

DES Newsletter

July 2021



No, you didn't miss an exotic meal. Due to the pandemic, our last "luncheon" was another Zoom event. Over 50 DES members joined in for announcements, fun, and an extremely interesting talk about Abraham Lincoln presented by our very own Mark Pohlad. He accompanied his talk with various slides and shared little-known interesting details about Lincoln's life.

Confirmation of three new members of the DES steering committee also took place. Bob Rotenberg, Pat Cavanaugh, and Miriam Ben-Joseph had agreed to serve on the committee and the membership approved their selection. The current members of the steering committee are Jessica Hallam, Marty Kalin, Susan Kosinski, Bob Rotenberg, Pat Callahan, Miriam Ben-Yoseph, Betsy Soete and Nancy Rospenda.

Susan Kosinski shared the current status of the DES Scholarship Fund. The DES awarded this year's endowment earnings (\$9,817) + \$6,000 to students this year. The remainder, \$12,460 plus \$27,015 from last year, will be reinvested into the endowment fund. The current principal value of the endowment: \$215,057.54. That deserves a collective pat on the back! Thanks to your generosity this Fund has grown from an idea to a fund aiding at least five students per year as they advance toward their degrees.

Upcoming Change for DePaul's 403(b) Retirement Plan

Effective July 21, 2021, Fidelity Investments® will become the single service provider for receiving contributions and providing plan services for the DePaul University 403(b) Retirement Plan. This change will take effect for active employees and for retired and non-active participants who still retain a balance in the Plan.

The decision for this transition was based on years of careful monitoring and evaluation of Fidelity's ability to meet the needs of all the participants in DePaul's 403(b) plan. Since October 2017 when Fidelity became the provider for all new 403(b) plan enrollments, Fidelity has demonstrated its ability to operate our plan and to do so at materially lower participant costs, all in service of our goal of helping faculty and staff achieve a successful retirement.

To prepare for this transition, a "blackout period" for certain account activities will begin on July 16. Therefore, any action that you plan to take should be done before July 16.

Detailed information and resources about the change can be found at www.myfidelitysite.com/depaul, and you can review a [recorded information session](#) for retired and non-active employees with balances in the plan.

For current TIAA participants, the [TIAA Participants Transition Guide](#) provides detailed information about which holdings at TIAA will transfer to Fidelity and which will remain with TIAA.

Participants may also schedule a [complimentary one-on-one meeting](#) with representatives from Fidelity and TIAA to discuss how the change may or may not impact your retirement savings strategy. For more news and information about DePaul's retiree benefits, visit <https://retireebenefits.depaul.edu>.

They're not making yardsticks any longer.

Probably the biggest news if you haven't heard is that on Monday, June 14, Dr. Gabriel Esteban shared in an email to faculty, staff, and students his decision to step down from his position as president at the end of the next academic year, on June 30, 2022. After five years of leading DePaul, he will take a one-year sabbatical and plans to visit members of the Vincentian family around the world. He will rejoin the University as a faculty member after his sabbatical.

Additional changes include the Board of Trustees' appointment of Sherri Sidler as Executive Vice President. Sidler, an accomplished and longtime member of the university's financial team, has served as interim executive vice president since Jan. 1, 2021. DePaul University's Board of Trustees voted to appoint Salma Ghanem as provost, effective immediately. Ghanem, professor and dean for the College of Communication, has served as interim provost since July 2019 and as acting provost from October 2018 - June 2019.

Another change in administration has already taken effect. DePaul University announced that Brian Sullivan will serve as its next treasurer. His appointment was effective January 18. "Brian not only brings extensive cross-disciplinary financial experience to DePaul, but he also demonstrates dedication to upholding our university's Catholic, Vincentian mission," says Sherri Sidler, interim executive vice president. "I look forward to collaborating closely with him as we work to ensure DePaul's continued fiscal strength." Sullivan joins DePaul from Veolia, a Global Fortune 500 company and leader in the water, energy, and environmental services sectors. He most recently served as treasurer and senior vice president of corporate finance for Veolia North America, the North American \$3 billion subsidiary of the France-based Veolia. He joined Veolia in 2001 as its vice president of investor relations in the U.S. and became treasurer for North America in 2009.

Stay in contact with the DES through our Facebook page and the DES blog. You can join Facebook by contacting Elaine.beaudoin@gmail.com and you can find the BlogSpot at <http://desretirees.blogspot.com>. Some interesting discussions have taken place on Facebook regarding all the changes in TIAA and method of paying for health insurance. Check it out!

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid. He says he can stop any time.



Kathryn DeGraff reports that the DES book club met via Zoom on June 2. The featured book was *The Greater Journey* by David McCullough. Most members of the DES Book Club enjoyed his detailed, wide-ranging account of Americans in Paris from the 1830s to the close of the nineteenth century. Many readers commented on McCullough's easy, graceful style; they were impressed also by his thorough research and his use of sources like letters and diaries to illuminate the individual lives of his American subjects. And of course, they were impressed by the range of fields this work covers—medicine, technology, art, literature, and the many Americans who were transformed by their studies in Paris. In particular, the accounts of artists were vivid and compelling. A few readers felt that the work covered too much detail, so the effect was scattered; they felt McCullough had assembled material without achieving a unified narrative with an “arc” or controlling idea. But in general, there was admiration for McCullough's achievement and his ability to convey the energy and wonder of these encounters with Paris. We all agreed that the paperback would benefit from better maps, especially to encourage an understanding of the extensive changes in Paris then.

Our next book will be *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. [Our next meeting will be August 4 at 11:00 am, Central Daylight Time.](#) The zoom link opens at 10:30 to permit everyone time to connect and say hello. If you have any questions or would like to join in the discussion, please contact [Kathryn DeGraff](#) or [Helen Marlborough](#). We enjoy catching up with our former colleagues and enjoy welcoming new members to the group. Zoom meetings have provided a great way for us to connect virtually during this time.

The only difference between a tax man and a taxidermist is the taxidermist leaves the skin -Mark Twain

Please remember to change your address with Advancement or contact Nancy Rospenda at nrospend@depaul.edu. She hates to see her lovingly written birthday cards to members returned as not deliverable.



DEPAUL NEWS:

The National Science Foundation has awarded DePaul University \$1,000,000 to support STEM students. Over the next decade, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates a significant increase in the demand for scientists, mathematicians, engineers, and other STEM professionals. A grant from the National Science Foundation will help DePaul's STEM students achieve their career ambitions.

The Game Design and Animation programs at DePaul's College of Computing and Digital Media are among the top in the nation. The Princeton Review included DePaul on

both its 2021 [Top 50 Game Design: Undergrad](#) and [Top 25 Game Design: Grad](#) lists. The undergraduate program placed 41st while the graduate program came in 25th. DePaul also landed on Animation Career Review's 2021 [Top Game Design Schools](#) and [Top Animation Schools](#) lists. The game program ranked 15th nationally and first in the Midwest. The animation program ranked 23rd nationally and second in the Midwest.

Over the years, Blue Demon Athletics has utilized the talents of students from both CDM and The Art School at DePaul to enhance marketing materials for students and fans. The tradition continues in 2021. The past two quarters, DePaul Athletics has worked with two students from CDM as game design interns. An introduction from Brother Mark Elder, C.M., a muralist and professor in The Art School, brought senior game design major Quinn Davis to Athletics as part of her ART 383 internship with the purpose of developing a game for children ages 12 and under. Davis recruited fellow senior and computer science major, Michael Vanderwerf, to help with the coding. Together, they formed a team that created two DePaul Athletics-themed computer games for the DIBS Kids Club, gaining invaluable experience throughout the process.

A new exhibition opening at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry called, [Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes](#), explores the Marvel Cinematic Universe's evolution alongside society over the past 80 years. The collaboration between the museum and the genre makes sense, says Blair Davis, an associate professor of media and cinema studies, who was asked to participate as an expert in the [exhibition's opening event](#). "The stories featured in Marvel comics are frequently related to science and technology, especially in the origin stories of many characters," says Davis, a comic book, pop culture and Marvel researcher.

LEGACY, a comprehensive entrepreneurship, and brand development program for student-athletes at DePaul University, will soon enable Blue Demon student-athletes to fully leverage Name, Image, and Likeness legislation tentatively slated to go into effect in Illinois on July 1.

Congratulations to Gillian Anderson (TTS '90) for winning a Golden Globe. Gillian won Best Supporting Actress in a Television Drama for portraying Margaret Thatcher in Netflix's *The Crown*. We couldn't be prouder to call her a DePaul alumna!

Another DePaul Theatre School student, Ashton Sanders, is included in the cast of the movie "Judas and the Black Messiah."

A new degree program, the Master's in Professional Communication, has been approved and will launch this fall. Program Director Matt Ragas answers questions about this degree for mid-career professionals, the College of Communication's first fully online graduate program.

Marcy J. Dinius, an associate professor in the Department of English, has earned a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award. She will use this award in spring 2022 to lecture

at Ochanomizu University and Tsuda University, two prestigious women's universities, in Tokyo.

Life Trustee George L. Ruff (BUS '74) and Tanya S. Ruff are giving \$21 million through estate and monetary gifts to support scholarships and the DePaul Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH). In recognition of the gift to IGH, the institute will now be known as the George and Tanya Ruff Institute of Global Homelessness. To encourage others to help students, the Ruffs have also issued the "Double Your Impact" Ruff Scholarship Challenge, which runs March 1 through December 31, 2021.

In the spirit of caring for each other and for our surrounding community, DePaul has decided to require students to be vaccinated for COVID-19 when the 2021-22 academic year begins. This requirement covers all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in all degree programs who intend to be on campus for any period of time starting in the fall 2021 term. On April 22, DePaul faculty, staff and students received an email with a link to sign up for a Moderna vaccine clinic that was held on the Lincoln Park Campus from April 27-30.

With COVID-19 safety precautions in place, DePaul Art Museum reopened to in-person viewing May 14. A pair of exhibitions, "LatinXAmerican" and "Claudia Peña Salinas: Quetzalli," will be on display through August 15 at the museum, located on DePaul University's Lincoln Park Campus.

YAY! If everything goes according to plan and there is no spike in the virus, the next DES luncheon will be IN PERSON. The date set is October 29th, with a Mass preceding the luncheon. Keep your fingers crossed, get your vaccination, and join us for a happy reunion!

We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives. –John F. Kennedy



FRANK K. WUKITSCH, 79, passed away on January 26, 2021 in Geneva, Switzerland. Frank was born on April 18, 1941 in Chicago to Frank and Dorothy (nee Schlessler) Wukitsch. He was united in marriage to Susan (Bonnie) Zimmerman on April 30, 1968 in Basel, Switzerland.

Frank will be remembered for his love for his family, the theatre, and old tools. Frank's father, a tool and die man for the Chicago Stockyards, instilled a love for woodworking and tools at a young age. Frank would often go with his father to job sites and learned woodworking from a master. After four years in the army (stationed in Germany), Frank went to work for the Raytheon Company working on missiles. While in Germany, Frank and Susan were introduced by a mutual friend and were married two months later in Basel, Switzerland. Returning to the United States, Frank received a master's degree in

Theatre and went on to teach theatre at the Latin School in Chicago and The Goodman School of Drama/The Theatre School - DePaul University. His many students talk of his “quiet but powerful sense of calm and generous heart” and his giving of his sandwiches is legendary.

Frank instilled in his young children a love of the arts, and specifically, the theatre. Many a weekend was spent on the train going into Chicago to see one of the children’s shows at the Goodman Theatre and later The Theatre School - DePaul University. Lisa and Gil carry on that love of the arts and the theatre in their jobs as music teachers, pit orchestra directors, and drama directors.

After his retirement, Frank and Susan could be found antiquing, always bringing home that “new” antique tool or another book or piece of china. Frank volunteered with Preservation Partners of Fox Valley, helping to restore some of the old machinery and giving tool talks to weekend visitors. Frank spent time with his adult children, helping Lisa to build scenery for her school and helping Gil to rebuild his old barn. Frank enjoyed visiting the farm animals with his granddaughter, Ava, and talking Legos with his grandson, Grant.

Frank leaves behind his wife, Susan, his children, Lisa (Chris) Wukitsch and Gil (Danielle), Wukitsch, his grandchildren, Ava Wukitsch and Grant Wukitsch, his brothers, Tom (Margaret) Wukitsch and Bob (Barbara) Wukitsch, his sister, Lori (Nick) D’Asta, many cousins, numerous nieces and nephews, many friends, and countless students. In honor of Frank, please consider a donation to Preservation Partners of Fox Valley or The Theatre School-DePaul University (Wukitsch Spare Sandwich) Scholarship Fund .

Retired U.S. Ambassador **JOHN F. KORDEK** died Tuesday, February 16, 2021, at home with his loving wife by his side. Following graduation from Weber H.S., he joined the U.S. Air Force and served four years on Strategic Air Command (SAC) 818th Air Division of the 8th U.S. Air Force. When he completed his active military service, he graduated from DePaul University with a PhB in 1964. Kordek is also a graduate of the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University. The Ambassador also studied at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and graduated from three languages (Serbo-Croat, Polish, and Spanish) and area studies programs from the State Department's U.S. Foreign Service Institute.

Recruited while a college senior at DePaul for the U.S. Foreign Service, he worked for 26 years with the USIA, ICA, and the U.S. State Department, attaining the rank of Career Minister and then U.S. Ambassador. He also worked in numerous other countries as part of official U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy delegations. One of his first jobs in the Foreign Service, he served in Serbia, Croatia, Italy, Belgium, Poland, Venezuela, Botswana, was in 1965 where he was to escort Louis Armstrong, who was visiting the former Yugoslavia as part of the U.S. State Department Cultural program overseas.

Ambassador Kordek held many senior positions in the U.S. Foreign Service, including Acting Deputy Ambassador (DCM) at the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw during the rise to

power of the Solidarity movement and the visits of Pope John Paul II to Poland. During President Reagan's presidency, Kordek was the USIA Director of European Affairs and then the Counselor of the Agency, the highest career official in USIA. He participated in the Geneva and Reykjavik summit meetings between President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev and numerous international negotiations, including those with the Soviet Union, Poland, Germany, and other countries.

President Reagan nominated Kordek as a U.S. Ambassador in 1988, and the U.S. Senate unanimously confirmed him. During the Reagan Administration, he briefed senior officials, including Vice President Bush, and participated in several key National Security Council meetings at the White House chaired by the president.

During his Foreign Service career, Kordek was nominated for diplomatic positions by every American president, from Lyndon B. Johnson to Bill Clinton. President Clinton, in 1995, appointed Kordek to two five-year terms to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council in Washington, which oversees the operations of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Kordek served on the Council's Executive Committee and the Committee on Conscience, which monitors genocide worldwide.

Clinton also selected Ambassador Kordek to be a member of the U.S. presidential delegations to commemorate the 50th anniversaries of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the 1945 liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau NAZI death camps. He traveled with, among others, on these delegations with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel.

Following his retirement from the U.S. Foreign Service, Kordek joined DePaul University, where he worked for 15 years as Associate Vice President and taught courses on WWII and the Holocaust. He also lectured at many universities and organizations.

Kordek is the recipient of many honors, including a presidential award from President Reagan for "..., sustained superior conduct of U.S. foreign policy"; Distinguished and Superior Honor Awards from the State Department, ICA, and USIA. The Ambassador is also the recipient of the "Via Sapientiae Award," DePaul University's highest faculty-staff honor. It was awarded to Kordek for his work to educate generations of students and faculty "...about the horrors of bigotry and the promotion of the value of dignity and respect for all people."

Ambassador Kordek served on several boards of directors when he returned home to Illinois, including the Illinois Humanities Council and the Chicago International Visitors Center. He chaired the Chicago-Warsaw Sister Cities program and was co-chair of the National Polish American - Jewish American National Council.

Kordek was a world traveler. His Foreign Service assignments took him to the four corners of the world. In retirement, he and his wife continued their travels visiting all the earth's continents. He loved opera, classical music, and jazz. And was a voracious reader of world history. John is survived by his spouse of 56 years, Alice (nee Kleczynski); son Andrew (Elizabeth) Kordek; daughter Catherine (Lynn) Stover; grandchildren Joshua

Kordek, Henry Stover, and Will Stover; brother Phillip (Theresa) Kordek and sister Judy (Chester) Pasowicz.

DONALD BANIK passed away on February 10th at the age of 86. Don was the husband and best friend of Mary Ann for over 54 years, and loving dad of Michelle (Ed) Snorewicz, Dawn (Jim) Cooke, Maribeth (Nicole) Conway, Donald (Colleen) Rost Banik and David Banik and grandfather to Emily, Jacob, Matthew, John, and Danny. His survivors include his sister Dolores (late Stanley) and his sister-in-law Collette (late Robert) Kampendahl, along with many nieces, nephews, cousins, extended family, and friends. Don was a U.S. Army veteran. The family would appreciate considering a memorial donation in Don's name to St. Linus' St. Vincent de Paul Society.

To keep up with Alumni news and events, be sure to visit alumni.depaul.edu.
In addition to live events, I believe virtual events will continue on this site for the foreseeable future.

Life's most persistent and urgent question is "what are you doing for others?" -Martin Luther King, Jr.



Newly vaccinated **JOAN LAKEBRINK** joined two fully vaccinated friends to hike in Door County Wisconsin in April. A cold and fun time was had by all - lots of shore was covered by lake. In June Joan traveled to Florida to celebrate with family for the high school graduation of her youngest granddaughter - Go Bella! **LINDA CAMRAS** wrote a book for my "COVID project" entitled "*Emotional Development across the Lifespan.*" It's a grad level textbook and should be published in late 2021 or early 2022. **JEAN BRYAN** and her husband Thom Clark traveled to Colorado for 9 days in the first half of June... their inaugural post COVID air flight! They split their time between Estes Park (Visiting Rocky Mountain National Park) and spending time with family in Grand Junction. On another note, Jean took her 9-year-old grandson to a fishing clinic at Chicago's West Ridge Nature Park. And found a familiar face among the many helpful volunteers: fellow DePaul retiree **TOM MURPHY!** Small world. Prof. of Law (Emer.) **LEN CAVISE** has kept himself occupied during the pandemic by writing a book. You can find his recent publication *The Gentile's Guide to the Jewish World* on Amazon, Barnes and Noble and other sites where books are sold or at the publisher's website, outskirtspress.com. Len states that this book is no scholarly work. It's a light-hearted description of Jewish ceremonies, holidays, customs and the like along with the several hundred-word Jewish vocabularies that everybody should know. If you're a gentile who would like to know more about what it means to be Jewish in the U.S., or if you're Jewish and you just happen to have a friend who could use a little more understanding of the Jewish experience, then this book is for you. Feel free to write a short review - if you like the book. Another author in our midst is **GRACE BUDRYS** who wrote a pandemic-inspired novel now in print. It's a story set in 2031 that revolves around the dystopian reality in which we live. She states it's not a serious effort, but she enjoyed getting her angry thoughts out and on paper. The title is "Collapse of Society

According to Dick and Jane” and can be found on Amazon, Kindle, and Barnes and Noble sites. **FRANK DINELLO**, who moved to Holiday Island, Arkansas several years ago, reports that he and Ann are still enjoying the move. They have five children and 9 grandchildren, all doing well. Frank plays golf six days a week, although he reports his shots are getting shorter. Six days a week! **ANDREW SUOZZO** has moved from San Diego to Cathedral City, CA. Still avoiding snow! **DOUG CELLAR** made the big move from Elmhurst to Eugene, Oregon. He reports that they had hazardous air because of the wildfire smoke for a few weeks. If he goes up in elevation there is lots of snow and he’s encountered it going to visit his son Jack in Idaho, but he has yet to shovel snow – which he absolutely doesn’t miss! Doug moved to Eugene because he wanted to be in OR and around the things a city has to offer, but not a larger city like Portland. Also, housing is more reasonable in Eugene. He adds that there are so many outdoor places and activities that one can do year-round in OR it’s just great. Perennial traveler **MARY LU LINNANE** was in the first week of a two-week trip to Costa Rica when her trip was cut short, and the group sent home. To reward herself for this disappointment, she has now scheduled a trip to Iceland. Mary Lu was inducted into the American Association of Law Libraries Hall of Fame. Members of the Hall have at least 25 years of service and have contributed to the legal information profession and to the Association in leadership positions. **NANCY** and Bob **ROSPENDA** traveled to Ripon, WI, to view their son Mark’s art exhibit at the Ripon College Art Museum. After his exhibit closed, the Art Museum asked if they could keep two of his works for their permanent collection.

The biggest lie I tell myself is “I don’t need to write that down, I’ll remember it.”



Several DES members were kind enough to share insights into their lives during the pandemic – as per my challenge.

STACY GONZALES writes:

After my initial panic subsided when the Stay-at-Home Order was issued, I decide to take this time to be creative and resourceful with my time.

We were able to travel back and forth to our lake house, which was wonderful. We stayed safe by bringing all supplies with us so that we did not have to go to the local stores. While at our lake house we did not have to wear masks. It was lovely because while we were there we could forget about the pandemic.

I learned that I could be creative with my time and set up a routine each day to make myself feel that I accomplished something. I returned to my art which was lovely.

Doing a few online classes which were fun. I continued with my online Feldenkrais class which was on Monday evenings. I continue that even now. I found those very helpful for relaxing and focusing on awareness through movement each Monday evening. It was also fun to see others and our instructor is my sister-in-law, so it was fun seeing family too.

I joined several reading clubs and found that I was reading a lot more. I would give myself time while on the morning treadmill workout to read. Then my after lunch “quiet

time” for 20 minutes. Lovely. I have kept a journal of the books I have read, something to reflect back on. I realized that I am not a fan of Zoom but Zoom made it possible for me to stay connected with my Northbrook Civic Foundation fundraising.

Started meeting up with my sister for walks along the beach which has become a weekly thing.

As did others, I too started to cook more. I amazed myself with several things that I made including homemade tortillas, chicken pot pies and a few dessert items, like cookies and banana breads.

I kept up with having tea parties with my granddaughter. That was something we started at the beginning of the pandemic and continued. I would have to say that some good things did come out of the stay-at-home order and our Tea Parties are one of them.

BOB ACKER shared how he survived and kept his pandemic sanity.

When the entire state shut down in March 2020 my wife Alison and I were in the middle of rehearsals for two concerts which our community chorus, the Elgin Master Chorale, was preparing. We had made significant progress and were looking forward to performing some interesting choral works, only to be disappointed at the cancellation of these performances. We also had to cancel a planned choir tour to Europe (which was also postponed this year). During the shutdown we watched a lot of Netflix (along with everyone else!) as well as listened to lots of streaming audio of classical music. In the latter category we discovered some subscription concerts sponsored by a British vocal group; while we had to pay, the cost per concert was less than we would have paid for a live concert. We figured this was a good way to support the artists, who were adversely affected by the shutdown everywhere.

In the fall our choir director figured out a way to rehearse and perform safely. We were aware that singing was a dangerous activity due to the forced expulsion of aerosol droplets, but we minimized the danger by rehearsing on stage of our usual concert venue which had excellent air exchange, separated 10 feet apart, and wearing masks while singing. We had to rehearse for only 30 minutes at a time and took 15-minute breaks to allow the auditorium to have a full air exchange. Then we recorded each piece which was edited and posted on the Elgin Community College Arts Center’s Facebook page. We rehearsed and recorded three concerts this way from fall, 2020 to spring, 2021. Not one person got sick from this activity. I also participated in several virtual choirs by various groups, where each person recorded their own part and submitted the recording for compilation. Now that most of our group is fully vaccinated and the state is primed to reopen in full, we are planning to resume normal rehearsals and concerts this fall.

So, despite the shutdown we managed to keep busy and engaged with music. Thank goodness my local public library reopened so I could borrow books to read! We took one trip last summer to northern Michigan where we felt fairly safe, eating outdoors most of the time, a trip that provided a welcome break from home. We are looking forward to

getting back to a more normal routine this fall!

Yet another retiree, JOHN BRIDGES, shared.

For much of the pandemic I was somewhat paralyzed.

Last August, the horrific 8-year journey with dementia my 96 year old mother was finally ended. Though she was never COVID positive, I do believe the pandemic restrictions at her nursing home contributed to her death.

I stopped going to the gym in March 2020, which I'd been going to 5 days a week for over 5 years.

I discovered that I had some close friends and extended family members that thought directly opposite of me about the pandemic and Trumpism, and some relationships ended because of it.

I put on weight which I refer to as my pandemic pounds.

One of my sisters had a heart attack and went to the ER where they discovered she had pneumonia, needed quadruple bypass heart surgery, but had to wait till the pneumonia cleared up.

But then a few months ago, I decided to pay less attention to pandemic negatives.

Though I have not yet gone back to my gym, I now regularly (2 or 3 a day) take online classes with the Silver Sneakers program offered through Blue Cross (I would recommend this to any fellow retirees concerned with staying healthy and fit).

I bought some Great Courses classes. One was on Master Photographers. It has inspired me to save for a new camera and get more active again at taking photos.

Another class (Learning the Piano) got me to buy an electric keyboard and teach myself to play the piano! I'm currently on lesson 5 of 24 and struggling to play "When the Saints Go Marching In" in a way that actually sounds like the song.

I ride my bike around town and am once again growing some tomatoes and peppers in pots on our deck.

This August, my husband Chuck and I are going to spend some time with most of his family at Bull Shoals Lake in Arkansas, where his family has been going for decades. Chuck's dad died almost 4 years ago, and his mom has not been to the lake since then. But she's going in August and will be there with all 6 of her great-grandchildren for the first time, all born after her husband died.

I will take many photos! And who knows, I may even bring the keyboard and attempt a passable "Saints" for the group!

My sister is now fit as a fiddle and the pandemic poundage is gradually melting away.

Jessica Hallam contributes:

As cities begin to open back up things seem to be moving faster. Maybe it's just me, but it didn't take us long to get back to being in a rush again. Many are chomping at the bit to get out. I for one am taking it slow (and cautiously) enjoying more simpler things like watching birds' bathe in our bird bath, taking 3mile walks most days and listening to my favorite music, planning meals, and cooking them, reading (lots of reading) watercolor, playing my guitar, and doing some writing. All good old retirement stuff accentuated during this pandemic.

While all these things are lovely and truly enjoyed, I miss my grandchildren Mia, Annie, and Noah, the most. I have had to watch these special ones over the past months from afar. What beautiful young people they are growing up to be and so gifted with a collection of talents and interests that include cross country running, ballet, piano, violin, soccer, writing and painting among so many more. They are truly amazing and such inspirations and with great parents (daughter Kim and son-in-law, Eric) who support and encourage them.

Big news, my daughter Kim qualified for the Boston Marathon. I am so very proud of her and her commitment to running. A goal achieved that she has worked very hard for. My son Brian continues to do very well as communications manager at his place of work. Handling e-newsletters, websites, and high-level communications. Very proud of his hard work and dedication as well as his on-going inspiration of his fine guitar playing and his passion for all kinds of music.

All in all, over the past year and half, I have learned to listen more and to appreciate all that I have, taking a bit more care not to take anything for granted. Family and friends are the riches thing we can have and that even small things are meaningful.

So, as we continue this pandemic journey, I will continue to wear my mask when in public places maintaining social distancing and avoiding large crowds. And I will continue to look forward to homemade jam, or a golden homemade pound cake or fresh homemade bread that Fr. Ed Udovic makes. Truly blessed to know Ed and thankful for his kind ear during these past months.

If you haven't grown up by age 50 you don't have to.

And last but not least, some of my thoughts about what being quarantined for COVID this past year has taught me:

- That I don't have to get up at the crack of dawn. I don't even have to get up until full sun. That I don't even have to get up!
- That books are your friends. I knew that before, but hoarding books that were waiting to be read was a true bonus.
- Speaking of hoarding, my tendency to hoard toilet paper and paper towels finally paid off in spades.
- That Amazon is probably related to God because they have everything you ever wanted. And it's delivered. Mostly the next day.
- That treasures lurk in drawers, closets, basements, closets, etc. Things you have forgotten becoming new again. And bring back memories.
- That neighbors are true blessings.
- That socially distanced cocktail hours with neighbors are really fun until someone mentions the T word.
- That your hair continues to grow and grow and grow without the opportunity to go to your hairdresser to have it cut. Makes you appreciate your hairdresser even more. And you find that after a year you have a new hair color.

- That you can socially distance and visit friends, especially if they have a large screened in porch. Or a heater in their back yard.
- That you can socially distanced visit your children and grandchildren.
- That hugs are essential.
- That it's possible to celebrate a milestone, like an anniversary or a birthday, and have it be fun – and memorable. Especially when those neighbors leave a bottle of wine at your door. And your kids and grandkids come over, socially distanced, with chocolate chip cookies and balloons and signs – and presents.
- That you don't have to shave whatever you have to shave as often as you would have to shave if you were released into the public.
- That you can go into a bank with a mask on and not be arrested.
- That a Zoom meeting can be either a blessing or a curse, depending on its purpose.
- That your dress clothes collect dust. And your dress shoes. But you learn to love your sweats. And your PJ's.
- That it's good to be retired during a pandemic. Actually, it's just good to be retired.

Remember to submit your news to Nancy Rospenda, Editor, by e-mail (nrospend@depaul.edu) or snail mail – although snail mail has been reeeaaaallllly slow lately. That's why I have been allowing at least a week for birthday cards to reach celebrants. So, you may be one of the lucky ones to get your card early or on time.