

Silver Wordsmiths ages 65 and over

First place, *My Covid-19 2020 Year*, By Eileen Creeger, age 66

In the 1960s, the late Rabbi Herschel Leibowitz of Greenspring Valley Synagogue (today's Ner Tamid) delivered a sermon about Barbra Streisand's hit song "People." I was a teenager at the time and therefore didn't pay much attention, but I remember his general theme.

According to the song lyrics, "People who need people are the luckiest people in the world." Rabbi Leibowitz disagreed. His message was that people who don't need people are lucky. How wonderful it must be to live in a world of your own, needing no one else to be happy and content! Those who need people--the majority of us--are dependent on others; how can that be lucky?

What he was saying made some sense at the time as I recall. But the COVID-19 pandemic has shown me that while I can be content to stay at home reading, baking, gardening, watching TV, streaming movies, playing on the computer, etc., I do need people. Interacting with others and helping them gives me a purpose. Being a member of the Baltimore Jewish community has been a lifesaver.

At the beginning of the shut-down in March, I received an email from Northwest Baltimore's senior village, Northwest Neighbors Connecting (NNC). I was asked if I wanted to make weekly check-in telephone calls to NNC members. I was sent a list of approximately ten, mostly home-bound seniors, when I agreed to participate. Some were African American and the rest Jewish.

At first, many of my "phone pals" were somewhat wary to receive a call from a stranger. Over the weeks, however, I've developed friendships with many of them, some of whom I probably would never have known except for the pandemic.

One example is "Mildred." During a call she mentioned that a large pine tree in her yard threatened to fall on her house. She was very worried. All the estimates to remove the tree were unaffordable. I reached out to a friend in real estate, and he connected me with his "tree guy." His estimate fit her budget; a few days later, the tree was removed and the debris cleaned up. She was very grateful for the referral.

Another phone pal, "Sadie," recently celebrated her 90th birthday. She makes me smile with her upbeat attitude and sense of humor. Nothing gets her down, not even her severe arthritis. A third, "Gloria," sounded very anxious at the beginning of the shut-down. While she still is anxious, she knows that the community will help her when and if she needs assistance. Two weeks ago, when speaking with another new friend, "Gladys," I learned that we lived two blocks apart before she moved to her current apartment. We had a nice time reminiscing about the neighborhood. You could hear the smiles in her voice as we talked.

My synagogue, Suburban Orthodox Congregation Toras Chaim, has also been reaching out to home-bound congregants. Each week two special shul members prepare Shabbat "goodie bags" consisting of challah, cake or cookies and the latest shul news. I've been fortunate to be a part of the delivery team. Bringing joy to someone Erev Shabbat brings joy to me.

A shout-out needs to go the staff at the Edward A. Myerberg Center, which operates under the auspices of Comprehensive Housing Assistance, Inc (CHAI). Personally, being able to access the Center's many exercise classes on Zoom has been amazing. My post-exercise endorphin high keeps me going during the day. Importantly, the Myerberg Tech-Knowledge Hub has been a wonderful resource for teaching older adults how to use technology during our "new normal." Even my shut-in, technology-shy phone pals tell me that they have learned to use their smart phones and tablets to stay in touch with children, precious grandchildren and friends.

So, while Rabbi Leibowitz of blessed memory may have thought that people who don't need people are lucky, I respectfully disagree.

Second place, 2020 SOS, By Carolyn Scherr, age 89

2020 SOS

The Pandemic, oh the Pandemic
It's really here and what a shame!
It didn't get an invitation
But it got here just the same.

By land and sea and even air
Invading every continent
With a fervor and a power
That truly was hell bent.

It changed our way of living
And changed our way of life
And in hardly any time at all
It bombarded us with strife.

Frequent washings of the hands
And a mask upon the face
Were the instructions given us
To help slow down the pace.

We had to keep apart a distance
Of at least six feet
When we and our loved ones
Had a chance to meet and greet.

I think there are two points of view
In our limited situation
Some feel they're under house arrest
That's not like a vacation.

I feel blessed where I am living
It's very safe and people care
Informing and advising us
Keeping tabs on our welfare.

I love working crossword puzzles
It's my favorite thing to do
But if you'll forgive the pun
Sometimes I don't have a clue.

I walk the halls in my building
At least four times a pop
Sometimes I have to coax myself
But I do not want to stop.

We can still enjoy the sunny days
With a schlep or with a stroll
It's like a gift you're giving
To your body and your soul.

Kudos to Yaffa our caterer
Each day he sends us dinner
They're tasty and nutritious
But we're not getting any thinner.

The kugel and stuffed cabbage
Are my very favorite
I often like to mix and match
But I still eat every bit.

On several special mornings
A package waited at my door.
Crammed with fruits and lots of veggies
Who could ask for more.

That you did a mitzvah
The foodstuffs were a hit
You even got us motivated
To cook a little bit.

We wish a happy birthday
To the Associated Federation
From the Jewish community
During the COVID 19 duration.

For your outstanding contributions
Philanthropically
You've enriched the lives of many
On that we all agree.

Jewish Times, we give our thanks to you
For your wealth of information
Here in our community
And all across the nation.

As for the Pandemic
One thing I know for sure
This too shall pass one day
But it won't be as it was before.

There will be a brand new normal
An enlightened one I hope.
Nourished by the strength and wisdom
From which we learned to cope.

Face it and embrace and make it work for you
Stay safe
Carolyn Scherr

Honorable Mentions

Undercover, By Susan Kurlander, age 73

Smiling at others is second nature to me whether that person is someone I know or a stranger. It doesn't matter if the person is someone I may see again (the gas station attendant, the clerk in the grocery store or the lady walking her dog in my neighborhood) or someone who, most likely, will never cross my path again. Smiling helps me connect with people by letting them know I am aware of their presence.

So what is so challenging for me now as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic is that wearing a mask means that no one can tell if I am smiling or not. Just as upsetting is that I can't tell if they are smiling at me. I know others might say that my eyes will let my feelings be known. That thought is a little comforting as I struggle to figure out how to offer an emotional connection to someone with whom I can't interact by my expression or at a distance closer than six feet.

Maybe I can give a "thumbs up" to the gas station attendant behind the plastic partition to let him know that I hope he has a good day. Maybe I can make a heart shape with my fingers to let the clerk in the grocery store know how thankful I am that she is coming to work. Maybe I can wave to the lady walking her dog to let her know how glad I am she is able to be outside and caring for her pet.

I am not in any way complaining or questioning how critical it is for everyone to wear a mask as much as is possible until the time comes when we're able to gain control of our health and safety. Wearing a mask is a minor inconvenience that has been proven to save thousands of lives.

I just need, during this pandemic, to figure out the best way to show others that we are all in this together in so many ways. Wearing a mask lets someone know we care about their physical well-being. I also want them to know that the person behind the mask cares about helping them stay connected—even with a stranger.

Nonstop Giving, By Rae Rossen, age 90

I began as a childhood recipient of Baltimore's Associated Jewish Charities and continue to my current stage of senior recipient. Food and clothing enabled my family of parents and five children to survive during the dire deprivation years of the Depression's unemployment stage. I specifically recall the arrival of shoes.

Along came the Jewish Educational Alliance replete with opportunities of a girls' club membership. Sports, musical and speaking presentations, procedural meeting training, and charity were emphasized. These provided benefits to my maturing stage. My membership continued while employed as a secretary in a law firm where I met realty investor Harry Weinberg. I retain membership as a JEA Fellowship Association board member.

As a working mother of two, the AJC stepped prominently again into my life at 319 W. Monument Street, where I worked alongside former JEA executives, Isidore I. Sollod and Julius Rosenberg, Campaign Department Directors, as well as Zelda Miller, their Administrative Assistant. Housed at the AJC were: HIAS, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (Inge Weinberger); Hebrew Free Burial Society, Social

Services, Hebrew Free Loan Association, and the Women's Division. I felt honored to be under the leadership of Harry Greenstein, Executive Director, and to unexpectedly meeting ambassador-diplomat Abba Eban! (As a side note, several fellow employees formed a lunchtime weekly bowling league at the Howard and Monument Streets bowling alley.)

Adhering to my instilled charitable principles, Hadassah built a strong connection with Israel. Additionally, through Hadassah my breast cancer experience played a major role in their Check It Out Program of breast health awareness. I presented cautionary breast cancer advice to high-school audiences and various organizations, and joined in the Susan B. Komen Race for the Cure efforts. Interwoven in my giving pattern was enabling literacy by tutoring needy youngsters who encountered a brush with the law.

In my "seniorhood" I have enabled bingo games, lectured on various uplifting topics, such as Show and Tell, and served Eating Together meals. On the receiving end, the AJC offers free food, perishable and non-perishable, thereby easing my grocery bills. I deeply appreciate their "mental groceries" such as puzzles and cheerful "how are you" calls and notes. What a beneficent legacy I've inherited!

My message to future generations: When you give, through actions or words, you are giving yourself a boost in building character.

The Associated: Visual Acuity 2020, By Marlene Resnick, age 83

For as long as I have been involved in Baltimore's charitable and organizational life, I have always found The Associated to be the ultimate. Creating a bond within our citizenry, our community abounds with groups doing incredible work and addressing the needs of people educationally, financially and medically.

Oh, so many years ago, I recall that The Associated excelled creatively in their every endeavor. For instance:

- A luncheon function featuring none other than nationally renowned news broadcaster, Barbara Walters, as the keynote speaker. As a young, impressionable volunteer, this was a celebratory occasion for me.
- A Maccabee phone-a-thon creating an aura of enthusiasm and excitement for the volunteers, as well as the attending staff members. From serving a festive selection of food, nosh and beverages to encouraging support from the community, The Associated always makes people feel welcome, relaxed and ready to make those special telephone calls.
- During another phone-a-thon, I recall the Grand Chairman entering the massive room with a flourish, garbed in a suit of armor, brandishing a sword. He "worked" the room, stopping at many phone stations while extolling the volunteers with jovial, encouraging asides, saying, "Remember, your smile definitely comes across via the telephone."
- To celebrate an auspicious anniversary of Jerusalem, Park Heights Avenue was cordoned off for blocks. It looked like a virtual Israeli shuk, featuring vendors galore, food stuffs and Israeli

products indigenous to our beloved State. Lending an atmosphere of joy and unity, Arches ala Jerusalem were positioned to create barriers to this lovely mini-version of the "City of Gold."

- ACHAREI, a carefully chosen group of people seeking leadership direction and skills, was formed. They offered a mini-mester of classes with direction from leaders of The Associated, replete with useful printed handout information, plus one-on-one conversations and discussions. I liken this to the planting of an olive tree, bearing its fruit perhaps 70 years hence. The Associated, not keeping stride, but instead setting the stride for the future. Working with this cadre of amazing people promoted a feeling of being at "the top of your game."
- Hebrew Free Loan: How many organizations can convene a board meeting on a weekly basis? In as much as The Associated people are painfully aware of the financial and vital needs of their clientele, meetings are essential on a more stringent, time-sensitive schedule, as BG&E and rental obligations are pressing when you are operating on a financial deficit. How kind and wise are these people comprising this so-important board! On a personal note, over the years, I have had the opportunity to co-sign for much-needed loans; never did I once experience a default.

In deference to special contest regulations, I have but scratched the surface of this awesome group. It is impossible in a limited essay to elaborate effectively on the many constituent agencies and services rendered by The Associated.

Alas, here we are in 2020—a year fraught with surprises and challenges still being addressed. Yes, The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore has risen to the top individually and as a unit, always fostering the best in the human condition technologically, virtually and innovatively. Beginning with the recent Installation of Officers via Zoom, this inspiring organization passed the gauntlet to the ever-growing visionary select group of leaders.

Please G-d, this organization should continue for another 100 successful years—minds always open to the peoples' needs not yet even imagined. The difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary is THE ASSOCIATED.

Mazel, Bracha, Hatzlacha

My Adventure of the Day, By Elaine Wolf, age 78

My Adventure of the Day

Gathering all my courage
To go to the store
Grabbing all I need
So I'm out the door

It will be an experience
As everything is planned
Mask, sanitizer, a list
Gloves for the hands

Hoping for a space
Not too far away
Entering the grocery early
My adventure of the day

Picking vegetables and bananas
Eggs, cheese but no deli
Getting sliced rye and some bagels
Peanut butter and grape jelly

Passing canned goods and salad dressings
Seeing pastas of all kinds
I pick and choose
New varieties I find

Next sundries, snacks, sodas
Perusing ice cream and frozen needs
Then hightailing up front
With the greatest of speed

Using sanitizer in the car
Always cleaning my hands a lot
Carrying in the groceries
With all the energy I've got

Wiping everything down
I put all away
Soon lunch and relaxing
In my home I'll now stay

On the Other Side of This, By Mary Helen Grasso, age 67

On the other side of this
we will have a long embrace;
I will stroke your hair and gently kiss
your unmasked, smiling face.

On the other side of this
when our red, raw hands have healed,
we'll have a toast and reminisce,
share feelings long concealed.

We'll smile and laugh and dance again
and travel, as before;
we'll visit with our distant friends
and love our loved ones more.

Our screen time will diminish,
our fitness will improve.
On the other side of this
we'll be more inclined to move.

We'll go to classes, parks, and shows,
share ice cream cones and pie.
We'll link our arms, and shed our woes
and heave a grateful sigh.

We'll cuddle with our little ones,
and read books, cheek to cheek;
play piggy-back out in the sun
and games of hide and seek.

On the other side of this
we will swear to never grouse.
To celebrate togetherness,
we'll hold an open house.

We'll tread more gently on the earth,
be kinder, more forgiving.
We'll value more each person's worth
and care for all things living.

We'll mourn for what and who we've lost,
question what is meant by "cost,"
reconsider what is bliss . . .
on the other side of this.

20 Take-Aways from the Covid-19 Pandemic and Quarantine, By Eileen Creeger, age 66

1. Nice, kind, thoughtful people continue to act the same in a crisis. So do the nasty ones.
2. There's a HUGE difference between what one wants and what one needs.
3. Man does not live by toilet paper alone.
4. Grocery shopping online isn't horrible except when someone else picks out your produce.
5. Virtual hugs and kisses from your grandchildren are no substitute for the real thing.
6. Staying home isn't so bad if you have enough books to read.
7. Three months without a haircut is a good time to explore a "new look."
8. Amazon Prime can become your new best friend!
9. Patience, patient, patience. Especially if your spouse is under foot all day long.
10. Afternoon naps rock!
11. Losing one's spontaneity to go and do what you want when you want is difficult.
12. Trader Joe's is the best place for seniors to grocery shop.

13. Many people aren't as cautious as you are, so you have to be proactive and protect yourself.
14. Listening to the news all day is not good for one's sanity.
15. Postponing the 6-month check-up at the dentist is wonderful!
16. Knowing that you can't go out on a bad weather day is priceless.
17. Libraries should be classified as "essential."
18. How come men can grow beards but women have to shave their legs?
19. Some days will be better than others.
20. Humor is the always the best medicine!

Hats Off!, By Harriet Lebowitz, age 77

COVID-19 has hit our community
Without a vaccine we don't have immunity

In response there are those of us
Who make sacrifices; they are tough

Hats Off To COVID patients about whom we care
To their families who have such a scare

To health care workers who give their all
Their contributions - not small

To the unemployed - they still have grit
They are taking a really big hit

To store staff providing medicine and food
And while working, they're in a good mood

To public service workers who have been splendid
Hangin' in there 'til this pandemic has ended

Yes, firefighters, police, military, and more
They all have taken on quite a chore

Hats Off to volunteers who perform many tasks
Deliver essentials, entertain, make masks

To government officials being our guide
And helping us through this crazy ride

To isolated people who live alone
To those who have no visitors in a nursing home

To those people of this land

Who social distance, wear masks, lend a hand

To kids and parents who have had to cope
And who are looking beyond this slippery slope

To groups I may not have talked about
Didn't mean to leave you out

COVID-19 is hanging over us like a cloud
Our community has responded; I feel proud

Pandemic Gifts, By Bonnie Block, age 77

...and so our lives changed. In every corner of our world. COVID-19 had begun to take it's most horrific toll on the lives of people everywhere. "I'm going to keep a daily journal for my grandkids. When they study this situation in their future classes they will have a written recording of Grannie and Pop's lives at that time" My writing stopped on May 22. I found myself feeling so sad as I wrote what seemed like a repeat of yesterday. Being a person who likes to make a positive difference, a special idea came to me just a moment in time. What if people would reflect on a gift they received from the pandemic? I remember writing about my gift from cancer after my radiation treatments for breast cancer. It seemed strange to put gift and cancer on the same written line. Yet it did help me to focus on the affirmative aspect of my healing journey. Maybe, just maybe I could help people visualize a positive aspect somewhere somehow and place a smile on their hearts. My family and friends were my first guests and then it was anyone I saw: a stranger in the beach, the grocery clerk, the bank teller, the biker, some lower and middle school children just to name a few. Before long I had 101 gifts listed. So many smiles I hope I gave! So many smiles I had received! I continue to ask my question wherever I am on my life's journey. "What is a gift you received during this time? Look forward to your answer. Blessings to all. .

The Associated and I, By Betty Seidel, age 98

The Associated's one-hundredth Birthday Celebration 2020
Maps my ninety-eight years with memories aplenty.
I recall on D-Day, the in-person way,
Driving to homes in request of donations, "fifteen cents a day."

Associated provided an opportunity to enhance my creativity
Designing vital table centerpieces for special events of many a family.
How proud am I to have been a Volunteer
At the boisterous Phonathon year after year.
Happiness for me never did cease
Each time my conversation reaped an annual giving increase.

I'm gratefully reminded how blessed in our community to be living
By my treasured photo of me adorned with a ribbon marking "50 Years of Giving."

In Israel, around the world, and in Greater Baltimore,
Associated's Heroes provide for all ages services and programs galore.

Eagerly I weekly explore the Jewish Times to read about our historic sages
And the news and views that abound in its pages.
Ever am I in awe of Associated's committed Staff and Volunteer Leadership,
Every person a talented, dedicated VIP.
The Associated does not permit pandemic challenges to unnerve;
Our Community its dedicated Agencies innovatively protect with verve.

Today, The Associated is needed more than ever,
Generations relying upon it must support, now and forever.
"Mazel Tov, Associated," shall we with promise say;
For a happy, healthy next Centennial I pray,
As you help make our hopes and our dreams come true
With all the "Repairing the World" deeds you do!

My Journal of the Plague Year, By Judith Floam, age 79

Some entries from my 'Journal of the Plague Year' (apologies to Daniel Defoe):

March 12

I just bought this journal at Barnes and Noble.

Today, they announced that our learning program will be closed until after Spring Break, or maybe until the end of April. I have my doubts.

March 13

*Our synagogue board had an emergency meeting and decided we need to close for the time being.

March 16

There's been a case in Columbia; they closed the Columbia Mall for a few days.

We told our friends that we wouldn't be coming to their son's wedding at the end of March. They wrote back to say the wedding has been cancelled; the kids are getting married in small home ceremony.

March 19

Our local religious authority has issued guidelines: anyone returning to Baltimore from New York, New Jersey or Israel has to self-quarantine.

March 20

My sister-in-law tells me that they will be deciding on April 1st whether to move my nephew's wedding date from April to July.

March 23

The Governor announced that all "non-essential businesses" are to close. I bought myself a t-shirt that says "Books: Essential Business - Since 1440".

March 24

The local Jewish community on-line update, J-COVID, has a chart with 7 stores and items they have, or are out of. Only one is not out of toilet paper.

March 26

Passover is coming. Our local religious authority has sent out a notice that people should not go out of town for the holiday and should not have out of town guests. Our seder this year will be us two, no one else at our table.

March 29

This is the day we were supposed to go up to New Jersey for the wedding.

It's only been two weeks since we started staying home - it feels more like two months.

March 31

Now we are being told to wear masks. It turns out the CDC originally didn't want people buying medical masks, which are in short supply. But it's okay to make your own. So I did, from strips of an old undershirt, with elastic straps attached by safety pins.

April 23

We drove out into Owings Mills to buy four homemade masks - they're nice but you have to tie them in the back - too much trouble.

We just heard from my sister-in-law that my nephew is getting married in two days, on the original date planned for the wedding, in a ceremony at home with a few family members and a few more on Zoom. They'll have a big party on April 25, 2021 (let's hope we can go).

April 26

We went to get a package of 25 face masks at a subsidized price from a local health-and-safety group. That should be enough for the time being.

May 6

It's my birthday. The Governor announced that golf courses, state parks and beaches will be open for camping, boating and fishing.

May 13

We had a hastily-called board meeting to talk about why it's premature to reopen the synagogue and to write a letter to the congregation explaining why.

May 20

The County is now open for in-store shopping, including barber shops and beauty parlors. People want to get their hair cut!

May 25 (Memorial Day)

We 'attended' a wedding on Zoom.

June 8

Another Zoom Board meeting to discuss how to reopen the synagogue. It will be in the back yard, with detailed guidelines: wear masks, bring your own chair, sit 6 feet apart, etc..

June 12

It's exactly three months since we've been on lockdown and I am on the last page of this journal. Tomorrow, I start using a new one - it's very elegant, from the Walters gift shop.

June 20

The synagogue is back open this weekend. It's amazing how well you can hear people leading services even when they're wearing masks.

June 25

We went out of town to visit a friend - the longest trip we've taken since March. It was so nice.

June 30

Major league baseball opens at the end of the month with two new rules: no spitting, and in extra inning games, each team will start their inning with a man on second base. My husband says "it's interesting, but it's not baseball".

July 2

My grandson's preschool reopens next week, with four kids in the class, wearing masks and with play tables behind plastic shields if they want to take their masks off. How weird for a four-year old. (Or maybe they're more adaptable than we think.)

July 29

Major league baseball has reopened – Dr. Fauci threw out the first pitch of the opening game. But 10 people on the Marlins have tested positive so they are quarantined for now and the schedule has been rearranged.

... to be continued ...

What I learned, By Judy Schwartz, age 70

On March 19, 2020 I took an un-accessorized walk around Coral Gables, FL - our winter home. The pandemic had descended and we were crafting our "new normal". Paying attention to my surroundings was my focus - what and who was I seeing, how was everyone behaving? These observations became the theme of daily musings shared via internet, entitled "What I Learned Today!" Since then I continue to walk, observe, learn and share with members of my cyberspace community. The ritual of my morning walks and evening writings provide a structure that define and stabilize our new reality.

I observed and counted the mundane - banks, salons, gyms, driving patterns - I had lots to say about it all! Then I focused on patterns of behaviors, people and "stuff" that became my daily "Corona Creature Count". I expressed outrage at the littering of discarded gloves and face masks and countered that anger by focusing on social interaction infused with kindness. "Good morning!" became my mantra - eventually it was reciprocated. Soon our Baltimore friends and family visualized our life in Florida - I described and posted pictures of anoles (small skittish lizards), flowers, assorted dogs, historically significant landmarks, and two fan favorites - "Shirtless Hunks" (bare chested male joggers) and "Fearless Fools" (helmetless motorcycle riders).

The reciprocity that emanated from my posts became my emotional fuel. Some topics became frequent themes. Once Pesach concluded I shared our remaining matzo with the pigeons on the sidewalks. While scattering matzo crumbs to them I learned that some pigeons have bright red feet. Soon I learned that the blackest pigeons have the reddest feet. I miss those pigeons since returning home. Near the pigeon hangout, I frequently saw an older gentleman who I assumed was homeless. I named him Joe/Jose (Coral Gables is bilingual) and incorporated him into my/our community. He pushed his worldly possessions in a grocery cart and dressed in a tired-looking shirt and tie. Eventually we shared daily greetings. I started bringing Joe/Jose some food. Some days were disappointing when he was not there to accept the orange or boiled egg I'd brought; other days I ventured out empty-handed, worrying I had let him down. Once I snapped and shared a picture of Joe/Jose from a distance (to respect his anonymity). It was one of the last times I encountered him.

Eddy - an important member of our community! He fulfills his duties at our building's front desk wearing his contagious smile! Sometimes I bring him traditional Jewish foods I've made; challah is his favorite! Eddy stopped me once to introduce me to Roberto, our FedEx delivery person. Eddy thought I would appreciate knowing that Roberto is an Orthodox Jew - who in

fact wears tzitzit under his "brown" uniform. Roberto said "Shalom" and started singing Shalom Aleichem. Now every Friday when in Florida I'm greeted with a "Shabbat Shalom!" from Eddy that I include at the end of every Friday post. My community has grown!

Pesach was a struggle this year. I make a big deal out of the holidays - lots of traditional foods and an especially festive table. I cooked and delivered food to our girls' (aka Helicopter 1 and Helicopter 2) homes then we attempted to zoom our seder. Dreadful sadness and disappointment descended upon me as I cleaned-up that night. Instead of our glorious grandchildren only their photographs were at each of their usual seats. I included the photo of that table in the night's post. The next morning I read the responses and knew that I was not alone. Many others echoed that hollow feeling - we don't like how isolation feels. We learned we need those connections that bind us to feel complete.

Our Helicopters!!! Blessed with two gloriously funny, bright, talented daughters, their wonderful mates and our enchanting grandchildren who settled in South Florida is why we became snowbirds. They have taken it upon themselves to parent us now that we are "that age". Their directives and opinions are infused with endless love, firmness and rigidity. Sometimes we obey, sometimes we just pretend to obey. Again I learned from our community. There are many women who mother helicopters, which explains the endless buzzing I hear.

Reciprocity in my community is a consistent comfort. In June, I had an emergency admission to a Florida hospital, fortunately remembering to take my iPad with me. From my ICU bed I drafted my daily post, trying to sound more calm and confident than I felt. "My people" rallied to my support providing what doctors have no prescription for - interpersonal connection. I am fine now - walking and writing daily. Old and new friends send messages - they are treasured gifts, arriving during challenging times, with indescribable value, affirming all that I am learning daily!

Ensnared by two Evils, By Felicia Graber, age 80

My life began in Poland during the Holocaust. Born in March 1940, 6 months after the German invasion, I lived "hidden on the surface," posing as Catholics with my mother in Warsaw from 1942 until 1944. My father joined us after he escaped from the ghetto.

Later that year, we are in a transit camp. Here men are separated from women and children. Mother sends me to the men's side to give Father something, the German guard waves me through. Once, twice, the third time, the guard yells at me: "if you go again, I will not let you return to your mother!" I am terrified, I run and huddle next to my mother afraid to move.

A few weeks later, we are sheltered by a Polish farm family. Everyone has to chip in, to help with the chores - even I, the four-year old. My job is to watch the one cow they have. I am given a big stick and told not to let her go into the wheat field. She is humongous. Soon she starts walking towards the field and I run after her, hitting her as hard as I can. Of course, the more I hit her the further she goes into the field. I run sobbing into the farm house, devastated helpless.

Other memories from my early years consist of unrelated scenes and sounds: Mobs... shouts... locomotive whistling... steam engine hissing... people pushing, trying to get on to the train. A garden... trees... a white rabbit in a cage... Bullets flying through the window...crouching down on the floor...running to the basement...bombs exploding... A soldier standing outside the open door of our house, a rifle in his hand.

Now, having turned eighty last March, I am living again under another evil – Covid-19. The circumstances are very different, but many of the same scenes and situations evoke similar feelings of anxiety and helplessness. The virus does not discriminate based on race, religion, age or your ability to work. It is not contained in one part of the world. Every human no matter where they live on this planet is confronted with the same life-threatening virus. People lock themselves in their homes, wary of any contact with strangers and even families. We communicate via Zoom, smart phones and telephone. We carefully plan all errands for fear of coming in contact with people and being infected. Radio and television news are so disturbing that we try to minimize being exposed to them. Every day new recommendations are reported, some so contradictory that we do not know who or what to believe.

Then we have the unending riots, burnings, lootings, shootings, fights in the streets with one group blaming another. We see people being out of control, breaking into stores, breaking windows, smashing shelves and displays and not caring whom they injure or kill, just like German soldiers who were beating and humiliating old men, shattering Jewish shop windows and burning synagogues. Like then, authorities post one order after another, many making no logical sense. They appear power hungry wanting to show how much clout they have. People are standing in lines, reminiscent of the war years waiting to receive food packages or to be tested for the virus.

Those images sear into my inner soul reminding me of the senseless brutality witnessed during those horrible years I lived through as a child. The feeling of helplessness, of uncertainty about the future. What will the future be like? When will all this stop? Will life revert to being normal? And if not, what will the new normal look like?

After liberation, life did not return to normal. Most survivors had to rebuild families, livelihoods, had move to foreign countries, learn new languages and adapt to new cultures. It took years for life to become normal – the new normal. How long will it take to adapt to this new normal? Are we to wear masks and avoid people for months if not years?

Child survivors of the Holocaust lived with many psychological, emotional issues that followed them throughout their lives. Many had missed years of education and had to work hard to catch up to their non-survivor friends. How will Covid-19 influence my great -grandchildren? The oldest is eight, her cousin seven, both need to be in school. How will their education be impacted? Our next three are four and five. They cannot have the necessary social interactions with their peers to grow up as responsible members of society. How will that situation affect their development? The two youngest are infants, their lives are not affected by the current living conditions right now. But what will their normal be like?

Life in general of course is much, much better under Covid-19 than it was then. We have a beautiful apartment, food gets delivered, there are no armed soldiers parading in the streets. I know, the situation now is by far less threatening or dangerous than it was then. Being a senior, not a young child anymore, I have a better comprehension of the situation. Although being a child I might not have fully understood the danger we were in now I am much more aware of my feelings of helplessness, foreboding and insecurity. As much as I tell myself how good my situation is today, how the comparisons with the Holocaust is totally unwarranted, I cannot help my feelings that my life is ensnared between those two evils.

By Joan Miller, age 75

On the last day of submission
I will turn 75,
I am active and positive,
And well and alive -

G-d has given me many gifts,
Teaching children, piano, and poetry,
These few months have allowed me to share
These gifts to friends and family -

At the beginning of the Virus Period,
I was asked to share my poems with a Hot Line,
To cheer up people who called in,
It made me feel so fine -

From a Jewish Point of View,
Since I suffer from anxiety,
I was given three support people,
All with a Jewish background fitted just to me -

2 weeks ago I decided to get,
More Jewishness in my life,
So I subscribed to the "Jewish Times,"
Just to deal more fully with the nationwide strife -

One of the most exciting things I've been doing,
Is to teach young children like before,
With the help of the Associated
I can only pray for more good things in store!

I have an attitude of gratitude for all the Associated has done for me and for the people I love.
Thank you.

Vacationing While Quarantined/COVID-19, By Linda Miller, age 75

It's been four months since the quarantine, and I'm resigned that a vacation is *not* happening this year. I've decided to have a staycation, which does have the advantage of being a money-saver! My new attitude is, I'm not going to be upset about being quarantined. Here's how it's going:

Just like any vacation, when I get up in the morning, the first thing I do is visit the bathroom. After brushing my teeth and using the toilet, I start the back exercises that I need to do to maintain this 75-year-old body whether I'm home or on vacation. I do this in my comfortable bedroom, which has a Beauty Rest mattress, better than any I've ever slept on in a hotel. I'm in my own space and don't have to worry about packing weights. This room has one added item: two skirt hangers with clips that now hold two masks and several pairs of gloves that are drying since being washed after their last use.

I head downstairs to the kitchen for breakfast. The good thing about breakfast in this hotel is that the menu has items I really like to eat. The bad part is I must make it myself and then clean up.

My first real adventure requires climbing the steps to my hobby/exercise room. There's no heavy workout equipment like some hotels, but this one has everything I need: weights, mat, exercise bands, towel and water bottle *with ice!*

I open my computer and go to my Beach Body programs to decide what exercise routine(s) I feel like doing that day. I have my favorites and my challenges, and I just mix it up but always try to get in one hour. The best part of this room is the views. When I'm in the final stages of stretching and lying on the mat, I turn my body left and head right to face a large picture window and see our mature sugar maple tree. A wonderful calming sight to view while deep breathing in a spinal twist.

I switch and turn left to face a wall where a collage hangs of artwork from my granddaughters when they were two and five. It includes photos, their art and a background sprayed with sparkles, adorned with ribbons and feathers. At the top, Arianna printed "Love, Arianna and Emily."

Some hotels have spas. My bathroom is a good substitute. I love that the showerhead gets with the program, towels are big and fluffy, and the hair dryer kicks ass.

Hunger hits after exercising. Lunch time! Unfortunately, all restaurants are currently closed. (It is a pandemic, you know.)

My husband Stuart and I do our "kitchen dance" as we each prepare our own food. In our small kitchen, we're adept at weaving and dodging as we share the microwave, fridge, counters, and sink. When my food is prepared, I carry it to the combination living/dining room and sit at the table by the window where I see our beautiful trees that hide neighboring houses.

After lunch, I read the mail (not a normal vacation activity, but there's nothing "normal" about this one) that came three days ago. Conservative Stuart suggested we wait that long to open it because of the virus threat. I read in the family room, resting my aging back while lying on

my comfy couch, a specialty of this hotel. There's also excellent lighting, 150-watt bulbs, another perk not often found in hotels.

On a "normal" vacation, Stuart and I would be seeing sights, hiking, taking photos, buying souvenirs, just having fun! Here's the daytime entertainment on staycation:

- 1) Work the puzzles that the newspaper generously provides daily.
- 2) Read the paper and feel crappy about people who won't obey new rules.
- 3) Watch "Hot Bench" and "Judge Judy," always worth a laugh.

Bonus: I know all the channels and what shows are on each. I hate figuring that out while in other states.

Finally, there's the lobby powder room. I love this tiny half-bath that has a flowered border running along soft violet-colored walls. A little white cabinet, hanging above the toilet, has doors with windows where I put pretty knickknacks and a favorite photo of Stuart and me in our younger years. On one wall is a framed needlepoint of an old-fashioned toilet that my mom (oleho Hashalem) stitched just for me.

Now that I've written this, I'm not feeling so bad about no *actual* vacation. We are healthy and have each other. Everyone we know is well and virus free (for now). I'm counting my blessings. But I'm never going to get over not going to Oriole Park at Camden Yards to cheer the O's during Sunday home games. Still, I wear an Oriole t-shirt every game day.