



The

Kimball Farms



Observer



Volume 30, Number 1

Happy New Year!

January 2021

Unmasking the Secret Lives Behind Covid

Remember last March? We were going to committee meetings, working out in the gym, venturing into the wider community in the Kimball Farms vans, welcoming new residents, watching movies in the auditorium, lining up dinner companions, gathering in the Pub, going where we wished and with anyone with whom we wanted to socialize.

And then suddenly, it all stopped. Our lives were taken over by the coronavirus.

That was nine months ago. By the time you read this, Kimball Farms residents and staff may have in fact been vaccinated, at least with the first dose of the two necessary for protection from the virus.

But it may still be months before life returns to “normal,” whatever that is, or will be.

Now, you could look at all the free time you have had since March as a curse or a blessing. We thought it would be interesting to ask random Kimball Farms residents, using a totally unscientific method, which side they’re on.

It seems that how you planned (or not) to spend your time depended on if you thought the pandemic was long term or short term. Optimists thought that the pandemic would end with the change of the seasons, so when quarantine began, they might have cleaned out the kitchen drawers, put away the winter clothes and prepared for summer.

However, as summer came and went, and more precautions were required to keep us safe, it began to dawn on some residents that our restrictions could last a very long time. Time would pass in an unending series of “Blursdays.” Maybe this would be the time to undertake more challenging projects, perhaps things you’ve always wanted to do but never had the time. Here are reports from some residents. We’ll let you figure out who’s where on the optimist-pessimist scale:

Bobby Liebert candidly admits to “being bored out of my mind, watching too much news and getting agitated.”

John and Patricia Moynahan have a new cell phone, and all their waking hours are spent trying to learn how to use it. “A challenge,” says Patricia.

Walking has become a habit for many residents.



Kissa Guilsher walks for 50 minutes every day (doctor’s orders) and then does jigsaw puzzles for a change of pace. Currently, she’s working on a one-thousand-piece puzzle of a map of the United States. The puzzle covers all of her dining room table except for a space just large enough for her to eat her meals.

Kissa’s Map

Garry and Jill Roosma continue to walk three miles every day, but they’re reading more when the walking is finished. Garry recommends *The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family and Defiance During the Blitz* by Eric Larson, which was loaned to him by David Vacheron, another devoted walker and reader. Inspired by the exercise program of a person in Candace Bergen’s biography, David has added crunches done in bed, 110 modified push-ups, and sit-ups to his fitness routine.

Walking is a new pastime for Susan Wojtasik, who rhapsodizes: “One of the fun things about my walks has been traveling from the staid and predictable halls of Lenox to the wilds of Stockbridge—without a map.”

(continued on next page)

(Secret Lives, continued from page 1)

I love taking the elevators and stairways to parts unknown, not caring if I get lost, reveling in the halls of friends and strangers.

And outdoors, a ginkgo biloba shedding golden leaves on a grassy knoll between the D and C parking lots. "Ah wilderness!"

Ellie Chandler is another walker, and she's enjoying the third season of *The Crown* on Netflix and playing "Words with Friends," an online Scrabble game, with her sister-in-law and nieces. Ellie says she is "smearing" her sister-in-law, but her nieces are another matter!

The day we talked to Connie Montgomery, she was lined up for several FaceTime sessions to keep up with her numerous family: four children, twelve grands and three great-grands. "The sessions are lively and really help us stay in touch with each other," she said.

Jean and Georgeanne Rousseau are improving their French, especially their street slang, by watching French detective series such as *Spiral* and *Murder In ...* The latter is a series in which each episode takes place in a different French city, "almost like a travelogue," comments Georgeanne, who also mentions that some of the scenes may be more racy than we are used to on American television. The series is available on Netflix and Prime.

"A book is a good friend to have," according to Jim DeGiacomo, who is currently reading *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*, by Maria Rosa Menocal. Jim is also newly enthusiastic about Podcasts. The National Constitutional Center has many that interest him, and he listens to *The Daily* podcast from the *New York Times*, well, daily. He has discovered podcasts from Jacob's Pillow and other culture venues. The winter semester of OLLI will begin soon after the New Year, and Jim is signed up for a ZOOM course on Richard II and News of the Day. Jim is another walker who is often seen on the Kimball Farms perimeter road. His children are nearby, and his "days are full," he admits.

Another person with a long-range plan is Ann Trabulsi, who is studying Spanish online through the free app *duolingo*. Ann has tried several other

language programs, but she's finding that *duolingo* works best for her, and now she feels that she's making real progress. Each lesson in the series has 20 questions, sometimes about translating English words into Spanish, verb tenses or irregular verbs. Each lesson starts with easy phases with two or three examples, and the lesson gets harder toward the end. Ann says the "teachers" are very encouraging and supportive, with no pressure. After Thanksgiving, Ann wrote a note in Spanish to her daughter Liz, who is fluent in Spanish and her son-in-law Luis, who is from Ecuador, to thank them for the Brussels sprouts they sent her for Thanksgiving, and Ann was pleased to report that they were very impressed with her progress.

"I try to keep as busy as I can" says Leo Goldberger. During the pandemic, via ZOOM, he has addressed the Department of Psychiatry at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City on the timely topic of social isolation, as well as presented a program for the Holocaust Museum in New York City on his family's escape from the Nazis in World War II. Leo is working on a memoir, and has reached page 100, the point at which he is about to leave for Canada to attend McGill University.

Joyce Coffey had a project all ready when the pandemic began. She had ordered a new electronic piano, which was very late in arriving, and while she waited, she decided to brush up on her guitar skills. The last time she had played her guitar was in 1971, and Joyce says things did not go well.



Joyce at the keyboard

While her brain was willing, her fingers were less cooperative, so she was greatly relieved when the piano finally arrived. Writing poetry was another way Joyce "kept her brain alive" during the long days of quarantine. "Bits of poems began to emerge," Joyce remembers, "beginning in April.

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(Secret Lives, continued from page 2)

Some were serious, but my grandson, who's two and a half, loves cows so there are poems for him too." Joyce wrote 24 pandemic poems altogether.

Another serious memoirist is Nelda McGraw. She loves crosswords and jigsaw puzzles, too, but she welcomes the pandemic free time because she has promised her three daughters that she would write the story of their family's overseas adventures when the US Department of State posted Jim McGraw to Cyprus to start a USAID program, then suddenly evacuated them to Beirut and then sent the family to Ankara, Turkey. After home leave, they were posted to Bangladesh, evacuated to the Philippines and then back to Bangladesh, where their Christmas tree was a palm frond stuck in a bucket. The last stop was in Islamabad, West Pakistan .. The girls, the youngest of whom was born in Cyprus, were too young to remember the events, and they hope that having the story in print will help them to understand the travels of their early years.

If we missed hearing about your "pandemic projects" because of our highly unscientific method of information gathering, please let the *Observer* know. While the vaccine is being distributed to arms all over the world, it may still be many months before we are all busy and yearning for more free time again.

Susan Dana

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And Lockdown Isn't All: Acing a Kimball Trifecta

Here are ten sure-fire ways to survive a Kimball trifecta: simultaneous lockdown, fumigation and quarantine:

- Take an OLLI course on substitutes for four-letter words.
- Garbage is beautiful. Always keep a pile of it in your kitchen.
- Imagine you're in jail. See? Don't you feel better now?
- Smile when you say thank you.
- Be your own housekeeper again. It's never too late!
- (Fumigation victims only: Most of your clothing will be in storage up to eight weeks for fumigation along with quarantine. Enjoy warm-weather wear in cold weather, or vice versa. Invigorating!)
- Call a strike. Picket the front office.
- You're not lonely, you just need to go out and spend some money.
- On the other hand, think of the money you saved by not finishing your Christmas shopping.
- Go to bed early. Sleep late. Time passes quickly when you're having fun.

Finished? Reward yourself by ordering our exclusive "I Survived Kimball Trifecta" T-shirt. Make your neighbors envious.

Andy Pincus

Meet the Newcomers...

These Floridians Arrive Just in Time for Winter

December 3rd, a bright sunny day in Lenox, became even brighter for me when I visited Kimball newcomers Cynthia and Albert Segal. They moved into Lenox apartment 168 in mid-November and have already made it into “their” space.

The Segals came to Lenox after living for 18 years in Boynton Beach in Florida. It wasn’t easy to give up the comfortable lifestyle they enjoyed there; Cynthia described it as “very laid back, like a small village.” Their community was congenial, small enough for everyone to become well-acquainted, swim every day and enjoy cocktails in the evening. I assured them that, minus the swimming, that same lifestyle could take place here.

They’d lived in Philadelphia for a considerable time before heading to Florida. Albert’s working life was always connected with food, beginning in a supermarket in Glenside, Pa., where he worked with his father, and ultimately becoming owner/manager of six Open Hearth restaurants; steak and lobster tails were standard fare at each of these successful eateries. Cynthia became a vital partner in the enterprise, which was as successful as it was demanding.

The move to Florida was supposedly a step into retirement, but new demands came along. As this engaging couple became acquainted with their new neighbors, Albert stepped in to help one resident, then another, and then another, with financial management. And, you guessed it: he soon had a part-time career helping, mainly women, understand unfamiliar intricacies of taxes and finance. That career is definitely over, along with restaurant management, both Cynthia and Albert hastened to tell me.

Like many other residents, the Segals love to travel and have done a lot of it. They’ve crossed oceans and traveled over many continents; their favorite spots were India and Africa.

I welcomed the opportunity to look at some of the treasures they brought home with them: a handsome sculpted Guatemalan lamp; wrought iron statuary from Mexico; chests from China and Indonesia.

Much of their art work is still in storage while they figure out what will go where.

The Segals have two children. Their daughter Leslie lives in nearby Pownal, Vt., where she works as a potter and photographer while her husband pursues his career in painting. Son Gary remains in Philadelphia, where he is associated with the real estate firm Keller Williams.

Five grown and married grandchildren as well as eight great- grands round out the family.



**The Segals with a
favorite sculpture**

As a young man Albert served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. For some time he was stationed in north China. He became skilled in Morse Code,

now superseded by our ever-expanding digital technologies.

As our conversation veered into other aspects of Cynthia’s life, I was especially interested to learn that she was a student of Yoga, Tai Chi and Qigong. She visited Kripalu in its early days when guru Amrit Desai established the famous institute familiar to many Kimball residents. I was happy to let her know that, when we are past Covid-19 restrictions, classes in those body arts would likely resume in our auditorium.

Both Cynthia and Albert are eager to familiarize themselves with this area. They moved here, sight unseen, on the strong recommendation of daughter Leslie. Physical issues prompted the relocation: a broken leg (Albert) and a heart attack (Cynthia) convinced the family they needed to be physically closer. Whatever the reason for promoting the move, we are the beneficiaries.

Dorothea Nelson

A High and Low Road Around from Scotland to Kimball

In mid-December a bit of the coronavirus loneliness was lifted when I met with three of our new residents, Albert and Cynthia Segal, mentioned elsewhere in this issue, and Mary Buhr, a lively and interesting woman you are now about to meet. Born in Scotland, she's called many other countries home: Japan, Germany and the U.S. among them.

It was in her birthplace, Glasgow, that she met the man who would become her husband, Hans Joachim Buhr. Many people accepted German refugees after the war; Hans and his family were among them. Mary and Hans met and there followed a lovely "ever after," when they eloped and embarked on a life that took them back and forth between continents and cities, always daring to start a new chapter.



Hans' work in international banking was the springboard for their globetrotting. Mary relished her chance to exploring new cultures. With her keen interest in art and music and language, she found it easy to immerse herself in each city that became home. Her Kimball apartment, which had only been home for a week when we first met, is testimony to her collecting; there are chests from Japan, art work from Germany, silver of England ... and that's only what I saw on a quick visit. Mary has a lot more to unpack.

An accident last winter in her Sarasota, Fla., home convinced Mary and her three daughters that it was time for her to relocate to a retirement community. Kimball was a logical choice: Great Barrington was one of the many communities where Mary had lived; she loves Tanglewood and Jacob's Pillow; and one of her daughters, Moira, works at nearby Simon's Rock.

Mary is eager to become involved in Kimball and definitely looks forward to meeting her neighbors. For now, most of her social life involves her family; a daughter in Germany calls her daily; another in

California keeps in close touch; and Moira in Hillsdale, N.Y., is very attentive. There are also five grandchildren and four great-grands with whom she maintains close contact.

Dorothea Nelson

Welcome to Kimball Farms; You're Quarantined!

Should it be called a "welcome" when new residents move to Kimball Farms and are immediately quarantined for two weeks in their new apartment? Dan and Rita Kaplan say they were well cared for during their time in quarantine, but now they're out and about and enthusiastic about learning all about their new home.

They want to keep a low profile, Dan says, so here are just a few facts about this Pittsfield couple who now live in apartment 135.

Both Dan and Rita grew up in the Bronx, and both graduated from the City College of New York. Dan was an engineer, and Rita worked for an advertising agency in the city. Dan's career took the couple to several different communities, but eventually they landed in Pittsfield, where Dan worked for General Electric. For 54 years they lived on Anita Drive in Pittsfield, where they raised their children, two daughters and a son.



Their daughters both live in Massachusetts, one in the east and one in the center. Son Michael lives in Taiwan, where he is a production manager for a manufacturer of sporting goods.

By the time you read this, Rita and Dan will be well and truly welcomed by their new neighbors. Maybe not for dinner just yet, but certainly ready for introductions and smiles even behind the masks.

Susan Dana

Charting the Long Road to COVID-19 Vaccines

The study of the immune system and its role in protecting us from invading organisms, as well as from diseased cells in our own body, is known as immunology. It is a relatively new scientific discipline but had its origins in the last quarter of the 19th century. It was born through the collaboration of basic research and clinical application and that remains true today. Two major discoveries sparked a critical understanding of how the body fights infection once the germ theory of Louis Pasteur gained widespread acceptance.

The question arose: Is the host a helpless prey of invading organisms (pathogens) or is it equipped with an efficient defense mechanism to combat its invaders? The first discovery by Elias Metchnikoff at the Pasteur Institute in Paris demonstrated the role of phagocytosis (blood cells able to engulf and destroy the invaders). The second major discovery by Emil Behring and Paul Ehrlich, researchers at Koch's Institute for Infectious Diseases in Berlin, identified antibodies (cells that neutralize microbial toxins) as crucial counterparts in fighting pathogens. For his research, Behring was awarded the first ever Nobel Prize in Medicine.

Immune defense is basically of two types. The first is referred to as "innate," characterized by Metchnikoff's discovery of cells that engulf and kill invading organisms; the second as "acquired," with the identification by Behring and Ehrlich of antibodies that circulate in the blood. Innate immunity does not depend on a specific antigen (any molecule your body recognizes as foreign) to jump into action. It can be anything the body sees as trouble whether from a wound, a burn or an unwanted microbe. The body's defenses can be fever, a change in the blood's acidity, or an outpouring of white blood cells to engulf and destroy the invader.

Acquired immunity, on the other hand, is antigen-specific and can be triggered by a previous infection to which the body responded with antibodies that retain a memory for the next time the same antigen appears, or vaccination that triggers the antibody response that will protect from a subsequent exposure. Immune defense is a brilliant and highly

orchestrated interaction of innate and acquired immunity, intertwined, sometimes overlapping and mutually beneficial.

We are now in the midst of a pandemic caused by the novel corona virus, COVID-19, and finally help is on the way. Until now, the only way to develop immunity was to get the disease and hopefully recover. You would then be equipped with a supply of cells called B-lymphocytes and T-lymphocytes that produce antibodies that remember and will attack the virus if it is ever seen again. There is finally a better way to get these protective antibodies without the risk of disease, and that is vaccination.

Currently there are 58 vaccines in development worldwide, with three main types. Different types work in different ways to offer protection, and with all types the body is left with a supply of "memory" T-lymphocytes as well as B-lymphocytes to fight the virus in the future. The recently approved Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines ushering in a new era in vaccinology. mRNA stands for "messenger ribonucleic acid," the set of instructions to create a specific protein, in this case the spike protein of COVID-19. The spike protein is the protruding piece of the virus that has an affinity to attach to and allow the virus to invade lung cells. Years of research are behind these vaccines. They have elicited potent immunity in animal models of influenza, Zika, rabies and other viruses but only COVID-19 has had large-scale human trials. These have been shown to be 95% effective with no serious side effects to date.

The technology behind the mRNA vaccine is awesome. First the genetic code of the virus and its spike protein had to be established. Once that is done, mRNA is built using simple salts and sugar and the molecule is enclosed in a lipid bubble to protect it until it is injected into a muscle. Once injected, the lipid bubble dissolves, the mRNA goes to work and the cells begin to produce the harmless spike protein, and the genetic material from the vaccine disappears. Our bodies recognize that the proteins don't belong there and start producing the necessary antibodies, which can take a few weeks and require two shots for full protection. This protection will soon be available for us and hopefully we will all avail ourselves.

Stephanie Beling, M.D.

Library Lines: Prize Winner Grapples with Misery

This is the season of giving of annual book awards. Two of the most prestigious, the Booker Prize and the National Book Awards, have just been announced. I would like to introduce the Booker Prize, both past and present, in this issue and the National Book Awards in next month's.

When the Booker Prize was first established in 1969, it was called *the Booker Prize for Fiction*. The investment firm, the Man group, took over sponsorship in 2002 and its name became *the ManBooker prize*. The non-profit group Crankstart assumed financial responsibility in 2019 and the name is now officially *the Booker Prize*.

Some of the famous winners of the Booker Prize include: Nadine Gordimer (1974, *The Conservationist*), Penelope Fitzgerald (1979, *Offshore*), Salman Rushdie (1981, *Midnight's Children*), and Thomas Keneally (1982, *Schindler's Ark*).

Books are first submitted for consideration by the publishers to the Booker committee. From these, about 20 are chosen, usually in August, and make up the Long List. Through an arduous selection process, a Short List (usually about six titles) is released in October, and the winner is announced at a gala dinner held in London usually at the end of November.

There were six titles on the 2020 Short List for the Booker Prize:

Shuggie Bain, by Douglas Stuart (more about this below)

The New Wilderness, by Diana Cook. Bea, with her five-year-old daughter, joins 18 other volunteers who leave the stifling City to try to exist in the Wilderness State and cope with nature.

This Mournable Body, by Tsitsi Dangarembga. Set in present-day Zimbabwe, this novel tells of the vain efforts of a bright young girl to escape the poverty of her home environment and find work and independence in the city.

Burnt Sugar, by Avni Doshi. The first line of this poignant novel, set in contemporary, India is: "I

would be lying if I said my mother's misery has never given me pleasure." Wow!

The Shadow King, by Maaza Mengiste. A gripping novel set during Mussolini's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia. It sheds light on the role of women soldiers in the conflict that was really the beginning of World War II.

Real Life, by Brandon Taylor. Wallace is a Southern gay Black student enrolled in a doctoral program at a chiefly white midwestern college. These are the ingredients for a powerful novel.

... and the winner is...*Shuggie Bain*.

The novel opens in 1992 with a brief prequel in which the reader meets 15-year-old Shuggie Bain, who is eking out a miserable existence in the slums of Glasgow. The narrative then changes to Shuggie at age five living with his alcoholic mother, Agnes, two older half-siblings from a previous marriage, two maternal grandparents and his cab-driving father, Shug, who pays occasional visits. Things worsen when Shug moves Agnes and her three children to council housing in a slum on the outskirts of Glasgow.

Agnes' increased drinking eventually drives off both the older children and she is alone with Shuggie living on welfare. Shuggie is a pathetic, lonely boy who is made fun of by other children because of his ungainliness and effeminacy. In spite of some periods of sobriety, Agnes' alcoholism increases as does Shuggie's misery. Although at times this partly autobiographical novel is tough reading, one reviewer said, "Scene by scene, this book is a masterpiece," and another, "It is a memorable book about family, violence and sexuality."

Next month, the National Book Awards

John Gillespie

In Memoriam

Lucia Scala

March 3, 1936 to Nov. 19, 2020

Agnes Thompson

March 18, 1929 to Dec. 6, 2020

Robert Stein

January 17, 1925 to Dec. 13, 2020



President's Comments: Glad Farewell to 2020

2020 has gone, left, departed, never to be seen again, for which I believe most of us give thanks. What plans were we making a year ago? Did they include resolutions for self-improvement, trips, renewing contacts? Whatever they were, it's a safe bet that few, if any, materialized.

And is anybody making resolutions for this New Year? The practice of promising ourselves new things, or resolutions, has been around a long time ... like for over 4,000 years. Its origins came from the ancient city of Babylon. The feast was named after the temple Akhitu, whose doors opened only once, at the beginning of each year. It was both a time for celebration and also reflection on their society. Both were necessary if the New Year was to proceed well.

This might be a good time to consider new resolutions for ourselves. Has the semi-isolated living created by the pandemic pushed you to discover new things you could enjoy, new ideas to explore, new awareness of what matters most that you miss?

One of the things I've missed most is music, live music. ZOOM concerts don't cut it for me, so I've had to find new avenues for listening. When I go for walks now I pay more attention to the sounds of nature around me. I've never been particularly good at identifying bird songs, but I've gotten better. Trees make sounds, too; there's always rustling of leaves, of course, but when tree trunks bend and sway, there is distinct sound. Chipmunks don't just chip; they also trill. The earth makes music; if we listen attentively, we can hear it.

I want this dreadful pandemic to end. I want to see my friends and family again. I want 2021 to see the end of masks. I want the freedom to hug, hug, hug. But I don't want to forget what this plague has taught me.

Life at Kimball isn't likely to change soon. Christmas will be pretty much like Thanksgiving. A resident can invite up to two other residents to join her/him for dinner, maintaining the requisite distancing and wearing masks. Anyone who chooses to leave the premises, even if only for dinner, will be subjected to quarantine for seven-10 days. We remain closed to outside visitors.

Most of us have had our medical information copied by the Administration in preparation for the vaccines that may be coming soon. While that is an important step toward control of the pandemic, we mustn't delude ourselves: vaccines won't put a quick end to the virus. All mediating protocols must remain in place.

That being said, there is light at the end of this long and wretchedly dark tunnel. And we've been kept safe through nine difficult months. Kudos to our staff ... and kudos to each of us for (mostly) observing rules we didn't welcome and managing to smile behind our masks and care for one another.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EACH OF YOU!

Dorothea Nelson

Birthdays!

Twenty-two residents celebrate birthdays in January. There is a 23-year spread between the youngest and oldest celebrant. January birthdays belong to:

George Raymond, Leo Mahoney, Ann Cashen, Diana Feld, Ann Morgan, Edmund Conlin Bradley, Marilyn Fiddes, Gwen Sears, Glenn Jorn, Kathy Stell, Leonard Allen, Mike Brown, Marilyn Simons, Ned Dana, Patricia Carlson, Nancy Steele, Sue Colker, Judy Levin, Laurel Meyerhofer, Vivian Wise, Audrey Salzman and Julane Reed.

Happy Birthday to each of you!!