

Number 10
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PhotoFile

COVID-19

"We are all in this together"



Featuring Photography and Commentary by John R. DeLapp

In This Issue...

Covid-19: Our Alaskan Experience



My grandfather, Verner Victor DeLapp, died in St. Louis, MO at age 33 on December 2, 1918. My dad recounted that the whole family was very sick with the Spanish flu and his dad never recovered. This knowledge has made it especially poignant for me as my wife Tina and I complete our fourth month of

“hunkering-down”, as Anchorage’s Mayor Berkowitz referred to this isolation rule that was imposed to combat COVID-19.

We watched from our northern location as the pandemic grew across the U.S. and globe. It was like watching a train wreck—you are appalled, but can’t stop watching. In the early stages, the Trump administration did not understand the risk posed by this highly contagious virus, and through willful ignorance or incompetence, did not provide the leadership needed to reduce the infection rate. The virus spread across the country and chaos reigned. The U.S. quickly jumped into first place in the world, leading by far, in infections and deaths. Schools, bars, restaurants, sporting events, theaters, churches, gatherings, and non-essential businesses were all closed. Streets were virtually empty. Airlines cancelled 70-80% of their usual flights. Air quality in big cities cleared. Wildlife reappeared. Mail orders increased. Toilet paper was scarce. Bread yeast was scarce. The economy tanked. Many people lost their jobs. Federal relief funds were provided to some.

Today, the coronavirus pandemic is still a slow moving train wreck that has dominated the news 24 hours a day and it has been difficult not to worry about what is still coming. Politicians and health consultants give mixed directives and many states opened businesses too early with few restrictions. Now, many of those states are seeing serious spikes in the virus and are redosing bars and adding other restrictions. Additional restrictions may be needed in the future, and this will likely be the new norm until there is a therapy and/or a vaccine for the disease.

Although the lockdown in Anchorage has eased some as I write this, Tina and I are still seriously isolating. I have dubbed this period as ISOLATIONITIS, which is characterized by a longing for social contact with one’s family and friends, while avoiding others, a yearning for eating at favorite restaurants, the uncharacteristic use of four-letter words directed mainly at the TV and politicians, and the hoarding of certain foods and liquor.

In this issue of PhotoFile, you will find a chronology documenting the spread of the virus, the lack of federal leadership, and the questionable political decisions that now account for our uncertain future. Also included, is an eclectic group of photographs that I made during this lockdown period, nearly all of which were taken at home on our wooded lot in Anchorage or at our cabin on Willow Lake.

John R. DeLapp, July 4, 2020

FRONT COVER: Face masks, urged by all public health officials but not used by President Trump and many others.

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PhotoFile #1: *Chinitna Bay Bear Camp*, Oct. 2012

PhotoFile #2: *Redpoll Rally*, March 2013

PhotoFile #3: *Denali*, July 2013

PhotoFile #4: *Road Trip*, July 2014

PhotoFile #5: *Havana!*, May 2015

PhotoFile #6: *Bear Boat*, September 2015

PhotoFile #7: *A Season to Remember*, April 2016

PhotoFile #8: *St. Paul Island*, September 2016

PhotoFile #9: *Anza-Borrego Desert State Park*,
April 2019



Linwood Fiedler mashes his team in a snow storm at the start of the Iditarod sled dog race, on March 8, 2020, at Willow, Alaska. Thomas Wærner, of Norway, won the race arriving in Nome on March 18th.

Anchorage Alaska, March 2020...

We first learned about the coronavirus in late February when we were traveling on an RV trip in Arizona and California. When our trip ended, we felt a vague sense of insecurity as we boarded a plane in San Diego on February 29th for our trip back to Anchorage. Luckily, we had been upgraded so we were not sitting next to any strangers. We were also relieved that our connecting flight to Alaska was in Portland instead of Seattle which was reporting a serious surge of COVID-19 infections at the time.

The following week, our friend Ike from Phoenix stayed with us and he and I drove to our cabin for three days to photograph the start of the Iditarod sled dog race. The race started on Sunday, March 8th at Willow Lake, where our cabin is located. There was some talk of the virus at that time but no big worries of it being spread in Alaska and there were no requirements for social distancing or mask wearing at that time.

While there were few worries about the virus at the start of the Iditarod, there was a troublesome three-day snowstorm that dropped nearly two feet of snow in Willow. Fortunately our cabin driveway had been plowed a few days before Ike and I arrived but, we still had piles of snow to remove before turning our

attention to the start of the Iditarod. The storm continued during the race and made some challenging conditions for photography but provided some interesting images. Fans enjoyed making their traditional high-fives with the mushers with no apparent worries about the coronavirus.

Interestingly though, the Native village of Shaktoolik, located on the Bering seacoast, required the mushers to bypass their village because of fear the virus might be brought to their isolated community by the mass of mushers, media, and other visitors. Later, in Nome, at the end of the race, the usual post Iditarod musher's banquet scheduled for March 22nd was canceled to avoid a large gathering of people in a confined area. Race fans were urged not to come to Nome for the race finish due to concerns about spreading the virus. By this time in March, there were active cases of COVID-19 in all states, with Seattle and New York experiencing the most serious problems in treating and accommodating all the sick people.

Alaska's first case of COVID-19 appeared on March 12th, when the pilot of a cargo plane reported his illness. He was quarantined in Alaska and health officials felt that this case had been contained. ❖

COVID-19 Progression and History to Date

2017: During the transition to the incoming Trump administration, Obama officials conduct an exercise with the Trump team to prepare them for a potential pandemic, which could strike anytime, would profoundly impact the economy, and kill many people. A 69-page reference pandemic response document is delivered to Trump's administration. Most public health officials around the world have been warning about a global pandemic for the previous ten years. While Obama's team saw it coming, Trump's team largely ignored the warnings.

2018: Trump disbands the National Security Council's pandemic response team, slashes public health funding, and ignores previous planning and warnings. Bill Gates meets with Trump urging investments in new technology to deal with a pandemic.

December 10, 2019: An apparent first case of COVID-19 is found in Wuhan, China but is not acknowledged by authorities.

December 30, 2019: Dr. Li Wenliang of Wuhan, China, posts a warning to health officials about this novel coronavirus which is spreading. He is arrested and reprimanded by local police for spreading rumors about

the virus. The live meat market where the outbreak is thought to have originated is closed. Only later, after the virus spreads, is the city of Wuhan completely shut down. Later, on February 6, 2020, Dr. Li, at age 34, dies of COVID-19 and is eventually considered a Chinese national hero for recognizing the health threat and trying to stop it.

January 8, 2020: China confirms a novel coronavirus and the development of a test for COVID-19.

January 15: The virus arrives in Washington state via a man returning from Wuhan and, undetected, it spreads rapidly in a nursing home.

January 22: Trump states that it was just one infected man returning from China and "It's going to be just fine" for the U.S.

January 30: The World Health Organization (WHO) declares a world health emergency. The health care officials are concerned since there is no treatment or vaccine for this new virus, and it appears to be very contagious.

January 31: Trump shuts down travel into U.S. by foreigners coming from China but allows U.S. citizens to return from China. Eventually, 40,000 people are

allowed back in the U.S. following the travel ban with little or no screening. Dr. Anthony Fauci, an expert in infectious diseases, lets the world know that asymptomatic transmission of the virus is occurring. He later is assigned to the White House pandemic task force joining Dr. Birx, who is the Coronavirus Response Coordinator for the White House Coronavirus Task Force during 2020.

February 12: The stock market hits an all time high of 29,551 on the DOW. In the following weeks, the markets free-fall from a huge sell offs that last into March, April, and May; and they have yet to recover. The biggest drop is on March 16th (Black Monday), when the DOW lost 3,000 points.

February 18: An outbreak of COVID-19 occurs on the cruise ship *Dimond Princess* in Japan. More than 700 people become ill.

February 27: The CDC director states that the virus risk is low to Americans and Trump claims that one day there will be miracle and it will disappear.

February 28: Trump claims that the coronavirus is a new hoax by Democrats.

February 29: The first COVID-19 death in a Seattle-area nursing home is confirmed.



Aliy Zirkle, a veteran of many Iditarods and fan favorite, gives a high five at the start in Willow, March 8th.



Above: Ike at DeLapp's cabin waiting for our neighbor to clear a path through new snow to the road.



Right: Ike clears a path to DeLapp's famous outhouse, whose interior walls are covered with a literary history.

March 4: Vice President Pence promises that the U.S. has a million COVID tests available in the field. This proves to be a lie.

March 10: Our friend Ike boards a flight back to Arizona today while wondering about the risks of infection during the long flights. (At this time, flights were usually packed and there were no requirements for masks.)

March 11: The WHO declares that the coronavirus is a global pandemic. Fear rises in U.S. and many gatherings and events are cancelled. Groceries are stripped from stores in a panic. We stock up with big purchases at Costco and Carrs. Toilet paper and disinfectants are in short supply. Yeast and flour are also hard to find. People are filling carts with liquor. Banks in Anchorage limit the amount of cash that can be withdrawn amid fears across the U.S. that there will be a cash run on the banks.

March 12: Dr. Fauci testifies that the U.S. system is failing and does not have what is needed to control the spread of the virus. NCAA cancels the March Madness college basketball tournament. The UAA women's team is already in Hawaii preparing for their first tournament game when the news is heard. The first case of COVID-19 is confirmed when an air cargo pilot contacts Anchorage health officials after becoming sick during a layover.

March 13: The 46-year old Alaska Folk Festival cancels its Juneau festival due to risks of the coronavirus. During a Oval Office address about COVID-19, President Trump is questioned by an NBC reporter if he takes any responsibility for the lag in making testing kits available. He answers, "No. I don't take responsibility at all." (John Dickerson, of CBS News, later responded to the president's statement by asserting, "This is not a phrase available to American presidents.")

March 16: Anchorage Mayor Berkowitz shuts down in-house serving at restaurants, bars, breweries, closes gyms and theaters, and bans gatherings of 50 or more people. In addition, he orders social distancing of all municipal employees except first responders. Anchorage schools close for a week, but eventually the remaining school year is canceled. Similar closures happen all over the country. Millions of families face managing in-home distance schooling of their children.

March 20: The National Park Service cancels all mountaineering permits for Mt. Foraker and Denali for the 2020 climbing season.

March 23: In Anchorage, snow is not melting yet with sunny 16F degree weather. Alaska now reports 36 cases of COVID-19 and no deaths. USA now has 44,183 cases and 544 deaths.

March 26 and beyond: The U.S. now leads the world in COVID-19 cases and millions of Americans are out of work due to the shutdown. Offices close, although some workers can work at home. Parents are called to take on greater involvement in their children's schooling as schools pivot to remote online schooling. Infections are skyrocketing now. New York is hit hard and ultimately sees 2,000 deaths per day, overwhelming healthcare facilities, and mortuaries. Refrigerator trucks are parked near hospitals to store the bodies of the victims who die of COVID-19. The federal government is unable to keep up with the demand for masks and other protective equipment needed to keep healthcare workers safe. Trump tells governors that it is the state's responsibility to provide this equipment which leads to states bidding against each other for scarce equipment. One state secures the PPE (personal protective equipment) and hides it so the federal government won't steal it to replenish the federal stockpile. Trump blames Obama for not stockpiling enough ventilators. However, records show that actually Obama left 16,660 for the Trump administration.



Keeping Busy at Home

Above: Raspberry syrup, made from last years crop of berries.

Below: A polished art object fashioned from a heart-shaped birch "round" that could have been firewood for the stove.



Isolated at Home...

By March 12 we became very concerned about the news of the growing pandemic. We decide to prepare for the unknown by getting some extra cash, filling our cars with gas, and making a run to Costco and our local grocery store to stock up on food, liquor, and other supplies. We found that many other people at Costco were there for the same reason. Already there were reports of shortages of toilet paper, and disinfectants and it was not long before we heard that some store shelves were bare of popular items, such as flour and yeast. Masks were hard to fine. This added to our general stress of not knowing how long and this crisis would last and to what extent items might not be available.

We settled into a smaller world without any masks, washed our hands frequently, and tried to learn as much as possible about the virus and how contagious it is. Are droplets from sneezing the only way it is transmitted? What about aerosols? Is a six-foot separation enough? How long does the virus live on surfaces? Are packages or mail dangerous? Should we microwave the newspaper? Would supplies lines be interrupted and food in Alaska be impacted? Should we worry about contamination of vegetables and fruit? What are the symptoms of COVID-19? How many people are dying? When will there be therapies or a vaccine? What happens if the hospitals get filled with COVID patients? What about nursing homes?

These are some of the many of the questions that we had, but unfortunately, there were few clear, consistent answers from Trump, the White House task force, or local authorities at this time. Little was known about the virus in the early stages and there was not much for us to do at that point but to keep abreast of the latest news. We finally get our first masks from our neighbor who had made many for first responders.

It was distressing to hear that gun sales throughout the U.S. soared at this time, an indication there is panic among some of the population. We began to worry planned trips in the spring and mid-summer would be cancelled. The feeling of isolation from family and friends gradually became a reality as it appeared there was no end in sight to the pandemic. To combat this, we tried to focus on internal tasks to accomplish various house projects, catch up on crafts, photography, reading, and writing. And, we had periodic "happy hours" with neighbors via Facetime or, weather permitting, outside at social distance on our decks.



April 3rd, we wake up in Anchorage and find more snow to shovel off the back deck. No surprise, this is Alaska!



A lynx bounds across the road near our house. Lynx prey on snowshoe hares which are peaking in their population cycle.



A handsome Boreal Chickadee who frequents our feeders.



Lynx tracks in the snow near our house in Anchorage.

March 27: Alaska now requires all passengers arriving in Alaska to self-quarantine for 14 days before going anywhere. Alaska Airlines cuts 70% of its flights. Trump tells Pence not to help those governors who “don’t treat you right.”

March 30: The virus has caused 2,400 U.S. deaths; 150,000 people have been infected and an estimated 80% of the population is sheltering-in-place. Dr. Birx, the coronavirus task force coordinator, predicts that fatalities will likely rise to 100,000 to 200,000, even if best efforts are made to stop it. (By July 4th, the U.S. deaths surge to over 129,000 and with as many as a thousand more dying every day.) Arrangements are made to bring a Navy 1000-bed hospital ship (USNS Comfort), to New York to handle overflow of patients from the local hospitals. It ultimately handles 182 patients, and after April 26, is no longer needed.

March 31: Anchorage mayor Ethan Berkowitz issues an emergency “hunker down” order to prevent the spread of the virus. Alaska now has 133 cases with 3 deaths; USA now has 185,000 cases and 3,700 deaths.

April 5: Most of the ice is now gone on our driveway, although nights are still below freezing. Much snow remains. All masks are sold out locally and many people start producing them at home to meet community needs throughout Alaska and the U.S. We get our first masks from neighbor Diane who makes dozens for first responders. Tina ends up making a few as well.

April 12 Easter: Light snow and rain in Anchorage. Alaska now reports 272 cases, 8 deaths. The U.S. has 557,000 cases with 22,000 deaths. There seems little to celebrate and churches that open for services face health risks to their congregations.



Snowshoe hares turn white in the winter and gradually shed their white hair in the spring. Their ears seem to be one of the last parts of their coat to turn brown. Unlike rabbits, hare babies are born “ready to go” with full a coat and open eyes. Hares are very hard to see in the winter, but when the snow melts we see one or two nearly every day around our home in Anchorage. This one eluded the lynx!





On April 13th, Paul Guzenski and his crew arrive to remove a spruce tree, killed by beetles, from our front yard. Here, he has just finished his final cuts near the top of the tree and is about to push the top over. This is a tricky procedure and he is carefully watching the tree to make sure it is not going to fall the wrong way while he lowers his chainsaw onto its tether. This frees him to use both hands to guide the tree on the proper falling path.

This is also Paul's "office" and I have seen him take calls while balanced in a tree. His business is considered an essential service, and as weather allows, he has been working during the pandemic.



By mid-April the snow and ice has melted on all the roads in Anchorage,, so it is time to get the bike out again. Here I am "social distancing" from my shadow on a local Anchorage street.

Willow, Alaska...

Meanwhile, back at Willow Lake, on May 5th, all the snow has melted but the arriving sandhill cranes find that the lake is still frozen. There is usually a pair of cranes that nest on wetlands near the lake.

Our cabin on the lake was a family project accomplished over a period of several years in the mid-1980's and has been a source of peace and enjoyment for decades. During this pandemic crisis, it has allowed us to have a change in venue and routine from the constant isolation at home Anchorage. We found as the infection rate increased in town that Willow was a nice escape, although we were dismayed to see little use of masks or social distancing during our trips in early spring. When I approached a checkout clerk at a local store wearing a mask, she backed up as if she thought I was contagious. It appeared that the idea of masks protecting others had not yet made an impression to this somewhat isolated community.

By mid-May the ice is gone on the lake and we return to the cabin to hookup the summer water system and take care of other chores. I pump up the inflatable kayak for some paddling around the lake. Most of the ducks and other migrant birds have now arrived and are preparing for nesting.



A pair of Sandhill Cranes walk on the melting ice.

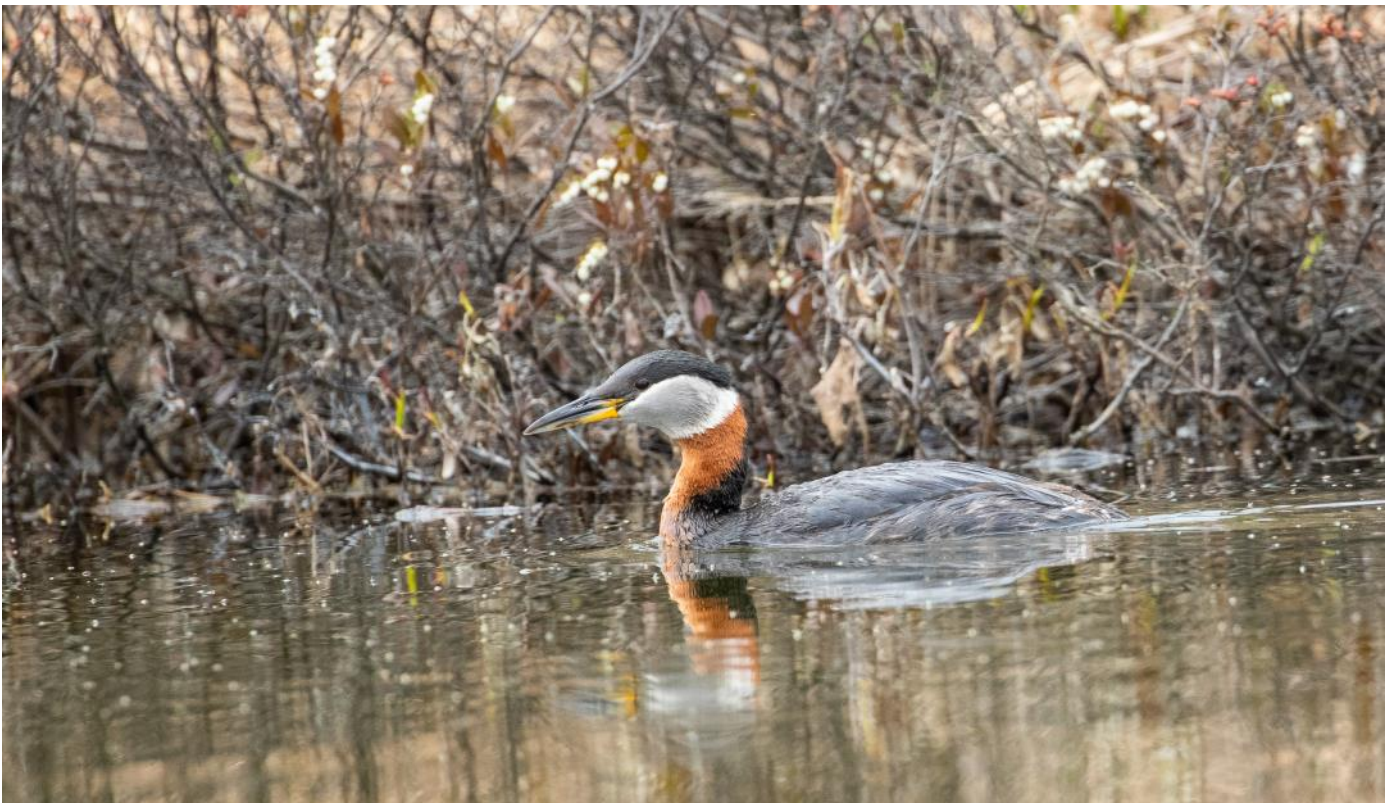


Mid-May at Willow Lake, the ice is gone and migrant birds have arrived.

Above left: Bonaparte's Gull which is standing on an upside down canoe. This gull is the only gull that usually nests in a tree

Above right: American Wigeon drake in breeding plumage.

Below: Red-necked Grebe. The Grebes consistently breed on Willow Lake. Both the male and female participate in raising their young.





The lull before a storm on Willow Lake as viewed from DeLapp's cabin.



Ducklings of a Common Goldeneye swimming in formation on Willow Lake, June 18th.

April 16: Trump plans to open the country up by May 1 and supports the anti-shutdown protesters with tweets, “Liberate Minnesota!” I begin painting our bedroom and Anchorage warns people that the bears are out of hibernation. There is a run on flour and yeast in all local stores. Tina mails 5# of flour to a former student living in Willow; she, in turn, mails four homemade masks to our daughter’s family in Connecticut.

April 23: During the White House briefing on the pandemic, Trump asks the task force virus experts if injecting disinfectants into one’s body would be an effective way of eliminating the virus. Horrified, they explain that it should only be used to disinfect surfaces. Trump later claims that hydroxychloroquine is effective against COVID. This idea is also dismissed as unproven by the task force. Later, it is confirmed to cause heart arrhythmias in COVID patients but not before thousands of people buy it, creating a shortage for those with legitimate need for the drug. Trump claims to have taken it as a preventive measure.

April 28: Due to travel restrictions and general lock-down, there is almost no call for car rentals in Anchorage. The companies have no room to park all the idle vehicles at the airport so they now park over a hundred at South High School’s parking lot. Trump will not wear a mask and Pence refuses to wear one while visiting the Mayo Clinic, in violation of their policy.



Emerging growth of a white spruce tree in our Anchorage yard.



I split and stack firewood at home in Anchorage, which I find is a brainless, yet useful and satisfying activity.



May 28, the raspberry patch is looking very good.



Lettuce, spinach, broccoli, carrots in our fenced garden.



Wild geranium, a favorite June bloomer.



This moose and her calf spent two consecutive days napping in our yard.

May 8: Two aides close to Trump in the White House test positive for COVID. All who had contact agree to self-quarantine except Pence, who refuses. The White House grudgingly begins requiring all visitors and staff to wear masks. Alaska now reports 378 cases, 10 deaths. USA has 1.31 million cases, 78,800 deaths. Various predictions call for 100,000-200,000 deaths in the U.S.

May 11: Trump has a “melt-down” when asked why he is competing with other countries on the number of COVID tests provided. He shows his contempt for the Asian reporter replying, “Ask China”, and walks off the stage. Alaska Airlines imposes mask requirements on all its flights.

May 23-25 Memorial Day Weekend: Anchorage opens businesses with some restrictions—keeping social distancing and mask wearing recommended. Other states have already partially opened for business, and crowds are gathering at beaches and at event locations in the South and California. Health professionals are worried about new infections. Alaska has 408 cases & 10 deaths; USA has 1.62 million cases & 97,000 deaths.

May 27: Minneapolis police kill George Floyd, a Black man thought to have passed a counterfeit \$20 bill, by kneeling on his neck for over 8 minutes while he is handcuffed and restrained on his stomach. A seventeen year old girl uses her phone to video the entire sequence, which goes viral. Citizens worldwide are outraged and lead protests, which include some violence, looting, and property destruction, reportedly by outside agitators. Protesters call for police reforms and ending police violence toward Black men. Huge crowds hold Black Lives Matter protests in many cities across the U.S. while health officials worry about further spread of the coronavirus. “Black Lives Matter” is heard and seen for days and weeks following.

May and June, continued isolation at home and cabin...

Spending all our time at home or occasionally at our cabin, we have time for gardening, yard work, biking, neighborhood walks, and watching and photographing wildlife that surrounds us. And of course, catching up on those interior activities such as, cleaning closets, organizing offices, painting rooms, refinishing furniture, reading, writing, crafts, trying new recipes, and watching TV news.



Rare sighting of a golden-crowned Kinglet.



Female Dark-eyed Junco with nesting material.



Yellow-rumped Warbler, calling.



All smiles with the first crop of rhubarb on June 2.

June 2: Trump orders the U.S. military to take forceful measures to clear protesters from Lafayette Square so that he can do a photo op holding a Bible in front of a church. The militarized response is found to be unacceptable by the church's pastor, D.C. mayor, Congressional politicians on both sides, and many military people.

June 15: Casinos in Las Vegas are fully opened for business as crowds rush in. While some have restrictions, some have none. Nineteen states record spikes in their 7-day rolling average of cases. Protests continue.

June 19: Trump holds an indoor rally in Tulsa, with no social distancing and masks not mandated. The one million anticipated attendance is only 6,200. Fake ticket requests had been submitted by pranksters.

June 25: The U.S. is setting new daily case counts, as high as 45,000 new cases in one day. Multiple states are seeing steep increases in new cases and the lack of quick testing complicates the situation. Texas and Arizona are particularly worrisome as ICU bed capacity is nearly full. Texas decides to re-close bars and put occupancy restrictions on restaurants. The White House coronavirus task force holds a briefing today, the first in over two months, to address the growing crisis. Mike Pence does not say that people should wear masks or provide specific recommendations other than "follow your local officials". This does not agree

or support the virus experts who have stated that masks are effective in reducing the transmission of the virus. It appears, once again, that the federal government is giving mixed messages to the nation about this crisis and is taking no responsibility for controlling it. There is mounting evidence that the virus is being "community spread" by young people, many of whom might be asymptomatic.

July 1: Right before the 4th of July weekend, the one-day coronavirus infections in the U.S. top 50,000 for the first time since the pandemic started. This bodes badly for death rates which will likely follow the peak in subsequent weeks. Worries mount over infections that are likely to occur from the crowds attending the weekend celebrations, especially in Florida, Texas, and Arizona. It is beginning to look like the coronavirus is out of control over much of the U.S. Trump, however, focuses his attention on the border and protesters who have been removing historic statues of Confederate generals.

July 2: It is reported today that eight secret service agents of Vice President Pence have tested positive for COVID-19; Pence's planned trip is delayed so that another team of agents can be assigned.

July 3: Hospitals in Arizona reach a critical capacity and request authority to shift their operation and policies to "Crisis Standards of Care" for an unspec-

ified time period, becoming the first state to operate under these guidelines. This likely means that some people will only get limited care, ambulances may not be available, supplies and equipment will be rationed, resources will be balanced, and protocols followed for who lives and who dies. Trump holds a rally for a large crowd at Mount Rushmore National Park. In accordance with Trump's wishes, the South Dakota governor says masks will not be required and there will be no social distancing at the event.

July 4: Another record day yesterday with 60,000 new cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. Herman Cain is hospitalized with COVID-19 after attending Trump's Tulsa rally held on June 19th. The girl friend of Trump's son Donald tests positive for COVID-19. Incredibly, Trump and Pence still claim that the virus is under control while the demand for test kits is skyrocketing and all the data clearly shows that the virus is spreading fast in nearly all areas. And if that is not depressing enough, Alabama and Texas teens have a game to see who can catch COVID first. The winner is rewarded with money that was gathered to play the game.

The U.S. count to date:
Cases 2.8 million
Deaths 129,000

-End of Summary-



Tina and John, after having a take-out dinner at home celebrating their 51st anniversary on May 31.

Epilogue...

For the last four months of this crisis, Tina and I have stayed close to home and cabin and kept our social bubble very small. Our mayor has taken a more aggressive approach to combating the spread of the disease than our governor, but in the last few weeks there has been substantial increase in cases in Anchorage. This is alarming but Alaska's numbers are still low and we believe that we are lucky to be in Alaska, compared to many other Lower 48 locations where testing and contact tracing are not keeping up with skyrocketing infections. We are committed to doing our part by following the experts advice on being safe. We find that Donald Trump and Mike Pence are not creditable.

We have adapted to wearing a mask, making less frequent trips for groceries, avoiding people and crowds, not going to movies or the gym. And, after many months without a haircut, I have learned to cut my own (scant) hair. Being retired we have not faced any stresses from losing a job; nor are we faced with homeschooling children, while trying to hold down a job like so many families. But we do miss our former

life of eating out, traveling to visit our family, shopping in stores, attending theater performances, and watching athletic events locally and on TV.

I recall requests to the government in mid-May by healthcare providers for millions more PPE and tests kits. The response was: "We can't move the Grand Canyon to Fargo". Even now, in early July, there is still a huge backlog for testing. The failures by the federal government in preparing for and responding to this crisis have been appalling. Many lives could have been saved had they acted sooner, listened to their virus consultants, and given truthful and consistent guidance to the public. One would think that our country, with its countless resources and advanced technology, would have been more prepared for this pandemic. Yet sadly, we lead by far in the number of cases and deaths, and Europe has recently banned travelers from the U.S. It is too early to predict how this will end but it does not look good as I write this. Perhaps we will have at least learned that politicians should never recommend drugs or remedies to the public—only health professionals.

We are all in this together.

* * *

