



From the President...

By Debby Weintraub

This is us.

I am listening to the sound of my daughter’s voice as she instructs her son, our six-year-old grandson, to put his scooter alongside the wall in our backyard. They have come over to play in a safe space where there are no other children to maneuver around while trying to keep the social distance required, though almost impossible for people under eight to maintain. Here he can climb on the small metal dome structure in our compact North Oakland yard, again with no worries of contacting virus droplets from metal bars in parks.



But I think they are also here because my daughter and grandson want to connect with us beyond the Google Hangouts, FaceTime, and Zoom chats we have been doing over the past eight days—something my husband and I long for too.

PRO MEMBERS OFFER ADVICE, RESOURCES, AND WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AS WE ADAPT TO LIVING IN THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. PAGE 6

This virus is cruel, not only in how it attacks and demolishes the respiratory system, but in its ability to socially isolate us. I know I am fortunate because I have a husband to share this daily shelter-in-place with, someone to hold and touch, someone to laugh with, get annoyed with, share meals and discuss all that is happening each day. I have friends who live alone and normally enjoy their living situation; yet, I know this time period is brutal.

I fluctuate among several emotions/feelings. I am almost always at a certain level of anxiety. When we open our back door and call out to our daughter and grandson to say hello from afar, our grandson edges closer and closer to us, and I back away—anxious— though he is still a good 10 feet from us. I am heartbroken when I think I may not be able to touch my grandchildren, my

BERNIE SANDERS AT SIT-IN, CIRCA 1962



Danny Lyon

PRO VP Bruce Jacobs recalls his days as a sophomore at the University of Chicago in 1962, where he became friends with Bernie Sanders. Jacobs explains how he went from political liberal to radical as the students took on the college president over housing discrimination. Page 3.

children, my family, or friends for months.

I feel rage, too, because I am so terrified by the lack of true leadership and compassion at the top levels of government. In addition, I abhor the constant changing of directives or reluctance to follow through, which causes crucial delays; the denials, the contradictions and even the initial mocking of the scientists and doctors on the front-lines of the pandemic leave me uncertain all the time.

I feel enraged when I think of my niece, an ER doctor at SF General, or my nephew, a cashier at Trader Joe’s in L.A. who may be without the adequate protective gear needed for the multitude of people they encounter every day through their work. I am flabbergasted and scared that states have been put in a Lord of the Flies dynamic with other states—jostling for medical supplies, likely leaving thousands of people to go without proper medical care.

And what of the Americans that will not even have access to any type of health care? It is daunting to think that so many will be without jobs or homes as a result of

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this contagion and a leadership that seeks to protect the wealthy over the majority.

And yet, strangely in all of this mess of anxiety, fear and anger, I also feel so touched, so warmed by my own community and communities around the world that are making bonds, finding moments of love and kindness. Countries around the world are trying to share information, skills, knowledge. I hope the United States will be so generous, too.

Every time I go out for a walk, people acknowledge our commonality of circumstances with a nod, a hello.

***I HAVE FRIENDS WHO LIVE ALONE
AND NORMALLY ENJOY THEIR LIVING
SITUATION; YET, I KNOW THIS TIME
PERIOD IS BRUTAL.***

My friends and I are connecting constantly via some electronic device or system. My book club, my Saturday morning breakfast group, my Tuesday afternoon coffee clutch, we have learned whatever technology skills we needed so that we could keep in contact in more intimate ways.

Emails, and texts fly, some with people I regularly connect with that way, but also with friends and parts of the family I hear from more sporadically. We are all helping each other with jokes, photos, words of encouragement, cyber gatherings.

The best of human kindness comes forth now too. Neighbors are finding ways to make small communities of support—I see it happening in every part of the world and on my street.

WARM POSITIVE THOUGHTS

So, I will try to lean toward those warm positive thoughts, even when I feel the pull the other way. It took everything in me not to shower my grandson with kisses as he hopped on his scooter home or hug my son when he dropped fresh fruit and vegetables off on our front porch. As my son quickly turned and skipped down the stairs my heart flew open with both crushing frustration at how our nation got to this place and immense love for him and his concern for us.

I know we are doing all this precisely because we love each other and because we care deeply about our larger community. I know too it is compassion, wisdom (as in doing what public health officials advise) and hopefully the political might of the 99 percent that will help us endure this pandemic. I think most of us are very good at heart.

Stay well and please be responsible to the larger community by listening and following what scientists and doctors are imploring us to do. ♦

PEGGY FRYER RESPONDS

Thank you, Debbie, for your heartfelt message concerning the Covid-19 crisis in our country (and many other countries around the world). I implore you to show a kind of leadership that does not exclude those who may not agree with your politics.

I left California because I could see no tolerance for conservative ideas and values. We are in a situation that is without politics, that is affecting our world, that is resulting in economic apprehension, that desperately needs our communities to come together for solutions.

NOTE OF CONCILIATION

Please rise above striking out at a party, at a leadership—there is certainly enough blame to spread around. Please sound a note of conciliation, of community, of concern.

Leave the politics somewhere else for a moment. Assure us. Lead us. Comfort us. There are so many places we can turn for vitriol and blame; don't do it here.

We are retirees. Many of us have concerns for ourselves, our children, our families and our friends. We don't need you to campaign for new leadership for our

(See Peggy Responds, page 8)

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MY FRIEND BERNIE

MEMORIES OF A 1962 SIT-IN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

By Bruce Jacobs

In the winter of 1962 I was a sophomore at the University of Chicago. After months of rumors swirling around the campus, the UofC Student Government and the campus chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) announced the results of a series of test cases that proved the university discriminated against black people, including students and university faculty and staff, in its role as a landlord in off-campus housing. The university was the second largest landowner in the City of Chicago (after the Catholic Church) and the test cases proved conclusively that the university practiced a policy of discrimination.

On Jan. 16, 1962, the SG and CORE met with University President George Beadle (a Nobel Prize-winning scientist). Beadle admitted that the university practiced segregation and days later he justified housing discrimination in some university-held property in the name of long-term “stable integration,” alleging integrating the community too quickly would result in “white panic.” He claimed that the university was “in complete agreement with the stated objectives of the students” and that “the only issue on which there is an arguable difference of opinion is the rate at which it is possible to move towards the agreed on objective.”

The students disagreed. CORE leaders responded that the difference between CORE’s and the administration’s positions was one of methodology as well as rate, as

“CORE can never accept segregation as a means to integration on logical or moral grounds.” That night, CORE decided that the next day they would sit in outside of Beadle’s office to protest university policy. CORE leaders voiced the commitment of the student activists to their demands: “...we will be prepared to carry it out as long as necessary until we have accomplished our goals—a complete end to segregation in all university owned property.”

THE REALITIES OF SEGREGATION

My response to all this was a commitment to join the sit-in. I had traveled to Norfolk, Virginia, the year before to visit a high school friend whose family had moved there and I had encountered for the first time some of the realities of segregation: the separate rest rooms for whites and blacks, the segregated water fountains in public places, the restaurants that did not permit black people to enter. The result was a strong feeling about the justice of the demands to end Jim Crow and a desire to be part of the struggle to change America.

I showed up at noon the next day, joining about 200 demonstrators where Bernie Sanders, a fellow student and a leader in the university CORE chapter, gave a rousing speech in his Brooklyn accent (that sounded remarkably like mine) in which he said, “We feel it is an intolerable situation when Negro and white students of the university cannot live together in university-owned apartments.” I then joined about 50 other students as we marched into the university’s Administration Building, went up to the fifth floor and began a sit-in outside the office of the president.

The hours passed slowly as we sat there, the first of many days in which we came and went going out to get food or attend classes and then returning to the fifth floor. I passed the time by reading books required for my classes (I remember reading Plato’s Republic and studying out of my Linear Algebra textbook) and getting to know other students, many of whom were what they self-characterized as “red diaper babies,” (which I was not).

The university tolerated us for a short while but then tried to limit the sit-in to no more than four students between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. We agreed that we would not follow the university’s guidelines, that we

(See Memories, page 9)



Bernie Sanders talks strategy for opposing housing discrimination.

DANNY LYON

WHERE IN THE WORLD HAVE YOU BEEN?

Travels in Oman on south coast of Arabia

By Roger Newman

In January my wife Audre and I traveled to Oman, a peaceful country on the south coast of Arabia. We found warm welcomes and fascinating geology and culture to witness and enjoy.

Oman has a long and colorful history. Since Biblical times, Oman and Yemen have supplied the aromatic resins of the Frankincense and Myrrh trees. During the Middle Ages, Omani ships traded slaves, ivory, and other goods around the top of the Indian Ocean, from Zanzibar to India. In the colonial period, Oman was a prize to be fought over between Persian, Portuguese, and British Empires.

Oman is ruled as a Sultanate, a family business. Sultan Qaboos had only recently deceased when we arrived, and his photo was everywhere. Contrary to many other oil-rich countries, his government used its wealth to build modern infrastructure including roads, internet, airports, and hotels. The Sultan had no children and the crown has now passed to a cousin who has pledged to continue benevolent rule.

Because the historic Arab and Bedouin peoples were few in number, the modern population also includes about 40% expats. These include mostly people from the Indian subcontinent (mostly Muslims), but also technical experts from Western Europe and the USA.

We had limited time, so we spent most of it in and around Nizwa, a small city in the mountains to the west of Muscat. There we attended the Friday *souq* (market) with the very colorful goat market. The goats are led in a circle in a crowd of buyers and onlookers who shout out their

WE HAD LIMITED TIME, SO WE SPENT THE MOST OF IT IN AND AROUND NIZWA, A SMALL CITY IN THE MOUNTAINS TO THE WEST OF MUSCAT.

bids. It seemed delightfully chaotic to us, but clearly was working for them.

We also went further into the mountains to see traditional villages. It was fascinating how much they can produce from trickles of water intermittently flowing in the deep *wadis* (canyons). Crop lands are carefully terraced and water is doled out on a rotating schedule of irrigation. The most lucrative crop is dates, so the sight of majestic orchards of palm trees belies the underlying dryness of the climate.



Men predominate as buyers and sellers.

Since the 1970s, the government has provided for great improvements of housing. In several villages we were able to see the ruins of the older stone and adobe structures alongside concrete-block houses with running water, electricity, and internet access. Needless to say, everyone now has a cell phone.

Another side trip took us to one of the trails in the Grand Canyon of Jebel Shams, Oman's highest mountain at over 3000 meters high. On the east side of the mountain is an immense canyon which has a fairly level trail which contours around the western (shaded) side. From this trail we could enjoy fantastic views of this dry and imposing landscape.

The rocks in this area have an interesting story to tell. Large formations derive from ancient sea-floor deposits and when they were forced up above the continental crust they brought with them rocks from the mantle. Geologists are trying to figure how why this happened, since it is a reversal of the usual geological process which has continental crust riding over oceanic deposits.

One type of rock from Earth's mantle, peridotite, is highly reactive with carbon dioxide and together they form a rock called calcite. This sequesters the carbon in a solid form, offering a potential way to sequester carbon from the atmosphere to combat global warming. This would be difficult to scale up, since it would take a lot of energy to break up the rock and expose it to the air.

Nowadays the Omani government is working to diversify the economy. Oil wealth will not last forever. One big area is international tourism. Oman offers opportunities

(See Travels, page 8)

Oman's amazing variety of sights



Clockwise from top left: Audre hikes rough section of trail; Oman locator map; women shopping in the souq; goats led past buyers in the souq; Grand Canyon of Jebel Shams; store-keeper demonstrates how to prepare myrrh.

Photos by Roger and Audre Newman

PRO members respond to pandemic

(Editor's note. In mid-March we asked PRO members to respond to how they're coping with the coronavirus. Several did so, citing words of encouragement, resources, personal experience, and viewpoints on how public officials are handling the pandemic.)

DIFFERENT THAN CALIFORNIA

We live in far northern Washington State (just a few miles from the Canadian border). The COVID-19 profile here is much different than in California. The vast majority of cases—especially serious and fatal cases—have been in nursing homes and care facilities. These facilities are largely staffed by very poorly paid part-time “nursing assistants” (roughly equivalent to LVNs) who travel from facility to facility. It is thought that one or more asymptomatic worker(s) have been the vector for spreading these devastating infections. Testing is ongoing, but with results taking up to a week and 30% error readings, there hasn't been a resolution to this major problem. Hopefully, the new rapid result test will become widely available soon, to curb this spread.

In the meantime, our county is on almost total shut-down (much like the Bay Area). There's been only a few cases “in the wild,” most likely spread from the original major Seattle area outbreak, 90 miles south of us. Most everyone is being hyper-vigilant about personal distancing and sanitizing, which is working fairly well. All we can do is hunker down and wait it out—and hope an effective vaccine will become widely available before the virus can roar back with vengeance next fall.

But, for now, our problem is acute cabin fever!

—Sanford Ohren

MARKETS IN HAYWARD

Hayward recently opened a test site for the virus. The guidelines are broad so many people can qualify for testing. They will even test people regardless of where they live or immigration status.

Hope it is helpful. Also, we found that a number of markets have special hours for seniors. We found that in our area FoodMaxx, Trader Joe's, Lucky, and Safeway offer senior hours. For example, FoodMaxx yesterday was open from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. for seniors only. Produce was plentiful; however, no eggs and very little frozen goods, but most shelves throughout the store were full.

People can call a market to see if they offer senior hours. Hope you are well.

—Art Naftaly

RETIREMENT HELPS

Actually, being retired takes the edge off a lot of this. Unless you have a “precondition” to worry about, staying put shouldn't be that difficult unless you're living in NYC in one of their matchbox apartments.

Grocery shopping can be challenging, but I think the hoarding will subside in time and we won't need armed guards to escort us through the TP aisle.

And I thought living with my wife in retirement was hard, now it is absolutely torturous. Can we replace 45 with Andrew Cuomo? At least until November?

Go figure...

—José Ortiz

PRAISE FOR THE NY TIMES

We subscribe to the NY Times. The Times has been broadcasting Andrew Cuomo's daily updates. In today's broadcast, he talked about all the things New York is doing now and in the future. New York is succeeding in its attempts to stem the spread. It is also available on

Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CJQaFmiqYM>.

He is offering to share the experience with other entities. We need to encourage our elected representative to follow New York's lead.

We live in Hawaii (Big Island)

—Richard Bidleman

WORDS TO SHARE

Getting Outdoors: Not Cancelled

Music: Not Cancelled

Family: Not Cancelled

Reading: Not Cancelled

Singing: Not Cancelled

Laughing: Not Cancelled

Hope: Not Cancelled

I came across this on the Internet and am sharing it in the face of the panic. I do have a serious concern: how easily we are all controlled and manipulated. I hope this isn't a warmup to cancelling the election and consolidating fascist political power!

—Albert Vetere Lannon

(See Response to Pandemic, page 7)

*(Response to Pandemic, from page 6)***BOOKS, “BEER NIGHT,” HIKING**

The Aesthetic Pruners Association, that involves a number of my former students, is holding Zoom videoconferencing meetings. And they’re great! Last night we had a virtual “beer night,” that lasted over an hour.

I have one consulting report to write, but have found it difficult to concentrate, so am spending more time online and emailing friends. My husband and I hike often in Joaquin Miller and Roberts Regional Parks, and the exercise really helps. I can understand why they’ve closed the restrooms, but think it’s ridiculous to also close the parking lots, as people need to get out into the fresh air and can maintain six foot distances from each other.

My April 6 right hip surgery has been cancelled and will have to be rescheduled, and the appointment with the cardiologist will now be a virtual meeting online, to answer some questions I’ve got. (The left hip was done two years ago without incident.)

I’m a minister in the Society of Novus Spiritus; and we’re going to have services online on May 3, through Facebook Live at 11 a.m., by going onto Facebook, and logging into the Society of Novus Spiritus. You might find it interesting that in her books *End of Days*, and *Prophecy*, Sylvia Browne (who founded our church), wrote around 2004, “By 2020 we’ll see more people wearing surgical masks and rubber gloves in public, inspired by an outbreak of a severe pneumonia-like illness that attacks both the lungs and the bronchial tubes and is ruthlessly resistant to treatment. This illness will be particularly baffling in that, after causing a winter of absolute panic, it will seem to vanish completely until ten years later, making both its source and its cure that much more mysterious.”

I’ve replied on Facebook to several people who’ve lost loved ones to the virus, and who’ve posted online, that Browne’s books entitled *The Other Side and Back* and *Blessings From the Other Side* explain why we’re here, our life themes and life charts that we charted before we came into this life, and why there is a reason for everything that is happening to us. Perhaps they will answer some questions that you or your loved ones might have. These books changed my life.

Many of us are shopping at supermarkets and places such as Trader Joe’s and Costco, where we can maintain six feet of separation while shopping. A guy at Trader Joe’s told my hubby that they get one shipment of TP every morning, so one can go early to get some.

–Judy Thomas

FLASH FICTION BOOKS

We have daughters nearby and that is how we are managing. They and their husbands have been wonderful. I have been writing and illustrating small, 10-page coloring books for my grandsons.

I also have been writing a flash-fiction every day for the last few weeks. This is an example: Waiting in the outer office of the Social Security office, June tries to smooth her scrubs so she won’t stand out. Everyone is sitting six feet apart because of the damn virus.

Suddenly, the man to her right gasps, clutches his chest and slumps over on to the chair next to him. Everyone freezes except June.

Screw the virus; her training takes over. She lowers the man on to his back on the floor. A ring of horrified faces watch her from six feet.

She gets a pulse, clears his throat and holds his nose to give him mouth-to-mouth to the shock of the ring of the voyeurs. With her hand on his stomach, she can feel that he is about to throw up. She turns his head and he does. The gasp of the voyeurs is instant. She grabs her water bottle, gives him a gulp which he also throw up. She continues her mouth-to-mouth until he gulps air and stares up at her. Her smile saves him.

“What happened?”

“You had a bit of an event.”

He sat up and everyone moved back to their six-foot spacing.

Hope you are all OK and keeping sane...

–Tom Turman

WORDS FROM A YOGI

My French yogi friend, Bernard, just emailed his thoughts about the virus crisis.

Here are his insights that might be of value:

I was reading a short story where in the Middle Ages the plague was spreading all over. A man met the Plague God and asked him, “Where are you going?” The Plague God replied, “I am going to Baghdad to kill 5,000 people.” Later the same man met the Plague God again and said, “You told me you were going to kill 5,000 people but 55,000 died. What happened?” The Plague God replied, “Yes, I killed 5,000 people, but 50,000 died of fear!”

As you know “there is a time for everything and everything has his own time.”

There are so many beautiful happenings at the same time in this world. Be careful with the negative media. As a political man was telling me, “Why worry about dying? It is compulsory for everyone anyway!” Be happy and relax. OM NAMAH SHIVAYA (My divine nature salutes yours)

–Alexander Pappas ♦

Obituary and letters policy

By Burt Dragin

The recent switch in editors at the PRO newsletter caused some confusion in our last issue, Jan./Feb./March 2020. Our obituary policy was breached due to a misunderstanding on my part. We generally do not run extensive obituaries. Our policy is to acknowledge the deceased in our In Memoriam section.

The previous issue also noted in that section (regarding Dr. Ida Pound) that “the full story of Dr. Pound’s life and accomplishments will appear in the next PRO newsletter.” This was printed in error. Readers can find the full article on Dr. Pound at: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/eastbaytimes/obituary.aspx?n=ida-b-pound-vitali&pid=195481476>. Likewise, if there is an article available on the deceased we will include a link. If you’d like to comment on the deceased, please write a letter to the editor.

We encourage letters to the editor, which should be a maximum of 250 words.

Please cut and paste your letter into a word document with subject line “PRO letters” and email it to burtdragin@aol.com. Deadline for letters for the July/Aug./Sept. 2020 issue is June 24. We sometimes edit for space and clarity. ♦

(Peggy Responds, from page 2)

country. We need you to tell us how our retirement plans are doing and what you are doing to make sure, as best you can, to protect the incredible benefits we enjoy as Peralta retirees. ♦

DEBBY WEINTRAUB RESPONDS

Hi Peggy,

Thanks for your feedback.

The piece I wrote was a personal viewpoint on how I am experiencing this unparalleled time in my life, but I know everyone in PRO does not have the same outlook about this pandemic as I do. Like some of my other pieces in prior newsletters, which are reflections on my years teaching or my experiences traveling, this recent piece was intended as a personal perspective as well.

I do not want any retiree to feel unwelcome in PRO because of their political ideologies, so I am sorry if the thoughts presented in my piece made you or any PRO member feel that there is only room for one political point of view in PRO.

In the meanwhile, if PRO learns anything new or different about our benefits, we will immediately pass the information on to all our members. As of right now, our benefits remain in place. ♦

(Travels, from page 4)

for adventures in canyoneering, dune-buggy trips, off-road 4-wheeling, scuba diving and other adventure sports.

We enjoyed our short stay in Oman and recommend it as a trip destination when travel around the world becomes possible again. It offers a friendly contrast to more belligerent and ostentatious Arabian countries. Oman maintains good relations with all the countries of the region, including Iran. I hope they will continue to do so despite the war going on in neighboring Yemen. ♦

(For a lecture by Dr. Christopher “Chuck” Bailey called “Insights from the deep earth: Oman’s amazing geological heritage,” go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oN7uzCAcHr0>)

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(Memories, from page 3)

would always have at least five people sitting in and that we would stay all night.

Sanders was almost always present and spent many hours talking to us about what we were doing and why. At the same time, he was able to show the connections between the power structure in the City of Chicago and the University, and how racial segregation served to enrich powerful corporations that profited from the discrimination that impoverished most of the city's black population. He pointed out that the university, one of the most prominent of the country's elite institutions, the so-called Harvard of the Midwest, located close to poor black neighborhoods, was almost 100 percent white: white students and white faculty were the overwhelming population.

The sit-in ended two weeks after it began when the university suspended the five students who were outside the president's office at that moment. That night 2,000 – 3,000 students and faculty showed up at a rally to protest the University's action (note, the university had a total of about 7,000 students, about 4,500 of whom were graduate students). President Beadle walked into that meeting and offered a compromise: the sit in would end and he would set up a committee made up of faculty, students and the administration in order to resolve the issues that had

generated the protest. Leaders of CORE such as Sanders argued against Beadle's compromise, warning us that the committee would not lead to change, but rather was a tool for co-optation, for convincing us to buy into a process that would delay the end of discrimination. But the vote to accept the compromise was overwhelmingly in favor. Many of the students still believed in the good-will of the university and, because of its commitment to scholarship, that it would come to realize that you can't practice segregation to achieve integration.

But I joined Sanders and some of the other leaders in voting to continue the sit-in. I had come to have a more critical stance toward the university and other institutions. I had become friends with Sanders and in the process realized that my world-view had changed. I had gone into the sit-in as a liberal and emerged as a radical with a radical analysis of America, an analysis that led to years of activism in support of the Civil Rights movement, the fight to end the war against Vietnam, and in support of many other causes. Today, as I watch Sanders withdraw from his run for the presidency of the United States, I feel only regret that he, with his passion for justice and his compassion for poor and working people, which has remained intact from those days in 1962, will not be leading the country. ♦

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