

Dear Friends and Colleagues

Rob and I went for a walk yesterday. We have moved to Berkeley this year, leaving Olympia after 46 years, to be closer to our family and to see a bit more sunshine. On our walk by the San Francisco Bay, we came across this sundial celebrating Berkeley's Sister City connections to Sakai.



Next time we come to Japan, we will make our way there to look at the ancient sites. Obviously we have been through Sakai on our many journeys from Kansai to Kobe and to Gakuentoshi, but getting to know a new sister city will be an adventure. Rob once went to Olympia's sister city Yashiro, but I was never there.

We still have a visit to Japan on our calendars as a possibility much later in the year. We knew we would want to avoid the Olympic season, so we have been talking about October and we have not abandoned that yet.

These are hard times for many of us. We in California are blessed with warm weather, a governor and county officials who shut down businesses and asked us to be very careful in cleaning quite early. Rob and I were in the UK and returned on Mar 14 to this new way of living. The people of Berkeley immediately became careful and obedient, though like Italians we still try to stay connected. On our small street, which is a "deadend" we meet spread out along the street every afternoon for a short while, just to

chat and catch up with the news. Twice now we have had dance parties with pop music and everyone dancing well spaced apart.

Our children are OK and luckily all safe. Emily and Mark are in theater so they have seen huge numbers of friends lose their work. Emily still works, Mark is cut back but not out of work yet. They were able to move out of New York City early and are living safe in a house belonging to a cousin, who lives next door. In the UK our son Alex and his family are living in our Lake District house, with my sister and cousins in houses in the same village. So far they are still not playing together closely but they talk and share shopping trips. Here in Berkeley our son Malcolm and his family live a few houses away down the same deadend street. Sometimes the children come to play in our garden but we don't get close. All three families with their young children, working from home while caring for children, are busy and sometimes a bit stressed but they are all committed to doing the right things.

Malcolm and his wife do shopping for us. A few times we have done a little shopping under very tightly controlled conditions, wearing disposable gloves and a home-made mask. So far we know only of one person who has died, a very elderly friend in New York. Two of Emily's younger friends have had the illness but are recovering without needing to go to hospital, but they report that this is a trying illness with a strong effect in the lungs even without pneumonia.

A huge challenge in the United States as a nation has been the resistance to collaborative agreement. New York State is being beautifully run under very, very difficult conditions. So is California. So is Washington. The Federal government has very poor Leadership. The President did not replace the skilled directors who were fired or left after he came into office. The lower level employees are working hard and as usual Americans will rely on individual initiative to manage problems which might be avoided if we were more able to share the work. Our medical research and the scientists go on being effective in their way, and at this moment some seem ready to share results without being too limited by corporate cultures that try to capture all the profits.

The title for this email echoes the subject line I have written on many letters from Japan and Korea each time we worked or were visitors. The collection of my impressions from Tokyo, Kobe and so many other places is a rich treasure for our lives. In our new house in a special wooden chest, lie the many paper and photo memories from Japan. Our visits among you have been so rich.

One result is that, as a student of politics and public ethics, I have been watching events in Japan with special care. Korea too, though I know the country much less well, but one of our closest young friends now lives there. The contrast between your two countries goes on being striking. It is also striking that in two quite different ways Japan and South Korea have done much better taming this illness thus far than almost anywhere else.

I would be very grateful to any of you who can send me notes, sketches, stories, information from your perspective about how the COVID 19 is affecting your lives and your region. My American friends and colleagues have begun asking to know more.

(1) How does Japan with quite a huge population, with so many elderly people, have such a low death-rate? Do you have any ideas about what makes Japan so very very unusual?

(2) My biggest question — since in the United States so many millions have become unemployed — is how is Japan handling the question of work? Where are people doing their jobs? Have schools and universities begun again? Do people work from home? What is happening to people who are losing work like those who work for airlines?

(3) Also, what about food and other supplies? Are people in Japan worrying about that?

Let me end with a comment about our university — The Evergreen State College to which so many of you have come. Like most Japanese universities, Evergreen has a new term just beginning right now. The faculty spent the last three weeks doing a complete redesign of the curriculum to make it possible to teach online. They are demonstrating a very impressive commitment to student learning and showing once again how effective innovation combined with collaboration can be. They too will come out of this season of crisis with difficulties that make recovery a challenge, but they can be confident that they have taken on the work required with good spirits and deep commitment to keep both teaching and learning rich and rewarding.

Walking yesterday was a treat. This photo of the Golden Gate Bridge is a bit out of focus perhaps but a reminder that through that gate, across a wide ocean is a country to which Rob and I are deeply attached.



With best wishes for you all

Helena