



The 732 days of distancing

The Diary of a Reluctant Social Distance Extrovert Prisoner: Part LXIV

Steve Soreff, MD

Wow, it is Sunday, March 13, 2022. Would you believe two years ago on this very date I began The Diary of a Reluctant Social Distance Extrovert Prisoner? Today, marks the start of my 110<sup>th</sup> week, the middle of my 25<sup>th</sup> month, the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary and my 732th days of social and physical distancing. And, COVID willing, this will be my last Diary. As the snows of Winter are disappearing into the early signs of Spring, so has my social and physical distancing been dissolving into more and activities both in- and out- doors. I still wear my mask when indoors in most locations. And, I am still reluctant to eat inside restaurants. However, my world and the wide- world are beginning to open-up.



March 13 2020-2022

By now, my readers know that I am obsessed with numbers and love numerology. Therefore, I cannot miss the opportunity to acknowledge this is my 64<sup>th</sup> Diary. That is a significant number me. I graduated Tufts University Class of 64. And it reminds me of the Beatles song, *When I'm 64* <https://www.songfacts.com/lyrics/the-beatles/when-im-64>. Here are some of the lyrics—" I could be handy, mending a fuse, When your lights have gone, You can knit a sweater by the fireside, Sunday mornings go for a ride, Doing the garden, digging the weeds, Who could ask for more, Will you still need me, will you still feed me, When I'm sixty-four."

I am not sure the Diary will be needed, but I know it has fulfilled its mission to chronicle daily COVID-19 times for 2 years. Thank you for joining me on this journey. Now let's look back on the last 2 weeks.



The 64<sup>th</sup> number of The Diary of a Reluctant Social Distance Extrovert Prisoner: Also, the colors of Tufts, brown and blue.

Good morning, it is Saturday, March 5, 2022 and everything is coming up roses-wow! Let me explain. Many good things happening. A cease fire for 2 Ukraine cities is a welcome but very small relief. Again, while exercising I watched on PBS *Queen Elizabeth's Secret Agents* <https://www.pbs.org/show/queen-elizabeths-secret-agents/> It was great viewing, educational and informative. And, as I in in the count do to end of the pandemic, I want to give another shut out to PBS as one of my major sustainers for the last 2 years.

Meanwhile, watching the news I learned that today was National Play Outdoors Day <http://playoutsideday.org/>. Wow, what is that? And the answer is from its website "National Play Outside Day is the first Saturday of every month. The next one is Saturday, March 5th, 2022. What is National Play Outside Day? On the first Saturday of the month, everybody in the nation plays outside. This includes kids, parents, adults, families and grandparents. There are no scheduled events or activities, just go outside and do something fun with your friends and family". Not only is it a beautiful day out but also playing outdoors has been one of my great sustainers throughout the pandemic.

And more roses are coming up. My daughter, Matana, from Tel Aviv and son, Barak, from Boston coming for lunch. Yippppppppppppppppeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee More evidence of the world opening up. And, it was a great visit and a chance to how they doing, And they are doing well 😊.



Barak, me and Matana

It is Saturday night and I want to reflect on the pandemic. One quick thank you to the Diary readers. Already, some of them have begun to send me their lessons learned. I will share these with you soon. My first lesson learned is that the steps I took in distancing have meant that Peggy nor myself have had COVID. As of right now, we did the right thing. Being cautious has paid off.

As a corollary of doing the right thing meant that we did get vaccinated times 3. I do know family members who did get COVID. But, they were vaccinated. And as a result of being vaccinated, their COVID sickness were mild. Vaccination is a good thing,

Welcome to Sunday, March 6, 2022. It is about 60 degrees and the outdoors beckoned. And I answered. I snowshoed with Peggy across the snow covered Pawtuckaway Lake and completed the loop by cutting through the woods. That brings me to one of big lessons I have learned in the pandemic. It is a deeper and greater appreciation of my neighborhood wilderness in all seasons. The Winter held many treats <https://forumhome.org/patterns-in-the-winter-wilderness-a-photo-essay-p34147-105.htm>. But any time, the lake and woods were my salvation <https://forumhome.org/patterns-in-the-neighborhood-wilderness-p32796-105.htm>.



Snow covered Pawtuckaway Lake with Mount Pawtuckaway looking on

Switching gears on lessons, here is some of “silver linings” of the pandemic from the *Reader’s Digest* March-April 2022 issue. It includes the following gains during the prolonged lockdown: a romantic involvement, learning to play a musical instrument, new careers, and new activities like yoga and bike riding. What “silver linings” have you discovered?

Hello, it is Monday, March 7, 2022 and my sustaining Monday routine fulfilled its gift of places to go and things to do. It was a short hike, some pickleball and Tai Chi. A Zoom meeting

not only confirmed the benefits of it but also showed the growing sense of Zoom fatigue in the participants. We all want more personal in-person events but are still reluctant to fully wade into the water.

Meanwhile, the readers' lessons are coming in. Thank you. Two distinct types of ideas have been offered. The first is that the government failed us. This reader said it this way. "I read a book on the 1918 pandemic which helped me understand both the nature of pandemics and the propensity for mutations to naturally occur. For a virus to 'survive' it must become more infectious, but usually at the cost of decreased morbidity. I could see it happening with Covid, and knew things were almost over... My feeling now is that my government failed us. Too cautious."

The other lesson was voiced by a couple of folks said people are idiots. It was based on their resistance to masks and the vaccine. One reader reported this handmade sign in a Texas restaurant. "'Thank you for not wearing a mask. Wearing a mask makes you look like an uninformed, subservient idiots. But we still love you.' The bad grammar is copied exactly; I took a photo because I was in awe at the ignorance and bad manners." The million COVID deaths in the United States is testimony that that opinion.

Good morning, it is Tuesday, March 8, 2022. The wind is blowing like crazy here. Here is one bit of good but ridiculous news. Yes, yesterday "Senate passes Emmett Till Antilynching Act of 2022, sending bill to Biden for his signature"

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/07/politics/senate-passes-antilynching-law/index.html>. Finally, Black Lives and Deaths do Matter. But it is amazing that it failed over 200 times to pass before!

Today is election day in Nottingham. This is where the rubber meets the road in testing democracy. Yes, the people can be heard. There are a number of citizen petitions in the form of Warrant Articles. That they are on the ballot demonstrates citizen can and do have a voice. I spend the morning with my Tuesday holy trinity: Talmud and Gospel Study and tutoring in Israel-all by Zoom.

Hello, now I want to connect two big dots-the invasion of the Ukraine and Climate Change. Both are fueled (bad but appropriate choice of words) by fossil fuels. Russia geopolitical economic power comes from its oil production. Oil use causes global warming. As the latest UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

<https://www.conservation.org/blog/ipcc-report-climate-change-could-soon-outpace-humanitys-ability-to-adapt> says "Climate change could soon outpace humanity's ability to adapt." It forces us to reckon with a stark reality. The crisis is here, and it is all around us.. The answer to both issues Russia aggression and Climate Change are renewal sources of energy-NOW!!!!!!

Hello, it is Wednesday, March 9, 2022 and it is warm out. I continue my routine of outdoors pickle ball and Tai Chi. However, by the afternoon it is snowing. Within several days it went from warm to winter to mud season to cold and snowing. That reminds of the classic New England weather cliché, "if do not like the weather, wait a minute and it will change".

But, and yes again there is the that pesky but, I want to talk about the local election yesterday. There was a good and steady flow of voters. It was masks optional and few actually wore them. What was most interesting was the mood of those who came there. There was sense of them smiling. They smiled to several reasons. First, finally, they could be out in public without a mask. Second, they felt an engagement in their community. With the vote they felt

they counted. And in fact, they did. In one race only 19 votes separated the winner from the loser. Third, there was the idea doing your civic duty. As one of the Nottingham Selectman once said, “ democracy is a participation sport”. And, fourth, it was a great reunion. I saw, greeted and talked with folks I had not seem for seemingly years. Just, maybe we are emerging from the pandemic?

Back to exercising while watching, I saw Ken Burn’s *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea* <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/2016/04/14/ken-burns-national-parks-americas-best-idea/82499256/>. And back to lessons of the COVID-19, it is an appreciation for Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)<https://www.pbs.org>. It has been a sustainer, entertainer, educator, and informer for these 2 years. Coupled with working out on my elliptical and my stationary bike while viewing it, PBS has helped me remain fit and weight down especially during really bad weather. This is a big shout out to PBS.



Public Broadcasting Service

Hello, it is Thursday, March 10, 2022 and a day to come out of my isolation. I went to the Nottingham Historical Society and did some neat family history research. Yes, I did wear my mask, there. Then I went for a haircut. It was a real haircut from a real barber, Carlene. Before the haircut, I looked like either Bernie Sanders, Albert Einstein or David Ben-Gurion. For 2 years, Peggy has been cutting my hair, It felt good to have a professional haircut. And there were magazines in the waiting area., too. However, there was sticker shock, My last haircut there 2 years ago was \$13. Today I paid \$20 plus tip. I rounded out the day with a talk at synagogue entitled *A Rabbi and Priest Walk into Another Bar* presented by Rabbi Peter Levy and the Reverend Ray Bonin. It was a course in applied interfaith connections and learning. It was Talmud and Gospel classes rolled into one teaching moment..

I also heard about Delta-Omicron <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/covid-deltacron-delta-omicron-variant-latest-b2032811.html>. This is a variant which is a hybrid of the two. I hope it does not rain on my exiting distancing parade.



Carlene's Barber Shop

Welcome to Friday, March 11, 2022 and I am about to come full circle. What does that mean? I'll tell you. Let me take you back of two years ago, This is what I wrote in first Diary entry <https://forumhome.org/the-diary-of-a-reluctant-social-distance-extrovert-prisoner-p32507-1.htm> . “It is Saturday, March 14, 2020 (Pi day) 10:45 AM. While listening to *Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me*, I am entering into my first morning of my confinement. To be exact this self-imposed prison sentence of an undetermined sentence began on Friday night, March 13, 2020 (Friday the thirteenth) at 10:12 PM.

Upon returning home from attending Friday night services at Etz Hayim Synagogue and struggling with the toilet paper hoarding crowds in the supermarket, my partner greeted me with request aka ultimatum. She suggested we immediately commence a strict social distancing program for the next two weeks. “ And, so that night I officially started social and physical distancing.

Tonight, to complete the circle, I went back to in-person to my synagogue's Friday night services. Yes, I still did wear a mask, there. But I was there in person, not Zoom. Folks attending the service remembered that it was almost to the day, 2 years ago that we actually did break bread after the prayer service. Okay, there were still some COVID precautions. That meant only one person with gloves on, could actually serve the food. But, we again after a gap of 2 years did break bread together.

Earlier, today, we still did our outdoor pickleball and Tai Chi. I showed them my haircut and they liked it. But, the birds were singing. The sun was shining. The air was warm. It felt like Spring and hope was abounding despite the forecasted weekend snow. Peggy actually went inside to the grocery store. It is almost a 'normal' day.

Good morning, it is Saturday, March 12, 2022. The weather is mixed precipitation As we approach Daylight Saving time, *Spring ahead; Fall back*, March 13 and actual the Spring itself March 20, the character of the snow storms has begun to change. What does that mean? Let me show you. In the evening Wednesday, March 9 and into the next morning, we had a moderate snow fall. It clearly met the criteria for needing to be shoveled and plowed. In fact , I shoveled the walk ways and the deck and the town did plow our road. Fast forward to that same late afternoon, and most of the snow was gone. The longer hours of sunlight and the warmer temperatures played a role. The point is that March snow often does not last long.

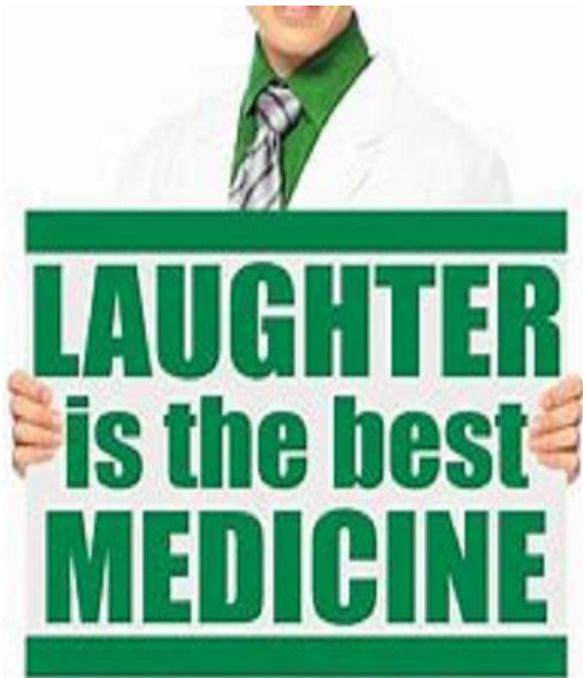


Sunrise Thursday, March 10 at 7:34 AM over our front yard

There is a metaphor here. Just like the snow ‘disappeared’, so have all the rules of the pandemic changed, been removed or ignored. Masks required has become masks optional. It seems the fears of COVID are in public’s mind are nonexistent. In the stores, few if ever wear masks. Schools have gone back to ‘normal’.

Peggy and I completed the day with a “date night” by going to the auditions <https://forumhome.org/auditions-for-becky-rule-play-saturday-march-p36036-129.htm> for parts in Rebecca Rule’s play called *Town Meeting*. Yet, more evidence piece of our lives opening up.

Enough, let us laugh!



**Did You Know**

The Russian word for "peace" is "mir" which is also Russian for "world".

### **Do You Remember**

Pulling in to a full service gas station, buying high test at \$.339, having your oil checked, your windshield washed and getting double (or triple) S & H Green Stamps?

### **Regular Humor**

Why is it unwise to share your secrets with a clock? Well, time will tell.

When I told my contractor I didn't want carpeted steps, they gave me a blank stare.

Bono and The Edge walk into a Dublin bar and the bartender says, "Oh no, not U2 again."

Prison is just one word to you, but for some people, it's a whole sentence.

Scientists got together to study the effects of alcohol on a person's walk, and the result was staggering.

I'm trying to organize a hide and seek tournament, but good players are really hard to find.

I got over my addiction to chocolate, marshmallows, and nuts. I won't lie, it was a rocky road.

What do you say to comfort a friend who's struggling with grammar? There, their, they're.

I went to the toy store and asked the assistant where the Schwarzenegger dolls are and he replied, "Aisle B, back."

### **COVID-19 Humor**

#### **Well, it's new variant day**



**AGAIN**

Some classic early pandemic jokes,

Let's face it: summer body just isn't going to be a thing in 2020. With the country on lockdown and nothing to do but watch Netflix and stuff our faces with snacks and drink the days away, Summer 2020 is going to be more about appreciating a solid beer belly

Everyone is laughing at the quarantine jokes as we try to deal with personal and economic anxiety, let's just hope that we're the ones who ultimately have the last laugh.

One thing every man in the country realizes during these tough times is just how important your relationship with the barber is. When stay-at-home orders are finally lifted, there's going to be a bunch of homeless-looking dudes rolling out of their crib desperate for a lineup.

This may have been the worst and longest April Fool's joke ever.

At times like this, it's great to be an introverted couch potato. You can go about your everyday life while others complain about being bored and lonely. And you get to do all of that while still being a hero.

