

PUG Times



The newsletter of the Pittsfield Union Grange

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In place of the president's message and the events listing, here are some "How I Spent My Covid Lockdown" essays.

Helen Welford and Robin Warner:

Robin and I are in the fortunate position of being comfortably situated, and able to go for long periods without having to leave our home. Perhaps we should feel embarrassed to have two deep freezers, two refrigerators (with attendant freezers), along with a tiny one originally purchased for seed storage — however, they are hugely useful as pantries!

Robin's work on the tree farm is pretty solitary, and the trees don't need social distancing. There have been many calls from folks with extra time and inclination to purchase trees, so sales have been good. Everyone walks 6 feet apart and is well masked.

I have been enjoying extra time in the studio, though have only produced three new pieces. Mask making has taken up time, with 60+ made to give away. Practicing music has become less frequent (but not forgotten, though choral concerts will be disallowed for a long time to come), and now files are being sorted and rather large quantities of irrelevant paperwork set out for recycling or shredding. PT is part of life (in an effort to rehabilitate the musculature around my hip), Jazzercise is now done to FB livestream, and our social life takes place on

Zoom! We have enjoyed happy hours, virtual tours, family chats, and a couple of dances/balls with many others.

We are content, though miss seeing, dancing, and singing with friends.

Editor's note: Ruth and Joan were grateful recipients of some of those masks.

Ruth Scodel:

My life has not changed that much, most of the time. Since I retired, I have often spent a couple of days at a time without leaving my house. Even when I'm not teaching, I'm an editor, and I have two book projects and some smaller research/writing to do. In the winter term I was teaching one day a week, and I would go to the office typically one other day. Other times I'd go in once a week or so. There have been times when I socialized around the office, but that stopped happening several years ago.

It could look as if stay-at-home would not be such a big deal. I'm very lucky. I have a nice house in a pleasant neighborhood, I'm a pretty good cook, I have a cross-country ski machine on which I work out while listening to dance music and reading *The New Yorker*, and I have no financial concerns. My daughter calls almost every day. But no Scottish dancing on Monday, no English dancing on Tuesdays and second Friday, no Torah study with bagels Saturday

morning, no Sunday afternoons stopping at the public library, no Michigan theater movies, no volunteering at the Back Door Food Pantry, no Grange potluck and program, no driving a Congolese refugee to his English class. Conference in Estonia has been put off until next year, all summer dance camps cancelled, which also means visit to my daughter in California is off, workshop in Edinburgh delayed a year.

So there are good days and bad days. On good days, I get work done. Through the second half of May, this has meant reading a German commentary submitted to a series where I'm an editor. The other editors are overwhelmed with preparations for fall teaching, so I'm having to do all the work. It isn't enjoyable, alas. Also on a good day I do some yard work and something around the house, and in the evening I read a novel or watch Netflix, or if it's Tuesday I can join friends around the country watching Karen Axelrod's non-concerts, and then go to the Historical Tea and Dance Society's conversation with some in the ECD world. On Tuesday at 11 there is a Talmud class on zoom. On Wednesday in the late afternoon I read Greek with students, and on Thursday Latin. Sometimes there are moments of odd joy: the other day I attended a session of a conference on zoom and made spanokopita with garlic mustard I weeded from the yard *at the same time*. Bad days happen when I have slept so badly that by early afternoon I sit staring blankly at the computer and eating pretzels.

My hope is that once I've finished with this annoying volume, I can get back to writing where I can achieve "flow," where I'm fully absorbed in what I'm doing. If I can't get it on the dance floor, maybe I can get it at my desk.

Betsy Foote and Tom Gebhardt:

With the Gov. Whitmer 's edict to stay in place but also allowing citizens to be outside to exercise Tom and I decided to go canoeing, one of our favorite activities to do together. We have a Kevlar canoe that allows us to have fun on the water while physical distancing. April and early May are favorite times to canoe for us in southeast Michigan because water levels are

generally high, nature is budding out and not many people canoe at this time of the year, providing a more singular experience. One of our favorite paddles is on the Huron River within Island Lake State Rec. Area. It's a relaxing two-hour paddle from put in just below the dam at the south end of Kensington Lake to Place Way picnic area, about 2/3rd the way down the park. Forest, wetlands, waterfowl, turtles and fish can be seen. We paddled here twice this spring. The first time on April 2nd we had the river to ourselves, but the second time was the first Saturday in May, a very pleasant day. Many kayakers, fisher people and picnickers also came out to enjoy the river that day. I believe that more people than usual were enjoying the park due to the pandemic. Being in a canoe, we could still physical distance, but we enjoyed the first time on this stretch more when we had the river and nature to ourselves. A highlight of our paddling adventures this spring was on the Huron River from Place Way Picnic site in Island Park State Rec. area to Huron Meadows Metropark. Soon after put in the river meanders through a big wetlands area. There were many nesting waterfowl; swans, geese and even sandhill cranes! Most of the river courses through the State Rec. area, state land and then through the Metropark so it is in a natural setting. We counted over 260 turtles out sunning themselves on this paddle! The day was April 5th. Within the State rec. area someone had cut off the downed logs blocking our way thus allowing passage of a canoe or kayak. But beyond the rec. area border there were many downed trees in the river. We needed to do lots of maneuvering past trees and branches. Fortunately, we were canoeing after heavy rainfall and the river was at flood stage. Therefore, we were able to paddle out of the normal river channels and into the woods to bypass the downed trees which blocked our downstream access. It also helped that Tom, in the back of the canoe and steering, is an excellent paddler. Also, the current was not too strong. As you know, a strong current makes maneuvering around obstacles in a river even harder. This trip took about 3 leisurely hours on the river. Take out on this trip is at the south end of Huron Meadow Metro Park on the west side of U.S. 23. It is at a picnic site with a nicely wooded

bank access to the river. Another favorite of Tom and myself for paddling is the Raisin River from Sharon Valley Road, to Sharon Hollow Road; doubly nice because of the name association with Sharon Hollow String Band. Put in is at a small parking area of Sharon Valley Road. The Raisin river is of course narrower than the Huron river and it winds around through woods and some fields, wetlands and ultimately to the pond water slowed down by the dam at Sharon Valley Road. There are lots of birds, turtles and waterfowl to observe. This river also has downed trees although not nearly as much as the Huron River downstream from Island Lake. We saw evidence of beaver activity and even saw a beaver mansion. Lovely aspects of this paddle include the Nan Weston Nature Conservancy Preserve on the north side of the River. This area has fantastic woods and river frontage which includes a blue heron rookery. We stopped and picnicked on the river bank within the Nan Weston Preserve. The take out right before the dam is at Sharon Mills County Park on Sharon Valley Road. This is a historic park including a restored mill and mountain biking trails. This paddle lasted 2 hours, including stopping for our picnic lunch - a leisurely paddle indeed. Our notorious paddle was on Hell (Portage) Creek starting in Hell, Mi. and ending at Town Hall Road. We have paddled Hell Creek before and it is always memorable. We put in in Hell, at the Dam Site Inn, a bar, (closed at the time). Within one hundred yards is a lovely pond downstream. Then the creek enters a wooded area with moderately steep banks on either side of the creek. The creek also meanders greatly, often the downstream river is 20 feet from your upstream position just across a bank. The wetlands offer lots of variety of plants. We counted over 50 yellow warblers and saw other varieties also. Just after a homemade sign warning about skinny dipping with the snapping turtle I saw it. In the water was a snapping turtle at least 3 feet long with a head the size of a big fist!! Many years ago a canoe outfitter rented canoes to paddle on Hell Creek. They cleared to creek of deadfalls. This was evident from Hell to Tiplady Road. But after Tiplady Road the many deadfalls had not been cleared and there were numerous dead tree obstacles to get around. Tom and I got out and hauled our canoe around at least 5 trees causing

blocks in order to continue paddling down the creek. This took time to get out, scout, haul the canoe, get back in. Hell creek is also quite deep in some places. Finally, we capsized. Fortunately, we always take extra clothes in a dry bag which we used. Later on down the creek, Tom discovered that he had lost his prescription glasses during the capsize. The temp was in the 60's but it was cloudy that day, so the dry clothes were welcome. We got to a shallower area of the river and started just walking in the creek, dragging our canoe across the deadfalls. We had parked our car on Toma Road. At Town Hall Road, the culvert under the road had deadfalls piled up five feet high in front of them. At this point, we had been canoeing about 5 hours. We opted to take out there. I walked from Town Hall Road, to Tiplady and then to Toma, only about a mile distant, to get our car and we began the process of packing up and returning home.

Joan Hellmann:

I am retired, but usually in May I volunteer with the watershed council doing streamside education activities. With school not in session, those were all cancelled, along with the entirety of my social life. Most of what I remember from the first week was working on a jigsaw puzzle I found in my basement. After that was finished, I started some small knitting projects and made several baskets.

Luckily, many of my musician friends have been streaming online concerts. Tuesday evenings, I enjoy the same English country dance music as Ruth and many of our mutual friends. Other weekly concerts occur on Monday, Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, and Sunday afternoon. Two other friends stream one song per day, and another reads a bedtime story every night. It's more than I can listen to each week. Every now and then I take out my flute.

I've been going for a lot of walks, starting with exploring my neighborhood and some new-to-me parks near home. As the weather improved, I've been going to parks and preserves farther from home, mostly alone, but sometimes with distanced and masked friends. I keep my eyes

open for places to return to pick black raspberries at the end of June. Two days last week, I finally got to do something useful - photo-monitoring for Legacy Land Conservancy. One of the properties is in Stockbridge, my first trip outside of Washtenaw County in months!

I've been trying to support local food suppliers, though my needs are far from enough to keep them in business. Knight's Market and Frog Holler Produce only work by curbside pickup, and Harvest Kitchen delivers. I get excited when I have an excuse to go the pharmacy or grocery store. It's also fun to use up some of the things in my freezer and cupboards. I made a partridgeberry (lingonberry) pie with a molasses cookie crust *a la* Newfoundland - with a can of pie filling I brought home in 2003! The whole wheat pancake flour that went into the bread was quite a bit younger than that. I will need to buy more whole wheat flour before I can bake another batch. I had a lot of frozen cherries - some from Marty Wilson's trees - and those have been turned into several cherry crisps.

My vegetable garden is planted in several spots around my house: potatoes next to the porch, eggplants and green peppers between the sidewalk and the street, tomatoes also in front, basil on the side, carrots and beets in the cartop carrier converted to raised beds, and new this year, winter squash in the back yard. Now that the forget-me-nots have finished blooming, I have mowed my lawn. On nice days, I sit on it and pull the little viney weeds.

I am very grateful to have my cat, Sprite, living with me. As I write, she is mad at me for taking her to the vet for her annual checkup this morning, but usually she is very good company.

Marty Wilson:

I've started walking again. I haven't been very good at "exercising" as such for several years. But I have been English country dancing 5-6 times a month (every Tuesday night - and all other special ECD dances). With dancing out of the question now, I have been walking around my fairly small block (or further, down to the post office and back) several times a week. When

communal dancing resumes, I want to have the strength to resume dancing.

I have done lots of mending (mostly small stuff) - but also a major dress update that very much needed doing.

I have read lots of National Geographic magazines (50 or 60 or so). I didn't read them when they were coming in when Dave was around. I have a friend who wants the read magazines for her son's school projects - so my shelves are less piled up now.

I continue cooking (in about the same quantities that I used when Dave was alive). This way I get a fair amount of good leftovers. (If I have a lot of something that I don't want to eat too many days in a row, I pop extra portions in the freezer.)

I go grocery shopping every 2 or 3 weeks and have found some useful ways to make fresh foods last longer.

1) Asparagus: trim the ends, store in the refrigerator with the ends standing in a container of water..

2) Cabbage: it keeps very much better if you don't cut the cabbage into quarters (which is very convenient for slicing for cole slaw). Instead I cut whole cabbage leaves off and slice them with my food processor.

3) Romaine lettuce: I found that the center leaves keep fresh quite a bit longer than the outside leaves. So, if I buy a package of 3 Romaine lettuces, I use them all up from the outside leaves in (I used to use them up one lettuce at a time).

I have found out about Zoom - for Grange and library board meetings - and, more importantly, for making visual contact with my family. On Mother's Day I had a lovely supper (delivered to my door by my Ann Arbor family) with most of my children - from Ann Arbor, St. Louis, the California coast - and some scattered grandchildren as well. It was fun talking to and seeing so many of my family.

I have enjoyed playing weekly video games using Zoom and various game sites with my daughter Joyce and her husband Ken - and a lot of other

assorted relatives (number at a given sessions varies from 2 to 6). We've played euchre and scrabble - and a batch of other (new to me) games.

And I have made some headway (not as much I would like) on cleaning up assorted piles of clutter around the house.

I will be glad when it's safe to resume face-to-face contact. Hugs are nice, and I haven't had one for weeks.

Ann Arbor Sword Club

Richard Raymond reports.

At the February meeting, 3 members of the Ann Arbor Sword Club, the Grange's regular Tuesday renters, talked about and demonstrated various styles of sport fencing and historical martial arts that they teach and practice on Tuesday evenings. David Hoornstra was helped by James Hibbetts and Matthew Stewart-Fulton. Modern/sport fencing includes foil, epee and sabre, and is what you see at the Olympics. Each kind uses its type of equipment and has its own rules as to the area of the body that is the target and what defines a touch. The Club also teaches and practices historical fencing with a variety of weapons, including German longsword, poll ax and rapier. These are not competitive sports, with fewer rules than modern fencing. Much more information, including photos, are on the Club website, annarborsword.com.

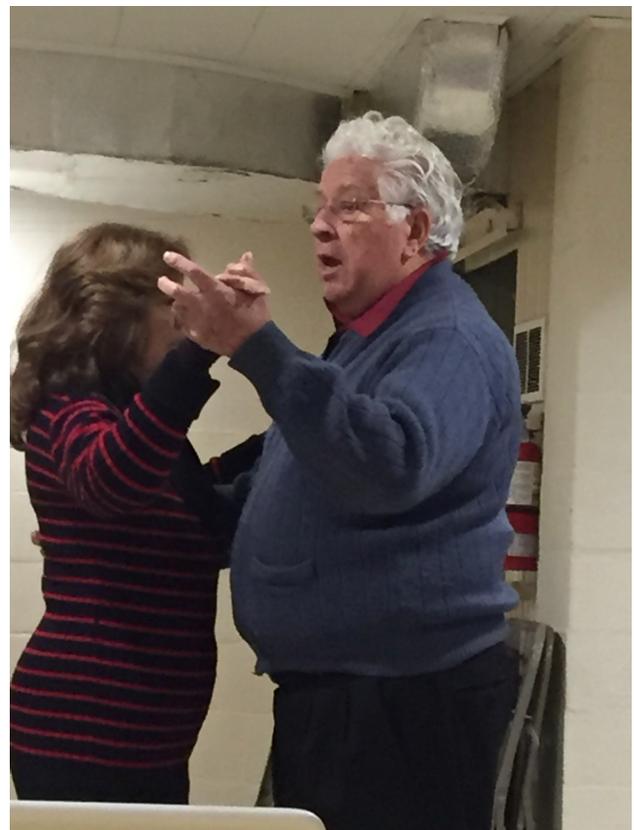


Argentine Tango

In January, Jorge and Griselda Broggio told us about the tango. They both came for Argentina many years ago, and it is clear that they enjoy sharing their Argentine heritage; they lead the Michigan Argentine Tango group that has been renting our hall on Thursday evenings.

Tango has influences from several cultures, including African, European, and Native American. It has had its ups and downs in popularity, coinciding in part with political and economic changes in Argentina. In 2009, it was named an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

As it traveled through time and around the world, many variations arose. Now, tango is enjoyed by people around the world.



As of June 15, neither Chelsea nor Saline had announced cancellation of their fair.

Flowers Blooming at the Grange in June



Remembering Herman Koenn



Ruth Scodel, President
734-761-6172, rscodel@umich.edu
Joan Hellmann, Vice President/PUG Times/Hall
Rental, 734-274-0773, hellmann@umich.edu
Richard Raymond, Treasurer/Membership/
734-662-9290, rraymond@umich.edu
Peter Baker, Hall Maintenance
p.j.baker@me.com

Herman was master of Pittsfield Grange for many years. His family sold land to the county for the Koenn Preserve, and a conservation easement on most of the farm to Legacy Land Conservancy. I (Joan) have been part of the photo-monitoring on the property for several years. These are some of the cows we saw this year.