

First, I have to say I am very lucky and COVID has taught me a new meaning to patience.

My husband, Dennis, retired in December 2018 from his business, Stacey Electric Service, an electrical contracting company. He spent the next year wrapping up the sale of his business. By December 2019, we were ready to travel. We started by seeing our adult children in CA; one in Alameda (San Francisco area) and one in Sacramento. Both lived with their girlfriends. Our eldest son owned their house, while our younger son was renting an apartment. Both our boys had at least three pets. It was an exciting time and we completed the Christmas visit to both, with the whole gang together on Christmas eve and day. It was a great time and we were looking forward to future visits and combining that trip with other excursions. In April we were planning to go to AZ to visit friends and do some touring of the state, toying with the idea that we might retire there. We had another trip scheduled to the northeast, touring from Vermont east and south back to NJ. I was always looking for a golf course or a tennis club in which to play along our routes.

Then COVID hit the area and all our plans were canceled.

All my life I have prided myself on being a chameleon, a champion of fitting into every group that I met and being flexible to the circumstances. I was going to beat this change as fast as it was coming on. I was optimistic and challenged. Dennis was already doing most of the grocery shopping so we were well-stocked with cleaning supplies, wipes, toilet paper and N-95 masks (from some electrical jobs he had done and 2012 Superstorm Sandy clean-up). I was figuring out ways to continue my life as it might be.

As my groups' meetings got cancelled, I was suggesting ZOOM gatherings and finding zoom exercise classes. I started those classes. As it was an early spring, I searched and found a friend that had her own outdoor tennis court and suggested players to her so that we could play outside from the beginning of our club's closing (March) and all through the summer to Labor Day. I started golfing as soon as the courses opened in May in my three leagues and played through October. In June the Tennis Clubs were opening up for outdoor play and proving to be safer than we had thought so eventually we were moving indoors by early September and started playing there as well. I am currently playing tennis indoors with a mask on, on two teams and two practices and two lessons.

Many years earlier as part of my South Mountain Y (SMY) and South Orange Rotary (SOR) commitments I tried to run mobile and satellite blood

drives with the New York Blood Center. In reality, those drives netted 13-20 pints, which was in no way unsuccessful to the recipients, but it did not warrant 13 volunteers being there for 8 hours to run those blood drives, so they went by the wayside.

During 2020, we continued to meet with our SMY Board and Rotary Clubs on Zoom and I continued to search for things I could do to bring more opportunities for volunteering into my life. I had continued throughout the shutdown to donate blood and felt that it was a very safe way to make a difference due to the perishable nature of blood, donations are always in high demand. As the Satellite and mobile blood drive sites dried up (the schools, colleges and corporations shut down), Rosana, my earlier NYBC contact, reached out to me to ask the SMY for support of the satellite blood drives. So in November of 2020 we started running blood drives every 6 weeks at the Civic House for the South Mountain Y, now every four weeks, and we are committed in 2021 to run these drives in all seven of our branches every 4-6 weeks. At our first drive in November, we registered 56 donors, collecting 47 units of blood. For each unit collected, we may be able to help 3 patients; therefore, our first drive had the potential to help save the lives of 141 patients. At the second drive, on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, we registered 56 donors and collected 51 units of blood, which could help save up to 153 patients. Rosana and I are now in communication with all our branches about ongoing blood drives.

I have been challenged by this virus. It rewrote my plans for the last year in ways I still struggle with. I was driven to look at the positive side and find every opportunity for a way to get through it unscathed. I believe that my connections within my communities have helped immensely with the isolation we are all experiencing. Hopefully, by donating blood or volunteering in other ways, by staying active when it is safe to do so, people can overcome the natural depression by forging human connections and by contributing to an effort that saves lives.

I have been very fortunate. No one in my immediate circle has died, and only four have been afflicted in December. Two from my next circle have died, one from tennis and one from golf, and it was their partners last Spring.

Thank you for listening.

Stacey T. Borden