failed to see this coming, most of us.

We failed to see it coming, most of us, because we never thought about the plague or pestilence — antique notions we must have forgotten. Now the enemy flag flies everywhere, unseen, and we obey or we disobey, and we calculate: Who has it? Who is a vector? What have they touched, breathed on? Everything we thought we knew was wrong, delusional, a dream of climbing an endless staircase made of sand, light infected with darkness and distrust, time turned viscous, like glue. Unending night, silence. We long to tell ourselves: Spring came so late this year, but it came all the same . . .

(2) For years I've conducted alumni interviews for Princeton, but this year I just couldn't subject myself or local college applicants to the sad, inadequate simulacrum of zoom, & I just don't want to be part of a process that will contribute to students being accepted for a "Princeton education" that they'll experience alone, in their parents' basement.

#### relationship on hold

I normally spend 50+% of my time traveling to meet with colleagues for research projects and to teach young doctors around the world in the classroom and the operating room. While the virtual world still lets me talk with and see many people, the direct transfer of skills, and the experience of the warmth of the people I meet, is not there. My distance from the Princeton campus similarly puts my relationship on hold.

- Prem Subramanian '89

### fairy land...

Reflections on the pandemic: OK! My first reflection is that I havn't been in a grocery store since March 5th. I would love to hug an apple as well as my friends. I have been in my house since then with only trips to the doctor's, Walgreens, and the farm stands nearby. My groceries have all been delivered to my door. It is very isolating. Some good things have been scheduled, maintenance on both my house and my body. I got my rotator cuff fixed on June 26 which initiated 6 weeks in a sling and ongoing physical therepy. My house has received a new gas line and I now have a gas stove, and a new furnace to come later. All done because I was here instead of my usual three months in my glorious lake Michigan home. My daughter Elisabeth '86 has been able to continue working, reading books on tape in a recording set up in my quilting studio. She made my upstairs deck into a fairy land with white lights some new furniture, a fire pit, a garden and a humming bird feeder. Never knew I had humming birds here. I miss my church, my choir, my stitching groups. I miss the activities surrounding the university..tailgates, football, basketball and concerts. The campus is a ghost town. I miss hugs and in person physical contact. THANK GOODNESS FOR ZOOM, MY KINDLE, MY GRAND KITTIES AND MY DAUGHTER WHO HAVE BEEN HERE SINCE APRIL.

— Sue Rodgers w56 p86 p88 h56

#### adrift

#### Reflections on a Pandemic - in Haiku

Kids returning home
Silver core of Covid's heart
Darkness faced as one
Eight minutes of hell
A body, a knee, a neck
Man is man is man
Evil surrounds us
Leadership absent, adrift
Future uncertain
Reunions cancelled?
I'll drive to campus myself
Best damn place of all

- Frank Derby '84

#### acceptance

In reflecting on the pandemic, I have gone through a wide range of feelings. First, there was disbelief. I did not believe that I would live to see a pandemic that would completely alter our lives. When the shutdown began, I felt anxious for weeks. Everything changed

Working remotely, suspending volunteer activities, attending virtual church services, fearing that a simple trip from home could lead to exposure. In addition, missing basic in-person interactions with family, friends, and co-workers. Feeling heartbreak at the mounting death toll with thoughts of the lives lost and all of the families who did not get to grieve properly. Feeling heartache for all of the Princeton students who had their Princeton experience interrupted.

Now, feeling acceptance. Understanding that all of the changes (including mask wearing and social distancing) are necessary so that one day we can return to normalcy. Understanding that even when life returns to normal, it will be a new normal that will include permanent changes to life as we once knew it.

Being active in alumni activities has allowed me to maintain a connection to Princeton through the years. Through all of the virtual activities available during the pandemic, I now feel closer to Princeton and other Princetonians. Via video conferencing, I have connected with classmates that I usually would only speak to at major reunions. I hope that these virtual connections can be maintained and that they will become part of the Princeton experience.

## completely changed

How the pandemic environment has impacted my life: Imagine the entire world seemingly turned upside down, grinding to a long, uncertain halt. It is a tragedy hard to fathom, as divisive and disruptive as any time I can remember, with ongoing battles about the wisdom of mask-wearing and lockdowns. Our daily routines have completely changed.

Saddened by the loss of so many, I am enormously grateful that my family remains safe and well so far, even as I worry that elderly loved ones may die alone, without family at their side. While the days seem to blend together, I'm lucky to be able to work remotely, mindful that many cannot. I am inspired by people's resilience and adaptability, and more grateful for everyday gifts perhaps too often taken for granted.

How the pandemic has impacted my connection to Princeton: Princetonties endure, pandemic or not: from checking in on classmates and other alums to see how they and their loved ones are doing, to self-guided campus tours with my daughter, Princeton still exerts its inexorable pull. I enthusiastically participated in the first virtual Reunions, including a highly entertaining P-rade that was a model of efficiency, and then watched the virtual Commencement while texting classmates and friends to congratulate them on their children's achievements.

I'm hugely grateful to stalwart classmates Stephen Ban, Frank Derby and Arati Johnson, among others, for all they do to keep our class connected. I'm inspired by classmates Ed Ryan and Michelle Williams and others leading the fight against the pandemic. Looking forward to "going back to Old Nassau" ASAP — some things never change.

- Christopher C. Palermo '84

#### altered

My family and I have been very lucky so far and have not been directly affected by COVID-19. Work practices have been altered; schools have gone virtual; vaccinations have been cancelled; gettogethers with family and friends have essentially ceased . . . but we are healthy. My connection to Princeton — short of the annual plan to try to make it to Reunions not being an option — has not suffered much.

- Van W. Knox IV '89

### what really matters

COVID-19 has isolated me from my adult children and to a greater degree my extended family and colleagues. It has also made my elderly mother depressed. I believe it has exacerbated our politically-driven bitterness. I sure do miss travel. On the other hand it has given me the opportunity to reflect on what really matters and to count my rather substantial blessings. We are all healthy. I have had to become more proficient with technology and I don't miss commuting and eating at my desk.

As for my Princeton connection I will greatly miss the inperson 40th Reunion this year, and I have missed the football season and the basketball season. The notices from the empty campus were . . .

- Martin Sklat '81

#### inequity

I chair the Department of Emergency Medicine at Mass General, where we were hit extremely hard by the first surge of COVID back in the late winter-early spring. After a relative lull over the summer, COVID roared back into our region around Halloween and has accelerated with unfortunate bumps provided by Thanksgiving and Christmas gatherings.

My department (about 650 attending physicians, residents, nurses, advanced practice providers and admin staff) are tired but deeply dedicated and committed to serving our community and are distressed by the inequity with which COVID is distributed across our society, hitting economically disadvantaged populations and communities of color disproportionally.

On the positive side, we can see a light at the distant end of the COVID tunnel as our vaccination program is now underway. We expect all COVID facing employees in all role groups to have received their first vaccine dose by January 8th. I myself have already been vaccinated and I encourage all to do so when their time comes.

- David F. M. Brown '85

#### stories I hear

I fell in love with Princeton during my on-campus interview. I am a child of well-educated immigrant parents who fled West because of the Holocaust. I have always known how fortunate I am to have attended Princeton and to have a medical/public health career.

Our health care (HC) system is broken. I have seen this for many years but COVID has shown the gaps with increasingly painful clarity. Now, I review medical charts, many from Appalachia, and talk to people from all over the US about HC. Proof of human suffering is in the stories I hear and read each day: "I got Stage 4 cancer because I couldn't afford to see my doctor." "My child has a pre-existing condition ...worried he will lose coverage." "I'm a mother teaching my kids at home ...lost my job...can't sleep." "My husband lost his job ....family lost health insurance." "I couldn'tsay goodbye to my mother and my sister... died of COVID." "Declaring bankruptcy ... due to medical bills." "He lost hope...relapsed with heroin."

I think of what Dr. M.L. King said(1963) [stated]: "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." I ponder the words: "Weiji" (Chinese) meaning Danger/Opportunity/Change and "Princeton in the Nation's Service." For me, all this leads me to work for a better HC system and to hope that from this period of danger we'll find the will to create an equitable, ethical, HC system.

- Anita Kestin, M.D., M.P.H., '76

# room-roaming prof

I am interested to see the different ways in which my college students behave. I was surprised to hear how much they mourned the spring dances and graduation ceremonies, which some of us had been happy to skip through the 70's. And yet out here at Case Western, these young people have taken covid more seriously than many around the country, self-isolating and masking, so that we have had very few cases, and very few students and faculty members have died, although one is too many.

I am proud of these students, who seem to care about themselves and the world, and who I encourage to turn into voters.... Zoom has turned out to be manageable for us old farts; who would have guessed? But dual-delivery to both live and online students will require me to stand still in front of the computer camera, which as a room-roaming prof I can barely do; I would have to lash myself in place, like a sailor to his wheel.

Some mental health clients who can afford the internet or cell phones like Zoom better; it is more convenient than getting on a bus or paying for gas to get to office appointments. I can take courses on telehealth til doomsday, but I still miss seeing the client in person. Seeing an opera singer perform close-up on the computer screen is more enthralling and expressive than seeing a client that way. But yelling the privacies of one's life through masks is no better.

- Bob Soffer '76

## a cat in my lap

My passion for theater, and lighting design in particular, led me to the English Department and to Theater Intime, McCarter, and the other stages around the campus. Lighting design, while not offered at Princeton, fit into the late Professor Dan Selzer's vision for the Department in Theater and Dance, now well-established at the Univesity.

In 1980, I made the transition to architectural lighting design and embarked upon a career path along which I have flown millions of actual airplane miles to 40 countries. I returned from a project in the Middle East and meetings in London in February 2020, and have since been grounded.

Now the worldly concerns of 45 colleagues and far-flung family have been flattened onto a screen. My wife and I have stayed healthy and have used found-time to read both the books unfinished from undergraduate years and so many more topics in science and history, letters and mathematics.

My recognition of the value and power of life-long learning that Princeton managed to instill has enabled me to imagine the state of lighting design beyond the time of the virus. To sit in my study with a cat on my lap, to comtemplate what came before and what may come next, can be seen as a great gift that obligates in my already full life. I can't wait to get back to it.

- Charles Stone '76

#### eerily quiet

The pandemic environment has affected my life, like everyone's in Italy, instantly and dramatically since March 4, when the Italian government closed the schools and began to shut the country down, which led to almost three months of strict quarantine. The lockdown meant that one could not wander more than 200 metres from one's house, except to go to a supermarket or a pharmacy, and that was limited to one person per family.

There were extensive line-ups and long waits, but it was remarkably orderly and calm, even eerily quiet, with everyone in masks and fearful of talking and possibly spreading germs. Everyone had to fill out self-certification forms justifying being outside the house. Most airports, train stations, and buses shut down and travel, even within Italy, ground to a halt. I missed my mother's funeral in March because my flights back to Canada were cancelled two days before the funeral. I had to evacuate my international boarding students as other flights were being cancelled. I quickly had to transition my school to virtual classes, which we did successfully until the end of the academic year in June.

My wife was in Canada when quarantine started and couldn't get back to Italy until July. One of my senior year roommates, Tom Ramsey, died from Covid in April. The pandemic has significantly increased my connection to Princeton. I attended all of the "76 Together Apart" monthly Zoom meetings and reconnected with classmates I had not seen in over 40 years.

#### shock wave

#### A teacher's perspective

An aspect of pandemics that is difficult to describe to those who haven't experienced them is the slow, surreal build-up as they spread, beginning as distant news stories and growing into a kind of invisible psychic shock wave that suddenly breaks on a community as the present reality of the threat hits home. As I taught Latin at The Branson School, nestled in the dreamy hills of California's Marin County, the idea that our little utopia might be affected was initially rejected as the shrill panic of so many Chicken Littles. But as cases grew in number and proximity from February to March, so did an unspoken acknowledgement of the situation until, in the space of just a few days, the weight of collective opinion shifted from, "Not to worry!" to "Close now!"

With essentially no warning, we were suddenly all at home—for the rest of the year: no meetings, no farewells; just a frantic Thursday afternoon scramble to bring home whatever teaching tools we might need as we dove into the completely foreign pedagogical experiment of teaching from home.

The rest of the school year was a timeless sort of blur, teaching "virtual" classes in Zoom video conferences, plodding through curriculum as we could, without homework or evaluations—the latter an unfortunate administrative overreaction in the face of an apparent apocalypse. By the fall we had adjusted to a new normal of "muted" faces in boxes, frozen connections, and yet humor.

- Henri de Marcellus '86

#### basic necessities

The pandemic has had a profound impact on both my personal and professional life, and those shifts have deepened my connection to Princeton. Professionally, I lead business development efforts for Revolution Foods, a B Corp and social enterprise providing healthy school and community meals nationwide. During the heightened food insecurity resulting from widespread pandemic-related school closures and associated limited access to school meals (upon which 31 million U.S. children depend), economic hardship (record unemployment and 50% of families now food-insecure), and natural disasters (fires, hurricanes, etc.), we have now delivered more than 30 million healthy child, adult, and senior meals during the pandemic.

Never has "in the nation's service and the service of humanity," Princeton's informal motto, been more important. The need for basic necessities like food has not been this high since the Great Depression, and these hardships are most acute at the lower end of the economic spectrum. It is an honor to be of service to my fellow citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, which is what Princeton prepared me to do.

Personally, much like when the tide goes on the beach and treasures may be revealed on the sand, the absence of physical connection with others during the pandemic has heightened my awareness of the deep friendships associated with my Princeton experience and made those much more valuable, now that the everyday bustle of life has faded somewhat due to the pandemic. I am truly grateful for those friendships, now more than ever.

### always patient

#### To My Wife, on Our Pandemic Wedding Anniversary

It's our anniversary!!! It has also been 208 days since we had a meal in a restaurant, 215 days since we have been to a movie theater, 223 days since we have seen a live play, and 234 days since we have been more than 30 miles from home. On the plus side, we have walked our neighborhood loop 842,000 times (estimate), watched 3 million Netflix episodes (estimate), eaten 27 billion turkey burgers (estimate), and changed our sheets twice (probably an estimate).

Through all the grocery store visits, grocery store visits, and grocery store visits, through Zoom calls with family, Zoom meetings with work colleagues, Zoom cocktails with friends, and even a Zoom P-Rade, you have been the best possible pandemic roommate.

Always patient, never judgmental, always upbeat and positive, never tiring of my incredibly tasteful jokes. So if I someday need to be stranded on a desert island, and can only choose one person to be stranded with, and Robin Wright is not available, I choose you Well, OK, I choose you anyway. Can we pick an island that has pie?

- Josh Libresco '76

### gut-wrenching

I am co-founder of Marin Shakespeare Company, working on stage, in education, and for social justice, as the largest provider of Shakespeare in prison programs in the world. We cancelled our 2020 summer season, but completed a renovation of the Forest Meadows Amphitheatre, our summer home. With many covid-related construction delays, not having the deadline of upcoming performances was invaluable.

Pandemic uncertainty forced us to continually re-think our Education programs. In the end, we offered both online and inperson summer camps, and are providing only virtual programming in-schools this school year. I typically teach joyous theatre classes three or four days a week in California state prisons. These classes give people who are incarcerated opportunities for self-reflection, self-expression, playful teamwork, responsible goal-setting, and appreciation of themselves and others. Participants have dropped out of gangs, enrolled in higher education, reunited with family members, and changed their outlooks on how they want to live their lives.

It's been gut-wrenching to follow the wild progression of the virus through the prisons, while being able to communicate only through "Alternative Programming" packets. But the time for reflection has been a blessing. The theatre field as a whole has been grappling with how we can be leaders in envisioning and creating an anti-racist world. We are imagining practices that will make our theatres places for true belonging, where truths are told with compassion and joy, and where we can model the future we want to see for all our children and grandchildren.

# never travel again

#### March 2020:

- Closed on purchase of home in San Carlos, CA.
- Moved out of home in Cambridge, MA. Provided masks to the movers.
- The US shut down. It was strange to shelter in place when I didn't have a place.
- Flew from Boston to San Francisco. There were 15 passengers on the plane; I had Economy Plus to myself.
- Moved into home in San Carlos, CA. Provided masks to the movers.

#### April - May - June 2020:

- Settled into my new home.
- Started buying groceries at 6:00 am on Saturdays.
- Test drove cars (in a mask, with no salesman in the car) and bought one.
- Enjoyed my 42nd Princeton Reunion via Facebook.
- Multiple family members were nearby but to keep each other safe, we kept our distance.
- My daughter set up an iPad for my 97-year-old-Mom who lives in an assisted living facility. Since we couldn't visit Mom in person anymore, this was vital to staying in touch.

#### July 2020:

- Since I'll never again travel like I used to, I adopted a pair of kittens; it's nice to have company.
- Finally got my hair cut, for the first time in 5 months.

#### August - September - October 2020:

- Spending lots of time on Zoom, Skype and Teams for work.
- Looking forward to getting my teeth cleaned someday.
- Really looking forward to spending time with family and friends.

# nobility and majesty

The pandemic has forced us to confront the fragility of the under-funded public health system. It highlighted our overdependence on a few foreign sources of vital supplies, and laid bare our vulnerabilities. When the world faces an existential threat, it looks to its leaders for inspiration. Winston Churchill's words have been my inspiration. His words joined the citizens of his time in noble purpose, even when he could not promise success.

As I work alongside those trying to shore up the supply chain for PPEand medications, I have thought of his admonition, "It is no use saying 'we are doing our best.' You have got to succeed in doing what is necessary." I have watched as hospital staff treat and comfort patients struggling to survive COVID, and thought of Churchill's comment, "These are not dark days: these are great days — the greatest days our country has ever lived."

Even with the horrific toll of COVID, there is a nobility and majesty in individuals putting themselves at risk to help others. As I help in planning for vaccine administration, I watch each setback and want the scientists to embrace Churchill's words, "Never give in. Never, never, never—in nothing great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense."

In freshmen week, we were invited to be part of Princeton in the Nation's Service. Since the advent of COVID, I have felt I am part of that ideal.

- Nancy Foster '76

# changed priorities

As the President of the United States Golf Association (USGA), the pandemic changed the key USGA priorities I will focus on. Before Covid-19, our key priorities were:

- 1. Annually conduct 14 great championships, including 4 professional championships, and 10 amateur championships.
- 2. Lead the global golf industry to a more sustainable future by introducing and implementing the Distance Insights project.
- 3. Manage a CEO transition as the current CEO is retiring in 2021.

Due to Covid-19, our priorities changed as follows:

- 1. First, lead the golf industry to a safe return to golf for the general public, and rounds played in 2020 are up 30%.
- 2. We reduced the championships for 2020 from 14 to 4—the men's and women's U S Opens—with delayed dates and the men's and women's U.S. Amateurs, all with strict covid-19 protocols and no spectators.
- 3. The USGA transferred its broadcasting contract through 2026 back to NBC from Fox to avoid new time conflicts for Fox.
- 4. We selected a second headquarters site in Pinehurst, NC to move our test center there and geographically diversify our operations.
- 5. We delayed the Distance Insight project for 9-12 months.
- 6. We began our new CEO search with video interviews with all the potential candidates.

Clearly, COVID-19 changed the priorities of the USGA.

#### Be kind

Pandemic mantra: we're all doing the best we can. Be kind to yourselves. I teach history at UC Merced, a Hispanic serving institution where over 70% of students are low income first-gen; most speak a language other than English at home. Roughly 7% are undocumented, many more in mixed status families. They worry about the pandemic, money, the election, work, Black Lives Matter, as well as potential deportation.

I'm a widow living alone. The isolation of the pandemic has been hard: I miss travel, and zoom happy hours are a poor substitute for the real thing. But my job is secure, I own my house; it's my students I worry about. After forty years of teaching, I'm unprepared for remote instruction. I know my students less than I wish.

Remote teaching is time-consuming and lacks the energy of the classroom. I record videos for smart, brave and anxious young people. Generosity is my watchword: class shouldn't be another source of anxiety. I chose readings — about disease, race, and inclusion — to help students think analytically about the world.

What I know: they are struggling to concentrate in a reading and writing intensive class. In an anonymous check-in they mentioned money, fires, and the election; one was concerned they would not be able to go to law school but celebrated eating two meals a day. For my students, the pandemic is not just hard, it's existential. We're all doing the best we can, I remind them. Be kind to yourselves.

- Susan D. Amussen '76

### perfect concert

Tuesday evenings have changed for me. Normally I conduct rehearsals of the 60-member South Orange Symphony. But the orchestra has been silent, with no safe way for musicians to rehearse side by side. In September, outdoor music lifted our spirits—a brass sextet in the gazebo and a string quartet in the park.

I played piano with a violinist, bassist, and dancer in a "chamber music variety show" onstage at the South Orange Performing Arts Center. Our 22-minute program included Scott Joplin Ragtimes; Bloch and Bach; Kreisler's Liebesleid; and Schwartz's "All Good Gifts" from Godspell. "A perfect Covid concert!"

Now if we can schedule a string rehearsal of Brahms's 1st Symphony before 2020 ends, we'll be thankful. Meanwhile, Zoom realigns my days and weeks. I'm grateful for so many chances to explore issues of interest with new acquaintances near and far...and no drive time. A question posed in a breakout session this morning, "how can philanthropy better organize to advance racial justice in Newark," generated vigorous discussion and firm pledges to reconvene soon.

Yet it's my own Princeton class that's producing the most remarkable series of monthly meet-ups. Called Class of '76 Together Apart, these Sundays-at-4 are an unexpected blessing of Covid-19. Class VP Illa Brown designs 90 splendid minutes of interviews, dialogue, humor, and music, followed by congenial breakouts. In trying times, it's a joy to hear the stories of compassionate, accomplished classmates, and to share even deeper bonds through our beloved Princeton.

#### meant to be

Three impacts of the pandemic loom large -on my family, my work, and knowing my place in the world. On April 14th, we lost my wife Grace's aunt to COVID-19. She had been personal secretary to Eleanor Roosevelt and was present at the creation of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in Paris. A force of nature. At 94, I believe she was ready to go, though we grieve the isolated circumstances she had to endure.

At the non-profit I founded, our most established program involves bringing low-carbon solutions to China. Through 2016, we were sailing with the wind at our back. The pandemic is now the third gale we've had to tack through since then. First, the announcement of the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Accord. Second, the outbreak of the tariff war. Now, COVID-19. (I was in Wuhan often in 2002-2004 and can picture the outdoor market and, if I squint, I think maybe the Institute of Virology too).

We've been able to make lemonade out of this, though: replicating the awarded collaboration model from this program and applying it to a second, new program — Keystone COVID Response.In the long view, I see my place in the time-and-space continuum a bit better: a momentary physiological blip (and miracle) sharing the experience of being human across time—from plague-ravaged Roman legionnaires through Boccaccio to everyone on the planet today. The simple evolutionary truth is that we are meant to be together.

- Terry Cooke '76

### got it

Every year a few of my Ohio friends make the pilgrimage to NYC in March for the Big East basketball tournament. Even though COVID had started to surface by then, we naively thought that it wouldn't impact our annual trip to the Garden. We saw a Broadway show and then the next day Broadway shut down. We saw one game at the Garden and then the Tournament shut down.

At this point, most rational people would have fled for safer confines, but as we had hotel rooms booked for three more nights, we stayed. On Friday we attended a concert of the Irish band The Wolfetones at Connolly's Pub. No social distancing. Great concert, but in hindsight it was likely a superspreader event.

The night I returned to Cincy the fever started. The next night chills and then profuse sweating. Later it got in my respiratory system, and for about two weeks it seemed like I was coughing up the inside of my lungs. It took a month for the symptoms to fully resolve. All five of us who made the trip to NYC got it.

As one of the 10 members of '76 who has never missed Reunions, I wanted to keep the streak intact even though COVID forced Reunions to be virtual in 2020. So in late May I drove back to NJ and met up with two classmates and we marched the P-Rade route the Saturday of Reunions. No asterisk next to my name for Reunions attendance!

- Willy Landrigan '76

#### accessible

The pandemic hit in the middle of my first year as a business owner (a move heavily inspired by the 2018 She Roars conference). My life continued as normal in many ways—I still work from home, my husband still goes to his lab—but much more isolated. In normal years, my city is full of festivals, but this year we get takeout and meet for masked walking dates with friends.

My Princeton friends quickly started Zoom check-ins back in March, which have been a lifeline. But there's been another unexpected bright spot: Now that everyone's remote, the Princeton panels and lectures that take place all over the country in normal years suddenly seem accessible from my home in Colorado. I find myself "attending" an event about every week.

Last night I watched two distinguished classmates talk about the political climate in a Class of '98 town hall. As we got a thoughtful, informed look at the circumstances our country faces, I caught up with my old roommate in the chat and connected with other old friends. After a talk a few years ago by Professor Sam Wang on gerrymandering, I texted my She Roars group, "I had no idea that 22 years after graduation I would still be getting so much

value from my Princeton education."

- Anne Merrow '98

## pockets

I know I am so lucky. I know I have every advantage – incredibly good luck that our family has remained healthy, the very good fortune to have a job that allows me to work from home, a loving husband and children, the resources to order books or food so we don't always need to leave the house. But I come back to this question—if I feel so broken by this pandemic, how are others, with many fewer advantages, able to get through this?

Each week is marathon. My workload has increased enormously, and attempting to balance litigation with pandemic homeschooling has nearly broken me. I fight with my kindergartener every day about zoom school and struggle not to throw my computer out the window when Outlook crashes for the eighth time. I have lost all ability to concentrate, interrupted every 15 minutes by my 6 year old or an emergent email. I am frenzied, frantic to get the endless list done. I am a fragile shell, unsuccessfully holding it together, failing in all directions.

What sustains me? The pockets of joy. Hot tea every morning. A run outside every afternoon. Diving into the pile of books on my bookshelf. Watching 80s movies with my 11-year-old. Seeing my 6-year-old learn to read. Crying through a virtual P-rade. Speaking with Princeton students who want to learn about a legal career. Speaking with my dear college friends by zoom every few weeks. I am grateful for them all.

- Kristin Vassallo '97

### The Dream

COVID, dammit, when you leave, We will get our life...the dream, Which we all have fantasies about...

Our planet pure and clean, Waterways will welcome this New and re-imagined Life of ours...

No fights and no wars, No crooks and no ghosts, All we need some sane and decent humans...

Be it Woman or a Man,
Be it They or be it Them,
Left, or right, or middle, I don't care...

All I care Death has stopped Life is back and Love is strong And we all enjoy ourselves together!

Have Alumni Days again,
Black and orange everywhere,
And...P-Rade... not virtual, but REAL!!!

- Marina Mitchell \*98, isolated in London, UK

#### time

The pandemic changed my perception and relationship with time. During lockdown, I thought being at home would give me the opportunity to do more of the things that I love such as reading, writing, etc. Nevertheless, during those 12 weeks, I constantly felt I had no time for anything. There was never a break. Being at home enjoying a unique and privileged time with my family, also meant that there was no time for either one of us as individuals. By sharing all time and space with someone else, it felt there was no time and space for either one of us. And that was hard.

Days went by as a slob, in a monotonous routine between work, caring and overall getting thru the day with little time for joy or recognition for each other. Time seemed endless. Conversely, the overnight disappearance of things to look forward to, the lack of timelines and timeframes, the unknown... all made me realise how limited and precious time is; how quickly it vanishes leaving you with the uncertainty of whether that was the last time you did or could have done something.

Epicureans told us that carpe diem was a motto to live by, and while we all recognise the need to seize the moment, I often find myself being the only one truly worried about the opportunities that we missed or might have missed forever. Time is then scarce. Endless or scarce, time has changed. It is gone and it is also present, but more importantly it is here for us and what we make of it, or don't, counts.

- Dr. Elena Peregrina Salvador \*15

# large and sudden

The Pandemic has been present for over a year as I write this (May, 2021). Even though we have been in isolation, the influence of the Pandemic has not. It has coincided with racial issues, a dramatic election, an attack on the Capital, and life changing events that may be secondary to Covid, such as retirement or loss of close family and friends.

My two daughters came back from Brooklyn to stay with us, at first coming for "a week of quarantine, which might last 2 weeks or maybe even more" but ended up lasting 3 months. The partial quarantining, stores and restaurants closing, and many people changing to working at home was part of the "New Normal". There were mixed reactions to this new lifestyle. Many felt lonely and isolated. Some lost jobs or had other financial hardships such as daycare or medical expenses, some had to work stressful hours or with stressful or dangerous conditions, fearful of getting covid. On the other hand, many found the change positive in several ways. There were less social "obligations", they could work in the comfort of their own home, and did not have to commute to work.

Both of my parents, Sam and Sylvia, and my aunt Dotty, passed away the first week of April 2020 within 8 days of each other. It was a large and sudden loss. Two were from Covid, one hadn't been diagnosed with Covid, but we suspect it was. My father had many medical problems, which he had kept overcoming, but the loss of all three, within 8 days, was unexpected. The pandemic meant I could not visit my Dad in the assisted living facility after my mother died, nor visit any of them in the hospital. It has been disturbing knowing they died alone, without family nor friends nearby. There was a huge sense of loss, but it was tremendously helpful feeling the support of so many people. It was a strange time, transformative, and they were changes that will have a permanent effect on me.

I converted my Psychiatry Practice to virtual. After a while, I found that it was not as bad as I had anticipated. Prior to the Pandemic, I had been opposed to the idea of Tele-Psychiatry, feeling the live connection was a necessity. There were a few interesting "unintended consequences": I got to see inside the home of many of my patients, and because they wanted privacy away from family, at times I had sessions in their cars or even a few closets. It has enabled many people to make appointments more easily, for the elderly, students on break across the country, or those with child care issues or time constraints. I hope that Tele-Psychiatry will continue to be an option, while still having in person treatment as the "default".

### longer twistier

About 25 years ago, at 1995's "Oth" Reunion, I had a brainflash. I knew the perfect Reunion theme for our 25th: "Hindsight Is 1995". For 22 years I thought about that theme, so when the time came to start planning for our 2020 25th, I volunteered to be our Reunion Theme Chair. NB: 1)After our class input, no matter how big a thumb I tried to put on the scale, that theme did not come out on top; 2)the theme we chose — "I-95: The Journey" — is objectively a better theme; and 3) thank goodness my theme did not win, because we didn't have a 25th in 2020 and our Journey is ending up being longer, twistier, and filled with more detours and potholes than anyone could have imagined. Hindsight's 20/20; foresight's practically blind.

My personal pandemic experience, consisting of "working" from home and, sadly, un-planning our 25th, has fortunately been less dramatic and tragic than many others'. But, like the seniors who graduated last year or the kids coming to Princeton now (or deferring), this experience isn't what I was expecting life to be. It isn't what I was "promised" by recent experience. But just because my Journey isn't what I thought it would be, at the end of it, I will still be me—forever changed by the Journey I was on, true—but still me. Hopefully, how we've been changed by Journey's end will, in a small way, make up for some of what we've lost.

- Ronnie Raviv '95