

Rhode Island Jewish Community

Covid-19 Reflections



March, 2022

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Historical Association**

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2021-22

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September 20, 2021

Rhode Island Jewish Community COVID-19 Memory Book

What would you like people in the future to know about Jewish Rhode Island in the time of Covid-19?

As the keepers of Rhode Island's Jewish history these past 70 years, the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association (RIJHA) wants to preserve the community's thoughts and memories of the pandemic. Your recollections will be published in a Memory Book which will be made available to the community. The Memory Book will become a part of our archives and a resource for the future.

Here are some possible questions to consider.

- How did your Jewish life change: for example, for Shabbat, the High Holy Days, Seders, life cycle events and festivals?
- What did you find most challenging?
- What surprised you?
- What life lessons did you learn?

We also hope to document the experiences of Jewish businesses and organizations by collecting information about how these groups responded to the pandemic.

Please make your reflections fit on just one page – single space, 12 font. You may include pictures. Please provide your name, address and phone number. Only your name will be published, unless you ask to remain anonymous.

If possible, send your page electronically to office@rijha.org Subject line: Covid Reflections

Otherwise, send by US mail to
RIJHA
401 Elmgrove Ave.
Providence, RI 02906

The deadline for submission is December 1, 2021, but do it now! Be a part of RI Jewish history!

Thanking you in advance,
The Membership Committee
Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

Introduction

FOR 70 YEARS, the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association (RIJHA) has collected photographs, legal documents, books, programs and other artifacts documenting religious, social and institutional activities of Jews living and working in Rhode Island. Our extensive RIJHA archives, accessible online and in our Providence office, will now include this COVID-19 Memory Book.

We thank the book's contributors for answering this question posed by the RIJHA Membership Committee in the Fall of 2021, "how did COVID-19 affect your Jewish life?"

We asked for one-page responses, but we made an exception to that length limit for two submissions. Mel Blake was working on a travel article for another Jewish publication when he died (not of Covid), leaving a Covid narrative which we include posthumously in its entirety. Sam Zwetchkenbaum wrote from the perspective of a worker for the Rhode Island Department of Health who then later also worked for the Rhode Island Disaster Medical Assistance Team's Medical Reserve Corps. We include his longer-than-one-page essay because it provides a statewide public health context for all of the other essays in this collection.

We are grateful to each and every essay writer for making this an interesting and wide-ranging historical record! We are proud to publish this for current and future readers.

– Elizabeth Bakst *December 2021*

Membership Committee

Elizabeth Bakst, *chair*

Ruth Breindel, *trustee*

Marilyn Myrow, *trustee*

Harold Foster, *ex officio*

Kate-Lynne Laroche, *RIJHA Executive Director*

Jaime Walden, *RIJHA Office Manager, Project Coordinator*

Mel Blake

A Vacation Trip to Myanmar or “Around the World in Not 80 Days, But in 4 Days.”

PAT AND I began our long-planned vacation trip to Myanmar (formerly Burma) on Wednesday evening, January 29, 2020, with a 30-hour journey, which included plane changes and layovers in Toronto, Canada, and Guangzhou, China (formerly Canton). Our itinerary included 2 nights in Yangon (formerly Rangoon), Myanmar; 7 nights aboard a small cruise ship on the lower Irrawaddy River; 3 more nights in Yangon; a flight from Yangon to Pagan for a 3 night stay; 7 nights aboard a small cruise ship sailing from Pagan to Mandalay on the upper Irrawaddy; 3 nights in Mandalay; a flight from Mandalay to Yangon; 1 night back in Yangon; and finally a 36 hour trip back to Boston with plane changes and layovers in Guangzhou, China and New York’s Kennedy Airport. We had booked the cruises, hotel stays in Yangon, Pagan, and Mandalay, as well as the flights in, out, and within Myanmar well in advance of trip, and had paid in advance for both cruises and the hotel stay in Pagan, as well as for Myanmar Visas.

Our reasons for this vacation were that we had never been to Myanmar and that based

on a previous river cruise we had taken on the Ganges in 2018, river travel on these special-built river craft was relaxing, enjoyable, and highly educational.

Toronto The flight aboard a small WestJet Bombardier jet plane to Toronto was uneventful, but the landing was somewhat exciting. The pilot executed a “touch and go” landing (read aborted) on his first try, later explaining that it was due to a “sandy” runway....not sure what a “sandy” runway is, and I am not sure I ever want to know.

To liven things up a bit, we did not understand the loudspeaker instructions regarding luggage. We thought the luggage was checked through to Yangon, and we did not have to collect it and bring it through security. Wrong! We were supposed to claim it and bring it through security. This resulted in our being paged and having to retrace our steps back to the luggage claim hall. It was a good thing we had a 4 hour layover, as the retracing took almost 3 hours.

Together, these two were perhaps an omen of things to come.

To Guangzhou The 13 hour flight to Guangzhou was uneventful. The China Southern Boeing 777 plane was perhaps only half full. Our fellow passengers were almost all Asian, as were the flight attendants, whose English was at times difficult to understand. Food on board was not exactly appetizing – pork sandwich for snacks?? However, one does not fly for the food. I stuck with a bit of white rice and considered myself on a diet.

In Guangzhou Airport Guangzhou Airport is large. There had to be 40 to 50, maybe more, China Southern aircraft on the ground. The

“those remaining on the plane would be given the option of disembarking... if they agreed to a 14 day quarantine”

terminal at which we disembarked was very large and modern, with many shops and food establishments. We landed at 5:45 AM local time for a 3 hour 35 minute layover. Though understandably because of the early hour, there appeared to be very few people, all with masks on – we had masks as well – in the terminal. For our flight to Yangon, there were at best 4 other Caucasians. One large group of passengers consisted of Chinese men between the ages of 25 and 55 who were traveling together. My guess is that they were employed by a Chinese contractor doing work in Myanmar, and they were returning to Myanmar after visiting family for the Chinese New Year celebration. While the plane was departing from Guangzhou, there was no way of knowing what part of China they had come from... including Hupei Province (the province in which Wuhan is located) which is only a few hundred miles north of Guangzhou.

To Yangon The 3 ½ hour flight to Yangon was relatively full. We sat near the front of the back half of the plane, which seemed to be similar to a Boeing 737. Midway during the flight, there appeared to be a commotion at the rear of the plane. Questioning one of the flight attendants, we were told that a

passenger had reported or had been found to have a very high fever... oh, oh.

At Yangon Airport After landing, the plane taxied to a spot away from the terminal, and we were told we would be waiting for the arrival of Myanmar Health officials. After what seemed like an hour, three people, dressed in Haz-Mat Tyvek suits, masks, and face shields, entered the plane and went to the back of the plane where: high fever person was sitting. After approximately ½ hour, people sitting in the front half of the plane were told to exit the plane (along with the high-fever person) and taken by bus to I am not sure where. We were told by the attendants that those remaining on the plane would be given the option of disembarking in Yangon if they agreed to a 14 day quarantine, or staying on the plane to return to Guangzhou (and possibly a 14 day quarantine there). The attendants then began to collect the names, seat numbers, and passport details of the passengers remaining on the plane.

After another ½ hour, the bus, which took the passengers away from the plane, returned, and the people who had previously left re-entered the plane. Shortly thereafter, another bus arrived at the plane, and new passengers entered the plane, essentially filling the plane. The attendants advised that we all were going (back for most passengers) to Guangzhou... Myanmar officials did not wish to deal with what could be one or more cases of the Corona Virus. We were later told that Myanmar was refusing to allow any plane from China to land on its soil. In total, we probably spent 4 hours on the ground in Yangon before leaving to return to Guangzhou.

main terminal.

Given it was highly unlikely that Chinese officials would allow us to re-book a flight to Yangon or that Myanmar officials would allow entry, we decided our best course of action would be to return home. To do so, we needed to change our plane tickets. With all of the on ground delays in Yangon, by the time we arrived back in Guangzhou, all planes with onward connections to Boston had departed. So the task was to secure bookings from flights the following day (Saturday, February 1). After two very frustrating hours trying to deal with China Southern ground staff, we secured seats on a flight to San Francisco and then from San Francisco to Boston. Fortunately, there is a hotel within the security zone at the Guangzhou Airport, and we were able to book a room for the evening. Interestingly, rooms are rented by the hour (with a three hour minimum). We opted for a 9 hour stay, giving us the first opportunity in I don't know how many hours to shower... but not to change clothes or take our prescribed medication because those items were in luggage in a separate zone to which we had no access while in the security zone.

The next morning, we attempted to find a restaurant where we could eat familiar food for breakfast... no such luck. We ended up in a restaurant which appeared to be serving something we could recognize from the pictures in the menu... one chicken soup for each of us and one sirloin (beef) noodle soup to share. The chicken soup reminded me of my youth when my mother would include chicken feet in the ingredients: I had not seen chicken feet in soups for decades. As an aside, the chicken soup had no other chicken. The sirloin noodle soup was a bit different... a number of pieces of beef fat that included

very small sections of meat. At the rate of meat (meat, not fat)/bowl of this soup, a whole cow might be enough for close to a million bowls of soup. At least, it was warm and tasty.

To San Francisco Another long flight, this one seemingly filled. We may have been the only non-Chinese passengers on board. Typically, on long flights, I experience difficulty in breathing (because of COPD). On this leg of the journey, I had to request oxygen for a few minutes... the first time I have requested oxygen during a flight. Being out of breath combined with the coughing I have been experiencing since September and at times sneezing with a runny nose would later serve to cause our return to Boston to be interrupted. I did request a wheelchair upon disembarking the plane because of breathing difficulties.

In the San Francisco Airport Upon landing in San Francisco, my breathing improved but was by no means normal. After a light lunch in the airport, we boarded the plane bound for Boston. I was seated on the aisle, near the rear of the plane. When a fellow passenger took a seat next to me, partly because I wanted the room and partly in consideration, I suggested he find another seat because of my coughing and sneezing. He did.

Little did I know it, but the person sitting directly behind me was a physician/rheumatologist from Worcester – a would-be Dr. Kildare. Kildare gave me a mask to wear. He also asked where I had been. As the plane taxied to the runway, Kildare summoned a flight attendant, identifying me as a health risk to other passengers. The attendant

reported the comment to the pilot who in turn brought the plane back to the terminal. EMT's, airport police, and county health authorities entered the plane and asked me to re-enter the terminal. I was told that I could not re-enter the plane without clearance from the local representative of the Center for Disease Control (CDC). They requested the local CDC representative come to the gate to evaluate my status. While waiting for her arrival, the EMT's took blood pressure readings (higher than normal), blood oxygen levels (normal), and temperature (normal).

Once the CDC representative – a short older woman wearing a combat sweater with 4 striped epaulets – arrived, she reviewed the results of the tests and examined my appearance, concluding that I was cleared to travel. Great, except the plane captain – the ultimate authority on who can fly on his plane and who cannot – would not allow me to board. He did not want the responsibility in the event that the CDC representative had made the wrong decision... meaning Pat and I had to secure a reservation on a different, subsequent flight. Because of my reported difficulty in breathing, the coughing, and the sneezing and running nose, I was, however, given the option of going to a local hospital... which I declined. However, after making a very short walk to the men's room that resulted in my having difficulty in breathing, I changed my decision and was transported to a nearby Sutter Health Hospital for a more complete evaluation.

After a series of tests, which included x-rays and a blood workup, I was deemed suitable for travel. However, given the lateness of the hour, we were forced to find accommodations near the airport. We took a cab to a nearby hotel and checked-in. Pat then

returned to the airport to book tickets for the flight back to Boston and to collect our checked (in Boston when our journey began) luggage. Finally, we were able to take our medications and change clothes.

After a peaceful night's sleep, we departed (on Sunday February 2) for Boston, arriving during the Super Bowl halftime... the end of a very long in miles yet short in time trip which was both exhausting and frustrating... without ever having set foot in the country which we had so looked forward to visiting.

Elizabeth Bakst

WHEN WE – I and my husband Charlie – first entered Covid-19 lockdown in Rhode Island in March of 2020, we had been enjoying crowded Red Sox Spring Training baseball games in Florida, where no one was paying much attention to the deadly virus, when our daughter and her husband phoned from more-aware New Jersey and ordered us to go home to Providence, as they put it, “while planes are still flying.”

Once back in RI, our other daughter delivered groceries to our door since it was deemed unsafe for us 70-somethings to be around others inside stores. She just rang the bell and ran away as we waved our thanks to her for making the 40 minute trip from her home in Massachusetts to ours in Providence. Stay inside except for walks with only each other? Who could have imagined such a thing? Fortunately for us, both of our daughters could, and so that is what we did.

We became accustomed to life lived online. We watched weekly Shabbat services streamed from Temple Habonim in Barrington where our rabbi and our song leader led us at home from the *bemah* in an otherwise empty sanctuary. We attended a Zoomed funeral online from Shalom Memorial Chapel in Cranston, RI, in the summer of 2021. A few weeks later, we watched a Zoomed wedding where the couple stood under a *huppah* in a mostly deserted Texas backyard. Some vaccinated

and masked congregants attended High Holy Day services in person this year, but we followed 5782 Rosh Hashana services on his iPad and my iPhone. Temple Habonim lent us copies of the High Holy Day prayer books.

In 2020 we set up deliveries via Instacart and relied on Amazon. We isolated ourselves safely inside and took long walks on empty streets. The nearby deserted campus of Brown University, where we are alumni, became our private preserve in 2020. Invisible workers kept us well supplied. We will be forever grateful to those workers! We also recognize that many systemic inequities kept us safe and comfortable while others were neither. The need for *tikun olam* has never been more apparent as we slog through yet another year of Covid-19.

As I write this in the Fall of 2021 we no longer walk around the Brown campus now that it is once again buzzing with students. We do go out in the world more often now that we are vaccinated, but masks and social distancing are still a part of our lives.

The story of the Covid-19 pandemic is still unfolding. I write this not sure whether Thanksgiving 2021 or Seder 2022 will be an in-person family celebration or again take place via Zoom as we did in 2020 when family members signed in from four different states. All members of our family are vaccinated, but we are all uncertain about travel.

May the next year, 5783, allow me to write a different report!

Cynthia Benjamin

‘Seder in a Box’

I BARELY MADE IT BACK from Florida in March of 2020 in time to begin lockdown. The virus had just begun to surge in earnest, and I watched “closed by order of the governor” signs go up on restaurants and even gas stations as I drove north. But I made it.

For the first few weeks, the novelty of the situation kept me occupied. For example, even a trip to the store to pick up milk became a fraught ordeal. I would call my friends, see who needed milk too, and then one person would make the trip and drop off the jugs at friends’ homes, placing it on the stoop, ringing the doorbell and then scurrying back to the car.

Needless to say, the novelty of lockdown quickly wore off ... and gave way to boredom. This is when I began to stress about Passover and how we could celebrate during these “troubled times.”

I knew many families that were holding a Zoom seder, but I wasn’t fond of staring at a screen, and neither were my adult sons. I also didn’t like the idea of preparing the ritual foods and my sons watching, from their own homes, as I ate. So that’s when I conceived the idea of “Seder in a Box.” This had the dual advantage of helping to ensure that we all had a meaningful holiday ... and giving me

something to do.

Here’s what I learned: Making a seder for 12 is a lot easier than making three Seders in a Box.

After I created a menu and chose which haggadot I wanted to use, I began to gather supplies. I made a thorough search of the house for items I would need, both because I wanted to minimize shopping trips and, well, because I had the time.

But I still had to shop for food and other items to create the boxes. The more stores I entered, the higher the risk, so I bypassed my local Stop & Shop and headed for the one on Branch Avenue in Providence, knowing it was most likely to have all the Passover supplies I needed under one roof. Then I made one quick stop at the Dollar Tree to get the boxes (they turned out to be baskets) and plastic containers.

Cooking everything was similar to other years, but the portioning and wrapping and packing, and remembering everyone’s preferences, added a whole new dimension to the task.

On the eve of Passover, my three sons showed up, one at a time, to pick up their boxes and then stand in the driveway for a few minutes of conversation. As each child departed, my spirits sank a little lower. But I cranked up some Passover songs on the radio and managed to rally enough to enjoy my seder-for-one. And then the photos began appearing on my phone – photos of each son, and their significant others, and their beautifully appointed tables filled with Mom’s Passover cooking. As far as I was concerned, this made any amount of effort worth it.

PS: I’m happy to say, Passover 2021 was quite a different affair. Not quite normal,

but we felt safe enough to gather at my house for a hurry-up seder featuring a shorter Haggadah from Jewbelong.com. The Haggadah was a huge hit, and even though we wore masks when we weren't eating, and left every other chair empty, and broke up by 9 p.m., it felt life-affirming – and marvelous – to be together again.

“...the dual advantage of helping to ensure that we all had a meaningful holiday ... and giving me something to do.”

Ruth Breindel

PESACH 2020 comes in a totally different format. We sit at our computers, on Zoom, reading the Haggadah we downloaded and singing songs together – a family that rarely sees each other. My older son and family are in Massachusetts, and my granddaughter, as the youngest, says the Four Questions in Hebrew. My younger son, in Chicago, is present and his children, who are quite young, wander in and out. My cousin comes in from Birmingham, Alabama; I haven't seen her in person in several years. Her daughters, one in Chicago and one in New York City, Zoom in; I have seen them recently. My other cousin, in Tucson, Arizona, is there with her husband; I can't remember the last time I saw them! The service we do is tailored to our specifications, so we omit passages and add in our own. The food is there, but we each eat by ourselves. In some ways it was very good, as we, who rarely get together, had that opportunity; on the other hand, I miss the hustle and bustle of cooking and holding the family.

Pesach 2021 is totally different again. The first day is a seder with me and a friend; we have it as an afternoon tea without much food. It's a new experience for me, since without the bustle of the food, I can read through the whole Haggadah – something I have never been able to do, as I am usually in the kitchen after the meal, washing dishes, etc. I really enjoy reading it with her, and

again, doing our own service as we want to.

For the second Seder, since we are vaccinated, I can be together with some of the family, although I can't go out to Chicago, or any place by plane. Massachusetts has a ban on their residents leaving the state (how weird is that?), but I can go up there (OK, this makes no sense at all). So I travel up to that family with the soup and matzoh balls, the gefilte fish and, most important, the family-traditional walnut cake (with whipped cream and strawberries, which are the real hit with the children). Because my older son is a Rabbi, he is at services in the morning, and we all eat lunch at different times. The seder begins at 3, so that I can come home before dark. We call it a Seder Tea (you're getting the picture of what we like to do) – we eat the traditional foods I brought, along with their two types of charoseth, and the cake, of course (we tried to make a pineapple upside down cake with matzoh flour, but that was a disaster and wound up in the compost!). Again my granddaughter does a great job with the Four Questions, and we all play with the little green frogs I have brought (from Dollar Tree, my favorite store for this type of thing). The service is again pared down to the attention span of the kids (not to mention the adults) and it is a wonderful time. This is as it should be – family together in person.

What will 2022 be like? It's not in our hands...

U.S. Rep. David N. Cicilline

RI First Congressional District

THE PANDEMIC resulted in a dramatic change in my daily life and for nearly everyone I know. Most events and special occasions were routinely cancelled because it was not safe to congregate in large groups. As an elected official, this was a very difficult change. Daily interactions with constituents in a variety of settings is critical to my work – knowing what’s on people’s minds, what are they worried about? What would they like me to focus my work on, etc. This valuable source of constant feedback and guidance from those I serve was suddenly gone.

The Jewish High Holy Days are my most beloved moments in synagogue. We were not permitted to attend in person and participated through Zoom. They were beautiful services with exquisite music from Cantor Seplowin but still something is missing when you are doing this from home. I dressed up for each of the services, even though no one could see the participants because it was a webinar. It was the High Holy Days, after all. The silver lining was that my mother, who lives in Nar-

*“...the daily interactions
with constituents...[were]
suddenly gone.”*

ragansett and for whom it is very difficult to travel to Providence, was able to join us for services this year.

I, like so many others, also lost loved ones from the deadly virus. The pandemic was a source of tremendous fear and loss for so many. I found myself wondering: will we ever return to our normal lives without masks, constant testing and vaccines and no longer in fear of variants? In some ways, I’ve come to recognize that certain things are not within our control. We can mitigate risks and try to protect our family and friends and others in the community, but we don’t control the precise way a public health crisis unfolds.

All through these dark days, I was fortified by the caring and commitment of members of my congregation to help others any time they could, and reminded of the incredible strength and resilience of the Jewish community in Rhode Island.

Ellen Fingeret

Hadassah Rhode Island

HADASSAH Rhode Island programs and activities provide members with opportunities to learn and to connect with one another as we support Hadassah initiatives. These activities are designed to inspire members to strengthen their partnership with Israel, ensure Jewish continuity, and realize their potential as a dynamic force in the US.

In March of 2020, when the effects of COVID-19 began to be evident, we supported over 200 of our oldest members through phone outreach. We knew it was also important to continue providing meaningful activities for everyone, which continued to focus on Hadassah's goals.

We discovered we were also strengthening our ties to the Hadassah Southern New England Region (SNE) and Hadassah National. Our Book Club moved from a monthly in person meeting at Books on the Square to a monthly Zoom meeting. Members who traveled to seasonal homes continued to join us, we utilized the region's weekly email messaging (a Shabbat Shalom) and we found new friends throughout the Region who joined us each month. In turn, our members joined other Chapters' events and Book Clubs.

General membership activities became virtual, beginning with a "Virtual Summer Bash" in the summer of 2020 to support efforts by the Hadassah Medical Organization to meet the cost of crisis care of Covid-19 patients at

the Hadassah Hospital at Ein Kerem.

Our members participated in Hadassah online programs such as author talks and book clubs, we joined programs for Women's Empowerment, Culture and History, and Medicine and Research. Hadassah Rhode Island followed up "Treasures of the Hadassah Archives" by partnering with two other SNE Chapters with a January 2021 program entitled, "Our Cookbooks-Our Memories" raising more than enough money to equip a state-of-the-art hospital room at Hadassah Hospital at Ein Kerem, Jerusalem. Another partnership with SNE Chapter in October, 2021, "A Virtual Tenement Museum Tour" raised money for Youth Aliyah in Israel.

Members joined an exercise challenge, "Every Move Counts," supporting woman's health equity access and education initiatives. In Rhode Island we also "Took It Outside" and explored Sachuest National Wildlife Area.

This year, as we did last year, we will celebrate Hannukah online. Last year we shared our hanukkiah and our Hannukah memories; this year we will explore celebrations of the holiday in various cultures and world regions.

COVID has taught us to pivot online, to take advantage of virtual programming, and demonstrate Hadassah's "Power of Women Who."

Mike Fink

THERE IS a ghostly/ghastly quality about the COVID culture. People avoid each other, rudely (I think) tell you to raise your mask higher, and reject a handshake...I know, I know, but still! You ask and I'm honestly reporting how I feel. "Stay Safe" is hardly a blessing, it's a warning to stay away! I DID enjoy sharing the tent with the little kids (including a grandchild on my lap) for the High Holidays, and the guest Rabbi was a wonder of tact and genuine showmanship, making even Yom Kippur available to tots, a miracle in itself, as I said to him after the ceremony. I did NOT like seeing the temple closed up, echoing a past, not a present or future, alas. So my yahrzeit candles became central and important for me. It's how I can summon up the spirits of aunts and uncles, cousins and grand-parents, and I like being a bit superstitious, "Chassidic" believing in wee wonders, miniature miracles, "nonsense" that abuts poetry itself. Well, challenging of course, but surprising? I'm a friendly soul, I like to think of myself, but I am astonished a bit by my loneliness, my sense of solitude. It's not a curse, no, and I can enjoy my own company, but still! It's too much, and as for "lessons", I guess I could claim that walking around the block really is NOT a bore but I DO miss the occasional conference at some distance that could stretch my world a bit wider. Yes "penned in" is by no means altogether

unpleasant but since you ask, yes, I do miss my journeys and adventures, and at my age it is even scary, because you need to escape from yourself to restore your memories as they change context as well as content. Any good part? YES!!! my grandson was born and got the name "Noah" (who saves his family and the whole world, every creature within it) and the middle name of my late brother "Charles" who represents strength and, for me, also art....so that is the surprising life lesson, "it's an ill wind that blows no good" I forget where that phrase comes from, but it says it all. The COVID is a test of our inner resources and our overly human-centered focus on our species, when don't forget our Maker blessed ALL his creatures and smiled with satisfaction at the handiwork.....enough for now

"...seeing the temple closed up, echoing a past, not a present or future, alas."

Harold & Sara Foster

MY WIFE SARA has been teaching Sunday School at Temple Habonim in Barrington, RI for over 25 years. Helping our youngest students learn Jewish Holiday customs and history through crafts and activities is very rewarding to her. Temple Habonim is more than a place of worship, it is also a place of community and learning. It is a special place for us, a true sanctuary, a place Sara calls her “happy place.”

All of this changed in the Spring of 2020 when the pandemic began to rage. The synagogue was closed and classes were cancelled. Pivoting and adapting wisely was paramount for every business and organization. This was no different at Temple Habonim. Wanting to maintain a connection to school age families, Temple Habonim began to offer Zoom classes to families of religious school age students. Sara was assigned teaching “Jewish cooking from generation to generation” even though the technology necessary was out of her comfort zone. Families purchased the necessary ingredients beforehand and everyone cooked together on Sunday morning, led by Sara.

This turned out to be a win for both Sara and me. She was able to connect with the students she cared so much about and I was able to enjoy kasha varnishkes, an Israeli couscous dish and others with my favorite being the potato kugel. Thankfully as we end 2021, all are back in the classroom.

George Goodwin

YES, the COVID pandemic has inconvenienced my family, but we cannot complain. Too many others have suffered, and I believe that our federal government and right-wing fanatics are partially to blame.

Betsey and I love to travel, so we often took two trips abroad each year and a third to visit my siblings and other relatives in Los Angeles. During the past two years, we haven't flown or taken trains anywhere. This also means, for example, that last year I missed my 50th college reunion near Chicago and the rescheduled reunion this year.

Most of my journeys have consisted of daily walks around my East Side neighborhood, which I greatly enjoy. I take thousands of digital photos of nature and architecture and then mount hundreds of prints in my scores of albums. With the East Side Y being closed during much of the pandemic, I did miss many of my longtime exercise buddies- Jews and Gentiles alike. Whatever the temperature, my dear friend, Mike Fink, and I continued to meet outdoors for coffee on Wayland Square.

For years I led the Wednesday minyan at Temple Beth-El, but I'm not much interested in participating in Zoom services. I did remain active as chair of the Temple's library committee, helping select wonderful books for its huge collection. Given my bookish ways, I have also read more novels, mysteries, and

biographies than ever. I've written several articles and completed two issues of *The Notes* far ahead of schedule. Of course Rabbi Yehoshua Laufer of Chabad pounds on my front door to summon me to his minyan, and I go reluctantly, but only when a service is held outside.

Our daughter, Molly, and our granddaughter, Chloe, lived with Betsey and me for nearly three months so they would not catch germs from Adam's pediatric patients in Brooklyn. If extremely hard for Molly's family, it was mostly a treat for Betsey and me. Our grandson, Ben, was born in Brooklyn in November of 2020, literally a few hours after Betsey's father passed away. Already helping out in Brooklyn, she was unable to attend Norman's graveside funeral, so I traveled alone to Andover, Massachusetts, and spoke on behalf of our family.

Our son, Michael, was transferred by his company from Mexico City to Washington, DC, and is now in Houston. We're hoping to visit him there next year.

Alas, the only person I know who passed away due to COVID or its complications was my dear friend, David Gitlitz, a widower, who had built a new home in Oaxaca, Mexico. But there have probably been others.

I am most grateful to the Almighty for protecting my family and most of our loved ones. Grateful for every moment, we feel profoundly blessed.

Adam Greenman

CEO Jewish Alliance of RI

EACH OF US has moments in our life that are burned into our memory. For me, March 13, 2020 is one of those dates. I remember the pit in my stomach trying to decide whether or not to shut down the Dwares JCC. I remember our entire leadership team sitting in my office and having a split between the staff about whether or not to shut down. I remember at the moment saying we would wait on the Governor. And then I remember the next morning when I said, with or without the Governor's blessing, we need to shut down the Dwares JCC and think about how we shepherd the community through whatever comes next.

I spoke that Saturday with a member of the community who is a friend of mine, and fellow nonprofit CEO. He said to me, "Closing is the easy part. Figuring out when to reopen is going to be a much harder decision." He was right. There were so many things running through my mind in those early days. How do we take care of ill community members and those who were affected by the loss of a job? How do we take care of our agencies and synagogues who are trying to figure out how to navigate things? How do we reassure staff that we will be there for them? What will the future look like? That doesn't even count the things I thought about relating to my family and how we were going to get through things.

In the end, what has always propelled our strong, vibrant community continued to do so. We worked together. We all pivoted together, getting online programs and services up and running. We supported each other, and members of our community in need. We quickly raised \$250,000 for our community, and we began meeting the immediate needs people had. I shifted my own way of doing things, delivering weekly video messages to the community to be a constant in lives that were turned upside down. As the pandemic dragged on, we helped bring experts to our community agencies and synagogues to help them figure out how to safely gather for the high holidays, on how to restart the delivery of in-person programs and events.

Eventually the pit in my stomach subsided. My weekly messages moved back to every two weeks, though the new format stuck. As of this writing we are not yet through the pandemic. However, two things are clear to me. First, the world we emerge into will be different than the one we experienced before the pandemic. Perhaps more importantly though, while the world may look different, and while how we bring community together may change, our strong, vibrant Jewish community in Rhode Island will not. The same spirit that has kept our people going for generations will continue. I am deeply honored and humbled to have played a role in making that a reality.

Jeff Ingber

IN EARLY MARCH of 2020 my life was heading in a great direction. I had a child graduating from High School and a College Graduation that coming June. My family was going on a cruise to the Caribbean to celebrate over the summer and I was getting ready to accept a job that had landed square in my lap. When Covid 19 found its way to NY, its epicenter was a Jewish Community in Westchester County. Its other epicenter was Yeshiva University where I had a graduating senior in its Women's Division. I was summoned to NYC on the Sunday before St. Patrick's Day to pick up my daughter, whose college was closing its dorms. One kid home. On March 13th, in the middle of my son's final High School performance at Classical High School, the show was interrupted, the house lights were turned on and the show ended mid performance. Providence Schools closed. 2 kids home.

“I was thankful that my friends chose weekly zoom sessions to check in with each other from across the globe.”

The following week my friend called and asked if I had any free time. He was desperate for an extra set of hands in his High End Kosher meat business. Since Passover was 2 weeks away and Covid had basically shut down New York City, he was desperate. Soo....back to NYC I went. I spent 3 days, 18 hours a day, dressed in an Eskimo suit working in a freezer helping my friend meet his orders and helping kosher consumers have Kosher for Passover meat in time for the holidays.

1 week later, both my daughter, son and I were all home on couches with Covid. We were all able to get tested as the testing site at McCoy stadium had opened just 2 days earlier. My wife Marcie, miraculously did not get sick. But she bore the burden of completely preparing for Passover by herself. Passover was simple. We all barely stayed awake to make a Seder and eat soup. Thus began a cycle of just the 4 of us working, eating, studying, teaching and everything else from our dining room, living room and bedrooms for the next 3 months.

Takeaways:

- It's ok to go simple. Instead of Seders and Holiday meals for 20...Meals for 4 are just fine if they are shared with love and good intentions
- I was saddened that both of my kids did not have a graduation ceremony and that our family vacation celebrating these accomplishments was cancelled.
- I found the variety of reactions from local Jewish agencies concerning. I was perplexed that some synagogues remained open during the first weeks of the pandemic while others closed.

- I was thankful that my friends chose weekly zoom sessions to check in with each other from across the globe
- My home delivery fresh fish business was thriving because people refused to go to grocery stores. It was remained twice as busy as it was prior to the pandemic
- My father can lead Shabbat Services on Zoom. Who knew?
- A family pre-seder on zoom is a bad idea. People want to sing different melodies to the same song. it does not work

Lessons Learned:

- There is a reason Doctors wear masks in Surgery and the ER
- Smart people say smart things and stupid people say stupid things
- Money does make the world go round
- When faced with adversity, people can do amazing things to help people
- You are entitled to your opinion. Just remember that it is yours and please do not try to force it on me
- When the world is in crisis...little things really do not matter.

Marilyn Kagan

AT FIRST, I was astounded at how quiet the streets were. but it was really nice. This street had been heavily trafficked.

Then came the ability to order food online and have it appear at my door. I felt like royalty – a click, and what I wanted appeared within hours.

Then the invention of Zoom came about, by a hidden genius, and the world opened up. I have a weekly meeting with an old friend who lives in Toronto.

My synagogue also had a couple of tours of Israel on Zoom, which were great fun.

I attend morning services without having to wear shoes, and I'd never gone to services that early before. That's too early in person.

We have a member who attends each morning who lives in Guatemala. She was able to say kaddish for her Providence aunt, joined a discussion group, and is part of us now.

If I don't attend services now, they'll worry about me, just because I hit 90, so it's a way to check in and reassure everyone that I'm alive.

Because of the virus, I've attended the High Holiday services on Zoom two years in a row, and all other services and celebrations on Zoom as well.

I think that we in the daily minyan are now friends.

I've attended birthday and anniversary

celebrations on Zoom, and even a 90th birthday celebration for me.

I'm the coordinator of the Hadassah book club, and our meetings are on Zoom. We even have people who are located out of town, thanks to Zoom.

My other book group, Women of Brown, is also on Zoom, and people who are far away are able to join.

Going to a supermarket for the first time in almost two years was a real thrill. I could pick out what I really wanted.

Taking a bus and transferring to another was strange after all that time, and I got into the wrong bus, which took me to the end of the line and back.

There are so many activities now on Zoom, that sometimes I forget to attend one, but I've learned that it doesn't matter. There's always another one.

Even though my world is small now, except for ventures like walking to CVS or meeting a friend in the outdoor garden of a coffee shop, it's become relaxing, and it's a larger world because of Zoom.

Marilyn Kaplan

Time of the Pandemic

WHEN Stephen and I departed for a cruise of the Panama Canal on February 24, 2020 I had some trepidation, but it was the culmination of a long anticipated dream and we had received great reassurances from the cruise company. We were told that all potential Chinese passengers had been excluded from the cruise, there would be health checks of all passengers before boarding and all precautions would be taken. So – I ordered a box of masks from Amazon and embarked with enthusiasm.

As anticipated, the trip was wonderful and the thrill of traversing the Panama Canal did fulfill my dream. In the final days of our trip, things gradually changed. There were small indications, such as the replacement of the open buffet by masked and gloved servers allocating portions from behind a counter. By the time we docked in San Diego on March 12, we knew that it was urgent for

*“I have spent lots of time
in the kitchen and mastered
many new recipes.”*

us to get safely home in a hurry. Instead of leisurely touring the city, we spent hours masked, waiting in the airport. Once safely home, we only ventured out for groceries on March 13 and then returned home for more than a year of lockdown.

While the weather was warm, we enjoyed outdoor meals at local restaurants, walks in our neighborhood and (socially distanced) time with family and neighbors on our porch and at our condo swimming pool. As the pandemic intensified and the weather grew cooler, we rarely left the house – ordering groceries from Instacart, and welcoming deliveries from CVS and meals from Door Dash and Uber Eats. After about ten months of missing our family in Israel, we were treated to a visit from our daughter and son, who traveled to the U.S. and quarantined at a local Airbnb so they could visit with us. Again, in the summer of 2021, as we continued to cautiously remain in Rhode Island, our entire family returned to celebrate our 60th anniversary with us.

During this time, I have spent lots of time in the kitchen and mastered many new recipes. I have become reasonably adept at Zoom, which became my lifeline to the outside world. Zoom enabled me to have extended contact with my Temple Habonim religious community. I regularly attended Friday night Shabbat services, Thursday Lunch and Learn classes, and Saturday morning Torah study and Torah Wisdom classes through Zoom and YouTube. My Jewish knowledge and observance has been significantly enriched by those experiences. In addition, I have hosted and attended multiple classes in the Rhode Island Life Long Learning Collaborative community; met with my book group; visited with

family and had regular meetings with college classmates.

As I write this in November of 2021, somewhat secure with our vaccinations and booster shots, my husband and I are looking forward to visiting with our family in Israel. We are grateful for our health and ready to reengage with the world.

W. Robert Kemp

THE FIRST TIME I really felt a sense of deprivation by the pandemic was in April 2020 when my wife, Lois, and I were unable to celebrate Passover with our family. In addition to the traditional “Next year in Jerusalem,” we hoped for next year at a family Seder.

Another casualty of the pandemic from my Jewish perspective was the impact on The Ruach Singers, a small *a cappella* singing group formed at Temple Habonim in 2011 and with which I had been singing since its inception. About ten of us sang African-American spirituals, protest songs, and songs from the Jewish and other religious traditions. We had to suspend our in-person rehearsals and performances because of the transmissibility of the virus, especially by singing. We did the best we could to continuing meeting by Zoom, which, unfortunately, didn't work very well for singing together. But with the assistance of Rafi Wolfson, the son of our founder and leader, Diane Minasian, we were able to produce separate videos of each of us singing our respective parts for *Olam Chesed Yiboneh* (I will build a world from love) by Rabbi Menachem Creditor, which Rafi combined into a lovely tribute to Rabbi Andy Klein at the last service he conducted at Temple Habonim in Barrington before his retirement June 30, 2020.

In many ways, our Jewish lives were enriched during the pandemic. My wife, Lois, and I

found that we were attending Shabbat services every single week (streaming on-line), which is something we had never done before in more than 40 years of married life.

Through the pandemic miracle of Zoom, we also were able to study *Pirke Avot* with our new rabbi at Temple Habonim, Rabbi Howard Voss-Altman, continuing a “Lunch and Learn” tradition Lois had enjoyed in person with Rabbi Howard's predecessor, Rabbi Klein. We also were able to participate in Torah study with Rabbi Howard nearly every week, something we also had never done; and in both Lunch and Learn and Torah Study we met with partially overlapping sets of Jewish friends.

During the pandemic, we kept in touch with our three children and their spouses and our four grandchildren on-line, and we followed the progress of the grandchildren in videos sent to us by our children. In one especially hysterical video, our little four-year-old grandson, who was attending a Jewish pre-school, explained to his father, who was making the video, how the Jewish people received the Ten Commandments. According to our grandson, “*Moses wanted to get them the Ten Rules and he went to Mount Sigh-a-nigh and got the Ten Rules and stayed for a long time and they made a golden cow and they prayed to the cow and when he came back he said 'why are you doing monkey business?' And then he ripped the Ten Rules apart and then the Jewish people from Egypt said 'Moses, I won't do it anymore,' and he went back to Mount Sigh-A-Nigh and he did the same thing and got different rules and then when he went back they broke the cow and they could do what they want but just not monkey business. And that was it, good-bye!*”

WHEN I ATTENDED the joyous *Purimspiel* at Temple Habonim on March 9, 2020, I never dreamt that it would be the last time that I would be at the temple to participate in a religious event in person until 2022. We had heard of Covid 19 at that point, but were unaware of how very much and for how very long our lives would be changed by it.

I was co-chair of the Transition Committee at the temple, and we had already been meeting and planning for the transition of Rabbis due to take place on July 1. Over the course of the next few months, we made and revised plans, then re-revised those plans as the Covid situation worsened. We finally had to resort to virtual means to celebrate our beloved Rabbi Andy Klein. It was heartbreaking for all of us not to be able to honor him as he so greatly deserved. Temple Habonim volunteer extraordinaire, Michael Blane, set up virtual platforms (yay to Zoom and streaming services) for us to carry out some of our plans.

We also had to find ways to welcome our new rabbi, Rabbi Howard Voss-Altman, into the Temple Habonim community. The committee was eager to give Rabbi Howard the opportunity to share his warmth and desire to interact with his congregants on a personal level, despite the pandemic. Rabbi Howard worked with us to create ways to meet the

“Over the course of the next few months, we made and revised plans, then re-revised those plans as the Covid situation worsened.”

congregants in small groups on Zoom (unmasked) and outdoors in our courtyard in person (masked). Meeting in the courtyard led to two committee members realizing that the temple could use new plantings, and a Garden Club was formed!

My husband Bob and I enjoyed Friday night services, but did not attend every Erev Shabbat – that is, until the lockdown. We started streaming every Friday, and have hardly missed a service. I had already been a “regular” at Lunch & Learn from the time that I retired in 2013. Once it switched to Zoom, Bob joined in, too. When Rabbi Howard introduced weekly Torah Study on Saturday mornings, we started attending that, as well. We now had regular temple activities on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays! These weekly temple events helped to anchor me during this otherwise difficult time, when I couldn’t visit family and friends in person. Despite being on Zoom, I have gotten to know some of the participants who I didn’t know very well before, and feel even closer to those who I already knew. In addition, Bob and I attended evening adult ed classes on Zoom conducted by the rabbi and other temple members, participating in enjoyable, meaningful, and thought-provoking discussions.

I have always been told that we Jews are a resilient and resourceful people, and I feel that Temple Habonim's adaptations to the Covid situation have proven this to be true. I don't feel that I've sacrificed anything religiously or spiritually; if anything, I feel more connected to my Judaism than ever. Temple activities gained in importance, and have allowed me to learn more about my religion and myself – and all from the comfort of my home. (I do have to admit, however, that nothing beat those first hugs with my children and grandchildren after vaccinations allowed us to see each other in person again.)

Rabbi Emeritus Andrew F. Klein

Temple Habonim

לְעוֹלָם יִהְיֶה אָדָם כִּי בְקָנָה וְאֵל
יִהְיֶה קָשָׁה כְּאַרְז

*A person should always be soft like
a reed and not hard like a cedar.”*

– Talmud Bavli, Ta’anit 20b

WE JEWS are resilient people; we always have been...sometimes out of choice, and sometimes out of necessity. At certain points in our history we have chosen to be flexible because of our desire to thrive in a constantly changing world. Other times we were forced to change in order to face challenging circumstances. Either way, our survival over the millennia has required us to be adaptable while still holding fast to our core beliefs. Finding creative ways to keep the essence of our traditions alive has been one of our people's strongest features.

This has certainly been the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. As COVID encroached on the lives of people across the globe, Jews and non-Jews alike, our Temple Habonim community was forced to quickly find new and unparalleled ways to gather, pray and remain connected as a congregation.

In this spirit, the “Zoom-Mitzvah” was born. We didn’t complain or bemoan our fate ... ok,

perhaps a little in the beginning! Soon thereafter, however, we got to work as one community with strong bonds and found ways to celebrate the important rite of passage of *B’not Mitzvah* with our young people and their families.

Did you know that you can buy a miniature (non-kosher) Torah at Amazon.com? Well you can. We purchased a portable Torah for families to utilize as they created sacred worship space in their homes. Living rooms became sanctuaries adorned with flowers, a make-shift Ark, *siddurm* and *tallitot*, reverence for our tradition and of course, lots of love.

We practiced streaming the service with the skillful guidance of tech savvy congregants, and before you knew it, we were celebrating the “Zoom-Mitzvah.” Families near and far joined together virtually. Loved ones who may not otherwise have been able to travel and attend the service in person prayed side by side with those who were present. Our young people and their families were flexible and remarkable. They didn’t bend and snap like a cedar; they swayed softly and gently like a reed as they took their place in *shalshet ha-Kabbalah*, the chain of our tradition in a new and innovative way.

The services were deeply moving - transformative for the students, their families and our congregation. Our youth joined the ranks of countless young adults throughout the ages as they became young adults in the eyes of the Jewish people, now learned and able to lead a Jewish worship service.

Ingenuity in hand, the heart of our Temple Habonim community is strong and intact. I am proud to have been part of leading our people at the beginning of this complex time. Together, we found ways for our

Jewish *neshumas*, our souls and spirits, to thrive and shine.

We are strong and resilient people. We are soft and flexible. We are Jews.

Kate-Lynne Laroche

RIJHA Executive Director

ON SATURDAY March 14, 2020, the Jewish Alliance sent out a notice that as of Sunday March 15th, a decision had been made to close the building for a week in an effort to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. When we left the office on Friday the 13th of March, we did not know that we would not return to the office until the beginning of June. The two week “pause” that many Rhode Island businesses planned, turned into almost three months; for some, it was even longer.

We very quickly gained approval to work from home and set up our at home work stations. Thankfully, our IT help, my husband Derek, was able to set up remote access to our computers in the office. This allowed us to have access to everything but the physical archive. Our Office Manager, Jaime, coordinated with the JCC maintenance staff to pick up any mail we got, and to check any phone messages once a week. We sent out a newsletter to let our members know what was going on, and promised to work on some initiatives that would give them access to some of the regularly used genealogical material in the archive.

The first thing we did was make our collection of digitized newspapers available on the RIJHA website, www.rijha.org. We also made our obituary collection – over 12,000 of them – accessible through the website. Our digital

initiatives seemed fruitful as we regularly got research requests in throughout 2020. It also likely helped that the better part of the Rhode Island workforce was home working, and in turn had the time to go through their basements and attics to find family treasures, and ask us to assist them in making some headway in their genealogical quests.

Another project we worked on during COVID was a collaboration effort with several other New England based Jewish history organizations. We created the New England Jewish History Collaborative (NEJHC) and over the course of about two years, from 2019-2021, put a resource website and webinar together that launched on January 21st of this year. This collaborative effort has thus far been done virtually, and we hope 2022 will allow us to finally meet in person to continue creating content that spreads awareness about the Jewish community in New England.

This year has brought us back into the office, where committee meetings have thus far been held in person, but annual meetings are held online via Zoom. Earlier this month, we held our Fall Meeting via Zoom and presented another digital initiative, the Jewish Rhode Tour – which is also accessible through the RIJHA website, to our members. In a world that is continuing to move toward doing things online and virtually, we still hope to have in person events, when it is safe to do so: who knows when that will be.

Rabbi Sarah Mack

Temple Beth El, Providence, RI

THE PAST EIGHTEEN MONTHS have been an exercise in essentialism. We have had to make critical decisions about every aspect of our lives down to how we safely do our grocery shopping. And while all of the assessment of risk is exhausting, it is also a moment for bold consideration of what is most important to us. Things that seemed essential at one time diminished in importance when we truly had to focus on the fundamentals.

Our Jewish lives were no different. We celebrated and mourned and learned the incredible power of our sacred rituals. The brides and grooms who gathered with their immediate families, the b'nei mitzvah families who saw grandparents offer aliyot over zoom, the mourners who shared memories at zoom shivas will all attest to that. Many times, it wasn't what we had dreamed of,

but we were still transported by our tradition to comfort and joy.

What is most amazing to me, is that when we strip away the details we are left with only what is truly essential. One parent who celebrated a bar mitzvah of his youngest child shared his extraordinary wonder and joy. This time he could truly focus on his son and celebrate him growing in maturity before his eyes.

Temple Beth-El's daily minyan has also been exercise in meaning. With the able leadership of Lynn Rakatansky we have gathered mourners daily on zoom throughout the pandemic. Together we have held memories in our hearts and walked towards blessing. Family members are able to say Kaddish together across time zones. This daily gathering has shed light on what is truly essential.

This pandemic has taught us that more isn't necessarily more.

*"we have held memories
in our hearts and walked
towards blessing...able to say
Kaddish together across time
zones. This... has shed light
on what is truly essential."*

Jessica Murphy

Jewish Collaborative Services

ON MARCH 17, 2021, we shut the door to Jewish Collaborative Services (JCS) headquarters located at 1165 N. Main Street and immediately began assessing needs, identifying the most immediate and appropriate responses, and efficiently reassuring our community through regular communication that JCS was still here to help. Shutdowns and social distancing made it difficult and at some points impossible for many of our established programs to continue their work. Many programs were completely overhauled, creating new models of service that established efficient and contactless support for all clients. Almost immediately, our programs and in-person events met virtually, and staff became ZOOM experts. Words will never be enough to express the gratitude and appreciation felt toward our staff members, volunteers, and donors who stood by us with determination and flexibility and made all these transitions possible.

Amid the pandemic, JCS continued to support our community in extraordinary ways. Our Nutrition Program, consisting of the Kosher Senior Café, Meals on Wheels, and Shalom Apartments Meal site, distributed over 29,000 meals to seniors. The Kosher Food Pantry distributed over 8,000 bags of groceries to individuals and families. The Senior Café began meeting via Zoom. Even now, the Senior Café and Meals on Wheels

continue to meet daily on Zoom to enjoy lunch together and socialize. At the onset of the pandemic, JCS established a Waves initiative which provided food (and personal items) to over 750 households, representing 1,023 individuals who received food and personal care items across four distributions, or "waves", throughout the year.

Keeping our residents at The Phyllis Siperstein Tamarisk Assisted Living Residence (Tamarisk) and Shalom Apartments was a top priority for JCS. Tamarisk and Shalom kept all the residents safe by following the mandated guidelines from the Department of Health. From the beginning to now, Tamarisk remained covid free, and has never let their guard down while still celebrating life with socially distanced activities and opportunities to socialize. Shalom Apartments, treated all touch points with patented *Sani Shield*. It creates an invisible surface interruption which greatly minimizes bacteria and virus from 'sticking' to surfaces and transferring by touch. The application is effective for one year and will be reapplied each year.

The Pandemic changed the face of mental health in our Counseling Center. After switching to Telehealth in April 2020, the Counseling Center at JCS held over 2,000 counseling sessions via telehealth. We quickly learned that this platform would help our community well beyond the pandemic by reaching clients who have a hard time traveling and found telehealth allowed more people access to health care from their own safe and comfortable space. JCS will carry forward with telehealth, as well as zoom programming and meetings, to improve operations and delivery of services to clients.

Despite the pandemic, donations from individuals and foundations continued to play a critical role. The relief act by the government helped us tremendously, as well. Due to the Cares Act and the Payment Protection Program (PPP) we were able to secure monetary aid and close our FY2020-21 in better shape than initially anticipated. As we moved into FY2022, we looked to reduce expenses as the pandemic continued to drag on.

Now, nearly two years after many of our programs pivoted and established new ways to interact and support clients, the pandemic continues to affect our short and long-term decisions. We acted quickly to show clients we were still here for them, and we continue to prepare for any ramifications covid may bring in the years to come.

COVID-19 Memories

Alan Rosenberg

OF COURSE, everything changed in the era of COVID-19.

The essence of some important things, though, didn't.

I was executive editor of *The Providence Journal* for the first several months of the pandemic. When we left the newsroom at the end of the day on Friday, March 13, 2020, we took our computers with us – our company had decided we would be out of the office, working remotely, for “the next couple of weeks.”

Most Journal staffers are still working from home a year and a half later.

Journalism relies on collaboration. Reporters, editors and producers constantly brainstorm, share information, look together at photos and videos to assess their worth.

We didn't know how well we could do this online. The answer turned out to be: surprisingly well. Our scheduled meetings transitioned easily, and other conversations could be held spontaneously via text, chat, video or phone. Perhaps as importantly, unwanted distractions could be ignored.

What couldn't be done as well remotely was the actual reporting. There's no substitute for being in the same place, seeing and hearing and smelling and tasting what's going on, the people you're covering, the event you're writing about. So our reporters and photographers masked up and got out there as Rhode

Island erupted in protests over race-related killings, high on the list of 2020's non-COVID events.

I salute these hardy, brave professionals who have kept Rhode Island informed.

My Jewish life changed as well. My synagogue, Providence's Temple Beth-El, went remote, and services were held online.

While more convenient, these services seemed less rewarding; beyond the High Holy Days, I attended few.

But my family's Friday nights have long centered on our dinner table, where candles, wine and my wife's wonderful homemade challah are always the centerpieces. With two of our three adult children living with us, we were able to maintain our Shabbat traditions. And our older son, in Los Angeles, and my sister in Chicago joined us virtually for Pesach, which they hadn't before -- an unexpected reward.

Life-cycle events were tougher to navigate. My best friend's daughter married in Boston. My wife and I watched the ceremony via Zoom, but didn't attend the reception, held indoors when we were avoiding indoor events. Our ex-sister-in-law's father died and the funeral was graveside, rather than in a funeral home; we hesitated, but went.

At the height of the pandemic, the company that owns *The Journal* – wracked with COVID-caused advertising losses and the high costs of a merger – offered a buyout, and I took it. So my world changed again, as I left the full-time work force for a new venture helping nonprofits tell their stories.

Now, with the Delta variant rising, I watch with both hope and anxiety as the pandemic's story continues to be written.

Sandy Rosenberg

MARCH 1, 2020 fell on a Sunday. My husband and I were driving up to Dedham, Mass. to be with my closest friend on her 76th birthday. Although we had made the trip from Providence on the previous Sunday, I knew that it might be her last birthday; it was important to me to be with her. When the hourly news interrupted Boston's classical music station, we listened as one of the newscasters reported on two Rhode Island high school students who returned from a class trip to Italy with a virus that was rapidly spreading throughout that country.

On Wednesday, March 11, we were again heading north on Rte. 95, never imagining that life as we knew it would change dramatically just two days later. By Friday the 13th, our son would be cancelling The Rashi School's 8th grade trip to Israel, and we would be cancelling our plans to attend a bat mitzvah the next morning. By the first night of Passover, which was just three weeks later, we were hastily putting together a plan to be with our two children and their families for an online Seder.

Our granddaughter, Clara Engels, was scheduled to have her bat mitzvah at Congregation Dorshei Tzedek in Newton, Mass, right after Passover on Shabbat Shemini. The weeks before the bat mitzvah were filled with uncertainty. Could the service take place in the Dorshei Tzedek sanctuary? How many of the

invited guests would be allowed to attend? As the day grew closer, the plans changed almost daily. In the end, my daughter Karen drove to Dorshei Tzedek to meet Rabbi Toba Spitzer and to bring Dorshei Tzedek's Torah back to their apartment in Cambridge. Being an "RK" (Rabbi's kid) proved helpful as Rabbi Spitzer, Karen and Clara created a truly meaningful service that was shared virtually by almost 200 viewers on three continents.

Closer to home, Temple Habonim in Barlington had planned several Spring 2020 events to honor Rabbi Andrew Klein on his retirement; but they too were scaled back and reconfigured to take place virtually. Temple Habonim's congregants were able to meet Rabbi Klein's successor, Rabbi Howard Voss Altman, at outdoor "meet and greets," and Habonim had a few outdoor Erev Shabbat services during the summer, but most services were livestreamed from the empty sanctuary on New Meadow Road. Funeral services and shiva services across the state were soon online as well.

A full year later, during the summer of 2021, lay leaders and clergy across Rhode Island spent many hours planning for the High Holy Days; but when the Delta variant appeared they needed to pivot yet again. Temple Beth-El in Providence held their High Holy Day Services for 5782 completely online. Temple Habonim had a hybrid model with some congregants opting to be online and others choosing to attend in person. To attend in person one needed to be vaccinated, masked in a KN 95 or KF94, and tested for Covid both before Rosh Hashanah and again before Yom Kippur. For the first time in our more

than fifty years of marriage, my husband and I attended services separately.

In some ways, our Jewish life expanded during Covid because we were able to attend services in other cities and in other countries. I often meditated at noon at The Institute for Jewish Spirituality in Manhattan, and I listened to many of the Sephardic melodies of my childhood at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun on the Upper West Side; but as rich as these experiences have been, I continue to hope that as we move into 2022, we will soon return to life as we once knew it.

“In some ways, our Jewish life expanded during Covid because we were able to attend services in other cities and in other countries.”

Judy Schoenfeld

How did your Jewish life change?

There were several changes in my life because of Covid, and several significant changes in my Jewish life. As a rule, I was not in the habit of attending Saturday morning services regularly with my busy schedule. Covid forced me to stay at home more. I began to look forward to and take part each week in B'nai Israel's Zoom Shabbat services. After the services we would stay online and talk with each other. It was a great source of comfort to get to talk to others in a time of isolation. We continued to celebrate by Zoom for Hannukah, Purim and Passover: a group candle lighting for Hannukah, a Purim play about Haman, and a wonderful Seder during Passover. Although we were alone in our homes, we were able to feel the company of family and friends.

What did you find most challenging?

The most challenging part of a Covid life was the unknown. Whom to believe and what to do to keep healthy? Was it safe to visit the grandkids or was an in person visit putting us all in jeopardy? It seemed no one had the right answer. We lived our lives on that gut feeling in hopes that we were doing the right thing for all.

What surprised you?

What surprised me the most was how well we got along without all the activity we were used to. I became grateful for the family that I did live with. It was a challenge to find things to do that were "Covid Friendly". I think the most interesting activity was taking the time to visit the cemetery.

What life lessons did you learn?

The best lesson is "Don't sweat the small stuff". You don't really appreciate what you have until you lose it. We were more than able to get along with less activity in our lives. It was a real challenge to come up with things to do that were "Covid compatible" but we were able to get along just fine. Now that things are slowly getting back to "normal," I appreciate each day that comes along.

Shula Schoenfeld

TO ME, the pandemic has been a lesson in humility and patience. The world came slowly to a halt. Nature sighed a sigh of relief. Man was humbled.

What is our responsibility for this catastrophe? Our disrespect for nature? Our taking for granted the beauty that surrounds us? For our hubris and the belief that nothing matters if it is not for our own selfish gain? Our denial of obvious scientific facts? The politization and manipulation of facts?

Have we learned our lesson? Are things ever going to go back to "normal" again? Or are we going to take the lesson of Genesis, and separate the chaos from order, darkness from light, and crawl up from this experience wiser and with more of a mindset of *Tikkun Olam*. Let us hope that it is the latter that prevails.

Bailey Silechnik

“AND WHAT did you do in the pandemic, Bailey?”

I was imprisoned and became an addict.

This is my story.

Before the pandemic, I was busy working full-time; attending board meetings and orchestra rehearsals and Lions Club dinners; going to the gym and synagogue services; seeing friends. I was rarely home.

Then COVID arrived, and all that ended.

Because I have two very major comorbidities, I immediately condemned myself to becoming a prisoner in my own home. For months and months, I only left the house to go for walks – and even then wore a mask; yes, I was and am one of “those”...

No supermarkets for me. No human contact for me. I was and am convinced the world is not safe for me.

What to do? (besides teleworking)

I do not know how it happened, but either I discovered online Zoom programs, webinars, and live streams or they discovered me – and very soon, I became hooked – addicted. I believe my first source was The Temple Emanuel Streicker Center in New York. Several times a week, it offers marvelous one-hour virtual events: interviews with politicians and philosophers and authors and actors and comedians and all sorts of entertainers; holiday cooking demos; a series of talks with four children or grandchildren of four of

Israel's greatest leaders – and with female Jewish authors; concerts. Then came other sources: political sites, a Holocaust education one, a Canadian Jewish one, even the Alliance. I have access to lectures given by the US Naval War College and took advantage of that. The common thread among all my sources, except the last, is Judaism and Yiddishkeit. I am sorry to say I do not watch many religious programs, but I have “attended” some wonderful Zoom Jewish holidays (even one in Yiddish!), including Seders and High Holiday events – and SOME services – and sadly a funeral and two Shivas. And okay, I listened to a few of Rabbi Soloveitchik's inspiring talks.

Some evenings, such as tonight, I have THREE programs to watch, two overlapping. I did say I was addicted, didn't I?

The problem is that as my prison sentence approaches its conclusion (maybe), I now must temper my addiction and return to something resembling my life pre-pandemic. I am not finding that easy.

MY STRONGEST MEMORY of the early COVID weeks is the sheer uncertainty of it, combined with just how well people came together at a time when we weren't even sure what was happening. My work as a college professor was impacted in what by now are well-known ways. For someone whose half-century career included nothing but meeting students in a class or seminar room, I was suddenly, and with little notice and less enthusiasm, introduced to something I never heard of – Zoom. But we all adapted.

Similarly, attending scholarly conferences meant travelling to conference locations and “presenting” in front of a crowd of scholars. Zoom doesn't allow for anything like the real interactions and responses that make such events so valuable. On the other hand, Zoom conferences did allow for people to attend easily from the world over. At one conference alone, attendees included the legal counsel for the India Supreme Court, legislators from Brazil and Italy, and professors from Israel, Spain, Germany, England, Canada and the U.S.

The impact on my Jewish life was of course great. Who knew from High Holy Day services by Zoom? But Temple Emanu-El did wonderfully in adapting the services to the technology. I could of course see our superb clergy at work, but, the techno-idiot that I am, I can only imagine – and be grateful for –

the planning and effort that must have gone into preparing the services and events.

The visits to my relatives in New York and New Jersey came to an abrupt end, and for the first time in my life I went more than a year without any such visits. That may have been the hardest. There is, we know now if we didn't before, no Zoom substitutes for hugs and real family chatter (and maybe arguing).

The pandemic began during my term as president of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. The effects on our operation were disruptive to say the least. Hence it's wonderful to recall the success with which the RIJHA continued to function, and I'd like to note how crucial my leadership was to that success. That's what I'd like to note. But in fact I had very little to do with it, or needed to, because of the astonishing work of our Executive Director, Kate-Lynne Laroché, and Office Manager, Jaime Walden. They continued working, keeping the RIJHA going, adapting so well to the limitations, uncertainties and challenges. Further, the RIJHA Board and Executive Committee continued to function as they always have, even if it often had to be by Zoom.

The pandemic is still with us, “omicron” just making its introduction as I write. I look forward to Temple Emanu-El, the RIJHA, and Jewish life in Rhode Island getting at least a little closer to normal.

Rabbi Howard Voss-Altman

Temple Habonim, Barrington, RI

AS I WRITE this reflection at the end of November, 2021, we have been living inside the pandemic for more than 20 months, encompassing three different school years. The death toll – for the United States alone – is approaching 800,000, and here in Rhode Island, the number of positive cases continues to rise. As we consider how life has changed - and how it hasn't – in our Jewish community, my heart goes out to everyone who has lost a loved one to Covid. Tragically, this contagion has not only taken thousands of lives, it has also denied beloved family members the opportunity to say goodbye; to hold their loved one's hands one more time, to offer words of comfort and support, to share moments of intimacy and regret. All of the traditional ways we let go of life have been upended, leaving both the dying and the bereaved without consolation. To all of you who experienced such a loss, may God's healing spirit offer you courage and strength.

During this surreal time, many writers and journalists have claimed that this pandemic has irreparably altered our lives. But from my perspective, it's difficult to discern what alterations they have in mind. One might have thought that a worldwide pandemic – one that has taken millions of lives and thrown millions more out of work – would have led to a serious and substantive push for health care benefits that are not tied to

employment. This has not happened. One might have thought that a nationwide pandemic – whose impact was substantially borne by the poor – would have resulted in a serious conversation about our nation's staggering inequality, and the societal implications of the disparity between those who have and those who do not. This has not happened. And one might have thought that in response to a nationwide pandemic, our nation would find a way to work together; to recognize (finally) that a virus has no political agenda, no preference for the right or the left. Sadly, the ability to work together – or even to limit the spread of Covid – continues to elude us, and we remain more divided than ever about how to confront this medical (and political) challenge. For far too many people who should know better, fighting with each other has been a higher priority than fighting against Covid.

But even as I continue to be disappointed by our nation's Covid response, I continue to be buoyed by the generosity, creativity and adaptation of the Jewish people. I have seen countless examples of our Jewish community going above and beyond to alleviate some of Covid's most tragic

*“For far too many people
who should know better,
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consequences. Our goal was not just to long for “*tikkun olam*,” our goal was to pursue it. In this Covid era, we pursued justice, we pursued health care, we pursued food and housing insecurity, and we acted on behalf of those in our community who were needy and vulnerable. We also saw a transformation in Jewish worship, particularly in our *minhag* for *shivah* gatherings. While we may have missed the support of our loved ones in person, the technological breakthrough of Zoom has enabled relatives and friends to support us – and mourn with us – for many more days and weeks than we could have ever imagined. I will never forget, during the first months of the pandemic, I was Rabbi at Temple Beth in Providence, leading the evening service. Every night, from Rhode Island to New Jersey, from Florida to Colorado, and many places in between, we joined together to pray, to say Kaddish, and to share the memories of our loved ones. At such moments, in the words of our patriarch, Jacob, “Surely, God was in this place.” May we continue to use this remarkable technology to bring people together, to offer our love and support, and to remind us that even in dark times, we continue to search for the light; the light in each other’s eyes; the light of God that gives us hope.

Mark T. Weiner

What did I find most challenging?

Not being able to see family members and learning new way of communicating with them on different virtual apps (House Party, Face Time).

My Jewish life changed from not attending services and holidays due to Covid-19.

What life lessons did I learn?

I can say what changed in my work life. No long commutes to Boston sitting in hours of traffic.

My work world evolves to learning about virtual platforms, Teams-Go to Meetings and Zoom.

I can honestly say I am much more productive using virtual platforms for the past few years and will use in the future. I think my company realizes results were very impressive overall. But there's nothing like face-to-face contact.

Marlene Fishman Wolpert

DURING the COVID-19 pandemic, our family adapted by having virtual holidays. We hosted Shirley Wolpert's 95th virtual birthday party with party decorations ordered for curbside pickup. Our new granddaughter's Hebrew naming ceremony was virtual, with *Machatonim* and family attending from South Korea. We attended family bat mitzvahs via Zoom and live streamed funerals and we also participated in virtual High Holiday services. Our comfort zone included hearing the shofar outside as Temple Emanu-El hosted shofar blowing in our neighborhood. FaceTime Shabbat and Chanukah celebrations became the norm.

As a professional in epidemiology and infection prevention and control, I hosted virtual meetings to support nursing homes, served on a COVID-19 advisory panel to guide Jewish Alliance participants and consulted for Roger Williams University.

It has been difficult to reconcile my own limited risk tolerance with my husband's broader tolerance level regarding socializing and resuming pre-pandemic activities. We look forward to returning to our routines, including traveling to visit family and to see the world.

Sam Zwetchkenbaum

AS ONE OF A HANDFUL of Jewish staff at the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), I'm happy to share a bit about work done as part of the state's COVID-19 response, as well as my experiences as a volunteer over the past 18 months.

My COVID work began as a volunteer activity in the Center for Acute Infectious Disease Epidemiology (CAIDE) at RIDOH, during the very early stages of the pandemic. An email went out to RIDOH staff, asking us to volunteer after our regular work hours. My first tasks were to "call negatives," or let people know that their COVID test result was negative, and to triage test requests, help schedule tests and respond to inquiries regarding test results. At the time, availability of testing was limited, so someone had to be quite symptomatic to qualify for a test. We have since realized that may not have been the wisest strategy, as individuals with minimal symptoms or even asymptomatic could transmit the virus.

My COVID work was limited to my evening volunteer shifts; the pandemic also started to reshape how I did my "regular job" as state dental director. The early days of the pandemic were filled with uncertainty and anxiety. I began getting inquiries from dentists and dental hygienists, who were understandably nervous, asking whether they were safe in their workplace and whether re-

strictions were going to be imposed by the state. I had heard of other states placing restrictions and reached out to a colleague in Taiwan to find out what they have been doing, seeing as Taiwan was remarkably effective in mitigating the disease's spread. Realizing RI was probably not the only state in this situation, I sent an email on the dental director listserv to see if any states wanted to have a call. Almost everyone replied yes, and the next evening we had a productive call with representatives from over 40 states! Based on these conversations, I drafted a statement describing best practices for RI dental providers and sent it through the RIDOH communications system for widespread dissemination. Given the bureaucracy and the high number of demands on my RIDOH colleagues, it took quite a while for my proposed best practices to be finalized. The delay was fortuitous because by the time it was ready to go out, both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Dental Association (ADA) had made similar recommendations, which was affirming. That dental director call turned into a bi-weekly zoom call which we have held consistently for the past 18 months!

As the pandemic intensified, my involvement on the COVID frontlines escalated as well. In addition to volunteering, I was officially "activated" to work on the COVID team at RIDOH, who was now leading an "all hands on deck" approach to tackling this unprecedented health crisis. In March I received an email informing me that I was now activated to CAIDE and until further notice I would stop my usual duties. Given my background in gerontology, I was placed on the nursing home team:

taking calls, providing guidance, and setting up testing for the vulnerable adults living in long-term care facilities. I also took evening and weekend phone triage calls. I answered questions from nursing home staff about their residents and provided guidance based on CDC recommendations. I also spoke with symptomatic nursing home staff and took data on their symptoms and made recommendations. I used my Spanish language skills because many nursing home workers had limited English. I began to realize COVID was spreading among many nursing staff, many of whom worked in multiple locations and traveled between worksites, sometimes carrying the disease with them. Working at RIDOH at this time felt a lot like being in the military, as we all were cogs in a collective mission. I fondly recall the delicious lunches that local restaurants would donate to DOH workers, which we would eat quickly (and gratefully) while working all hours on COVID testing. But as the pandemic escalated and social distancing rules were imposed, the lunches stopped – we know that being in close proximity and touching food left out in the break room wasn't a smart strategy.

I wanted to contribute in other ways besides this more clerical role so I signed up outside my RIDOH work to volunteer with the Rhode Island Disaster Medical Assistance Team's Medical Reserve Corps (RI DMAT/MRC). I'll describe later my experiences testing and vaccinating, but early on I was assigned to the Friendly Home, a nursing home in Woonsocket, to help certified nursing assistants (CNAs) who were overwhelmed due to low staff and increased work due to COVID. The first time I went, I worked on COVID wards and would don full PPE to take on any task. The first time I fed residents and cleaned

“we were asked to sit with people who were “actively dying,” meaning that they had physical symptoms suggesting that they had only days if not hours to live.”

rooms. Most of the names of the older adults were French-Canadian – there were Boudreaus, Bedards, and Gagnons, but there were also older Jewish residents who were from the area back when there was a sizeable Jewish population. I wanted to talk with them but it was a challenge. I was wearing both an N-95 and a face shield, they were likely hearing impaired, and loud fans were blowing to improve ventilation! Not a good combination! I felt so badly for the older adults because their quality of life was so poor. They couldn't visit with family and friends or leave their rooms. Food was served on Styrofoam and was cold. No doubt they were scared but many had good attitudes. The benefit of age is they have seen so much in their lives that they could handle this situation. The next visit to Friendly Home my partner Debby came along. We donned PPE again and this time we were asked to sit with people who were “actively dying,” meaning that they had physical symptoms suggesting that they had only days if not hours to live. It was important to the nursing home staff that residents would not die alone and while admittedly a bit boring, it is sacred work. I

was impressed by the caring of the CNAs even during this stressful time, and the one who came into the room to perform mouth care to assure the comfort of a dying resident impressed me even more. I never told them that I was a dentist; perhaps I could have offered to brush the teeth of other residents.

When the COVID numbers went down in June 2020, I was deactivated from the RIDOH COVID unit and went back to my usual work as dental director. While I had been working somewhat frantically throughout the pandemic to share guidance from the CDC to the dental community, now I had more time to devote to gradually post best practices information on our webpage, help with PPE challenges, and more. We are funded by CDC grants and had a lot of work to catch up on. Unfortunately this “break” and period of calm did not last very long. Numbers began going up in October 2020 and I was assigned to the Healthcare Team, now specifically to provide guidance to health care practices. I also took on extra hours evenings and weekends to do general case investigations and contact tracing. This involved calling positive cases and getting names of contacts, places they had been to, and providing guidance for safe quarantine and isolation. We used a database program called Salesforce and my “queue” would get filled with names of people all over Rhode Island and I would get on the phone and make calls. It was important to be both compassionate and firm. I had to clearly describe the requirements of quarantine, while at the same time being empathetic with the family members whose lives would be upended, even if temporarily, from the quarantine. Fortunately we had teams that provided support, including food drop offs and more. We also reached out to businesses, including restaurants and stores, to request names

and phone numbers of exposed staff and customers for contact tracing purposes; some were more compliant than others. Now when I drive around the state, I'll see a business and remember that I had spoken to the manager!

When the winter came, I once again turned to volunteering with RI DMAT. I was on COVID testing teams in several locations, including some very chilly days doing outdoor testing at Roger Williams Park and up in Woonsocket. As I spoke to fellow volunteers it was quite frequently the case that many of the other volunteers were Jewish, too, AND had come from the East Side! While we waited for test-takers we chatted, realizing we had much in common. We administered both the BinaxNOW test and took samples for other tests to be done by a professional laboratory. Each one was like a small chemistry experiment.

As news of vaccination came along, I worked to assure that dentists and hygienists working with local anesthesia permits were able to volunteer as vaccinators once they were trained to give injections. I also took the training so that I could volunteer as a vaccinator. At the early stages, RI took a “health equity” approach, meaning that they first doled out the vaccines to persons who had the greatest need, whether due to age or health conditions that would make them vulnerable. I first travelled the state by van as part of a “strike team” that visited group homes around the state to vaccinate adults with developmental and physical disabilities. I accompanied nurses through neighborhoods of Cranston, Warwick, Smithfield and more. We would carry crates of supplies into their homes, vaccinate residents, and wait the necessary 15

minutes to make sure no one had a reaction. We'd chat with the residents, sometimes sing songs, and get to know the staff. Like the CNAs I mentioned earlier, I realized these group home staff were heroes as well.

The next few times I volunteered at low-income senior housing sites, mostly high rise apartment buildings, and Debby came with me again several times and did administrative support, checking in patients, handling paperwork, and making sure that the number of vaccines we had matched the number of patients who signed up. We set up in the commons area and made areas for check-in, vaccination, and observation. It was a lot of fun and we were busy. People we saw felt like they were getting their golden ticket and were truly grateful. I went into buildings that up until now I had only seen from driving by, and now I'll forever remember them as places where we vaccinated. In April, Debby and I, along with many other RIDMAT volunteers, began working at the mass vaccination site in Woonsocket at the former Sears department store. It was very well organized with long lines of people and as soon as we got there we were busy with barely a time for a break. It was common to give 60 shots in a 4 hours shift. Our supervisor later told us that we had given out 1500 vaccines in a single day. We got to know many of the volunteers, both those who had come up from the East Side, and those more local.

In time the lines got shorter and we were less busy. I volunteered both by myself and with Debby in community settings – churches, mosques, schools, Waterfire, music festivals, and more. If we got 3 or 4 people at the vaccination booth, we were happy. Most of the time we spent talking to fellow volunteers, many of whom have become friends. From a

Jewish perspective, this has been an opportunity to perform *tikkun olam*. Being busy was important to me during the pandemic. Much of my RIDOH work is still connected to COVID. While I suspect my days of vaccinating are coming to an end, I'll carry many memories into the years ahead, having been on teams that helped keep Rhode Islanders safe during these difficult times.

