I am ticked! Like most of you, I have been quarantined for the past month or so. As I mentioned in another column, the walls are closing in. I haven’t seen my friends in all that time. The price of gas has gone to record lows and my car hasn’t moved from the driveway. It’s very frustrating not to be able to do the things that you have always done. But these are not normal times. We are in the midst of a pandemic the likes of which we have never experienced. This virus is so new that even the scientists are stumped. They don’t know for sure how it is transmitted. It has killed 45,000 people ranging from a five-year-old to those in their 90s. It will take about 18 months to come up with a vaccine. This time epidemiologists are sure of one thing – the only way to mitigate the spread of the virus is to isolate people. It seems to be working. But some politicians and some misled people don’t want to listen to the experts. And that’s what ticks me off!

I can empathize with people who fear losing their jobs. I can understand that when the predicted casualties proved to be much higher than the actual deaths that many might begin to think that the virus is not that dangerous – maybe the experts were wrong. What if they weren’t? What if the lower statistics were the result of our sacrifices? What does that tell us about those who don’t want to listen to the experts?

"Normal fear protects us; abnormal fear paralyzes us. Normal fear motivates us to improve our individual and collective welfare; abnormal fear constantly poisons and directs our inner lives. Our problem is not to be rid of fear, but rather to harness and master it," said Martin Luther King Junior. I think he meant that we must face the unknown and to work together to overcome the threat.

However, when a minority, urged on by others with agendas (according to some sources) demonstrate against the government just because they feel their rights are being disrespected, and with no real rational reasoning behind it thereby putting the rest of us in peril – that’s what makes me angry. In Understanding Stupidity, James F. Welles defines stupidity this way: "The term may be used to designate a mentality which is considered to be informed, deliberate and maladaptive."

Welles distinguishes stupidity from ignorance; one must know they are acting in their own worst interest. Secondly, it must be a choice, not a forced act or accident. Lastly, it requires the activity to be maladaptive, in that it is in the worst interest of the actor, and specifically done to prevent adaption to new data or existing circumstances." Another psychologist wrote, "... Every intellect begins to show weakness when affective motives are working against it." He suggested, "People become stupid ad hoc, that is, when they do not want to understand, where understanding would cause anxiety or guilt feeling, or would endanger an existing neurotic equilibrium." Open-carry guns, large groups not respecting the six-foot distance show the meaning of the above.

Politicians set the tone. Tom Friedman in today’s New York Times quotes Dov Seidman in a discussion about leadership, "In addition to truth and hope, what people actually want in a leader, even a charismatic one, is humility.

Continued on Page 2
I feel more certain in the face of uncertainty when a leader says to me, 'I don't know, but here are the wise experts I am going to turn to for answers, and here is how we are going to hunt for the answers together.' The more I hear Dr. Fauci say that he does not know something, the more closely I listen to him discuss what he is sure of. Humble leaders actually make themselves smaller than the moment. They know that they alone cannot fix everything. So they create the space for others to join them and to rise to do big things – together."

So, OLLI members, listen to the experts, not the politicians, and this ordeal will be over sooner rather than later.

Bob Grady

---

**JUST FOR LAUGHS**

"What starting salary are you looking for?" The head of human resources asks the newly graduated engineer at the end of a job interview.

Going forward, the guy says, "Well, sir, I was thinking about $125,000 depending on the benefits package."

"OK," the HR director says. "How about five weeks vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, 100% company match for your 401K and a Porsche for your company car?"

The engineer gasps and says, "Wow! Are you kidding?"

"Yeah," he replies. "But you started it."

---

**STAYING CONNECTED WITH OLLI @ HOME**

- Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter (go to olli.uconn.edu and click the blue button that says "Add Me to Your Email List") to receive updates every Monday
- "Like" us on Facebook to participate in interactive posts and "Virtual OLLI Cafe." (https://www.facebook.com/olliatuconnwaterbury/)
- Email yvoorg@aol.com or osher@uconn.edu with your own tips on how to stay busy during this time, photos, interesting stories or news articles, original work (paintings, drawings, writings) to be featured in our Newsletters

---

The Newsletter is always looking for content from our readers. This may be in the form of original work or items you have found interesting and may wish to pass on to others. We always welcome any suggestions you may have to improve the newsletter or criticisms of it. The Newsletter exists to inform and entertain our readers.

Contact Bob Grady at yvoorg@aol.com or any presenter or staff member.
VOICES and VISIONS

Greetings OLLI’ties... I expect you have read about Voices and Visions, OLLI’s annual publication of creative works by OLLI students in the forms of poetry, prose, photography, or artwork of any type. This year was to have been our 10th Anniversary issue. However, as we all know, the quarantining of ourselves has thrown a monkey wrench into our plans. Even so, we want to ask for your submissions. We would hope to publish in the fall semester, 2020.

Some of you have already submitted your work, and we thank you. Some others of you are writing and creating and we would love to see what you have been doing. Please, wait no more! We ask you to submit your work to us online. We will review it, edit it gently, if necessary, and hope to fill our pages for next year.

You retain all rights to your work. When you submit your work to us you give us permission to use your submission. That protects you and us. Thanks for your time, talents and hope to see as many of you as possible in the Fall semester. To submit your work, you must have been a registered student in the 2019-2020 semesters. Check us out online at: lizhanahan@aol.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

-Voices and Visions staff.

Walking Activity

“Nature quiets the mind by engaging with an intelligence larger than our own.”

Come and walk in nature with some OLLI friends. Experience the beauty in our different communities. All walks are easy with some minor hill climbing. We will walk for approximately an hour. Third Wednesday at 10:00am. Meet at parking area. Bad weather will cancel the walk.

May 20th: Hopbrook Trail, Naugatuck. Parking at lot at the intersection of Routes 63 and 188.

Questions? Diane Visconti (203)215-8548 or email Vis1795@aol.com

The OLLI Walking Activity will continue at the discretion of the involved OLLI members.

 CLUB CORNER

If anyone is interested in joining the Book Club via Zoom, please e-mail Nancy Via at nvia@sbcglobal.net and we will send you an invitation to our meetings.

Want to read these but can’t make it to the bookstore during quarantine? Find the e-book and audiobook versions of these books on Amazon!

May 18: The Great Alone by Kristin Hannah
June 15: Unsheltered by Barbara Kingsolver
July 20: Warlight by Michael Ondaatje
August 17: Tobacco Road by Erskine Caldwell
September 21: Consider the Fork by Bee Wilson
October 19: The Pioneers by David McCullough
November 16: Appetite for America by Stephen Fried
Reflections On This Strange Spring

The OLLI spring 2020 semester will officially end next Friday, on May 1st. Back in February, who could have imagined what life would be like now? As I write this at home during our sixth week of self-isolation, my head is still reeling from how much has changed. A few weeks ago we were all preparing for classes, events, and travel. Now we're learning how to use Zoom and trying to make plans amid our struggles to make sense of each day.

The most important thing I'm learning is that we simply refuse to be kept apart. Never has it been more obvious that we humans are social animals, and we must connect with each other, even when it seems we can’t, even when, in our loneliness, we have to remember that we’re not alone.

I think about my family in the U.K. We all talk every couple of days now, instead of every couple of weeks. I feel a visceral need to be with them, but I can’t. I find myself drifting into “what ifs”: What if one of my parents or my sister gets sick? What if someone is hospitalized or dies? What if I can’t get to them?” Those “what ifs” never do any good, but they can creep into my thoughts very easily if I let them. And if I let them, I’m paralyzed with fear and then I’m overwhelmed, and I’m no good to anyone.

So… I do what everyone does. I shed a few tears, take a breath, and focus on something I can do. I remember to accept what I can’t change, but also to change what I can, and that usually means finding gratitude and ways to be positive. For that, I often turn to OLLI. The attitude of so many of you has humbled and inspired me this semester. For everyone who’s started holding Zoom meetings, or is figuring out online teaching and learning, or is checking in on an OLLI friend, I’m grateful. You’re showing that community is more important than ever. You’re proving that remote learning can bring us together, rather than keep us apart. You’re insisting that we keep OLLI going, because it’s your community. So that’s exactly what we’ll do. OLLI might look a bit different in the coming months, and it will still be hard not to hug our friends or sit together in class, but we will keep going. Thank you all for keeping me going too.

by Fiona de Merell
I was trying to think of a topic for this week’s column #9 for this OLLI semester. I am sure that like me you are inundated online via email, Facebook, news outlets, etc. about arts-related things you can watch. I just enjoyed one this morning forwarded by OLLI Vice Pres Mila Limson showing members of the Paris Ballet executing beautiful plies by themselves (or sometimes with their children running about) in their homes in France. Thanks, Mila!

But at this point I guess what I’d like to talk about is how grateful I am these days for so many things! Besides the aforementioned many cultural outlets online, I am most thankful for the gift of time. Time to think, time to do one thing at a time, time to really listen to my grandsons (who are coping remarkably well away from school, activities and friends.) There finally is time to tackle what I call “the scary back basement,” the repository of family mementos, not only mine but my parents’, photographs which span at least 150 years of family memories, including a couple of precious tintypes. I promised to get this done five years ago when I retired, but, well you know that story.....The time is now, and I am grateful for it. This task is not an easy one. Yes, lots of funny, sweet and poignant memories, but also some very sad and difficult emotions with which to deal. The deaths of family members, the dreams that didn’t come true. Well, you know, the stuff that all of us humans experience.

This “downtime” has also made me so very grateful for the everyday things I so took for granted before Covid19 entered our lives. The ability to get up in the morning, get into my car and go out for errands that I thought were so very necessary (probably most of them weren’t), the ability to go to Silver Sneakers classes, and of course to OLLI, usually a couple of times a week for classes and meetings. The ability to call a friend and make a lunch date, and then be fussy and selective about which restaurant we would grace with our presence. The ability to make a huge grocery list and come home with even more things than were on the list to begin with.

I am grateful now for the time to watch a mini-series or read a good book (I borrowed a large stash from Wallingford Library the day before they closed) without feeling guilty that I should be doing something “more important.” I’m grateful, so grateful, that I am retired and safely ensconced in my three-generation household, without the need to go to work, like so many of my former colleagues who are nurses, therapists and aides still must do.

I’m grateful for one of my most precious times of the day, when I wake up, make my coffee and sit in silence doing the New York Times Crossword puzzle, gently trying to wake up my brain. I am grateful for the ability to look out my large kitchen window and see the budding trees, the birds, and the occasional deer who visit my backyard.

I’m grateful that I can keep up with my sister and brother on Facebook, and with my church community via Zoom on Sunday mornings and even enjoy a virtual coffee hour with them. (Coffee hour, it is joked, is the Episcopal 11th Commandment.)

Grateful for my computer, the ability to check daily my bank account online (which was hacked last November to the tune of $1900!), to have a virtual medical checkup if I need it, and to order “stuff” from Amazon, Target, Walmart and a myriad of other places. If I get a whim that I need a pen refill for an old pen that I found while cleaning out my night table (true story!) I am all set. Grateful for my weekly Zoom meetings with the OLLI Executive Committee which always provide a lot of laughs and good ideas for OLLI’s future.

I am grateful for Dr. Anthony Fauci and for governors and mayors who are doing their best to make sense of the information that comes at them constantly and who are working to lessen illness, death, and tragedy.

Grateful, very grateful, to be alive. What are you grateful for?
WE SHOULD NOT GO BACK TO NORMAL,

BECAUSE NORMAL WAS THE PROBLEM.