



Newsletter

May 2020

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From the Director: Denise Klein

I wonder if I'll regret writing this piece now...if what I think and have to say will change a lot by the time we publish? I say that because of how unimaginably everything has changed in just the past two months. This reality is so well-captured in a piece, "Annals of Inquiry: The Coronavirus is Rewriting Our Imaginations," in a recent current *New Yorker*.

Kim Stanley Robinson, award-winning writer, says: "Now, when, those of us who are sheltering in place venture out and see everyone in masks, sharing looks with strangers is a different thing. It's eye to eye, this knowledge that, although we are practicing social distancing as we need to, we want to be social—we not only *want* to be social, we've *got to be* social, if we are to survive...."

Not only do we feel both further away from strangers and closer to them, we even feel further from and closer to our *Wider Horizons* peeps. We can't hug each other. We can't go anywhere together except perhaps on a walk or to a member's garden, appropriately masked and distanced. And we don't know how long this will be our reality or if the old reality as we knew it will ever return.

I have a sense that more change and loss is still to come...that "back to normal" is an illusion. Some sources have identified the emotions I'm feeling as anticipatory grief. And when you add to that grief from things that *have* happened (death of spouse, friend, sibling), it's a lot to handle on our own.

Some of us are now asking ourselves if the good old days were really good enough, in a societal or global sense, that we would return to them even if we could. We are trying to figure out what we personally can do to recreate a better society. That, too, can be overwhelming.

We are still creating community as we are able and it helps keep sad emotions at bay or cuts them down to size. Our Zoom meetings and Happy Hours, our phone tree, other phone conversations, walks, making music together, arranging for a volunteer to bring a member a mask or a prescription or walk our dog are our present sources of community, caring, and closeness. Feedback suggests these are working okay as a substitute for what we were doing before. Some of our members who weren't that engaged are probably feeling even more connected—they're getting a phone call from another member nearly every week.

Forever changing and changed, we grope our way forward and find some degree of well-being, helping each other make it through—sharing humor, wisdom, music, and more. Living in the present has never seemed so possible or so necessary. Let me know what more you think we could do to support each other. And I'll see you in person on the other side!

From the Board

by Ann Lawrence

Beginning with our next issue of the *Newsletter*, a member of the Board of Directors will alternate authorship of the front-page column with Denise. My contribution this quarter is two “thank you’s”:

1. I want to congratulate our new *Newsletter* production lineup which includes member **Kelly Marcum**, without whose picture-handling skills, Denise would still be tearing out her hair!
2. Kudos also to our donors, both new and old, who responded to the letters Denise and I (**Bob Anderson** also contacted his list of friends) sent out. The letter suggested that a spring donation to sustain our efforts would be timely and appreciated.

Thus far, 20 members have pledged or contributed \$9,836 and 12 non-members have contributed \$3,450—for a grand total of **\$13,296!** We’ll consider the end of this month (which is Older American Month) as the end of the spring effort, though your donations are so welcome at any time. Plus, we will do our annual fundraising this fall, as always.

Every contribution of time, money and emotional support from each of us and our friends makes us stronger. This is so important right now when spirits could be flagging! Thank you so very much.



Ann Lawrence presiding over the January All Member Meeting

Exceeding Expectations: The All Member Meeting

In late January, B.C., **Ann Lawrence** opened her first meeting as Board President by recalling how she joined *Wider Horizons* “to have fun.” She told the full room at the Douglass Truth Library that her leadership style is to get out of the way as members make things happen. Then she did just that, and the members had fun. Their ideas and questions drove the meeting.



We rose to give **Sue Lerner** (above) an ovation for her three years of extraordinary leadership as Board President. Sue was given much credit for helping make *Wider Horizons* “a thriving, marvelously-functioning member-driven Village we can all take pride and pleasure in.”

Here are a few takeaways from the wide-ranging discussion that followed:

- We’ve acquired thirteen new members in the past year to reach a current total of 86. Our goal of 125 is realistic as the buzz about us grows around Seattle. Our growth is a product of our success (and of some terrific recruiting by **Denise Klein** and others).
- We are financially sustainable but require grants and fundraising to stay this way.
- As members require more assistance with navigating old age, we have been fortunate in being able to meet their needs from within the organization, thanks in part to our having many members who were in the helping professions. We can envision a role for a hired social worker.
- Several members suggested we try some events aimed at getting different generations together.

Liz Ohlson (below) brought the house down by saying she'd like her kids to get to know some of the *Wider Horizons* members they might meet at her funeral one day.



- **Ellen Berg** wondered if some members might want to do a group purchase of season tickets to a theater or concert series. In true member-driven fashion, we will await someone to move this well-received idea forward.



Charles Heaney and Betty Swift, left front, enjoying the All Member Meeting

The second part of the meeting celebrated the publication of the handbook “Preparing for a Serious Health Event,” created by new Board member **Denise Lishner** with assistance from twelve other members. Space doesn't permit us to cover that part. Suffice it to say that the handbook has been a triumph!

Even such a simple meeting requires a group effort to prepare and clean up from. The Events Committee had it all down. Ann was delighted; the meeting had exceeded expectations. “Everyone just did what

needed doing,” she said. She sounded like presiding over *Wider Horizons* is going to be fun.

“Friends in Boxes”: The Wider Horizons Zoom Meetings



“Friends in Boxes” is **Kate Barber's** wonderful phrase (and the title of her drawing above) for what so many of us have been experiencing at weekly all-invited Zoom meetups. These have drawn more than 20 members each time. The April 30 one was typical. **Sue Lerner** and facilitator **Debbie Ward** began by helping the group settle on five topics of interest and then sent members to different “rooms” according to their choices. Someone in each group agreed to write up what happened. Their excellent reports have had to be edited for this article.

What have you realized about yourself during this period? **Julie Anderson** and **Kathleen O'Connor** have discovered that, for extroverts, they are finding this added time to themselves surprisingly enjoyable. Julie, who is loving time for such simple things as doing a jigsaw puzzle with her husband, is hoping some of that will stick around.

Kathleen is collecting 50 years of poems and spending more time communicating with family in

Texhoma that were an important and colorful part of her childhood. **Michael Kischner** has realized how very privileged he is to be living with only minor inconveniences when so many are living with sadness, deprivation, and fear.

Julie read us a beautiful statement by Sonya Renee Taylor expressing the hope that we will not return to normalizing “greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack.”

How might the post-Covid 19 world be different? **Carolyn Allen** reported for **Victoria Bestock, Denise Klein, Donna Sunkel**, and herself: “Some of us feel those changes will be life-changing for us as well. Maybe we will move out into the country or the woods. Maybe we will never go downtown--because there will be no downtown. Maybe we will have to do without cassoulet at the local French cafe. For others, the opposite--nothing will be different than it is now, because more separation is life preserving and we are risk-adverse.... How do we feel about this future? Terror for some, anticipation of even greater self-reliance for others. And for all of us, loss of some vital face-to-face community. So for me, and probably others too, connection to our *Wider Horizons* community will remain crucial. May the future allow us to have both.”

Where to begin in searching one’s ancestry? **A.J. Lowe**, a new member, reported getting valuable help from **Bruce Davis** with her question: “Bruce reassured me that [Ancestry.Com](https://www.ancestry.com) had come a long way since I tried it a decade ago...I’m now at the stage of confirming the links to when my ancestors came to America, and from where.... I just needed a little reassuring push, and Bruce provided it!”

What are we feeling about the state’s transition from staying at home to opening up? **Bob Anderson** reported for **Charles Heaney, Ann Lawrence, Sue Lerner, and Debbie Ward** a lot of concern “that it is still too early and that the necessary metrics aren’t there.” There was a feeling “that we are in it for the long haul and that others don’t seem to understand this fact.” One person noted the opportunity that exists now for *Wider Horizons* “to make our voices known to the Governor, endorsing a careful and measured approach to the re-opening process, emphasizing the public’s health over economic considerations and that the economy will be better served in the end by this strategy.” [Note: Bob and **Ann Lawrence**

sent letters to the Governor, the King County Executive, and the Mayor of Seattle.]

Concern was also expressed about giving up what many have come to enjoy about this period: the “lack of urgency” in their lives, the “time and space...to be more peaceful and present to what is around them.” Ann worries that the transition will be like “coming home from a vacation approaching Seattle on I-5 and feeling everything speeding up around her.”

Is there bias in news narratives about the pandemic? **Susan Adler, Jim Erickson, Joe Garcia, Barb Klube, Denise Lishner, and Maggie Pheasant** took up this question posed by Jim. Some narratives prioritize the deteriorating economy and suggest we are being too slow to open it up; others prioritize public health and suggest we are moving too fast to re-start economic activity.

Several participants agreed that critical reading is more and more important as the distinction between news and opinion becomes blurred in sometimes subtle ways. Do we even want news and opinion kept strictly separate? More people seem to go to the news media for analysis and commentary as much as for straight news. The media respond by serving up a combination that is bound to reflect ideology and points of view. Participants exchanged assessments of newspapers and TV news channels. Denise Lishner’s excellent full report, heavily edited here, suggests this rich discussion, like the others, could have gone on well beyond the allotted time.

An “Electrifying” Event: Members Respond to the Transgender Panel



Panelist Luca Savot

“Electrifying” was **Denise Klein’s** word for the presentation on gender fluidity co-sponsored by *Wider Horizons* and GenPRIDE on a Sunday afternoon in January. Six transgender panelists **Alison Davison, Peter Finton, Alphonse Littlejohn, Kelly Marcum, Beatrix Miguez, and Luca Savot**—ranging in age from 20 to 75—talked briefly about their lives and then spent the rest of the afternoon taking questions from the audience of about forty, mostly *Wider Horizons* members. Our average age was 75, we had a lot to learn about the subject, and our teachers were wonderful. On Monday morning, other reviews echoed Denise. Some edited excerpts:

Debbie Ward wrote, “I was impressed with the quality of the panel members and the facilitator.... I appreciated the person who said that we probably know or have had interactions with many, many more trans people than we realize. That got me thinking about assumptions I make about people. The young man Luca, gave specific definitions and historical perspective to such terms as ‘intersection,’ and ‘binary.’”

Sue Lerner: “I really enjoyed hearing the stories of the panelists, but I was equally interested in the questions from the audience. They reflected healthy curiosity and a wide range of knowledge. It was helpful to hear terms defined. I hope someone can find in print the excellent definitions we heard so you can include them in your article. [See article on page 6.] There is lots to learn about the transgender members of our community, isn’t there?”

Liz Ohlson: “The panelists certainly clarified for me the characteristics and complexity of being transgender.... Bob and Julie’s questions about non-binary produced just the answers I needed. I thought the panelists were...remarkably self-disclosing. That they were of different ages was also helpful. And the challenge of changing gender while married, of changing sexual orientation, of losing parents. Wow. Such sad stories. Our generation needs to catch up and this was a good beginning. Thank you...for asking of the two older panelists if they would be interested in a senior village.” [Editor’s note: The next week, **Kelly Marcum** joined *Wider Horizons*!]



Bob Anderson: “Each panelist responded to our questions with clarity and sincerity that helped us understand how to be respectful in our references to and engagement with transgender people. The pronouns ‘they/them’ for singular referents now make sense to me... Thanks to Denise and the Member Growth Group for organizing this transformative session.”

Julie Anderson: “It was incredibly uplifting for me as it expanded my heart, my understanding, my acceptance of all people, and my JOY!!!”

Carol Mirman on the phone Monday morning called it “One of the best presentations I’ve heard.” and went on to reflect on how appropriate it was for *Wider Horizons*. “Life is about change, and seniors know this better than many. We must adjust to changes we have no way of avoiding or denying. We must be flexible as our own bodies transform. We struggle with how we are identified and categorized and judged on our external appearance rather than being seen as individuals, each with their own reality.”

Carol’s insights evoked the simple answer of panelist, **Peter Finton**, aged 20, when an audience member asked what general misconceptions he would like to clear up about being transgender: “Just accept me as me.”

If you’d like to learn more about this topic, **Kelly Marcum**, now involved in the production of this *Newsletter*), recommends a YouTube series, *Her Story*: <https://tinyurl.com/s68gtrs>

The Transgender Panel: A Personal Response

by Michael Kischner

Just accept me as me, answered Peter. The question
To the panel had been what general misconceptions
They would like to clear up about transgendered
persons.

Some of us in the audience thought it wouldn't be
A bad response to conceptions about our aging
selves.

Earlier questions had been about binary and
nonbinary,
Two-Spirit, gender and sex, intersectionality,
And the business about preferred pronouns:
If it's just one they, do you say they are or they is?

We listened hard, grateful for guidance
To new language about a world that Luca
Promised we've always lived in. The color wheel of
gender

Has many more shades than blue and pink.
You've been interacting with trans people all your
lives,

And all your lives you've been saying someone left
Their coat on the chair, as Shakespeare did.

Each question met with courtesy, and good humor
We've been going into public bathrooms
Since they began, Luca said. Alison said
Some of my best friends are straight
And added most of our parents were.

Self-pity there was none, though
For some on the panel home became
The place they don't have to take you,
And the street holds perils. Still,
Said Alphonse Littlejohn, it's better to be
Trans and homeless in Seattle than to have a home
In some other places. Beatrix, who moved
From Miami, which is quite binary, seconded that.

As for self-describing as Two-Spirit, Kelly,
Who was born a boy, fathered two daughters,
And is now Grandma Kelly to four grandkids
She helps care for, told us the term embraces
The third gender recognized and often revered
Among many Native American/First Nation
Cultures. The phenomenon horrified
The European colonizers and their
Missionaries, who arrived with the truth
About almost everything but no reliable
Information on the preferred pronouns of God.

Common Terms in Discussions of Gender

(Reprinted by permission of the National Center on
LGBT Aging)

Gender: A person's internal sense of being male, female or another gender. A person may choose to express their gender through culturally defined norms associated with male and female, which may or may not align with a person's internal gender identity or with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Identity: The gender you feel you are inside (man, woman, neither or both). For transgender people, their birth-assigned gender and their personal sense of gender identity do not match. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term may include but is not limited to transsexuals and cross-dressers. Transgender people may identify as female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF).

Non-binary and/or genderqueer: Terms used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for transgender or transsexual and should only be used if someone self-identifies as non-binary and/or genderqueer.

Cisgender: Individuals whose gender identity and/or gender expression do align with their biological or assigned sex. If someone was assigned the sex female at birth and lives comfortably as a woman, she is likely cisgender.

Sex Assigned at Birth: At birth, infants are usually given a sex designation of male or female by a doctor based on the child's genitals.

Sexual Orientation: A person's primary physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual (straight) orientations.

Bisexual: An individual who is physically, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to both men and women. "Bisexual" does not suggest having equal sexual experience with both men and women.

In fact, some people who identify as “bisexual” have not had any sexual experience at all.

Gay: A word used to describe anyone, mainly men, who have primary physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to someone of the same sex, e.g., gay man, gay people.

Lesbian: A woman whose primary physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay (adj.) or as gay women.

Heterosexual: Used to describe people whose primary physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to people of the opposite sex; also known as straight.

Improbable Connections

by Scott Dills and John Barber

‘Twas 1963. We were enlisted men at a small US Army post in the Bavarian village of Herzogenaurach. *What we did we cannot say, for we were in the ASA!* (Army Security Agency). We were defending you in the Cold War; thankful we were not headed for “Nam.” We both had bicycles and, wanting to go further afield in Europe, we got military “hops” to Greece, with our bikes.

In Athens, we found our hotel and, for a dollar fifty a night we had a room with two bunk beds, a fabulous view of the Acropolis, and all the mosquitos east of Gibraltar. At a street stand we discovered that ouzo with antipasto and a place to sit was to be had at seventy-five cents each. Athens was a dusty, down-to-business city, where we enjoyed sightseeing for a couple of days, waiting for Greek customs to clear our bicycles.

Once cleared, we were off to the Peloponnese, camping out, sleeping variously on a gravelly beach, on the roof of a nice Greek family’s house, in a vineyard, and in small inns. Hot July is not the best time to ride bikes in Greece, but we were there.

Our travels included a cog rail and donkey trip up the mountains to two Greek Orthodox monasteries, meeting a tiny monk who gave us a guided tour at Mega Spleio, an impressively robed bishop at Agia Lavra, and vacationing pilgrims in Mercedes buses with their big families and huge baskets of food, which they shared with us.



John and Scott: Friends Rediscovered

Returning to the coast, we headed southward. After a night sleeping in a vineyard, we arrived in Argos early morning. John bought what he thought was a grapefruit only to discover that it was a giant lemon. At a road-side bakery we waited impatiently for bread, soon to come out of a wood fired oven. We then rode to a cheese shop whose owner had once lived in Detroit.

On to Nafplion, where John found a barber who gave him an old-fashioned shave using a straight razor and strop. Cycling on, we got to the ancient amphitheater at Epidavros in time for a performance of Euripedes’ *Hecuba*, the sun slipping into the horizon in the distance.

We took local ferries to two islands, Hydra and Spetses, then back to Athens for a few days before returning to Herzo Base. Two weeks in all. John’s enlistment ended in September of 1963 and Scott’s two months later. After the Army, we went our own ways: grad school, jobs, and marriages to Eleanor and to Kate.

In 1970, by chance, we met again. We both lived in Seattle; Scott had moved here from Lewiston, ID and John from Chicago. In the winter of ‘71 we took an REI mountain tour ski course together. It was challenging but enjoyable and included an overnight on Mt. Rainier in a snow cave. But we again drifted apart, going our own way: jobs, friends, activities, and, for the Dills, children. While running into each other occasionally over the years, our two families lost touch.

Time flies. about 45 years later in 2017, two couples met, walking down a driveway on a dark dismal rainy evening in February huddled under rain hoods and umbrellas. They were heading to a meeting

introducing *Wider Horizons*. Wanting to be friendly, Scott introduced himself to the other fellow, who replied that he was John Barber, and with him was Kate. Wow—we’ve reconnected. One of the great things that *Wider Horizons* offers is connections. And reconnections.

And Now

Miscellaneous Photos: Then...



Charles Heaney, Bob Anderson: Has Charles made the sale?
at a Pod 7 Podluck in February



Mary McGough and Sharon Sobers-Outlaw at the Onyx
Gallery Event last February



Sue Lerner and Gallery Co-Host Ashby Reed



Gay Hoerler zooming with family



Who are these masked women out for a walk in April?

Art by Kate Barber

One thing the virus hasn't stopped is creativity in *Wider Horizons*. This newsletter has three works by **Kate Barber**, a longtime favorite contributor of ours. Two on the next page: **Deirdre Cochran's** houseboat was done after Deirdre's holiday party in December. The one of the Leschi Market commemorates its owner, Steve Schumann, who recently died of Covid 19. Kate describes him as "such a pillar of our Leschi community." The third one is "Friends in Boxes," page 3: Kate's response to our request for an illustration to go with this issue's article on Zoom meetings.

Then



Now...



Artist and Member Kate Barber