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COVID-19 Personal Reflection_Corona Chronicles

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Corona Chronicles
March 2020
Orono Public Library Writing Circle

Friday 20 March 2020 – Barbara Wicks

Inspired by the quote *What's The Best That Could Happen?* that Sandra found on a dish towel, and following my message to those of you signed up for our canceled Spring 2020 Writing Circle, I'm sharing the following quote that I was going to share when we met.

We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language, That may be the measure of our lives.
--Toni Morrison

The thought leads to an invitation for those of you who are interested to send the group a draft for on-line comments, a quote or a paragraph that you've found especially meaningful, or just an email exploring a writing idea or question for which you'd like some comments.

Wednesday 25 March 2020 -- Maria Tijan-Wieck

I love the quote. Will be thinking of something. Very stunned by everything. This afternoon I'll make a couple of masks for my daughter when she goes out to buy food. Thank you, Barbara, for thinking of me. The earthquake in Zagreb has been the cherry on the cake. Family in Zagreb told me that the main cemetery has been damaged. Broken graves everywhere and talk of zombies. (This is a joke, but the broken graves are true). Love to you all.

Thursday 26 March 2020-- Sandra Dunham



Harbinger of Spring

Friday 27 March 2020 – Jack Moose

I hope everyone is well and safe. I'm in lockdown in our camper in the mountains of Georgia. I couldn't sleep last night (early signs of cabin fever). I hope I'm not out of line in putting into print thoughts I had last night.

VIRAL THOUGHTS

Germs linger silently in the air,
from the dying echo of a cough nearby.
From the touch of friends you trust,
to a casual brush from a stranger in a rush.
Has a viral trace been left,
on the handle you just touched,
or in the droplets on the restroom sink?
There's an invisible killer we've been told,
that lies in wait outside our safe abode.

Saturday 28 March 2020 – Gary Schilmoeller

Several Maine Ideas

Volume 31 Issue 2

March 2020

Is that so?

Had anyone told me on Valentine's day that less than one month later, the National Basketball Association would cancel the rest of its season, that universities and schools would send students home and switch to online teaching for the rest of the spring semester, that most group sports, concerts, plays, and other social gatherings would be cancelled indefinitely, I would have said incredulously, "Is that so?"

Had anyone told me that by St. Patrick's Day, I would hear new phrases – "social distancing," "self-isolation," "self-quarantine," "shelter in place" – and learn how practicing one or more of these constructs would impose serious constrictions on my personal lifestyle, I would have said incredulously, "Is that so?"

Had anyone told me that by mid-March, most businesses would be closed and only essential services – groceries, pharmacies, medical services, media, postal delivery – would be operating, I would have said incredulously, "Is that so?"

Five decades ago, Kathy gifted me the book *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A collection of Zen and pre-Zen Writings* that contained the story *Is that so?* In the story, a young unmarried Japanese girl became pregnant and identified the Zen master Hakuin as the father. The girl's parents took the baby to Hakuin who responded, "Is that so?" and took care of the baby. Later the girl confessed to her parents that a young man who worked at a fish market was the father. The parents went to Hakuin, apologized, and asked for the child back. Hakuin handed over the child and said, "Is that so?"

I fear my initial "Is that so?" reaction to the events of the past several weeks, spawned by the COVID-19 pandemic, was not so equanimous as was Hakuin's. At seven and a half decades of age, and with Kathy following closely behind, we are in the high-risk category. We needed to curtail our activities, yet I struggled at loss of control and at self-isolating as I am a very social person. But we are adapting. Kathy calms me. We self-distance in our house. I take walks in our low-density Webster Village on Marsh Island, dancing with the other occasional walkers by crossing the street or going onto a lawn when we meet so we maintain our six-foot or more distance. A neighbor generously offered to get groceries for us when she goes to the grocery store, so we do not have to go out. We give thanks for her assistance.

As I take my walks, I ponder the family, friends, acquaintances, and people who support me in my social world. And I give thanks to all of them. You readers constitute an element of that social world. For the past three decades, I have written these "Maine Ideas." Each time I write one, I think of you. Some of you I meet on a somewhat regular basis. Some I have met only once or twice. Some I have never met in person. Some live nearby. Some live in distant states. Some live in other countries. But I do think of all of you. You collectively constitute the muse that keeps me writing these ideas. So, in this time of events unparalleled in my lifetime, I want to say "Thank you" for being part of my social family. I send my wish that all of you are safe and faring well in these uncertain times.

How long will this pandemic disrupt our social, political, economic, and personal lives so massively? I have not the least idea. However, as the turmoil continues to unfold, I look to Hakuin's example and will try to say "Is that so" with equanimity.

Is That So?

The Zen master Hakuin was praised by his neighbors as living a pure life.

A beautiful Japanese girl whose parents owned a food store lived near him. Suddenly, without warning, her parents discovered she was with child.

This made her parents very angry. She would not confess who the man was, but after much harassment at last named Hakuin.

In great anger the parents went to the master. "Is that so?" was all he would say.

After the child was born it was brought to Hakuin. By this time he had lost his reputation, which did not trouble him, but he took very good care of the child. He obtained milk from his neighbors and everything else the little one needed.

A year later the girl-mother could stand it no longer. She told her parents the truth – that the real father of the child was a young man who worked in the fish market.

The mother and father of the girl at once went to Hakuin to ask his forgiveness, to apologize at length, and to get the child back again.

Hakuin was willing. In yielding the child, all he said was: "Is that so?"

Zen Flesh Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings (Slipcover edition, 10th Printing)
compiled by Paul Reps | Jan 1, 1968

Sunday 29 March 2020 – Barbara Wicks

Two Tankas

My Virtual Life

I live behind screens
Electric, plastic, cloth
Pixelated, cold,
But permeable to warm
Words, images, emotions.

Community Spread

Alternative facts,
Conspiracy theories
Are met with science,
Compassion, community
Proliferating kindness.