

Corona Chronicles
May 2020
Orono Public Library Writing Circle

Monday 4 March 2020 – Sandra Dunham

May the Fourth be with you.



Thursday 8 May 2020 – Mac Herrling

Good to see the work of Corona Chronicle writers. I had a letter published in *Bangor Daily News* yesterday, May 7. I am enclosing the full letter I submitted from which the actual letter was excerpted. I thought the group might enjoy its sentiments.

I continue to work part time at Lowes with masks and gloves waiting to stop by summer's end. I have been writing or trying to write daily on my novel which is up to about 16,000 words. It is fiction of course but loosely based on my family starting in the 1930s with a kidnapping in upstate NY.

The fake patriots have re-appeared. Armed, violent, proudly ignorant and ill-informed, these men and women wrap themselves in American and Confederate flags to supposedly protest the legitimate medical guidelines enacted to prevent further spread of the Covid-19 virus that has already killed over 60,000 of our fellow citizens. They are doing the bidding of their master, the impeached President, Donald Trump, who has added more criminal behavior to his resume by inciting them to riot. Trump wants to be re-elected so he instructed his minions to protest in the capitals of states run by Democratic governors. There are legitimate concerns about how to safely re-open the economy as the nation tries to heal in spite of this president's failure to lead and tell the truth (17,000 lies uttered in three years).

He has no credibility but people believe the nonsense he spews forth at the daily briefings that have taken on the aura of a clown show as he preens in front of the cameras. Eric Alterman pointed out in a March 20th issue of *The Atlantic* that the nonsense and misinformation peddled by Fox News and Trump not only makes their audience stupid and self-satisfied but now may kill them. These fake patriots appeared before in 2009 to protest Obama's election and the Affordable Care Act. White nationalism then and now is nothing more than racism and resentment perpetuated by white terrorists. These fake patriots worship a fake president (elected by Russian trolls) while obstructing justice once elected - not exonerated, and a fake Christian (Vice President Mike Pence who excludes LGBT people from God's kingdom and believes Trump is divinely protected) who are leading them to ruin. The only true American patriots are the scientists, doctors, and front line medical staff who face death every day with dignity and compassion.

Mac Herrling
Bradley

Sunday 14 May 2020 – Sandra Dunham

Spring visitors this morning!



Monday 25 May 2020 -- Barbara Wicks

The folk art garden sculptures that have graced our street and brought many smiles are moving to a nearby neighborhood this evening. Community transmission!

You can see the sculptures and read one of the creator's article about them at

[When a family's outdoor sculptures were stolen, neighbors ...](#)

www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/05/19/when-familys-outdoor-sculptures..

Saturday 30 May 2020 – Maria Tijan-Wieck

Corona Chronicles from Madrid
Maria Tijan-Wieck
May 30, 2020

Isn't it disturbing when the Health app on your iPhone reminds you that last week you averaged 12,000 steps a day and now only 700! That was the result of our seven week-long confinement from March 14, 2020 through May 2, 2020 when those age 70 and older were allowed outside for a walk for only one hour, alone or with a caretaker. My daughter Anna is my caretaker, so we walk together.

My mother had lived through the Spanish flu and she recalled the countless funeral processions marching under her windows. We are aware that death is very present, but we only occasionally see a casket on television. All funerals and memorial services have been delayed until it will be safe to hold them. Only this week, the end of May, has the government declared a state of mourning.

I am keeping a macabre diary listing the number of dead each day and a running list of the total dead. As of Saturday, May 23, 2020, the number of total dead was 28,678 which is a huge number considering the country's population of 47 million. This number is disputed and is probably bigger by 3,000 or so. A few days after May 23 the number went down by about 2,000 and then up by some 13,000, so the latest figure is about 43,000 but nobody knows for sure.

All the above brings forth the government's ineptitude. And I'm not talking of the faulty masks and ventilators they purchased from China from a company recommended by a crony of a minister. Many health workers are not properly protected and more than 56 have died from the virus. This doesn't mean that only the current socialist government is inept at handling this crisis. I believe that had the opposition been in power, the result would be equally disastrous. Very few governments on the planet deserve any kudos.

This government is flexible meaning they do not really know what they are doing and are swerving. They call this lack of direction *rectificaciones* or corrections. The first day of confinement the order was to close everything except food stores and pharmacies. Also, hair salons and drycleaners/laundromats were to stay open. The reason for the last two was that many older people have a hard time lifting arms for hair washing, and that not everyone has a washing machine. I found these reasons justified, but as the opposition ridiculed and criticized this decision, the government rectified, and closed them. The hair salons reopened a week ago and are now swamped with women anxious to dye their hair.

Another *rectificación* had to do with age groups and time slots. Originally, one parent could take out one or two children up to 12 years of age for a one-hour walk. The parks were not open, so no monkey business on jungle gyms. After many protests, those 14 and under could also be taken out. A big relief for parents.

Madrid now has passed to Phase 1. This means that outdoor bars are open as well as stores smaller than 400 square meters. In addition to phases, there are time slots for various age groups that may go out. You can also go out to run in which case you don't need a mask. Otherwise, the mask is obligatory. It's getting confusing.

Spanish flags billowing on balconies belong to right wing patriotic Spaniards who stand for a unified Spain notwithstanding the reluctance of Catalonia and the Basque Country to be part of that Spain. On the opposite side are white sheets with homemade signs written with black markers that say *Salud Pública*. These Spaniards stand for public health for everybody. The Spanish health system is available

to everyone and is one of the best in the world. Unfortunately, it is subject to cuts when governments want to save money.

Spain is as divided as the United States and as our building, a microcosmos of the divisions that exist in the country and the world. Raúl, our dynamic doorman, set up a group chat on WhatsApp for the 56 neighbors. The purpose was to inform one another of what's going on, get help with groceries, medicines, asking about somebody's health, etc. Most of the messages were positive and helpful, but soon political pronouncements and angry responses came in and the whole thing is collapsing. The number of participants is now only 38.

Our sewing machine is in storage outside Madrid, so I made nine double layer cloth masks by hand after looking at dozens of YouTubers offering patterns and instructions. I used old pillowcases that are soft and comfortable. The metal piece that adapts to your nose I fashioned from wider twisties they use in Spain for bread bags. I'm also knitting a scarf and a sweater, and have trouble sleeping.

Employment is in crisis too. Two foundations have pulled the foundation from under our daughter Anna. She will be unemployed after June 4, 2020. Both foundations sponsor art exhibits and are well funded, but the corona virus has changed everything. The contract with the first foundation where she has worked for almost two years replacing people on leave is ending on June 3, 2020. They were very pleased with her work, but the hiring freeze is in effect, so no job. On June 4, Anna was supposed to start working for the second foundation to replace a friend on maternity leave. This time the director of the foundation called to inform her that the board of directors decided not to substitute anyone's leave. This situation will also reflect on Flor, the Honduran cleaning lady, who used to come to clean the apartment once a week. Flor has a husband and two small children. Of course, she has not been coming since the beginning of the confinement, but now that it is possible to move around and use public transportation, we don't need her anymore. Anna is unemployed and we are two able bodied women who can clean the apartment easily. The trickle down to the immigrants and the disadvantaged has stopped.

I listen to radio programs recommending books on epidemics and pandemics: *The Plague* by Camus, *Decameron* by Boccaccio, *Death in Venice* by Mann. The latest recommendation was Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, when all you can do is accept what's going on. I found particularly compelling the *Journal of the Plague Year, 1722* by Daniel Defoe. It is a very long book and it covers everything we are seeing today, fake news, hoaxes, false rumors, scams. One thing I found particularly depressing is that people were saying that we will emerge out of this ordeal as better human beings. It didn't work out then and I fear it won't work this time.

Speaking of scams there is criminal activity both real-life and virtual. Our neighbors have warned us that there are gangs going around and visiting apartments, giving away free masks from a charity. They ask you to try on the mask to see if it fits. The mask is impregnated with a chemical substance that makes you sleepy and then they rob you. Another one features nurses on social media asking people to send electronic messages to isolated individuals in ICUs. They cannot see family or friends, so a friendly message will mean so much to them. We will read your messages to them. Please send a message with your photo and your age so they can have an idea of who you are and thank you in their heart for your kindness. Meanwhile your identity is stolen by the fake nurses.

At 8pm we all come out to windows and balconies and clap to support the health care workers. That is a touching daily ritual, but in some cases very hypocritical. While we are all exceedingly grateful to the doctors and nurses, we don't want them living next door because they may infect us. Not in my back yard is the message. There have been many cases when the vehicles of health care workers have been vandalized with nasty graffiti such as *Rata Contagiosa* (Contagious rat).

On the other hand, there are displays of kindness and generosity. A woman who lives in the apartment above us and is now staying with her son outside Madrid called me to offer all the meat and fish in her freezer. I was touched by the offer, but Anna and I are vegetarian.

My friend John from Scotland sent us a poisoned present, a 1,000-piece jigsaw-puzzle of the Van Gogh's painting *Sunflowers*. We had to give up our only table to this gargantuan project. It is sitting there less than $\frac{1}{4}$ done and without much hope for completion, just frustration as we realize our lack of spatial intelligence. Every time we pass by, we try to find a place for one of the pieces to no avail. Meanwhile John and Maureen have sent us photos of their completed *Irises* and are currently working on *Starry Night*, all by Van Gogh.

Today is May 30, 2020, week 11 of semi house arrest.

