

When I moved into my home, it was a big step. This was my first time buying a home all on my own. The Faith Lutheran Church property backs up to mine. I could see their marquis from my kitchen window. Back in August of 2018, it had the message "You Are Loved". That was my 'sign' that this was all going to be ok. With Covid, the sign recently changed. It's surreal to look out my window and see this new message. However, I know I'm still loved. A protective love. I am a photographer. I knew I wanted to capture this powerful message. This is my daughter wearing a mask I sewed for her.



# Documents of History in the making

## COVID 19 in Nevada

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Passover 2020 in the time of the coronavirus

Why is this night different from all other nights?

If you are familiar with the Passover Seder, the ritual meal that recreates the story of the Jews' exodus from Egypt, you will recognize this question as a central part of the liturgy. We learn that the night is different because we don't eat leavened bread, that we can recline during eating, that we eat bitter herbs to remember the bitterness of slavery.

For Passover 2020, a new chapter can be written around the world and in my home, because this was a Passover like no other. In almost all ways, COVID-19 has made "this night" different for everyone trying to celebrate a millennia-old ritual.

The core of the Seder is for loved ones to gather and tell the story of the exodus from bondage to freedom. The observance takes place around a holiday table—or tables if your group is large enough. I can remember as a child, sitting at the "kids' table" to accommodate the overflow from the main table. The kids never minded—the adults let us drink the requisite four cups of wine over the course of the evening and we got "schnockered." For all of us, it was the first time we felt the intoxicating effects of giddiness, effusive body warmth and general tipsiness coming from sweet Concord grape wine. We looked forward to Passover every year, perhaps for the wrong reasons.

Passover is usually a bustling time, especially for women. There's housecleaning, especially with guests arriving. There's setting a beautiful table, often bringing out heirloom linens and dishes. There's preparing the ritual objects—Elijah's cup, the Seder plate with six symbolic ingredients, matzah. There's identifying which hagaddah (the telling of the Passover story) will be used. There's preparing a traditional meal with many courses. It's all very festive and a bit overwhelming but in most years, the labor and the preparation are shared among family and friends. This elaborate feast is truly a communal effort by the time everyone sits down at the Seder table.

Fast forward to this year. Our Seder, which would have had people attending from two Reno and one Carson City locations and from Davis, California, was convening at my house. It came to an abrupt end once social distancing, sheltering in place and travel restrictions were announced. No one was comfortable gathering in person. So, we joined the international trend for Passover—we zoomed our Seder. There were upsides. I didn't have to obsess over cleaning my house. Who would see a missed crumb or cat hair? I didn't have to give much thought to what I was wearing since much of me would be invisible on a screen. But still, I set a lovely table with all the ceremonial items, only this year it was set for only one.

Starting promptly at 6 p.m., we all logged on to our link and there, like magic, thirteen faces popped up on the screen. By zooming, we were even able to include my son and his family in Seattle, something that wouldn't have happened in "normal" times. I suppose this was the silver lining, that both my kids and all my grandkids were together, if only virtually.

I missed the fun and energy in the kitchen but I was thankful that my daughter S. shared the burden of food preparation. Although she lives only a handful of miles from me, she is still working and we have self-isolated for three weeks. It has been torture not to visit with her daughter A., although facetime has been a great comfort. I just didn't have it in me to make the entire meal just for myself but S. stepped forward in a way that she never has before, and this made the holiday feel extra special to me.

I made the chicken soup and matzo balls. She made a brisket with vegetables. She made charosets, the Jewish version of fresh apple chutney-- probably the healthiest part of the meal and a favorite of mine. I got her a copy of the hagaddah. She brought me fresh flowers from my favorite florist Devonwoods.

The Seder began and in its own way, our little community came together. We took turns, as always, doing the readings and leading us through the rituals. We laughed. We tried to sing but somehow there seemed a second or two delay and harmonies were elusive. We could see each other and did our best to believe we were all in the same place. We were thankful for the technology that allowed us to be together, if only in this virtual way.

There was one last change in my Passover celebration in 2020 and no amount of technology could set this one right. In Israel, Passover often serves as an excuse for a spring vacation and my good friend Ishai introduced that tradition to my family. The years were marked with his family and mine taking wonderful camping trips to the Coast, with opening season visits to the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, with trips to San Francisco and Heart Castle and so many more. This year, the tradition imploded. I was planning to head to Bridgeport and Bodie, California with my oldest friend Amina, the day after the Seder. It couldn't happen. Amina was still holed up in Davis and travel was discouraged. No Amina, no spring trip-- another unfortunate casualty of the coronavirus.

At the conclusion to the Seder there is a traditional song and wish that we celebrate "next year in Jerusalem." For our family, and probably for families around the world, we would settle for "next year, all together."

# Documents of History in the making

## COVID 19 in Nevada

### NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Hello,

I am 15 years old, and I attend Coral Academy of Science in Reno, Nevada as a freshman in high school. A typical day for me is just like any other basic high-schooler. I get up, go to school at the crack of dawn, and after school I have sports practice, for me that would be track. Now I never thought running for fun was something enjoyable, let alone did I think I would ever be on the track team. But, I found enjoyment in running and I immediately fell in love with the sport.

I can't do anything that my regular day would look like right now. I don't go to school, it's all online. I don't have a track season as of now, and as far as the weekends go, I can't go to the park, I can't go to the mall, and I can't do what I love most, hang out with my friends. This kills me, really. I hate having to do online school because mostly it causes my face to be glued to a screen 100% of the time. It's hard to keep assignments on track, and it's also hard to not be able to see my friends, which is pretty much the best part of school. The best we can do is FaceTime, and really that doesn't do it for us. On the bright side, I have been able to get closer with my family which before, I never felt like I had time for. This is all super hard, and its especially hard to be positive about it, because all over the news and social media all you see is negativity about COVID-19 and how it's not going to get any better from here. Eventually we know it will go away, but for now we all just have to stay inside, because you can't do anything or go anywhere. As far as my track season goes, the best thing I can do is run around my neighborhood, being sure to stay far from anyone I see. I'm glad to have the technology I do, and the ability to stay in contact with my friends. I really thought I would never say this, but I miss school. I really do. So don't take the ability to go outside and hang out with your friends for granted, cause now I realize I did. And I miss that.

Sincerely, L.T.

# Documents of History in the making

## COVID 19 in Nevada

### NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

April 4, 2020

## **Living Through COVID-19**

Today is the 21<sup>st</sup> day of staying at home except to get necessary items from the grocery store, help the Red Cross with emergencies, and take walks in secluded areas. Here are some stray thoughts about what has happened so far:

**Food Shopping** Because L. became very worried about COVID-19 while most of the population was still thinking this might not be a big problem in Reno, I had plenty of time to stock up on essentials.

My first Coronavirus shopping trip was for things we could eat if we came down with the virus – lots of juice, ginger ale, soup and crackers. The stores I went to were well-stocked. The next day (about noon on Friday, March 13), as the governor started asking nonessential businesses to close, I headed to the nearest grocery store, hoping to reduce the number of times I would need to shop in the future. Chicken and ground beef were sold out. There was no organic milk. Toilet paper and paper towels were gone; signs on the bare shelves told customers they were limited to two packages. Except for expensive natural products, there was no dish soap. Bleach, hand sanitizer, and other cleaning products which might be used to kill the virus were gone. For no reason that I could think of, the entire aisle of bottled water was bare.

Mostly I was looking for frozen food, bread, and fresh vegetables, which were in good supply. Several clerks assured the shoppers that there were trucks on their way from warehouses in California which would replenish the shelves if we came back in a few hours. One worker added that they had never seen such a rush of people as they had had that morning. He said it was like a double Christmas. There were quite a few people in the store, but most were beginning to practice social distancing. Several times, I saw people pause as though planning to enter an aisle I was in and then move on, since there would be no way to stay six feet apart. The store had a steady stream of announcements asking us not to line up at the cash registers. Just as I was ready to pay, a new announcement: all the cash registers had just crashed. In order to maintain social distancing, they asked that we not move toward the registers until the system was rebooted. I headed over to the card section, which was empty, and found a few cards to purchase. The cash registers came back on-line. Seeing people rush toward the registers, I waited a couple of minutes and then another announcement: the system had crashed again. The server couldn't handle all the activity. I waited for another fifteen minutes, during which I went back to the food section and picked up additional items just because I could. Finally, the system stabilized; I paid and exited.

Having forgotten to buy eggs, I returned to the grocery store a day later. There were no eggs. Even the organic, free-range, eight dollar-a-dozen eggs were gone. However, milk again was in stock. All the chicken and ground beef which had arrived the previous afternoon had been purchased. I added some milk and bananas to my basket, then walked the aisles just to see what was happening. Toilet paper and paper towels were on their way, but the clerk who spoke with me didn't think they would last long, even though he had changed the signs on the bare shelves to limit people to purchasing one package at a time. I bought two boxes of tissues, which were still in good supply, just in case the toilet paper shortage continued. Again, there was no bottled water. The interior shelves now had some empty spaces. There had been runs on soup, bread, candy, certain cookies, and coffee. The frozen foods which had been plentiful just the day before were now picked over. After leaving the grocery store, I headed to a pet store, where I plunked down \$110 on cat food for the two cats.

Except for walks around the neighborhood and some Red Cross business, that was the last time I left our property for two weeks, when the need to buy eggs forced me back to a food store. The toilet paper and paper towels shelves remained bare. Surprisingly, there had been runs on club soda and tonic water, though the liquor shelves seemed to be well stocked.

**The Homeless** I just heard that COVID-19 has now been found in Reno's homeless population, so I'm very glad that my commitment to help at the city's tent overflow homeless shelter ended with a shift on March 11. In a

population that had health problems under the best of circumstances (on the 11<sup>th</sup>, with a few people in Nevada diagnosed with the virus, the paid worker – thinking to allay any fears about COVID-19 being in the tent - said that two women who were coughing loudly and continuously had just returned from stays in the hospital with pneumonia), it seemed certain that the disease eventually would reach them. The bunkbeds in the tent were so close that there was barely enough room to move a wheelchair between the bunks – in other words, there was no social distancing. We had plenty of hand sanitizer and tissues, which were both popular with the clients, but the staffer had to remind some clients twice that they needed to cover their mouths when coughing. At this point in time, the virus was almost exclusively found in people who could afford to travel, so COVID-19 was less of a concern in my mind than the fact that there were plenty of other diseases and wonderful things, like body lice, which I could get from them. When I returned home, everything I had worn went into the washer while I headed for a hot shower.

The city moved all the homeless out of the three shelter buildings and the overflow tent on Record Street a little later. This was one of the smarter steps made by the city as the virus became more widespread, since they now have people sleeping in spaces large enough to allow the recommended social distancing of six feet. However, feeding them has become more complicated, since all sites serving meals did communal feeding and – hey, they're homeless – the clients don't have a place to go to where they can eat their bagged meals apart from others.

The supplemental food distribution done by my church was altered to suit the times. Governor Sisolak asked all the groups working with the Northern Nevada Food Bank to continue distributing food, so we are. I worked the distribution on March 14<sup>th</sup>, where we gave a bag of food to people who registered for it. We eliminated the bonus table, where people could select a can or two of extra food which came in lots too small to put in all the bags. A high school class which is training students for work as food preparers had been making hot food for the clients once a month, but that was put on hold to limit having people congregate around the church. The coffee service, which the clients loved, was limited to one cup each to avoid any chance of spreading the virus through cup refills. In the past, we started packing the bags at 9 and began distributing them at 9:15, with a line of people waiting for the bags. To eliminate lines, some workers started at 8 and handed out bags as people arrived. In short, we did everything we could to get people in and out quickly, with no lines.

A few days later, those of us who were regulars were sent an e-mail, politely inviting us to stay home for the next distribution. We're all in the 65 or over age group. Instead, some younger members of the church would help. To get people to move in-and-out quickly, no coffee would be served. Also eliminated was the distribution of pet food to homeless pet owners. This had been a labor of love from one of the regulars. Fortunately, the Food Bank was given permission to eliminate registering people, which was the only face-to-face interaction where social distancing was impossible.

**Filling Time** So far, I have enjoyed not having to be places, though more and more groups I belong to are taking advantage of social media to have virtual meetings. As soon as the request (later order) to close nonessential businesses was made, I downloaded a bunch of books and ordered some DVDs and puzzles from Amazon. Over the past month, we've ordered more from Amazon than in the last 10 years combined. We'd prefer to buy locally, but that's not possible. I also treated myself to some virtual shopping at Macy's, because I might as well have better plates if I'm going to be eating every meal at home. As soon as Larry heard that COVID-19 could live for a day on cardboard and paper, we started putting all the packages and our mail in the garage for a day before we opened it.

I've played lots of games (Farkle, cribbage, and jigsaw puzzles with Larry; apps on my laptop or phone for bridge, Wordscape, and five different solitaire games; and the most difficult Ken Ken puzzles I could find – many of which I have to erase and do a second time because I made an error the first time.) I thought we would be viewing lots of movies, but that hasn't happened. IEvery day that we're not able to take a long walk outside, I try to watch an hour-long television show while using my treadmill to put in the miles. Fortunately, unlike some states, Nevada's stay-at-home rules carve out an exception for outdoor recreation. Mostly we

walk around the neighborhood, where we wave at people we've never seen before. Some of our former favorite places to walk, such as doing several loops around Virginia Lake, have become too crowded; it's hard to maintain the proper level of social distancing.

I've used the opportunity to take some on-line classes that I never had time for before. I've enjoyed being able to wake up whenever I want (assuming the cat hasn't jumped on me) rather than getting up for meetings. What I haven't started is that thorough Spring cleaning that I should have done this year and last year and the year before. I seem to have enough things to do that I haven't made it that far down on my list. I've done a fair amount of yard work, but only the basics inside the house.

I've seen all sorts of clever ways to stay involved with people who are distant. A friend does virtual cocktail hours with others every Friday. Another had a virtual supper with her far-flung family – one of those boxed gourmet meals that come with everything pre-cut and measured was delivered to each family group; each then prepared the meal and went on-line at a set time to eat together virtually. She declared it “was weird and fun.” My family? We're doing a play doh challenge. My youngest niece sent each family unit 12 cans of play doh and we have three days to create something wonderful and send a picture of it to my niece. She will post the pictures without attribution so that people can vote for their favorites. Actually, I would have done better with the virtual dinner. This challenge is straining my nonexistent artistic talent.

**Unexpected Good Things** Every disaster brings its share of positives. Here are a few I've noticed:

1. My Red Cross work continues. Emergencies – especially home fires – don't vanish because there's a deadly virus. I've been on three disaster response calls to people who lost their homes to fires since we were asked to stay at home. In the past, we would drag laptops and phones out to the site and then spend an hour or more getting information from the people and entering it into a computer. I've written answers to questions on the hood of a car with snow falling on me. I've sat on a curb at 3 in the morning with a headlamp on, trying to maintain the connection from my phone-as-Internet-hotspot to my PC so I could activate a credit card for clients. Now, whenever possible, they've asked that we take the information virtually, so that when we arrive on-site we just need to do a safe exchange of the credit card and related papers. I found that the process went much more quickly when I could sit in a comfortable chair, in a room with good light, using a reliable internet connection. I've treated the trips to deliver the papers as excursions – a good reason to leave the house. I'd like to see some form of this continue once we finally have a vaccine or other way to control the effects of this disease.
2. The local and state health departments were overwhelmed by the number of people who were calling or e-mailing to donate or sell masks, gloves, gowns, hand sanitizer, and other items for use in the virus fight. They asked VOAD, which is a compilation of non-profits, for help and the Red Cross agreed. Now every Monday and Thursday I look through whatever e-mail have arrived since the previous afternoon and enter them in a spreadsheet so the medical community and decision-makers can see what may be available. Makes me feel good to be able to help.
3. My church closed its doors on March 14<sup>th</sup> after our food distribution. As a downtown church, this was a hard thing to do, since we provided services to a variety of individuals and groups who are homeless or nearly homeless. This also meant that beginning on the 15<sup>th</sup>, all Sunday services and meetings were via Zoom. The first Sunday, 65 individuals or families joined. The second Sunday, we had 95. Last Sunday 120 homes were involved. The great thing was that several of our older and/or disabled members and friends were able to attend services for the first time in years. The in-person service always involves a time when we're supposed to greet each other. Usually this is a handshake, a “hi,” and then on to the next person. With the virtual service, we were randomly put in small groups involving four individuals or families per group. This led to a deeper level of sharing than would have been done in-person. We expect that once in-person services are permitted, we will continue to offer a virtual-only option for those who can't attend or chose not to attend in-person.

4. I led some training and meetings using Skype and MS Teams and attended a bunch more. This may not work well for large meetings, but I think for many smaller meetings it is just as good as an in-person meeting - and much more convenient!
5. I'm spending more time cooking. I always used to say I enjoyed cooking when I had the time. Now I have the time. Yes, I DO enjoy it....in reasonable doses!

Betsy M.

# Documents of History in the making

## COVID 19 in Nevada

### NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Hello. It's Sunday, April 5, 2020. I am a recently retired librarian and I've lived in Reno most of my life, since my parents moved me here as a child in 1978. My wife M. is a librarian with Washoe County, and we have two children, aged 12 and 15, both born here in Reno. I am documenting my thoughts and experiences on the worldwide pandemic we are in the middle of for the benefit of future history. As a librarian, I know the value of primary documents and hope this document may serve as a valuable archive of what one family experienced.

It's been about three weeks now that the coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic has been hanging over us. Throughout February and early March (although the past month or so has been a blur and time is losing meaning, I can't keep track of what day it is or how long ago things happened) we were keeping an eye on the progress of the virus in other countries because we had a trip planned over the childrens' spring break (which ran March 14-29 including weekends) to visit friends in England and my parents in France. We eventually made the difficult decision to cancel that trip rather than risk crossing paths with the virus in a busy airport and infect my elderly parents, or get stuck in quarantine in a foreign land. In hindsight, that was a wise decision.

The Friday before spring break, my daughter's track team cancelled practice and the track meet the next day. She had missed the previous (which was the first of the season) meet, so this would have been her first. It is her first time doing track. Sadly, it seems unlikely she will have a single meet this season.

Since then, the situation has spiraled out of control to a level we never would have imagined in those early days. Businesses closed, stay-at-home orders from the governor, school cancelled for weeks, and my wife's library (like all of them) closed until further notice.

We have been staying home much of the time to do our part to help contain the spread of the virus. We are so very fortunate to have a home, heated during the late wintry conditions Reno has been experiencing this year, with more television and movies than we could possibly watch, a fast internet connection to have video connections with friends, food and drink, no lack of any modern convenience but our ability to come and go and partake of normal life outside the home. No sports to watch (we miss our local Reno Aces baseball, opening day would have been this Thursday!), no restaurants or regular bar trivia nights to attend, nothing. Just runs to the grocery to restock as needed. Grocery stores have been an interesting time - sold out of hand sanitizer and toilet paper everywhere immediately, and only occasionally found since, but also hard to find many staples like flour, eggs, etc. Stores are limiting quantities of these things. We fear for the small local businesses run by our friends and neighbors that have been forced to close, whether they will be able to open again remains to be seen.

We try to avoid cabin fever by taking outings most days as weather permits. We walk our dog Auggie around the neighborhood, or sometimes we take drives to nearby destinations – Pyramid Lake one week, Washoe Lake the next, and Topaz Lake yesterday. The weather has hampered any ambitious outdoor activities most of the time, however. We did play basketball at the courts up behind Clayton Middle School for a couple days, but officially, the city has closed parks and courts like that so we aren't really supposed to go there so I suppose we won't anymore.

We find that a good mix of time together and time apart is keeping us all mostly fine in terms of our mental health. The kids are obsessed with digital content - some of it social, keeping in touch with friends they aren't seeing and interacting with like they would typically, and some of it just mindless entertainment on the internet. My wife and I do some of the same, playing games on our phones or watching TV. We've been trying to play games together as a family, a dice game or a game of chess (my son just barely knows how so I'm trying to develop some interest). Some of us enjoy jigsaw puzzles (I do not). I have been digitizing my music collection, putting content from my compact discs onto hard drives to preserve it and be able to listen from other sources, and it is a long term project I had intended for my retirement anyway. I'd like to get a garden going, having skipped it last year after a number of successful years before that, but that remains unknown - the effort with the weather has been challenging, and since I don't like starting seeds, and the usual community seedling sales are unlikely to happen this year, unless I get starts from friends, it may not happen. I did get some red onion shoots from our friend Sonya that I hope to put in the ground this week once the cold storm moves through today and tomorrow. Our son S. has developed more of an interest in baking (and some cooking as well) during this time, turning out cookies and breads and rolls and brownies in a short time. We had to slow him down, me tiring of washing his dishes and all of us not needing to have high-calorie carbohydrate/sweets sitting around in abundance to eat when we aren't getting much exercise these days.

My in-laws, both living (separately) here in town as well, have remained more homebound than us due to their advanced age and health conditions that put them at higher risk if they were to contract the virus. As a result, we have been delivering them groceries so they don't have to interact with anyone at all. We also arranged to have family dinner with them and my wife's sister via video chat, so we all ate together on each others' screens, and played a dice game afterwards like we might together under normal circumstances. We've met up with our usual trivia group (who would normally play trivia together at a local bar or brewery as we have for a few years now) to read each other trivia questions and enjoy drinks together via the same technology. We did venture down to neighbors down the street to enjoy "driveway happy hour", drinking and chatting together in their driveway while maintaining a safe distance, just in case one of us is carrying the virus but with no symptoms as they say is possible.

I regret not reading more during this time. I'm almost ashamed as a librarian how little I read. Too many other diversions, be they digital (usually) such as games or social media or just watching TV or doing other things, I rarely get to a book despite how much I enjoy it.

I suppose that's about all I have to say. It's been challenging but not terrible at our individual household level. I fear what comes next. It's going to get worse before it gets better. The economic fallout and challenges to business and society's well-being is likely to be catastrophic in the short term, both locally and globally, but I hope and am optimistic that we as a society will persevere. We have been through worse and overcome so it is my hope that we will again. My best wishes go out to the future.

# Documents of History in the making

## COVID 19 in Nevada

### NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

This sheltering time has brought me very close to my family and Nevada friends from different parts of the state. My fifth generation Nevada grandson stopped by my home to check on my well-being last Sunday. Our conversation led to the fact that he has bought a small home in Reno's old southwest, a home with lots of bookshelves. He told me the first books he put on the shelves were the many Nevada books I have gifted him over the years, even some Nevada books from my parents' collection.

I revealed in our conversation about how important the state has been to our family. We could have been talking health issues but were talking history instead. And, fortunately, so it goes.

Pat K.

# Documents of History in the making

## COVID 19 in Nevada

### NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The pandemic has changed the way Federal Court in Nevada hears criminal cases in Reno, especially initial appearances and bail hearings. Because Defendants are entitled to appear before a Magistrate Judge within 48 hours of their arrest for initial appearance and a bail or detention hearing, the federal court has entered into an agreement with the Washoe County Detention Center to hold some crucial hearings by video conference. Defendants remain at the detention center, and the Court, Court staff, prosecutors, defense attorneys and interpreters participate in the hearing via video conferencing, as long as Defendant stipulates to allow the conference to take place. In all the years I have worked, state and federal, never before have the Federal Courts offered video hearings to criminal defendants. If family members wish to listen to the hearings, they are offered an AT&T conference line that they can call into and listen. I am sure that we will go back to the in court appearances when the pandemic ceases to be so endemic.

# Documents of History in the making

## COVID 19 in Nevada

### NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY