

Sounds I Never Heard Before:

*Reflections on
the COVID-19
Pandemic*

*This project is an initiative of
Lasting Impressions: DOROT's
Legacy Project.*



DOROT's Lasting Impressions Department is proud to present *Sounds I Never Heard Before: Reflections on the COVID-19 Pandemic*. This zine began in March 2020, when the first wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic swept through New York City. For a period of five weeks, we invited older adults from our community to share their stories, poems, recipes, and musings from this unprecedented time. DOROT staff have also offered their contributions to this project.

Participants responded to the questions below:

- What is a meaningful experience that you have had during this period of isolation?
- What advice would you want to give to family, friends, or community members about your experiences during this time?
- What lessons would you want to share with “past you” about this experience of quarantine? (hint: it might be fun to write yourself a letter!)
- What is something new that you have learned in the past month?
- What is the most memorable food that you have eaten during quarantine? [or TV program watched / cultural experience tuned into]

This work would not have been possible without the dedication and artistic talent of Lasting Impressions Intern, Marion Wolloch, and, of course, the members of our community who chose to share their thoughts with us.

While we are all still physically distanced, our voices are captured here together in spirit.

With thanks and gratitude,

Claire, Lena, Marion, and Wendy

Lasting Impressions Department



This collage is about stress management, perfect for times such as these. Even though I made it a while ago, I hung it up once confined to my apartment. I've been here since January ... since my post surgery rest over-lapped the COVID situation. Hope it helps others to relax. All of my collages are made to expose and resolve a problem.

Matilda Virgilio Clark



This time of isolation reminded me I need to relax. As a student at 73 following a course for a B.S. in Criminal Justice, I needed to take some deep breaths and move slowly. My advice is to slow down, read, meditate, and cook or just do nothing at times and allow your mind, body, and soul to realize as an old song states, "Everything Must Change." There is a constant flow to life and rushing around bottles up the body's natural rhythm. Change is inevitable and we can do nothing to stop it. We may not like it, however, embrace the variation and you'll be all right.

Lujira Cooper

This is a Chocolate Chip Cookie recipe that I have been baking every couple weeks, my family really enjoys them. They are a comfort food.

Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsalted butter, melted

1 cup packed brown sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup white sugar

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1 egg

1 egg yolk

2 cups semisweet chocolate chips

Directions

Step 1: Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). Grease cookie sheets or line with parchment paper.

Step 2: Sift together the flour, baking soda and salt; set aside.

Step 3: In a medium bowl, cream together the melted butter, brown sugar and white sugar until well blended. Beat in the vanilla, egg, and egg yolk until light and creamy. Mix in the sifted ingredients until just blended. Stir in the chocolate chips by hand using a wooden spoon. Drop cookie dough $\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time onto the prepared cookie sheets. Cookies should be about 3 inches apart.

Step 4: Bake for 15 to 17 minutes in the preheated oven, or until the edges are lightly toasted. Cool on baking sheets for a few minutes before transferring to wire racks to cool completely.

*Recipe is from allrecipes.com

Lauren Kupferberg (DOROT Staff)

Poem in a Time of Corona Virus

I'm fine as long as day is light.
With dark, the spooks begin.
The ring of ash completes itself
encircling me within.

Dire thoughts, like moldy sugar-plums
dance gaily in my head,
such as: if I've run out of food --
will someone know I'm dead?

Oh, meet me on a nearby bench
and share a cheese on rye.
Remind me I am human
as you look me in the eye.

And when there is no Internet
and plunged is the DOW,

we'll play a lovely game of cards...
if we remember how!

Ellen Diamond



Below is a recipe that I've made a couple of times since COVID-19 hit. It's easy...and helped me make room in my freezer for things that were more important than frozen squash.

Squash Pie

Ingredients:

1 pkg frozen butternut squash (12 oz.), defrosted

1/2 cup flour (or gluten free flour)

1/2 cup sugar

1 cup non dairy creamer or Rice Dream

1 egg

1 pie crust (or 9x9 pan...be sure to spray it)

cinnamon

Directions:

Mix squash, flour, sugar, non dairy creamer and egg together in bowl. Pour into pie crust or greased pan. Sprinkle with cinnamon. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Enjoy!

Sharon Stahl (DOROT Staff)

Solitude is not my enemy, though I miss the ordinary city walks and lunches and lectures and gallery visit that one had once taken for granted. I have a daily routine that keeps me grounded and my emails and phone calls keep me posted to many relatives and friends. I am currently writing short poems, an activity that is a new medium for me. It is my belief that a new challenge keeps me mentally alert, while my ten-minute stretch exercise contributes to my well-being as well as my hourly daily walk through the apartment.

During the strict lockdown, sounds that I never could hear before became apparent to me-- the chirping and tweeting of the birds on the terrace below, the difference between the sirens of an ambulance, a fire engine and a police car, the closeness of a plane ready to land at a nearby airport, the rhythmic patter of rain on my window panes... these are sounds now heard by me due to the silence of the city...I am most gratified to have been privy to these.

Bernice Hauser

I belong to a synagogue, The Society for the Advancement of Judaism (SAJ). Each weekday morning Rabbi Lauren Grabelle Herman conducts a prayer service at 8AM for twenty minutes on Zoom. She reads and explains parts of a psalm, recites prayers for those who are sick and people recite the Kaddish. One of her comments struck me. Our ancestors, when they were in exile in Egypt, did not know how long the exile would last, just as we don't know how long we will be sheltering in place. We need to follow their example in remaining strong. This morning service, her teachings and a sense of community fortifies me.

Sandra Ceslowitz



COVID-19 Snapshots—Lorraine Voytek (DOROT Staff)

Click...

A basket of hand sewn masks, continually refilled for anyone who wanted them, while people elsewhere refused to cover their mouths and noses, calling it unconstitutional

Click...

The line of cars I check-in at my local pantry, growing from 30 families to 180 each Saturday, while my own cupboards were full from panic buying

Click...

Politicians talking of America's "great history", while masses gathered in the streets to protest our undeniable saga of racism

Click...

Zooming, emailing and calling into work, while millions lost their jobs and health insurance

Click...

The convenience of online shopping, curbside pick-up, to-go dining, while items became harder to get and small companies went out of business

Click...

Media revealing scenes of overcrowded hospitals and exhausted healthcare workers, while also showing overcrowded bars, beaches and parties

Click...

Helping out my parents, while remembering how much they have always helped me

Click...

Mourning the loss of family and friends dying, while unable to hug or hold a hand

Click...

Witnessing the worst of selfishness, while beholding the best of selflessness

Click...

Feeling frightened, vulnerable, sad, angry, while feeling grateful, strong, proud and loved

I have been home, sheltering in place in my upper east side apartment since March 12th, one day after my birthday when I celebrated with my nephew, niece, and 2 great nieces. We met in a Korean restaurant, washed our hands (since we were somewhat aware that something troublesome was on the New York horizon), and shared food and laughter. We tentatively hugged goodbye, and I hopped on the Q train to ride 4 stops back to my home. I was warned earlier in the day, by my brother who has been living in Buenos Aires since late November, and who is a physician, that due to my “elderly” status, I had better be vigilant, and certainly no subway rides. I thought he knew something but decided to just sit away from others and not worry. It was a great evening. Oh – did I mention that I had just flown home from San Francisco, where I was exposed to two people who ended up positive for COVID 19.

The very next day I received a call from my niece who called to tell me that her brother (the nephew who dined with us the night before) was very sick, and that I should not even think about leaving my apartment for the foreseeable future. I have been there ever since.

What I have learned is that I can be alone, something I always dreaded. I have lost two long-term loves in my life, and each time I was devastated, and only was able to resume some semblance of normalcy because of the support and love of friends and family who made sure that I was never alone if I didn’t want to be.

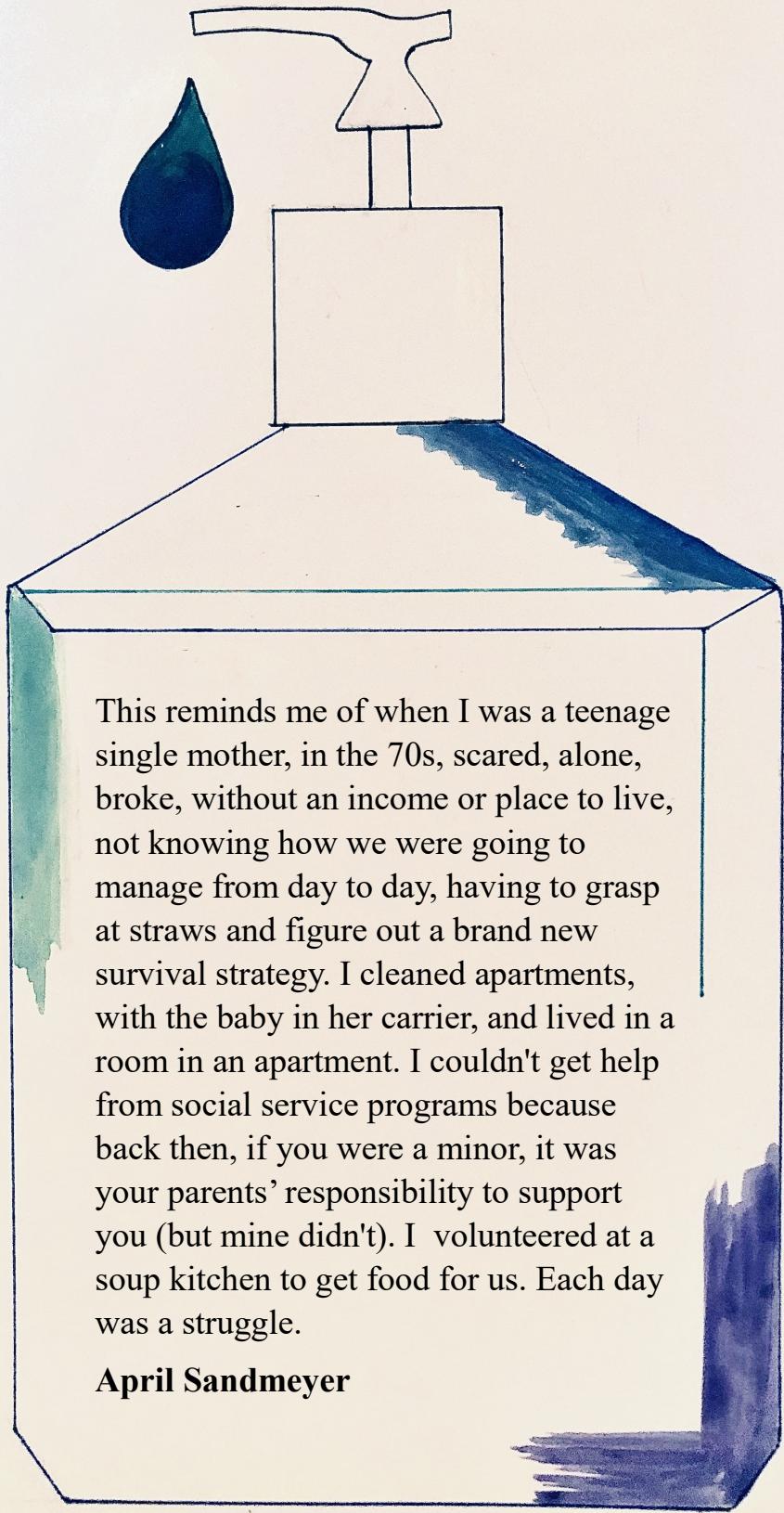
I have also learned that in solitude there can be growth. When you are more focused, and not busy with an over scheduled life, it does allow for more introspection. I almost never cooked in these past years (with or without my special person by my side) but preferred to dine out with friends, enjoying the social aspects as well as sampling new cuisine. Now I prepare healthy and, to my surprise, very creative meals for myself. Full DISCLOSURE: I would rather be sharing something I made with someone I love, but since that is not prudent at this time, I have learned to adapt and even enjoy the experience.

I have personally known several Holocaust survivors, and have always been deeply interested, actually fascinated, by their stories. I found out that one thing they all had in common, was an ability to live one day, actually one minute at a time, and not think about the future. I am trying, albeit not always successfully, to follow that example, and to have some hope that life will resume in some way, and that we will all prevail. I try not to dwell on the fact that so many people have succumbed to the Coronavirus, but to look instead, to a future that will be worthwhile for all. I have always cared about social justice and have volunteered in many arenas. This situation has only increased that interest and commitment in me. Being idle, and not having a purpose in life, is at best an empty existence. I always knew this but being forced into solitude has made me more focused on doing more for others.

I have seen that adversity brings out the best and worst in people. Friends and family who I did not hear from regularly, are now checking in much more often, but conversely, I have observed that some people who you thought would be there, are not. I try not to judge, but I cannot help but observe. It seems that for some, friendship is more about what you do together, rather than what you feel for each other. For the most part however, I am very happy to report that in my case, I have received a great deal of love and concern from all my family (some of whom were too busy to keep in touch very often in normal times) and neighbors as well as friends. I have also become more aware that everyone handles adversity in different ways. I always knew this, but now I feel it as well.

Thank you for the opportunity of expressing some of what I am going through in these unprecedented times. I have become more patient. I look forward to reading about how others are doing.

Adele Dressner



This reminds me of when I was a teenage single mother, in the 70s, scared, alone, broke, without an income or place to live, not knowing how we were going to manage from day to day, having to grasp at straws and figure out a brand new survival strategy. I cleaned apartments, with the baby in her carrier, and lived in a room in an apartment. I couldn't get help from social service programs because back then, if you were a minor, it was your parents' responsibility to support you (but mine didn't). I volunteered at a soup kitchen to get food for us. Each day was a struggle.

April Sandmeyer

My view has turned inward
circumscribed by my self-quarantine.
Now in my sixth week, safely
ensconced in my 15th floor apartment
I scan the rows of books and periodicals
lining
the shelves of the myriad bookcases.
They tell me to start discarding,
to ferret out the duplicates and those not
worthy of keeping
but as I finger each book, I drift into the
past
and recall where we purchased it
and why we feverishly, wanted to read it...
When is one ready to download the past
into the trash?
I know I am not yet there.

Bernice Hauser



Here are a few things that have worked for me:

Try to focus on yourself (sometimes I really have to concentrate).

Am I wearing my mask (before I go out)?

Do I have my gloves on before leaving the apartment?

Do I wash my hands when I come back?

Pass a Clorox wipe (or a cloth, and put some Purell on it) on doorknobs, phone, light switches; anything that you touch when you first enter your apartment (do this after taking off the gloves).

Watch some DOROT programs which I love.

Play word games at the Merriam Webster website, which is free.

Participate in some programs at the French Institute.

Take a walk. This helps a lot.

Don't go into crowded spaces.

At the grocery store check the paper products aisle and buy more of what you already have at home.

I do some exercises and try to do it twice a day, on days when Tia's program is not on.

I read things of interest to me.

Don't watch a lot of TV for news. Watch other channels of interest. I like to watch channels that make me laugh.

Clean the apartment (I have to force myself many times).

Try not to think of problems.

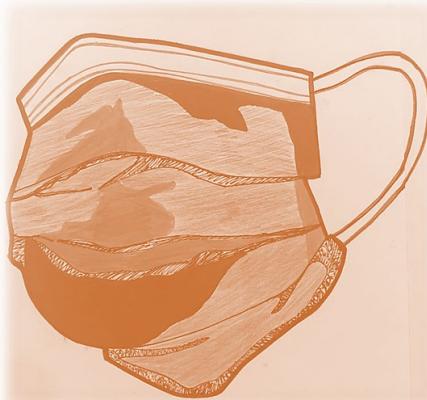
I hope the list can help. It has helped me to do it.

Anonymous

This experience reminds me of the polio epidemic in the 40-50's. I was born in 1939. When I was about ten I went to Coney Island with my mother during the epidemic and got sick, probably a GI upset. Instantly my mother thought I had polio. Looking back, I think it may have been related to her anxiety due to taking me to the beach. We were too poor to have a family doctor to consult. so my mother had no one to call to discuss my symptoms and get reassurance. I got my health care from the ER at Roosevelt Hospital. Fortunately, I did not get polio. At that time, I was too young to have any control of the situation.

Now I do. I persevere by following the guidelines to shelter in place, wear a mask and practice hand hygiene. I think my former experience makes me even more aware of how a contagious disease can affect one's life. Even though I am an RN, I feel like my early experience has as great an influence as my professional knowledge.

**Sandra
Ceslowitz**



Learning how to use Zoom so I can attend the DOROT classes I'm interested in (a month ago, if someone had asked me what Zoom is, I would have responded "You mean the cocktail?")

Learning Zoom helped me understand better the new Zoom-play live streamed by the Public Theater this past week about how the Apple Family is weathering the pandemic. Turns out just like DOROT: focusing on stories, music, history, etc. while loving each other and paying attention to social distancing.

Love,

Reed Hansen

During this time of reflection in isolation, I had the chance to lower the volume of all the noise that normally accompanies my day to day before February and find a new center. Can't deny that being thrown off balance has kept me on my toes. Discovered the wonder of connecting with Grandchildren and family on Zoom meetings and rediscovered my love of writing bits and pieces of our untold stories. Previously, no one in my family was interested, but now that they are all home bound and far away... all of a sudden memories have value.

I write several times a week on our shared FB family page and it has encouraged others in the family to also post... It feels like Sunday around the table over pasta again....A tradition long gone after Mamma died and the children moved out of state. The old ways were lost and so the stories we passed on went as well.

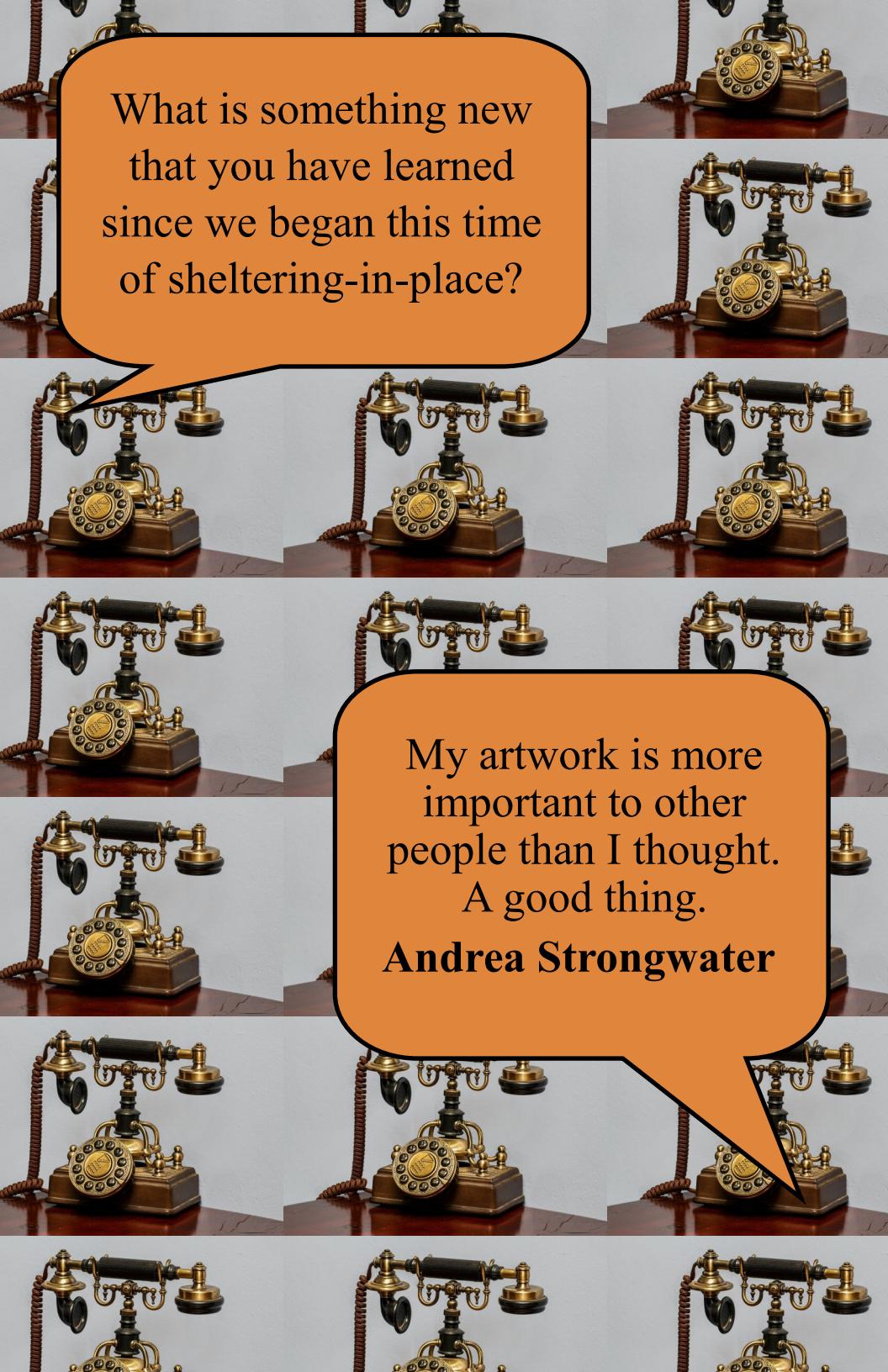
This isolation period rekindled the desire to share the stories and most importantly the desire of the new generation to hear them. We are an immigrant family and much has been sacrificed so that the young would benefit. To ignore that felt disrespectful to the memory of all who brought us to this day.

Even if there are daily struggles to stay healthy and get provisions and manage our finances...the groundwork was set by those before us.

Compared to many I can see that our family is not only prepared for the challenge of the changes that must be now put in place to survive, they are able to face adversity with energy, hope and perseverance. These are the qualities that have been taught and continue to be passed on to the newborn.

I am glad to report back to the ancestors long gone, that we have carried on their work with dignity and valor. Their efforts and sacrifices were not in vain. I am the last of the elders with all the stories. I now have the luxury of time to document it as best I can to pass it on to the generations yet to be.

Matilda Virgilio Clark



What is something new
that you have learned
since we began this time
of sheltering-in-place?

My artwork is more
important to other
people than I thought.
A good thing.

Andrea Strongwater

Invisible War
Life outside, so innocent
Distance touching love

—
Unintentional
Growing to know solitude
May become good friend.

Patti Pavloff



I never went to Hebrew School as a child (Sunday School yes, but not Wednesday Hebrew School) and have regretted that ever since. I can read the transliteration but not the Hebrew. I asked my rabbi for a suggestion and he suggested a powerhouse 4-part course including discs for pronunciation - Essential Hebrew by Living Language. So now I set aside time every day to study the well-thought out lesson plans. Already feel I am making progress.

Pam Haft

Try to avoid getting involved in the political blaming pitting one party against another. Take responsibility to practice the recommended health precautions. Keep in touch with family and friends. Have final documents in order. Breathe.

Sandra Ceslowitz

I have heard from people not heard from in years including several cousins, friends, etc. which has been making me feel and do the same! (and keep it up after this is over!)

Barbara Garrison

‘Till we see each other
again!



Thank you to the wonderful participants of this project

Anonymous

Sandra Ceslowitz

Matilda Clark

Lujira Cooper

Ellen Diamond

Adele Dressner

Barbara Garrison

Pamela Haft

Reed Hansen

Bernice Hauser

Lauren Kupferberg (DOROT Staff)

Patti Pavloff

April Sandmeyer

Sharon Stahl (DOROT Staff)

Andrea Strongwater

Lorraine Voytek (DOROT Staff)