

The Manchester Historical Society

IF I KEPT A DIARY: EXCERPTS (March 2020-?)

By David Garnes, September 2020

Day One: I have plenty of food, no worries there. Have a lot of projects planned. And I can prepare for a couple of the classes I'll be doing in late spring at Manchester Community College.

Day Six: What's with the toilet paper nonsense that's in the news? Guess I didn't realize how much TP that a bigger household than mine goes through (though a general public flare-up of anal-retentive personality behavior does come to mind)!

Day Eight: Delilah the cat seems to have gotten used to another being occupying her space all day and has settled back down into what I imagine is her usual daily routine, which involves more sleep than I imagined.

Day Ten: Supplies of produce, dairy, and a few other items need replenishing. Went to the Big Y up the corner. Seemed pretty much business as usual except that a few people were wearing masks. Also, the paper products aisle was noticeably more depleted. It's true about the toilet paper: NONE!

Day 12: Still haven't figured out the protocol for retrieving my two daily newspapers, the *Courant* and *Journal-Inquirer*, from the front porch. Have settled on gingerly picking them up, removing the elastic band or plastic covering and depositing them in the garage for a few hours. Handwashing follows. Same with mail.

Day 14: Except for the shadow looming over everyone (and for many, much worse), I'm not feeling bored, lonely, or deprived. I have two lists: one of stuff I aspire to do (writing and reading, mostly) and a second, fallback list of movies to watch, housework, and people to chat with. When I'm not engaged in the former, I keep busy with the latter. At the very bottom of that second group is household chores to do. No incentive, and, besides, I'm not expecting any visitors.

Day 25: Today at Big Y I didn't see one person without a mask, and several with more complicated regalia involving goggles, coverings, and gloves. Plexiglass shields now separate customers from staff working the deli, sandwich, and sushi counters, as well as at all the check-out stations. One nasty woman very definitely scolded me when I inadvertently started up a one-way aisle in the wrong direction. (OMG, I said "nasty". Have to stop watching Trump press conferences.) Regarding masks: I always thought eyes revealed how a person is feeling, but I think I'm wrong. Not seeing the whole face makes me wonder if the shoppers I encounter are angry, happy, resigned, or in a zombie-like state. Can't tell

Day 30: I think Delilah the cat is enjoying my unusually constant presence in the house. Or maybe she's really annoyed and is demanding attention just to divert me from whatever I'm doing or wherever I am (especially at the computer or iPad, where she has become a frequent and familiar participant in Zoom events). Zoom meetings comprise just about my only face-to-face contact with anyone, if you can count talking heads on a computer monitor real communication.

Day 36: I thought I'd welcome the occasional grocery run, but today I felt a bit reluctant to leave the house. Is it fear, sloth, or am I beginning to express what I've always thought is an Emily Dickinson-like tendency toward reclusiveness? Can't quite decide.

Day 45: My scheduled spring and summer Noon Institute classes at Manchester Community College have been cancelled, and the fall schedule is undecided. Also not conducting my monthly book discussions at a retirement community in West Hartford.

Day 90: I've had two virtual doctor appointments (one a routine wellness visit, the other an annual check-in with my allergist). Also ventured out for an actual in-person session with my eye doctor. Wouldn't have gone except it was the first routine visit since my cataract. I was somewhat uncomfortable at the extremely close contact with the doc and her assistant, but everyone was masked, gloved, and equipped with sanitizing tissues they employed vigorously on every exposed surface of the equipment. I did cancel my dental cleaning appointment, however.

Day 120: We're struggling at the Little Theatre of Manchester with what to do about our upcoming 2021 season (2020 was cancelled after the first show ended its run in late February). Suggested (or mandated) protocols for entertainment venues change on a weekly basis. There's no alternative than to go with the flow, despite the likely severe decrease in revenue for the theaters. Bad times.

Day 130: Today I crossed out the last programs I was scheduled to do, one a September lecture at the Granby Senior Center, the other a tentative program at Manchester's Mary Cheney Library about my new book (well, new a few months ago, but literally unmarketed because of the pandemic). My calendar is now virtually empty, with no resumptions in sight.

Day 131: Made a new list of at-home projects. If pandemic laziness does not kick in, I should be a busy "isolationist." Looks like Delilah the cat will continue to have constant company for the foreseeable future!