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BY RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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Braving the New World

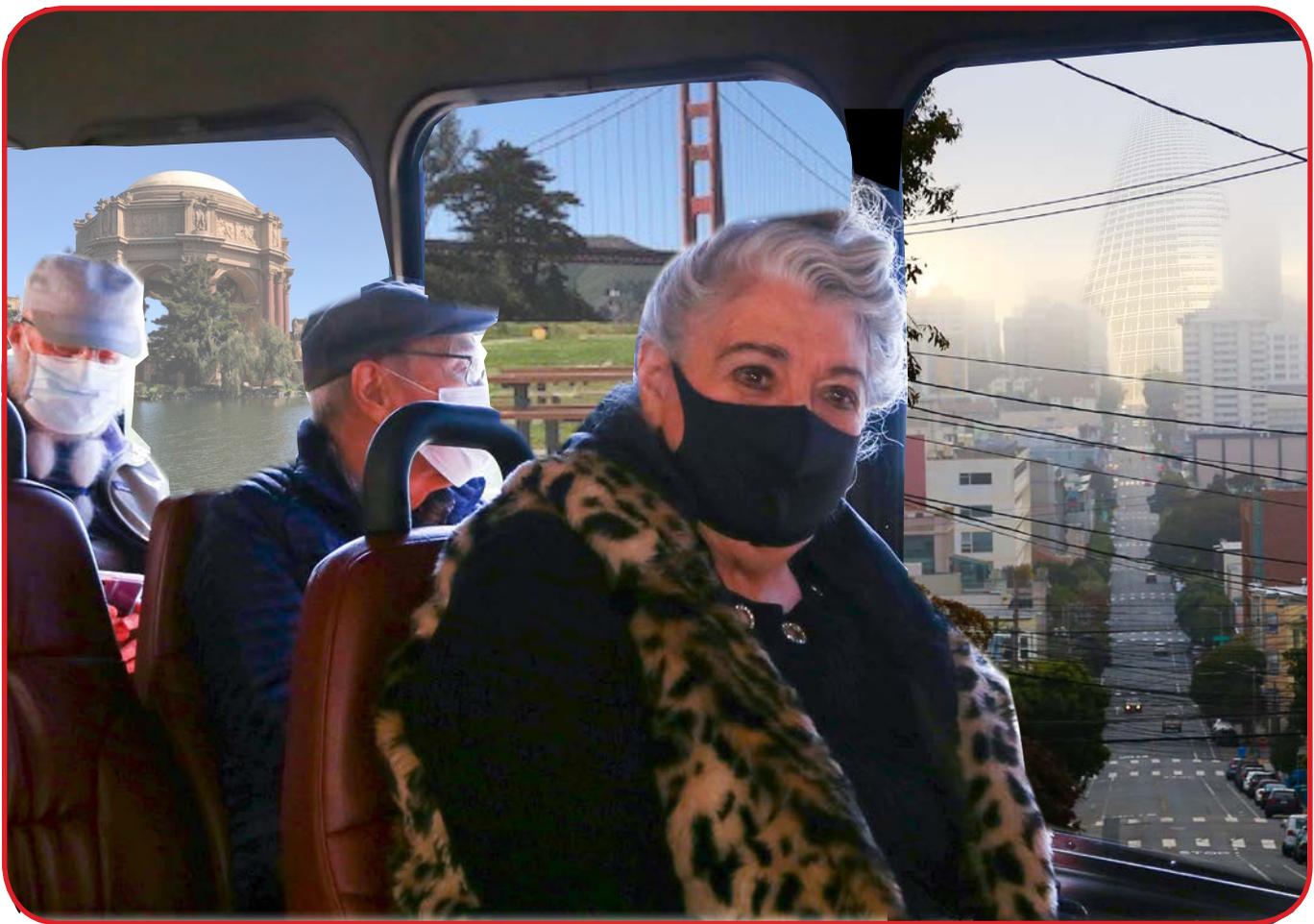
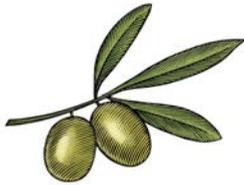


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What will residents who have been inside Rhoda Goldman Plaza for more than a year do with their new-found freedoms? How they will soar with so many opportunities! Where will they go?



Like butterflies emerging from their chrysalis, on not-lately-been-flown-with wings—still weak... residents hesitantly contemplate emerging into public life. Thanks to a protective net of regulations woven by the Department of Public Health, Department of Social Services, and through the diligence of Adrienne Fair, Director of Health Services, RGP residents remained safe and inside during the pandemic.

Complying with these regulations, residents, eschewed outside activities, avoided personal contact, and even reduced expectations. The net was so well-woven that, in effect, it became more of a cocoon. But life in the cocoon meant, in some cases, becoming inured to sameness of routine, lack of face-to-face interaction, limited choice, and reduced physical activity.

Now that the cocoon is dissolving, residents can emerge, regain their navigation skills, strengthen their wings, gain the skills of flight, and return to the places and people they so longed for.



May Birthdays

Ellis Schuman	2
Sandy Rosenbaum	4
Brenda Brody	6
Muriel Kroll	13
Mark Garrett	20
Morris Spector	23
Joanie Silverstein	23
Perla Piotrkowski	25
Reggie Goldsmith	28
Hedy Krasnobrod	29

Resident of the Month—Josephine Staub

Like a native, well-rooted, well-watered tree, Jo Staub has weathered the COVID experience well. When she saw that she was losing muscle strength, she bought an exercise bike. She kept connections with her friends and read voraciously. A native San Franciscan, she has a wide network of local friends from childhood and high school and sorority sisters from UC Berkeley. They kept her informed of life in the City and what was happening in their neighborhoods. “West Portal stores are closed,” she was informed... Being an avid reader, Jo joined the RGP Book Club and participated in their meetings. But when Jo went out on the first excursion, she exclaimed, “What surprised me after being inside RGP since March 2020 is that Van Ness is still not finished! However, there was a lot of outdoor dining sprung up—parklets. My hair salon which is a few blocks away on Fillmore is boarded up. Fewer people on the streets. I thought to myself, “Gee, this is depressing.”

I arrived to RGP before the pandemic in February 2020. I used to walk locally—around the block, to the hairdresser, the eye doctor, to Walgreens. I walked everywhere I needed to go. In April and May, I walked on my floor, then expanded my course to walk every floor. Then, I started walking around the block, but when I fell, I realized that walking outside was not a great idea. However, as time passed, I felt I wasn't getting enough physical activity and wanted to find a way to get exercise. I saw an advertisement on TV for a stationary bike and bought it. Very glad I did—I can exercise and watch TV. During the time of the pandemic restrictions, I realized I had developed patterns—which became hard to change. But when the opportunities came to go the see the Diebenkorn exhibit, go to the Palace of the Fine Arts or Chrissy Field, I immediately broke my habitual



patterns and rushed out.

I am a SF native, born at Mt. Zion. My parents came from Europe to the East Coast in 1920. My father, wanting to be a farmer, decided to move to San Francisco. He didn't have any experience in farming... so he opened his own business. I grew up on Monterey Blvd. near City College, graduated from Washington High School, and attended UC Berkeley. I graduated with an elementary teaching credential and began teaching immediately after graduation.

After teaching for a few years in New York, and in the Bayview, I was hired to teach in the San Bruno Public Schools where I taught for forty years. I was lucky that I was placed in a school where there were no discipline problems and where teachers were respected. Back then, usually only one parent worked, and kids generally did well. But when both parents began working or divorced, children's schoolwork suffered. San Bruno, however remained a good area, and I saw the children of my former students returning and sending their children to my school. I was lucky that the school was not regimented, and I was allowed to develop my own style of teaching. I really enjoyed my job; my reputation was that I was a tough but fair teacher. I wanted students to work hard and to do their best. During the time I was teaching, I also volunteered at the SF Fine Art Museums.

The outing to the Berggruen Gallery to see the Diebenkorn exhibit was wonderful; we had the whole gallery to ourselves. Yesterday we visited the Palace of Fine Arts. I have been there before, many times but for programs... it was a lovely day, a lovely walk around. People were feeding the ducks and the swan. I was amazed that the birds were not afraid of humans. It felt wonderful to be there—the smell of lavender, the flowering of fruit trees.. groups of people, but not crowded. Next week we are going to the Salesforce Tower.

I can hardly wait!



Corey Weiner,
Director of Food and Beverage

Brave

I beg to differ. It is not a brave new world, not one bit. Or perhaps it is, it takes real bravery to reopen the doors of the dining room. As 2021 continues I get more frightened by the moment. Who are you people? We cannot tell with masks, who to run from, who to ignore?

Dining will be different for all of us now and in the future. I will have my servers do the brave thing and run away like the wind! I have always said, “As long as I can out-run the residents, I will be safe.” Well, those days are coming to an end for me, and some of my staff as well. We will be sending our young ones out to face you, while the rest of us hide as best as we can.

The first week of full dinner service certainly had its ups and downs. By all accounts, the chaos looked well controlled to the outside observer. Quite a bit of champagne was poured that first night... mind you a not insignificant portion of it was used medicinally to soothe Kelly and my frayed nerves. While there were some difficulties around seating times (yes, they will be enforced), some dining companions (I promise they won't bite... probably... maybe), and the torture of having to choose what to eat (might be a little overwhelming), even I must admit the atmosphere was rather jubilant.

I was heartened to see that the majority of residents took our suggestion to dress for the occasion- nary a slipper was seen—though there was at least one fascinators and a sequined jacket! For those who feel under dressed I have some mink stoles available.

I am studying solutions that restaurants are employing for social distancing! Mannequins, around the dining room, cardboard cutouts in the shape of humans to make residents “feel more comfortable” could be fun. A reminder that we all have different ideas of “fun”! How about cardboard cut-out critters as a table mate?

Customers at one restaurant are seated alongside stuffed animals, minimum wage workers for sure. I read about a restaurant that got “bumper tables” to use when dine-in service begins again. Customers will get their own giant inner-tube tables to roll around and socialize in at six feet from each other. That will be fun don't you think? Exercise and dinner, floor show as well. Careful who you bump, road rage, table rage, whatever.

Fortunately for all of you, you can sit near each other, but the tables must be socially distant (our government at work!) What other pearls of wisdom will they come up with? We do not want our tables falling ill, they have no health insurance. Maybe Obama Care?

Remember the cone of silence from *Get Smart*? That could work and we would not hear any complaints!

Well, eat to your heart's content, if we can get the food under your individual plastic bubble.



Elizabeth Wyma-Hughes
Director of Resident Services

“It Takes a “Village”

Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -*

This poem by Emily Dickinson has rung true for me over the past year and I, like many others, am feeling especially hopeful. From outings to in-apartment visits, to the resumption of dining room service, there is so much rekindling hopefulness these days. I want to strongly encourage all our residents to take advantage of these offerings and to reconnect as a community.

Our residents have been resilient throughout this difficult time, sheltering in- place and trying their best to navigate the ever-changing landscape of restrictions. For many, this meant a significant decrease in activity levels and therefore stamina.

The formerly routine commute to the Dining Room and Activity Room is feeling a bit harder after months of room service and Zoom activities. Thankfully, there are a number of options to help residents rebuild their endurance: we’re offering daily exercise classes with in-person instruction, the personal trainer has returned to the gym every Friday from 10am-12pm, and weekly outings. Several residents have also pro-actively reached out to their doctors to request physical therapy which has given them a great foundation for their new exercise routines.

Another wonderful option is to take a walk with loved ones in the neighborhood. Family and friends don’t need to sign up ahead of time to go for a stroll with residents in the neighborhood.

Family “outings” can provide much needed support for residents who haven’t ventured out much in the past year and might be a bit nervous to stretch their legs out of the building. I also know how much more motivating it is to get out to exercise when you have good company.

While the exercise teachers offer plenty of encouragement, getting downstairs can feel like a Herculean effort. We are working against a year of inertia—the routines that we developed served an important purpose—keeping ourselves and the entire community safe. Changing these habits will take a concerted effort. Now is the time to reach out to your friends and neighbors to encourage them to join you for a walk or morning exercise. You might be surprised by how motivating that can be for another resident while also helping to keep you accountable.

We’ve made it through a difficult year and we will need to be patient with ourselves as we get back into the swing of things. It will take time for all of us to get back to our previous levels of strength and agility , but with so much to motivate us and plenty of encouragement from loved ones, there couldn’t be a better time to get started.

* “Hope’ is the Thing with Feathers” from *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University press,

Trying out our wings.....



Paulette Aroesty

Due to the fear of infection from COVID, my life for the past year has been confined to staying within the RGP physical space. I followed the instructions for staying safe very closely as the responsibility of keeping others healthy weighted heavily. The lifting of many of the restrictions has brought relief and joy.

As soon as short excursions were offered, I enthusiastically joined the small group outings. Going via RGP bus to Chrissy Field, The Palace of Fine Arts, Tulip Garden and to Mission Bay has been a mixture of excitement, awe and a little trepidation. The outside world now appears different from my recollections. Many stores and restaurants are closed. Numerous “For Rent” signs appear on buildings. What is most striking is the lack of people on the streets. There is still automotive traffic. The city appears to be without people.

For me, I am enjoying discovering a new atmosphere. With fewer people around, nature has taken front stage. The melodies of birds can be heard over the din of city noises. Flowers and animals are a majestic presence. The importance of nature and its ephemeral quality is overwhelming.

I am also walking in the neighborhood. There is a new ambiance as I am more conscious of everyone walking toward me. It is wonderful to see children playing in parks.

I think this reawakening can be an opportunity to take stock of our lives. Technology has been a boon to me. I have connected via Zoom to organizations and meetings in many different cities. The lectures and courses have been an enriching experience. I am looking forward to balancing the real world without fear of this terrible disease with the expanding world of technology. Most of all, I hope to see family that lives in other states soon. It has been very difficult to be separated for this length of time. I am very thankful for the applications that enable virtual visits.

Evelyn Adler

I have not been outside in the world since February 2020 and felt as if I had become practically agoraphobic. I wanted to see the Dibenkorn exhibit so joined the other residents on the RGP bus. We rode downtown; I’ve always liked downtown. Driving by, empty stores, empty streets, homeless tent camps. Riding on the bus, I was greedily trying to soak up the sights and sounds of the world—a place I had not seen for more than a year.

Downtown... few people—sad. Stores, restaurants—so many closed down. What I saw validated what I read and saw on TV. I realized for the first time the instability of our environment—that we could return to the pandemic experiences. Things will not go back to the way they were.

It was so wonderful going out. I wanted to absorb the “new world”. I was expecting to get life outside, but I didn’t get the “old” outside. I didn’t get what I expected. I got the new outside (I’d rather it wasn’t).

In reflecting over the events of the past year, I realized that we are not our own bosses. We are restricted by regulations at “home” that are echoed on the outside as well. We are controlled by the powers that be, for our own safety, whether we appreciate it or not.

Now we are mourning the good years—the years gone by. We mourn the people who passed this year, we missed the community grieving; the fabric of family that has been frayed during the past year. We have not yet met the new residents, so we are feeling the loss of familiar friends.

Now that so many are vaccinated, we are free to come and go without worrying about catching COVID. But even now, I don’t talk to other people; I walk down the street “inside my bubble”.



Change

Dear Ones,

...It's like a gradual fade-in in a movie; slow-motion, almost. Everything feels different, I'm different. After vaccinations I emerged with great trepidation. My first forays on Post Street were scary; I felt vulnerable, watched out for robbers. I ventured further into the neighborhood, but with caution. Finally, yesterday, I kicked all the doors down, grabbed a friend and a taxi, and burst forth.

As you know, I want for nothing at Rhoda Goldman, especially in the food department—but it's Kosher, and every once in a while I gotta get my fix of pork and shellfish, spiced and cooked as only the Chinese can do. This led me to Yuet Lee, classic Cantonese Seafood restaurant in the heart of Chinatown, where it came to pass that I feasted on roast Pork and Calamari for the first meal outside my room since Dec. 5th. 2019, and got a haircut at the Chinese Barbershop up the street.

Chinatown has changed since I read Charles Yu's extraordinary novel, *Interior Chinatown*. Waiting for the taxi to take us home, I sat on the bus-stop bench and gazed up at the apartments over the shops and restaurants up and down the street. Laundry drying on coat hangers in the open windows, and boxes piled up in the background evoked what couldn't be seen. It's all in Yu's book.

I thought of my Russian grandparents' fourth-floor walk-up, cold-water railroad flat in a tenement building on Rivington Street, on the Lower East Side, the Jewish Ghetto, which must have looked pretty much the same. Different odors, for sure, but chicken soup is chicken soup, and chopping vegetables sounds the same. Before I was born my maternal grandmother had a stroke and died on the stairs while carrying up a heavy pail of coal. I was named after her. Same immigrant story, different characters.

My idea is to welcome all refugees, including unaccompanied children, and ship them up to kibbutzim in North Dakota and let them live and work and thrive - Latin style. Maybe even sing again.

Today I dressed in blue instead of my usual black.

Be well.

Love & kisses,

Carol Pearlman



RGP Resident

Now we can have a different mindset than the unknown of the pandemic. I have started to explore the neighborhood with daily walks and visits to the grocery and hardware stores. There is this underlying feeling of a heavy weight being lifted off my soul. I feel I am trying to be more engaging with my fellow humankind even if it is still behind a mask. I am seeing a new light emanating from the eyes of my fellow residents. I am trying to see the people I pass on the street using my own eyes and body language to say hello while still behind a mask. Yeah, I too hope and wish we can see each other without masks on though even with the protection of a vaccine avoiding and preventing transmission of the virus will continue to be part of our collective lives for many months if not longer.

The relief the vaccine provides is a key to my overall mental health. Being able to give a person a hug goes a long way to reintroducing a human connection that pre-pandemic many of us took for granted. I have found that I have set my own measurements that are similar to how California has the tier system for opening things. When a certain number of residents, communities or nations are vaccinated, this will open the door of normalcy a bit more for me. This being my second pandemic, I understand and appreciate that science takes time. Human behavior is the critical component in reducing risk of exposure while science does its role of providing alternatives to how humankind learns to live within the bounds of what mankind or mother nature has created.



Candiece Milford,
Managing Director of Marketing

What a Wild Ride So Hang On . . . More to Come



Admittedly, 2020 tested all of us emotionally, physically and for some, cognitively. It was not a kind year, and one many of us would like to forget. So here we stand today in front of an exciting vista, looking into the future with renewed hope as our community, city, state, and country

slowly reawaken. Now we are reconciling anxiety with exhilaration as comforting freedoms return to our lives. To me, it feels much like this woman on a bucking horse—it takes discipline to hang on when your very foundation has been taken out of balance. In my world at RGP, when we posted on our website that “we are vaccinated and open for personal tours,” the phones exploded after a long drought. My days used to feel long because the volume of tours and calls had quieted. Now they are truly long in hours – while you may not see me in person, I work offsite one day a week and answer e-mails and phone calls seven days a week. That is the best way to keep up with the demand as a one-person operation. In fact, more Agreements were signed in the past month than in any single month in my five-and-a-half year tenure at RGP!

The people who currently inquiring are those who made adjustments to their lives to stay home over the past year. Yet, without socialization coupled with physical decline, as the world starts to whirl again, some tell me that their homes suddenly felt lonely. Others, who have had caregivers as their sole source of human contact in 2020, yearn to be around like-minded people to learn and share their life experience. For still others, increased home care has become a burden both logistically and financially. However, we are also welcoming the “planners” who are younger, in their late 70s. That vibrancy we so yearned for in this past year is returning with force.

So, as our friend John Wayne once said, “Courage is being scared to death—and saddling up anyway.” Why am I concluding with this remark? Because we were all compelled to develop resilience this past year, and as we start to open our hearts to this “brave new world,” not knowing whence it will take us, truly does take courage.

Employee of the Month— Yen Soon Siu (Jack)



Jack came to RGP after working for twenty years at Oriental Pearl, one of the larger restaurants in Chinatown. The experience he gained there proved to be invaluable at RGP.

When COVID hit and dining procedures had to be revolutionized to deliver trays to rooms, staff had to learn new processes and procedures quickly. Jack quickly understood the process and was able to help his co-workers. He explained that “if I see how something works, even if I see it only once, I understand what has to be done and how it can be done efficiently. Of course, our managers Man, Thi, and Shi organized things and we all worked together to learn our new jobs,” Jack explained.

Jack started working at RGP in December 2016. After working in a high volume, fast-paced environment, Jack enjoyed the slower pace. “I like working here because co-workers are friendly, people are nice, and everybody helps each other. I’ve learned a lot too since I started working here. I knew Chinese food well, but was not familiar with other kinds. Since coming here, I’ve learned about Jewish, Mexican, Japanese foods. It’s surprising that there is a Chinese version of the Russian borscht—without beets, though.”

Jack comes from Guangzhou, China. He and his parents came to the USA in November 1992. Jack began working and studying English as a second language, part-time at City College. He is married and has two children.

Renee Perlman



I have been inside RGP since lock-down in March 2020. Only in the past two weeks did I go out, and those excursions were for doctors’ appointments. I was a nervous wreck after going outside. Although I can say “I’ve been vaccinated,” I have my reservations about other people. I have been cloistered; I follow science; I did not misbehave. But I don’t know about the other people on the street. I was gratified to see that the doctor’s offices were following strict COVID protocol. I was very nervous about the whole thing and it took me three days to settle down. During the lock-down, I was concerned, but not to the degree of intense nervousness that I felt going outside after so long.

I feel protected here; RGP has been beyond excellent watching over us and I am more than grateful and appreciative of what RGP has done. And in a certain sense, I am very content with the situation. I am not looking forward to going out for the sake of going out, not for shopping, or just “getting out of the house”. However, I will go out happily for an outdoor meal with my children.

How have I survived? I use the computer a lot, play bridge on the computer; I watched MSNBC, Turner Classic movies, Netflix, read books, and had many phone conversations with my friends and family back East. I just discovered Shtisel a week ago and love it! I wasn’t lonely and had things to keep me busy.

Last night, dining together for the first time was wonderful, very interesting, and exciting. Relationships that were “put on ice” during COVID suddenly renewed themselves. People came early, were interested in this “new” experience, and perhaps anxious to be with so many people again. I could see that residents couldn’t wait to eat in the dining room—whipped cream on a cake. I can only surmise the organization that went into the first dinner sitting for RGP residents! We got reminder to “wear our best” which flippantly could be read as a suggestion—“don’t come in your pajamas.” But it was over the top and people were thrilled!



Health Notes

Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN,
Assistant Executive Director

Yes, But.....

What an immense relief for the entire RGP community of residents, staff, friends, and family: RGP is at a 98.6% vaccination rate (and counting). BUT before we take off our masks and have a wild party, there are some important points to consider.

The CDC (1) says that we can visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks, BUT our licensing body, the California Department of Social Services (CA DSS) (2) says we should track visitors and not allow visitors in common areas.

The distinction is that RGP is a congregate living community and even with a high vaccination rate, there is still a chance of an outbreak. Consider in particular, visiting children under the age of 16 who cannot yet vaccinate. SOLUTION: Friends and families can meet with residents in their apartments – or outside of the community. Friends and families cannot congregate in RGP common areas at this time.

We have an excellent vaccination rate at RGP, BUT no vaccine is 100% effective. A newly released study showed that there were a number of “breakthrough COVID infections” in Skilled Nursing Facilities in Chicago (3). A breakthrough infection occurs 14 days or more after completing the COVID vaccination. SOLUTION: We still need to maintain hand hygiene, masks, and social distancing to avoid inadvertently passing the virus from person to person.

RGP residents are all vaccinated, so if anyone were to contract COVID, the symptoms would most likely be minimal, BUT we are still obliged to take everyone’s temperature daily. It seems that this will be a requirement from the DSS for a while to come. At least, hopefully, we are all acclimated to our daily “beep” to the forehead. SOLUTION: Endure the digital forehead scans a while longer.

CA DSS is now allowing group dining for all meals, with residents sitting less than 6 feet apart at each table, as long as the residents are asymptomatic and not on quarantine (2). BUT we may have gotten a little accustomed to tray service. Are you ready to come down for all meals? Are you ready to ditch the bathrobe for dinner attire? SOLUTION: We have scheduled seating times to help with traffic flow. Take your time coming down to meals and rest when needed. I also highly encourage taking a daily exercise class, so you master the new mealtime commute.

Getting back to a semblance of our old, “normal” routine will take a while. The fact that we can have so many family visits, activities, and outings really has been a huge improvement. For the rest of the details, I would like to quote my daughter’s response to her reading challenges as a child: “Mom, it’s not a race.” Indeed. Let’s keep steadily moving forward to the end of this pandemic. No need to rush, let’s get there safely together!

- (1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021). Interim public health recommendations for fully vaccinated people. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>
- (2) California Department of Social Services (2021). PIN 21-17-ASC. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/CCLD/PINs/2021/ASC/PIN-21-17-ASC.pdf>
- (3) Teran RA, Walblay KA, Shane EL, et al. (2021). Postvaccination SARS-CoV-2 infections among skilled nursing facility residents and staff members – Chicago, Illinois, December 2020-March 2021. *MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Rep.* ePub: 21 April 2021.

Yes, But.. continued

FAQs

Can I take off my mask?

NO. Maintain your mask in common areas and in activities. Take off your mask only once seated and eating in the Dining Room. ²

Can my family visit?

YES. Families and friends can visit. They will need to sign up on Calendly, and screen at the Front Desk upon arrival. Visits are conducted in resident apartments or outside in Fern Court. ²

Can my loved one join me for a meal or activity at RGP?

NO. Visitors are not allowed in the Dining Room, activity room, or common areas at this time.

Can I go outside for a walk?

YES. Walks are encouraged. Your friends and family can meet you outside for a walk also. You can also participate in activities outside RGP such as restaurant dining, museums, or outings. Make sure to keep your mask on, practice frequent hand hygiene, and maintain six (6) feet of distance whenever possible. ²

Can I contract COVID after I have been vaccinated?

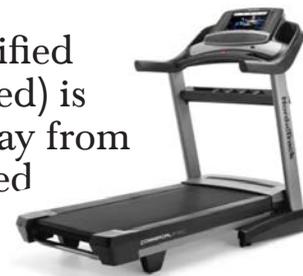
YES. This is a possibility. Although your symptoms will most likely be mild, there is still a chance of contracting COVID and potentially spreading it to others. ³

Will I need to quarantine after I go out?

NO. If you have been vaccinated, you will not usually need to quarantine. Unless you have COVID symptoms or a known exposure to a COVID-positive person, you will not need to quarantine after a family visit, outing, or hospitalization. ²

Exercise, Outings, and the Dining Room

Jonathan Santos, certified trainer (fully vaccinated) is in the gym every Friday from 10 am -12 pm. No need to sign up. Learn how to properly use the machines and exercise equipment. Please wear closed toe sturdy shoes!



Activities

- Japanese Tea Garden
- Outdoor Walk at Stow Lake
- Outdoor Walk at Land's End
- Filoli Gardens
- Local Shopping: Safeway & Walgreens
- Take Out on the Patio: Roam Burger

Dining

Breakfast will open on Wednesday, May 5th.

Please wear your masks entering and exiting the dining room.

Free room service will continue until May 31st. Starting June 1st, you will be charged \$15.00 per tray if you do not come to the dining room without prior approval from the charge nurse.

If you miss breakfast, a bag breakfast will be available outside the café from 9:00 am to 10:30 am. It will consist of hard-boiled egg, Clover brand yogurt, banana, rye bread, baked goody of the day and coffee or tea.

This will be free if you miss breakfast, and \$7.50 if you should happen to want one although you have already had breakfast.

The COVID Papers or Lemons to Lemonade

by Jeanne Halpern, Resident

It's March 24, 2021—exactly a year, a week, and a day after March 16, 2020, the day all of us at RGP received that startling letter from Executive Director Ira Kurtz. It began in bold-face type: **“Following guidance from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Rhoda Goldman Plaza will ask that all residents self-isolate in their apartments.”**

And here I sit, exactly two weeks after my second Covid shot, in Royal Grounds Coffee at 3101 Geary Blvd., feeling, in this nondescript coffee shop in San Francisco, as if I'm in my favorite cafe in Naples. I'm celebrating my liberation! I never imagined how happy I'd feel to amble down a street, walk into a cafe, order a cranberry scone and a glass of iced tea with lemon, slide cash across a counter, walk over to get a napkin and a plastic knife, sit down at a rickety wooden table and read my treasure. No, that treasure isn't our next Book Club book. It's the After-Visit Summary of my first *in-person* visit to my doctor since late 2019. Strange as it may sound, these two ordinary events—my snack and my live visit to UCSF Geriatrics—make me think of a favorite Wordsworth poem that begins: “My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky. . . .”

Back in March 2020, who could have imagined that Ira's letter would initiate thirteen months of letters, memos, reminders on our lunch trays, announcements on Channel 994, and that plaintive August issue of *The Olive Press*? Now, even as we gradually start moving toward a post-Covid life, we're not sure what will come next. Truth be told, I wasn't even sure last month when I finished my scone and second glass of iced tea, jotted down in my notebook how liberated I felt, and continued walking along an almost-empty Geary Blvd. back to my RGP apartment.

There, stuck with blue tape to the inside of my front door, remained Ira's original letter, and on my kitchen counter, in a neat pile, lay the dozens of multi-colored messages we received over the last thirteen months. I refer to them as the Covid Papers (not to be confused with the Pentagon Papers), and I invite you to join me as I read them yet again and make a few observations.

First, the main function of these papers has been to translate federal, state and city orders into action at RGP. When Adrienne and Elizabeth, for example, started their 2020 flurry of letters with “We are writing today to update you on . . . ,” we could be confident they were telling us what the government said we should/must do. And when they announced one or more positive Covid tests at RGP, we could be sure they would explain the implications for all of us—residents and staff alike. Though they might also occasionally mention ordinary issues, these letters and the “papers” of Emma (schedules, reminders, Zoom, 994), and Corey and Kelly (bi-weekly meal lists and daily menus of amazing variety and humor), kept us going and kept us safe. So my first observation, based on these Covid Papers, is that our outstanding staff did a superb job of adapting to new requirements, learning new procedures, and even translating a governmental vocabulary into RGP language. And for that we are most grateful.

Before we turn to a second observation, let's look at a different kind of Covid Paper, a longer one, that mostly reflects the residents' point of view: the August 2020 issue of *The Olive Press*. About this one, I have a confession to make. I have to admit I felt like an outsider reading the cover of this issue. “Sadness,” “Terrible loneliness,” “grief of loss of things I took for granted.” These words on the cover made me feel like a marching band was playing the Ohio State fight song while I was singing

Michigan's "Hail to the Victors." Was there really no other resident who saw a silver lining in what was going on here? For me, these Covid papers were keeping us healthy and at least moderately happy.

Then I turned from the cover to the inside pages with residents' longer comments, all unsigned. One resident wrote, "I feel alone and isolated due to 'shelter-in-place' . . . Despite the negativity this pandemic has generated, mindfulness helps me reach out to the positive, healthy, warm beings we all are." Another resident, praising the value of patience, concluded, "Part of patience, like learning to make lemonade out of a lemon, is to make a picnic out of meals served on paper plates." Comments like these helped improve my mood, and then I read one paragraph I totally agreed with. It started, "Shelter-in-place has been a good experience. I've been able to do so many things I never would have done." But as I read the details of this sheltered life, I realized that the writer was me.

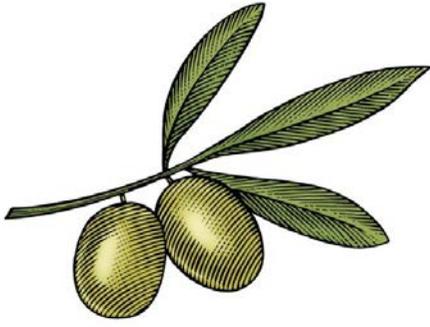
Why did I, among so many of us quoted in this issue of *The Olive Press*, sound happy? I guess because I got so much pleasure from the discoveries I'd made since Ira's March announcement. I could Zoom into exercise classes; a different opera from the Met, free, any day or night; expeditions with SPNI, an Israeli outdoor hiking group like our Sierra Club; a wonderful eight-week course on American Operas and sometimes have Steffi and Amalia join me. I enjoyed writing these monthly columns, going for walks with residents and my San Francisco friends, chatting by phone with others across the USA and, especially, talking with my sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren and cousins in Ann Arbor, Chicago, New York, and Tucson. Even as I write these words, though, I realize that many residents who expressed deep sadness in the *The Olive Press* were missing the close, in-person family contact they treasure. And now that we're opening up again, I trust they're feeling less isolated and lonely, and much happier.

Which brings us to my second and last observation from the Covid Papers. To clarify specifically what we'd gone through, I typed a detailed chronology based on the many multi-colored papers we'd all received. (Give me a call if you'd like a copy.) To summarize, we spent about ten months not knowing, when we went to sleep at night, if we'd be "shut down" again the next morning. In the months between March 16, 2020, when we first closed, and January 30, 2021, when we finally started to open up for good (we hope), things were changing so fast, we could no longer be sure what was going on. Six times we opened, then closed, then waited until two weeks after all residents and staff tested negative, to open again. Key dates were May 12, 2020, when our testing started; January 27, 2021, when vaccinations began; February 17th, when most of us got our second shot; and March 10th, when the last of us, including me, were finally vaccinated. And how could I forget that accompanying us, along with our Covid Papers, were masks, social distancing, and hand washing? Only when they stop will we be sure we're through with the Covid Papers.



Our First Outing

Now we have been opening gradually and cautiously –first, an outing to Crissy Field, then more destinations. Exercise and movies in the Activities room, and now more events for more people. And finally, hasn't it been a joy to talk and hear laughter and clink glasses again in the dining room at dinner? Long may it last.



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