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Founded in 1873

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GUEST COLUMN

My own journey through quarantine

When The Astorian contacted me about having tested positive for COVID-19, I was reluctant to settle for an interview and a story written by a reporter because the very nature of this experience is personal. I suggested that I write about my own journey through the quarantine and how it has affected me and my perception of the world.

So here we go.

PETER
ROSCOE

It was June 30 and I had a doctor's appointment in Portland scheduled for July 6, so I thought it would be a good idea to be tested for the virus and be given a clean bill of health before the appointment.

So I drove up near CMH Field, where I knew drive-thru testing was a possibility at Clatsop County's household hazardous waste disposal facility. The gates were all locked, so I went straight to Columbia Memorial Hospital and asked them if they took walk-ins for testing. The man at the desk said they didn't but he understood that Urgent Care NW, across the street, did. I went there and they took me right in.

After supplying all the insurance documents and a brief wait, I went into one of their rooms and was given a nasal swab by a pleasant young medical professional. He told me a few things about the test he was giving me. He said that it really didn't reveal much about the condition. It couldn't tell me how long I had the virus nor the strength of it. It had a low percentage of being a false positive.

I wasn't concerned, because I was not experiencing any of the conditions I had heard about on the news. At this point, as a betting man, I would have said my percentages of being tested positive were about 10% or at worst 15%.

I went about my day, running a few errands, wearing my mask at the grocery store, cooking dinner for my wife and hunkering down at the house for the night, just as I had done since early March when the pandemic became a reality in all of our lives.

The next day was Wednesday, usually a golf day for me, so I headed out to the club around noon. It was raining and windy, so my friends and I bagged it and I went in the clubhouse and visited with some other friends for awhile. The club had already required masks while inside, so I kept mine on until I sat with three other men for a quick game of gin rummy and some coffee.

I was home by midafternoon and settled in for the evening once again.

I got a call

Around 8:30, I got a call from the clinic. They informed me that I had tested positive for COVID-19. The same young man who had administered the test asked me some questions about my symptoms. The list is long and kind



Rick Bowmer/AP Photo

A nurse uses a swab to perform a coronavirus test.

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ONE NOT WANT TO DO IT?*

of predictable in spots, not so much in others. Headache, chills, dry cough, aches and pains, sneezing and sniffles, etc. Oddly, the loss of smell and taste are on the list. I had none of them.

He then said I would be contacted by the Clatsop County Public Health Department as I was now a statistic, the county's 50th positive case.

The next day was a flurry. Almost 100 phone calls to family, friends, the golf club and my doctor's office in Portland canceling my appointment.

A good deal of the day I spent waiting for the call from Ellen Heintz, a naturopathic physician and the county's community health project manager. She was to become a controlling factor in my life during the quarantine. Over the next 10 days, I spoke to her on the phone every day, reviewing the state of my symptoms, or lack thereof.

The rules governing my quarantine were specific. I was not to leave the house for 10 days after my test was given. I was to report any "contacts" I had had with anyone during the previous 48 hours prior to my test.

One of the significant definitions in these discussions is what constitutes a contact. I had to be within 6 feet or closer for 15 minutes or more without wearing a mask to have a defined contact. Everything else is social distancing. The term "social distancing" took on a clearer meaning. It allowed for socializing at a distance.

Since I am a frequent golfer, it became clear that golfing is a natural way to be socially distanced, particu-

larly given the measures taken by not only Astoria Golf & Country Club, but courses throughout the state. Gov. Kate Brown approved golf as an activity from early on and, according to the statistics from the golfing community, public and private rounds of golf have been very popular.

These two conditions — the time frame and the breaking of the distancing boundaries — were important facts in my contact tracing.

With the help of Dr. Heintz, I was able to retrace my activities during the 48-hour period and identify people who were actual contacts and people with whom I had been practicing social distancing. I contacted almost everyone I knew because I knew that when the word got out that I had tested positive, it would sweep through my circle of friends and cause everyone a good deal of worry.

What I learned through my conversations with the doctor was to be aware but not to panic.

All of the people considered contacts were also in daily communication with Dr. Heintz to track any developments in their symptoms.

A good deal of my efforts have been to assure my many friends of two things. First, that I had indeed tested positive for the virus, but have been totally asymptomatic the entire time. And secondly, that they themselves were not at risk.

A test of patience

The doctor has been extremely help-

ful and open during our discussions and we have vetted my case in its entirety, as well as putting the pandemic in perspective as it relates to Clatsop County.

In many ways, my quarantine was mostly a test of patience. Being stuck in the house for 10 days can become monotonous. Binge watching TV shows, reading, playing online games, cooking, gardening and Zoom meetings. Pretty much sums it up for me. Kind of predictable.

But the awareness factor is different than I expected. One turns inward, examining and monitoring the body functions. Every twinge throughout the day slams back to the question, "Am I OK? Is this the moment when the virus is going to whip its tail and take me down?"

That kind of reflection and awareness also makes one examine their life as they have led it. We all have to come to grips with both our successes and mistakes. Even the inevitable, cringe-worthy ones. Prayer helps. Perhaps it is even essential. Staying in the now is as important. Live in the moment until the moment is gone, then live in the next one. Eventually the moments mount into hours, then days, then the quarantine is over.

I feel fortunate to have been asymptomatic. Like most of us, I have seen the horrible pain and destruction the virus has wrought across the globe.

Even though there will be some that tell me I have passed over into an immunity zone, I will still wear my mask. I will still stay a safe distance away from others. Because I know that there will be a shadow of doubt in some minds that being near me could threaten them. I hope to avoid at all costs being the subject of discomfort for others.

There is no assurance of immunity at this point. There seems to be a high likelihood. But I felt the same way when I took the test. Every bookmaker in the world would have given odds that the Titanic was going to make it to New York. We know how that worked out.

So practicing social distancing and wearing a mask seems like a fairly simple preventative measure, much like wearing a seat belt. The question to ask is why would one not want to do it? I suppose there are still flat-Earthers who don't believe that the pandemic is real, but it seems as if many of them have tested positive and are either sitting in quarantine or laying in a hospital wondering why they weren't a bit more cautious.

As for me, I am free to walk the world, as Dr. Heintz puts it. How this experience has changed me is still to be revealed. It has given me an appreciation of the many friends who reached out with concern. I have felt the love of others and am humbled by it.

I am very grateful to be back in the world outside my house and look forward to being of service to the community in any way I can.

Peter Roscoe is the former owner of Fulio's and served on the Astoria City Council.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Risky calculation

Seaside City Councilor Seth Morrisey released a statement about COVID-19 a few days before the Fourth of July that casts significant doubt on our state government's handling of the COVID-19 response. Councilor Morrisey offered not a single solution, he offered only criticism.

Seaside is home to multiple assisted living facilities, around 25 hospital beds and a very small number of ventilators.

Based on what I hope is a solid understanding of contagious viruses, he made a risky political calculation in advance of perhaps one of the busiest weekends of the year in Seaside.

Councilor Morrisey seems confident that the response to COVID-19 is worse than the disease; for our sake, I certainly hope he is right. Either way, his words will be remembered.

ALEX CARNEY
Seaside**Scientists tell us**

I have a question for those who think masks are unnecessary: Do you believe your car or pickup runs because scientists working together discovered the laws of physics, or that they conspired to keep us from knowing that cars run due to the collective moral force of free Americans?

If you get this one wrong, you may

not get the respect you think you deserve, especially since top scientists tell us a deadly disease is being spread by people who don't know they have it (and probably aren't wearing masks).

CURT YODER
Astoria**True history**

The murder of George Floyd has put a spotlight on policing throughout the country and has also raised the level of discourse on race in America.

The June 18 edition of The Astorian contained two notable articles. "Astoria police chief addresses defund movement, use of force concerns" reported on Geoff Spalding's hourlong address to the City Council, in which he answered questions that I, and others, asked the council to address:

Are Astoria police authorized to use the chokehold? No. Does the city have surplus military equipment? No. Will the police use tear gas on demonstrators? The police do not have tear gas.

Denise Reed's "Confront the true history of our country" is a must-read, in which she leaves little doubt as to why African Americans are "sick and tired of being sick and tired." We who have benefited from the oppression of others — who have "white privilege" — must educate ourselves about our true history, but we should not expect to be spoon-fed that

history.

Reed includes a list of resources, to which I would add Colson Whitehead's "The Nickel Boys" and two books by Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Water Dancer" and "Between the World and Me." In the latter, Coates writes a letter to his 15-year-old son, expressing clearly the intense fear that African American parents experience as their children start to explore the outside world.

We must "listen, really listen," Reed states, as we work to understand our true history, in our reading and our discussions.

FRED WHITE
Astoria**Time to grow up**

I wonder, how did wearing a mask ever get caught up with the notion of infringing on one's personal freedom? Is it not prohibited to smoke in public places? And now, even in parks? Why? To protect the health and well-being of others.

What about the mandatory use of seat belts to protect those who are not quite bright enough to protect themselves? Can we speed in our cars to mimic TV fantasies? Or parade nude in public when the weather is hot? How about relieving ourselves in public places when we forgot to use the restroom?

We are ticketed and fined for such activities, and so should be when refus-

ing to wear a mask. It's sad that we must be punished in order to learn to care about others. Where is this childish 6-year-old mentality coming from? Oh ... I think we know.

TERRIE REMINGTON
Astoria**Vaccine success**

Most of you have never heard of Maurice Hilleman — but when a flu pandemic hit the U.S. in 1957, he was ready with a vaccine he produced in only a matter of months.

Realizing how little time the U.S. had to prepare from the virus in Hong Kong, Hilleman contacted pharmaceutical manufacturers directly, and asked them to make a vaccine from his samples — something that would not be considered today.

Hilleman worked at Merck & Co. for 47 years. In that time, he developed more than 40 vaccines for humans and animals. Hilleman and his team developed eight of the 14 vaccines recommended for children: measles, mumps, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, chicken pox, meningitis, pneumonia and the Haemophilus influenzae (Hib vaccine).

The World Health Organization estimates that measles vaccination alone prevented 23.2 million deaths worldwide between 2000 and 2018.

TERRY J. SMITH
Warrenton