

Reelers-Rangers Reporter

#1 (9-22-20)

Beth Benson: Keeping a positive note on this, since March 12 my job as a freelance court reporter has changed significantly. I was forced out of work for about two months until our clients (the attorneys) figured out they'd better get used to using Zoom and doing things remotely. Nowadays I'm just about as busy as pre-Covid, but doing it remotely – nice change from commuting (up to two hours a day) to wearing pajamas for work! Being home all the time has also allowed me to do something that wasn't possible when I had to be away a good deal of the day: I foster dogs in need of new homes. The group I am working with, Cold Nose Warm Heart, is very passionate in rescuing dogs from high-kill kennels in southern states and bringing them here, where they get spayed/neutered and find loving new fur-ever homes. My latest rescue, Maggie, is an 11-year-old Pomeranian with kidney failure, so I have become her fur-ever family. She is doing very well on a strict diet. Isn't she the cutest? Miss everyone and hope to see you in a square ... eventually.



Helen Jacobson: I have sold my house and am moving to an over-55 development in Florham Park, across from Fairleigh Dickinson University. There will be a clubhouse with multipurpose rooms, so I will be on the lookout for dance space. I am still doing disaster relief work for the American Red Cross, and challenging myself with my ukulele and jigsaw puzzles. I miss you guys!

Mary and Paul Olsen: We've been doing some light cleaning and gardening, going for walks, playing a few card games with square dance friends, and having a few get-togethers (keeping social distancing!) with retirees from Paul's group. But with no dancing, no bowling, and no group meetings, it's a pretty quiet life lately. Our youngest son and his wife are expecting a baby boy in mid-December; hopefully all goes well and we will be able to see the baby.

Carla and Stephen Holusha: We miss all of our square dance and round dance friends. It's been a busy summer. Stephen and I love to run. Since all "real" races were canceled, we had to do virtual races, so we just ran around the neighborhood here in Budd Lake. In May and June, we ran the distance of the New Jersey Turnpike (117.2 miles) and in July and August, we ran the distance from Trenton to Baltimore (126 miles). There was also plenty of swimming at the Vasa Park pool, where we have a membership and went several times a week. Work has been the same since there are only two of us at my CPA office. Clients have just been using my drop box instead of coming in to the office. Aside from me having to have a tooth pulled after it cracked, we are doing well!



At Donna and Mike's home

Donna Poyer and Mike Szekula:

Several members of Kittatinny Rangers at a card party/farewell dinner for Pat and John Sheppard before their recent move to California. Others present: Betty Harris, Francine and Bob Leshnower, Mary and Paul Olsen, Bonnie and Charlie Van Stone.

Pat and John Sheppard: We are getting settled in our new townhome, which is about an eight-minute drive from our son and daughter-in-law in Thousand Oaks – enjoying our granddaughter immensely. New address: 625 Baywood Lane, Unit C, Simi Valley, CA 93065. This is our humble abode – half the size of our house in New Jersey, so we had to get rid of many things before the move and again once we found a place here. We’re just getting settled in and will be ready for visitors soon.



Mary Bowers and Mark Van Ness: Hi Rangers and Reelers! We miss everyone! Mark and I have been busy working in the vegetable and flower gardens, and also have enjoyed many a float in our pond. It sure has been a beautiful summer. We have tried to see our children and grandchildren as safely and as often as possible. In fact, we are now the Thursday Remote Learning Partners for three school-aged boys in our home ... it takes a village! As a volunteer with the Sussex County Medical Reserve Corps, I have been answering phones at the Covid hotline since March ... a satisfying and quite interesting experience. I was also appointed to an open seat on the Board of Education of our town ... guess they thought a retired school nurse might be a promising candidate these days! We often think of our Rangers friends and hope the time when we can bow to our partner and corner is shorter than longer. Best wishes to all!

Ruth Philhower: This has been a year of many changes for me – one of my sons passed away suddenly in January; my dance partner, best friend, and husband of 70 years died in August; and last week I welcomed a new great-grandson. I cherish the memories of the fun and fellowship Earl and I had dancing, and look forward to news of others.

Barbara and Jay Ten Eick: We are fine here on Singer Island, Florida, one block from the ocean. We keep busy swimming, walking, and playing a little shuffleboard. We miss you all! Hope everyone is fine, and stay well.

Mary Pickett: Back in March when things shut down, my day job (with a family that became part of my bubble) quickly morphed into becoming a “kindergarten teacher,” with emphasis on teaching the little girl to read. She wanted *nothing* to do with learning how to read, but after countless repetition, worksheets, charts, and songs (did I mention the e-n-d-l-e-s-s repetition), I am happy to report the little girl now likes to read. I was doing pretty well in the gardening department, keeping up with the weeds and lawn much more than normal and successfully transplanting a 10-foot-tall rhododendron from one side of my house to the other – it’s still alive! The vegetable garden was doing quite well until Hurricane Isaias came through and knocked most of my plants over. I figured that this was probably a good opportunity to clean out closets and the like. Well, it’s an incredibly boring job, so I’m still trying to get through it. Don’t hold your breath. My health is good, my family’s health is good, cats are happy. I guess I’ll take that as a win.

Ed Crowley: Like everyone else, I am missing dancing. Extremely disappointed at not being able to finish class. A bit ill in March – probably Covid (no test, but antibodies found later). Busy helping deliver meals. Returned to subbing. Teaching Food and Fitness 8th grade class. Attending Zoom workshops for callers. Weekly session with Tom Miller. Purchased new music. Working with Katie on lesson plans. Hope my students will return.

Kathy Fetch: No big vacation this year. Because of the situation, I went to a lot of places on my own – couldn't go with a friend unless that person lived with you. I took advantage of so many things to see in New Jersey: Great Falls of Paterson (photo at left), Presby Iris Gardens in Montclair (photo at right), Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Morris County (walked around there and found it very interesting), Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange (saw the new addition to the giraffes and many other animals), and Peddler's Village in Pennsylvania (walked around and looked in the shops). On July 22 I adopted a rescue dog! Lizzie is very sweet, well behaved, and great company. Take care and be safe!



Deanna and Charlie Raffay: We came back from Florida just before the virus started up again and are missing dancing, but know that will happen again. After camping at Lake George in August, we came home to have our trailer serviced – and left the dealer with a new trailer. We are going to break it in the first week in October at Otter Lake with the New Jersey Square Dance Campers Association. It's a cool weekend (no pun intended, but weather will probably be on the cool side) with dancing and workshops. Everyone will be wearing gloves and masks as well as bringing their own refreshments to the sessions; it should be a very interesting weekend. Our standard poodle, Teddy, will be going with us as he enjoys watching the dancing and being spoiled by the members. We are busy scanning a few pictures (thousands) as we are getting into the virtual age. We look forward to being able to mingle with people again after this virus thing is brought under control. Hope all is well with everyone.

Jeanne and Inars Gruntals: We miss you, and we miss dancing! We are trying to stay in shape. Inars does NordicTrack, weight machine, and walking. Jean does Jazercise on Demand on the computer since her live classes were canceled. At night we watch a nature flick on National Geographic, PBS, or Smithsonian, and then the news. Stay safe!

Lea and Victor Keen: We are doing just fine. Victor is now back to playing tennis and Lea is teleworking from home while also keeping busy with her veggie and flower gardens. Although a hot summer, we were able to take the old cars out to a few cruise nights and stop by Cliff's for ice cream. The picture shows our cars at a recent car show in Montville. We miss everyone and can't wait to get back on the dance floor.



Celia and David Longendyck: We are doing well, thankfully. David had to stop working at our town's recycling center, but has returned and just got a promotion! After being home for months and fairly isolated, it was nice to have taken a trip to the rocky coast of Maine this month. Can't wait to get back to dancing with all of you!

Cindy and Dave Whalen: We have kept busy with work, camping, biking, kayaking, gardening, home improvement projects, and multiple trips to Pittsburgh to help with a grandchild. Life is good.



Nancy Ihnen: This picture was taken prior to getting big tomato, eggplant, and pepper plants. Now I have to put tarps over them every night this week to protect them from the cold!



Irene and Hal Stoller: Like so many others, Hal and I quickly became familiar with Zoom and have used it to continue our tap dance and exercise classes, for library book discussions and authors' talks, for social visits and games, and many other uses. I revived some dormant hobbies, including watercolor painting, pen and ink drawing, sewing (mostly masks, both for family and friends and to donate), and bread baking. We are spending more time reading and were very grateful for the Libby app to download ebooks when the library was closed. We have been kayaking and hiking and have enjoyed finding new places to hike. We were very happy when our community garden was permitted to resume, which provides a great outdoor venue for socializing, digging in the dirt, and harvesting a variety of organic veggies. We are glad that we have been able to assist our grandson in planning and implementing his Eagle Scout project. And I have been thinking with gratitude of all our technological advances that make this so much easier for us than for people in past pandemics, such as the 1918 Spanish flu when most people did not have radios or telephones, much less television or any of our electronic devices to stay connected.

Arlene and Tom Simansky: Tom and I are still at our home in Pennsylvania, and not sure when we will head back to Florida. Because of the virus, we got to see our children and grandchildren a lot here at the lake, which was really great. We have not gone out of the community much except to go grocery shopping.



Merrill Hodder: HoneyRose, a sweet three-year-old beagle from the rescue organization Cold Nose Warm Heart, became my newest family member in April. At 20 pounds, she's been nicknamed Braveheart as she chased a 400-pound bear up a tree a few weeks ago, running circles around the tree (and bear!) until my daughter scooped her up. Honey is sweet and cuddly, but bears and chipmunks beware. I've been working part-time for the 2020 US census – interesting work! Hope vaccinations become available in early 2021 so we can dance again soon. Yellow Rocks to everyone.

Janet, Alan, and Julie Gerber: We've had lots of ups and downs since Friday the 13th of March – that was our Julie's 17th birthday. Her school, which was awesome, ended abruptly and initial “snow day euphoria” swiftly yielded to despair. Julie had amazing summer plans: an engineering week at Stevens Institute of Technology, an engineering internship at Picatinny, junior counselor at 4-H sleepaway camp, two weeks of camping at SCA Pennsic War in Pennsylvania, family boating at Camp Seafarer in North Carolina, lots of college touring ... all up in smoke. Several virtual “Dungeons & Dragons” campaigns helped keep her spirits up. Luckily, Julie was able to start her senior year at the Academy for Mathematics, Science, and Engineering in hybrid mode, and school is going somewhat better than the chaos of spring. She got her driver’s license, and also got an almost perfect SAT score (perfect math, missed one in the verbal) as well as perfect 5 in biology, calculus, and US history AP exams. She will be looking for an engineering internship, if anyone has leads. Oh, we also had the “excitement” of a large bat flying around in her bedroom late one August night.

Alan recently ran his lawnmower over a nest of yellow jackets, with unfortunately predictable results. He’s OK now, and the wasps are all sleeping with the fishes, so to speak. Alan’s dad had an extended illness following emergency surgery; sadly, he did not recover and his funeral was this month. We miss him.

Janet spent much of her summer gardening (zinnias and more zinnias), hiking, running Chester’s growing pickleball program and recruiting new players (including some Reelers), boating (also with Reelers), and lots of wonderful beach days on Long Island with family. Unfortunately, her nearly three-year run of >10K daily steps recently ended in ignominy: a late night quest to finish the day’s steps, an ill-placed pothole, a trip to the ER, air casts on knee and ankle, you get the picture. Her mom was hospitalized for weeks with Covid-19. She made a miraculous recovery and we are so grateful that she returned home in August.



Pickleball: Av, Karen, Janet, Cindy



Whale watching on Miss Belmar: Alan, Janet, Julie

Lise Greene and Mark Bippes: I have been enthusiastically Habitat-ing in Passaic and Succasunna and Lise has been editing. We’ve both been hiking, biking, canoeing, and a bit of sailing. Then there’s been work in the gardens, installing drainage pipes in the lawn, organizing papers in the house, etc. It’ll feel great to get some of this stuff under control! When possible, we’ve also been participating in virtual walks around New York’s Central Park at 12:30 on Wednesdays. Each 15-minute walk is “led” by a member of the Central Park Conservancy. In addition to a free guided tour of the plants, geology, and buildings in each area, we learn about its history – almost like being there in person! To sign up for the weekly walks or to see videos of past walks, visit www.centralparknyc.org/virtual-programs-weekly-walks. We also discovered nature programs on PBS every Wednesday night at 8:00. And we’re finally trying virtual dancing!