

My life during the Covid-19 Pandemic

by Teresa Norris

The world started to grind to a sudden halt due to a deadly pandemic spreading like wildfire and killing people on my birthday this past March 13, 2020. I am not particularly superstitious, but there was a full moon, and it was a Friday. For months I had been planning a special gathering of far flung friends for a few days out at our rustic cabin in the middle of the Mojave Desert to celebrate my birthday. I had come down with a low-grade fever a few days prior to our departure day and was concerned about going into the wilderness feeling under the weather. All the folks that had been planning to gather seemed relieved I was canceling the gathering when I let them know I was not feeling well enough to go because we were all also concerned about this fast-spreading mysterious illness called SARS-Covk-2.

In February I had finally gotten in after waiting three months to see an orthopedic surgeon about an MRI of my left knee that showed osteoarthritis and bone on bone, that had been severely limiting my ability to go on long hikes. I'd been lame for a year wondering if the injury to my knee was a passing condition that would eventually heal, or permanent. During my visit with the orthopedist, I learned I was a candidate for knee replacement surgery. I told him I would have to think about it and get back to him.

Since we had to isolate at home and were not able to socialize or travel, I decided it was a good time to have the surgery and spend the isolation time rehabbing my new knee. So, I bravely put my name in a queue to get my knee replaced. At that point, everything had closed down including elective surgeries for a month or two while the medical folks and hospitals

figured out how to deal with the people catching Covid-19 and treating them for the virus. It was mid-June when I got a call from the surgeon's office that I could have my knee replacement surgery on July 1st, so I agreed to that date. There was a lot of preparation involved to get ready for the surgery including seeing my general practitioner and a cardiologist to be sure I was in good enough shape to undergo the surgery and to get my first and only Covid-19 test I have had so far. The cardiologist required a stress test on a treadmill, and I was not sure my lame knee was up for it. But I managed to do it and the doctor gave me a letter of clearance.

I decided it was a good time to have surgery and spend the isolation time rehabbing a new knee.

I had total knee replacement surgery at Scripps Green Hospital in La Jolla on July 1st and spent one night in the hospital and managed to go home before noon about 24 hours after surgery. My doctor's name is Kace Ezzet. I had a very nice and capable physical therapist (Sharon Sample) come to my house the day

after I came home to check out how I was managing and to be sure I could get around with the two wheeled walker I borrowed. I was not able to get in and out of our three showers in the house for the first two weeks because I was unable to step over the sides of the bathtubs to get in and out of them. I made do with sponge baths. Sharon came for seven visits total, working with me on strengthening and mobility. She was a good role model because she had had total knee replacement surgery ten months prior! It was also a good time to be laid up because my husband, Dick, who is a UCSD professor, was working from home.

Since the pandemic shut everything down, I had him around to fetch and carry things for me, go grocery shopping, and even cook me meals! Joy!

Since July 1st to the present (September 21, 2020), I have been working on doing physical therapy for my knee to relearn how to walk on it and to regain strength and flexibility.

After my home physical therapist stopped coming, I have been driving myself since the end of July twice a week to a physical therapy clinic called Proactive Sports Therapy on Carmel Mountain. They work on helping me straighten my knee as well as bend it as much as possible and they are monitoring my progress. In between clinic visits, I do my physical therapy at home utilizing our rowing

I do my physical therapy at home utilizing our rowing machine, a stationary bike, and our swimming pool.

machine, a stationary bike I ordered at the end of July, and our swimming pool in our backyard.

When I am not doing physical therapy I have discovered I enjoy doing crossword puzzles from the NY

Times newspaper, I practice my ukulele at least once a week (our group leader sweetly sends us songs to work on), and I continue to enjoy reading books and having Zoom meetings with my book club, Zoom meetings with friends for wine tasting (through the Oceanids), travelogues from Chris Wills and his wife, Liz, and Zoom dinners with friends. I go grocery shopping periodically and have returned to being chief planner and cook for our meals.

I hope to get back out on the road to ride my spiffy electric assist (e- bike which I bought back in February) with Dick in the mornings through our hilly neighborhoods once our pool is too cold to swim in (maybe by early October). And, I have a banjo I am hoping to get

I hope to get back out on the road to ride my spiffy electric assist bike

lessons via Zoom or Skype with a relative in Santa Cruz who not only plays and loves banjo but is also an exceptionally talented luthier who makes fine instruments. He also is a very good banjo teacher! So, I have been filling my time constructively and look forward to when I can get out and see friends and family again and maybe take a trip or two to somewhere far away...

Teresa Norris was born and grew up in the high altitudes of northern New Mexico, mostly in Los Alamos. She received a bachelor's degree at UC Santa Cruz with a double major in Biology and Environmental Studies with an emphasis on Natural History. She has spent her life raising two sons and sharing her passion for sharing nature with people of all ages through jobs both paid and volunteer including with the California State Parks, the National Park Service, the US Forest Service, the New England Aquarium, the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, San Diego Parks and Recreation Department, San Diego Humane Society's Project Wildlife, San Diego Audubon, San Diego Natural History Museum, and the City of Poway's Blue Sky Ecological Reserve. When she was still in college, she led guided walks out to the Northern Elephant Seal colony at Año Nuevo State Reserve and then taught environmental education to 5th and 6th graders as a naturalist over four years at residential science camps in the coastal redwoods and the high Sierra. She and her husband, Dick Norris, were founding members of the Botanical Club of Cape Cod and Islands during their eleven years living in Falmouth on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. In retirement, she continues to share her passion with the outdoors by continuing to volunteer for The SD Natural History Museum, Project Wildlife and Blue Sky Ecological Reserve. Her connection to SDIS is through friendship with Dorothy Parker, who invited her to contribute to this Covid-19 writing project.

This essay was sent to SDIS in September 2020.

Reprinted from *COVID-19: getting through with wit and grit*, published by the San Diego Independent Scholars. 2020 (<https://sdscholars.org>) © Teresa Norris