



CRONE CONNECTION

Spring 2023, Issue No. 2

AGING

by Kaya Kotzen
shared by Marge Hampton

How the changes creep up on you unaware,
A shift in energy level, increased need for sleep,
increase in the number of pauses required in a day or a nap!
How hard we sometimes fight it, until we no longer can.
We arrive. A destination unwanted and not planned for,
much akin to another new country to traverse.
Sometimes contentment rolls in and over us like a blanket of waves.
Other times, it's a feeling of frustration about what we can no longer do.
But there's no getting younger again.
We can only work to maintain what we have
and learn the terrain of this new uncharted territory,
which is now our daily landscape.
We are not sneaking into any back doors, but crossing the main
threshold with heads held high.
We have paid our dues, earned our rightful place,
every bit of silver and grey, salt and pepper hair that we may have.
We are women of wisdom. We are crones.



FROM THE BOARD

by ANNE BOHER

Your Board, together with our new staff assistant, Amber Ariana, are collating and considering the written responses to our questionnaire, sent to all members in March. We want to thank all of you who participated in filling them out. We are still in the process of deciding how many meetings we will have a year- how many in-person, on zoom, and hybrid. We will also be developing a budget for next year. These decisions will be finalized at our retreat in June with your opinions taken into consideration. Thank you for your input and patience.

Your Board,

Anne Boher, Mary Kay O'Shea, Bea Sweeney, Ellen Duernberger

Changes in Medicare Coverage

from AARP Bulletin, March 2023

by Dena Bunis and Andy Markowitz

The 2023 federal spending bill passed by Congress in December extends some pandemic provisions for those of us on Medicare. Remote medical visits via video or telephone from home will be covered until the end of 2024. Also extended through the end of 2024 is the allowance for hospitals to treat some patients in their homes. And then, *beginning* in 2024, Medicare will expand the types of behavioral and mental health providers it covers.

Medicare deadline extended to save on insulin

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' website had not included critical information for people wanting to change to the new \$35 a month cap on insulin. The deadline had been the end of Dec., but the service has opened a one-time special enrollment period. Insulin users of certain insulins have through the end of 2023 to change their Medicare Part D drug plan to get the \$35 copay cap.

(The following 2 paragraphs by the editorial staff are from the March, 2023 AARP Bulletin article, "Covid Emergency End Means Changes")

Some things will cost more

"The Biden administration's decision to end the federal COVID-19 emergency on May 11 could mean extra costs for older Americans..." Medicare and Medicaid will still fully cover vaccine costs and most private insurance. But people with original Medicare and those with Medicare Advantage plans or private insurance most likely will pay out of pocket for at-home tests (which can be purchased at pharmacies for \$20-\$25).

But oral antiviral treatments like Paxlovid will still be covered for people with original Medicare and Medicare Advantage plans that cover prescription drugs. *However, "when the federal supply is depleted, cost sharing may kick in."*

Another change

The three-day hospitalization requirement before moving to a skilled nursing facility that Medicare required before the pandemic, will go back into effect when the emergency ends.

The ability to speak several languages is an asset, but the ability to keep your mouth shut in any language is priceless. -

anonymous author

CRONE INTEREST GROUPS

Following is the current list of our interest groups. If you'd like to join one, just call the contact person for that group and find out where it meets or get on the list for the zoom link.

There has been some interest in a Museum Group, and a Tulip Excursion (Skagit Valley festival only runs until April 30). If you'd like to take part in either of those, contact our Groups Coordinator, Ellen Duernberger

Writing Group meets on Zoom the first and third Thursdays of the month at 12:30PM. When back to in-person meetings, meetings will be held downtown. Contact Anne Boher

Downtown Conversation Group currently meets on Zoom. Contact Marcia Sill for additional information

West Seattle/Burien Conversation Group meets on Zoom the second and fourth Fridays of the month. Contact Bea Sweeney

Downtown Group meets monthly for Happy Hours, and explore events, exhibits, etc. Contact Marcia Sill

Walking Group meets every second Wednesday (weather permitting!) at different venues. Contact Bea Sweeney or Barbara Stilson

Book Club meets on the fourth Saturday of the month on Zoom from 1pm to 2:30 pm. Contact Mary Kay O'Shea

Rolling Crones Singers meets every Monday from Noon to 2pm at Edmonds Waterfront Center. New members welcome! Contact Marge Hampton for additional information. Carpooling from Seattle a possibility.

Pencil Pushers, a writing group, meets on Zoom the second and fourth Mondays of the month. Contact Patricia Layden

Current Affairs: meets monthly on Zoom to discuss a current topic in the news. Contact Fran Campbell for additional information.

In Praise of Crone

from a writing by an anonymous Crone in 2000

"A friend recently asked me what Crone does. I said, 'Crone celebrates itself. It is a terrific assortment of older women who have elected to face approaching old womanhood with joy and purpose.' Naturally I also mentioned the conversation and writing groups, the potlucks and picnics, the fabulous newsletter, the fundraisers, the Rolling Crones, the drummers, and the educational programs that keep most of the 200 or so members hustling. But it's the celebration of self that is so impressive. As organizations go, Crone truly is several cuts above."



Writings by Crones

WIDOWS

by Marcia Sill

Relentlessly, the Grim Reaper
takes his harvest – making us widows
one by one –
leaving us with
grieving hearts
empty arms
lonely beds

silent rooms
lonely nights.
We're
decoupled halves, residuals.
Off he strides with
our beloveds.
We are left behind
with only
memories of our
wholeness.

The following two pieces were written during a Pencil Pushers Writing Group exercise inspired by this section of a poem by Mary Oliver:

"Slowly
up the hill,
like a thicket of white flowers,
forever
is coming."



by Trisha Layden -

Forever is coming.
Hasn't it always been?
What might it be, this "forever"?
I feel it closer than ever before now,
But I can't really touch it yet -
Only a sense of spaciousness...
It doesn't feel as much a "where"
As a kind of way of being:
Connection
And wholeness
Which, oddly, seems less constricted than ever;
Openness to life without boundaries,
No stress,
No worry,
Just a kind of Reality larger than this bounded
one...
Forever is coming -
And has always been -
And will always be
Coming?
I quite like the notion of exiting this stress-inducing
timescape,
Though I guess it's mine to travel for now -

For now, boundaries, limited connectedness, work of
some now-tasks to do
Until all boundaries dissolve.
All connection rises,
And forever knits everything together
Forever.

by Mary Sibley -

"Forever is coming," as it has come for others. I am just learning how long forever is. I am a poor student, so grounded in just living now that forever is nearly inconceivable for me. And yet, all who lived before us and are now gone have entered the mysterious forever. I reach for them, reliving memories of times with them and through vivid dreams of warm hugs where we speak few words. As time goes by and their absence weighs on my heart, I have begun to sense that forever is also present in the very now. Perhaps now is the most precious part of forever. Despite the sorrows of so many losses, I can turn toward those I can see and hear today. I have a new welcoming to share this moment of forever with them, to cry, smile, and laugh together, even as forever beckons us forward.

"Don't jaywalk and ditch the umbrella" the unspoken rules for being a Seattleite



condensed from an article in the March 30 Seattle Times, with responses from over 2,000 readers

"Break any of these rules, and you're at risk of looking like a tourist, being branded as a transplant, or losing your local card," said Vonnai Phair, the Times staff reporter who compiled these comments.

Hundreds of readers explained, "it's I-5," not "The 5." And neither Puget Sound, nor Hood Canal, nor any numbered highway is preceded with the word, "the," pointed out reader Liz Fallin.

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Ours is Capitol Hill not Capital Hil. And it's Washington, not Warshington. And, when spoken, West Seattle is all one word, WesSeattle.

On the use of umbrellas, a reader named Heather said, real locals "know umbrellas are situational, and the key is knowing when to use them in different types of rain. "You have to know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em," concurred Nancy Grayum. "It's an overly macho myth that we avoid them," Joe stated. "Sure, they're not always ideal for our misty or drizzly days, but during a downpour, there's no shame in using the best tool for the job."



Tisha Hoffman explained, "Maybe the saying should be, 'People with straight hair in Seattle never use umbrellas.'" But she has "wavy hair that frizzes if I walk past a water fountain, so there's no way I'm letting it get wet."

And, by the way, weather whining, particularly about the rain, is not permitted until at least March, said Ann Bergstrom. Here in the Pacific Northwest, "if something is worth doin', it's worth doin' in the rain," said Charlie B.

Someone, somewhere also decided one will never jaywalk, "no exceptions, even if you're freezing and completely soaked." "Just stand there and patiently wait for the walk signal. . .in the pouring rain. . .without an umbrella. . ." Jill Pagano said.

Canceling plans due to rain is unacceptable - but remember, "canceling plans due to social anxiety is perfectly understandable."



Once spring really rolls around with "those first sunny days after the extended winter grays, a lot of people are going to call in sick to work. Let it go," said reader Heather. "They are repairing their mental health after many months of dark, gray depression."

January

Readings by Crone Writers

January's meeting was on Zoom where five of our talented Crone writers read from their work. There was a variety of writing, from memoirs to poetry, even haiku. Readings were by Jean Chen, Tricia Layden, Helen Zimmerman, Marcia Sill, and Bea Sweeney.

Crone of Puget Sound has two writing groups. The Downtown one meets monthly, and the Pencil Pushers meets twice a month. Members read from their ongoing work or from some past writing that they'd like to share.

February

Speakers on the Ukrainian war

Our February meeting was a talk by Carl Larson, who gave a fascinating presentation of his five and a half months in Ukraine, where he volunteered in the Ukrainian Foreign Legion. Carl shared his first-hand experiences, some of them on the front line, with American and Ukrainian soldiers. He was joined by a Ukrainian American, Uliana Voytovich, who drives humanitarian supplies from Poland to the troops in Ukraine.

Since returning home, Carl founded the Ukraine Defense Support organization, which is a worthy destination for donations in order to be sure they will get someplace where they are truly needed. (Note: they do not donate or transport weaponry of any kind.) Crone Marcia Sill gave a substantial amount for Uliana to purchase a car to deliver supplies into Ukraine.



Uliana at Crone meeting

February presenters were Carl Larson on the right and Uliana Voytovich in back on the left with Cronos attending.



Uliana in her work clothes



The car she purchased for Ukraine.

This was our first meeting combining an in-person presentation and zoom for those who wanted to join from home. Although there are definitely kinks to work out, it is worth doing again.

March

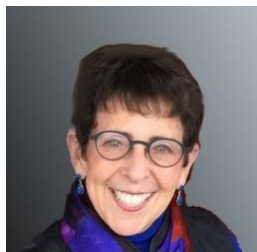
Membership Meeting

We said good-bye with many thanks to our outgoing Administrative Assistant, Nancy Hom. The Board presented her with a floral bouquet and a \$100

Amazon gift card. Nancy finished working on the 2023 Directory before her final day on April 1. Please see the minutes of the meeting sent to you from Ellen Duernberger on March 24.

Meet our reelected Board members

Mary Kay O'Shea



On June 10th 1941, I was born a “war baby” in Wichita, Kansas to a second-generation Irish Dad and French Mom. I have a younger brother and sister still living in the Midwest. I have three talented, wonderful adult sons who are in the Seattle area.

In high school (all girls' school), I dreamed of escaping from dry, flat Kansas. After 18 years of Catholic education, I obtained an RN

and BSN from Creighton University, in Omaha, Nebraska. Then in 1965, I joined the Army Nurse Corps for training assignments at Ford Ord, California and Fort Lewis. I've been in the beautiful PNW ever since. Ah! I did escape Kansas.

In 1986, my marriage ended and I became a single parent of my sons (2 teens and a 5 year old). To maintain the family home, I juggled multiple nursing roles. 1) Full-time Public Health Nurse, King County (1968- 2007) Rejoined the Army Nurse Corps in 1982 so I was a "weekend warrior," performed as staff and supervisor with the 50th General Hospital (This unit was deployed to Saudi Arabia/Gulf War in 1990). Retired from Army in 2001 (mandatory at age 60 years).

Third role – Earned a Master's Degree from U. of W. in Psychosocial Nursing and worked on Overlake psych ward or Children's Hospital on weekends. Finally retired from nursing in 2014.

\Interests/Hobbies: Voracious reader; Book Clubs; acting and Improv classes and performances; mediation; studying Eastern Philosophy and Energy Medicine; practicing yoga; Qi Gong.

Crone History: I was very excited to learn about Crones in the early 2000's and attended some activities. Joined Crones in 2010. I appreciate and applaud Crone's philosophy and goals of supporting elder women in aging gracefully with wisdom, compassion and growth through life-long learning and service. The Crone women I have met are amazing, inspiring and kind. They are models and companions I would like to cultivate.

Anne Boher



I joined Crone when I left the Eastside to live at the Summit with my husband, Leslie, ten years ago. He passed away five years ago, but I am still here. I had heard about Crone from several friends and thought it would be a good way to meet some new friends. It was! I joined the Membership Com. right away and enjoyed the general meetings, I also volunteered to help put on the annual tea. Six years ago, Marcia Sill and I started the Downtown Group and then we organized a writers group as well.

I grew up in San Francisco went to U.C Berkeley, married, and had my four children in the Bay area. We lived in Victoria, B.C. for four years in the seventies, then moved to Mercer Island. I worked as an educator, mental health therapist and a realtor. Now, I am looking forward to again serving you on the Crone Board.

What to Expect about Covid

Answers from infectious disease doctors in an article in the March 2023 AARP Bulletin

Will COVID be with us forever? "Yes."

Will getting the current booster help me at all if I come into contact with new variants?

"Yes. It can help prevent serious illness. These boosters are tailored to the new strains but boost your immunity to the virus in general."

Must you be very ill to take Paxlovid? "Anyone over 50 with COVID should absolutely

take it, regardless of how ill they feel. It acts like a cleanup crew, clearing away some of the virus so your immune system has an easier job. Preliminary evidence suggests it may help reduce the risk of long COVID. The earlier you take it after getting symptoms, the faster and better it works. Tell your doctor of other medications you're taking, as it can interact with some drugs, such as statins."

Wear a mask in crowded, confined spaces such as planes, or church. "Research has shown that nearly 100% of planes have COVID in their wastewater after a flight. It must be a well-fitting N95, KN95 or KF94 mask."

Connection Staff: Sonja Larson, Moreah Vestan

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