

Issue 3
April 26, 2021

GBS Class of 1969 Newsletter

Hello and
welcome!

This is our third class newsletter following our 50th Reunion. Each classmate's entry is accompanied by an email address so you can follow up and continue to be in touch.

There's more contact information (phone numbers and addresses) in the Directory section of the class website: www.gbs1969.com.

If you want to add to your bio or contact information on the site, send it to rlesaar@mac.com and we'll get it posted.

Stay well.



Colleen Malany

colleen@jkbfoundation.org

Bob Hawkins

bob@westerntree.com

[Colleen recently moved to Arizona and this January she dropped in on classmate Bob Hawkins at his nursery in Phoenix (<https://westerntree.com>). Bob says the second picture shows Colleen “interviewing for a secretarial job” at Western Tree!

–Ed]





Deborah Brailey (was Debbie Coon)

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Even with COVID-19 ravaging the world, my husband Mike and I were quite busy. Last November we were able to sell our house. We remain in Milford, NH but downsized to a great double wide mobile home with a nice lot for a garden. It's just right and we are extremely happy. We both received our first vaccine earlier this week. Will be so happy when things get back to normal. Haven't been able to travel but that will change too. Hope everyone is doing well.

Jill Wilson

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I am sure, the majority of us are saying, what a year!

It has been a time that I could not imagine ever happening. I spent over two months at home, with my faithful companion, Steele, my English Cocker Spaniel rescue.

I was unable to see my family, even though they only live 2 miles away.

At first I thought what a great time to clean out closets etc. I thought this will only last a few months. As the time went on and on, I spent my time reading, doing workout videos, zooming with friends, and walked miles and miles.

It was interesting and frightening watching the world go by.

I became consumed with the November election, hoping for my best. It happened!!! Two good people and a woman to boot. I wake up in the morning, not feeling as much anxiety.

COVID-19 is a horrible illness. So many people have suffered.

I'm looking forward to a new year.

Oh no, a mass killing in Boulder, Colorado.

Be safe, be well.

Julia Hitchins (was Julie Taylor)

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We now live full time in Austin, Texas, and loving it. But would love it more if the music scene opened up! It is obviously a really progressive area. And of course bought a Tesla.

Never thought I would live in Georgia or Texas. Change is good and now closer to grandkids.

I would love to go to a reunion when this COVID problem is over. But let's all meet somewhere other than Glenview. Sad what is going on in the state.

Kathie Magness (was Kathie McKiernan)

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All continues to be well with the Magness household. The last week in March, we took a trip to the Ft. Worth area to see Milton's daughters and their families. I'm enclosing a picture of us. It was the first time we had seen them in 18 months.



It's been 6 months since Milton has retired and he seems to be hitting his stride. He started a new ministry called Hope and Freedom Ministries which focuses on feeding the homeless. He either walks 7 miles round trip or drives to the park where they congregate, equipped with 12-15 hot meals. They simply love him and look forward to seeing him each day. In addition to feeding them, he provides other needed items such as sleeping bags, coats, pants, Vaseline, gloves, socks, etc. He is so satisfied to be doing this and making a difference in the lives of these individuals. I join him every week or so and love being there. Here's a link to some very interesting videos he has made. Take a look: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpAd16_ZdxhN3mkx8HC8OZA. As a writer, he is also starting a book called *The Face of the Homeless*.

I continue to stay busy with on line everything: Bridge, Church, Bible Study, lectures from the Baker Institute/Rice University, supporting the greater Houston area YMCA Older Adults programs, completing jigsaw and crossword puzzles, reading, chairing our neighborhood association book club, exercise and yoga. Soon we will start entertaining again, beginning with one of my exercise groups. Then some church friends. Slowly, we are coming out from under our shells.

We continue to binge watch and finally finished 17 seasons of NCIS and 6 seasons of *Schitt's Creek*. Now we're watching *Grey's Anatomy* (just started season 4) and the *Foods of Italy* series on CNN. Plus various historical documentaries, particularly those focusing on race and social injustice in America.

Travel for us has been the biggest change. We have not been to our Canadian home for over a year because the border remains closed due to the pandemic. We are hopeful for a summer visit but waiting for Canada's decision. The cheerleader reunion is still being planned but we won't be able to firm anything up for a while. Milton and I are planning a twice deferred trip to Italy in fall of 2022. We will use it to celebrate our 25th Wedding Anniversary and Milton's 70th Birthday.

We did a road trip to Big Bend National Park in West Texas in February, just before our historic freeze. It is a beautiful park and we did some hiking and even canoed on the Rio Grande River. Texas is so big that it took us 2 days to drive there.

After our trip to the Carolina's in September/October to sell Milton's business, we thought seriously about selling both of our homes and moving to Charleston. But once we got home, wiser heads prevailed and we decided to stay put in Houston and Canmore, Alberta. It was fun to dream but we decided we just don't have energy for a move of that magnitude. Instead, we decided to do some aesthetic updating of our Houston home so it feels fresh and new.

We've gotten our COVID shots and are feeling fit and happy. We're enjoying getting back to normal, attending church in person once again and starting more social activities with friends. We hope that all of you are thriving at this time of life. Who knew it would be so fun!!

Lastly, I hope all of you submit an update to Rick. I simply love reading about everyone and what you are doing.

Blessings to all.

Linda Murowchick Hopkins

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We have been hunkered down the last 6 months, so we don't really have any news!!

Hoping to be able to actually go on several trips we've scheduled for the fall - a cousins' reunion in Seattle, a weekend in Door County and a river cruise from Paris to Barcelona.

Keeping our fingers crossed....!!!

Jeph Harrison

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Here is a picture of our granddaughter, Cecilia, who was born the Thursday before our reunion. She is having fun with her parents on a weekend in Arnold, California. Cecilia and her parents all had COVID at the end of February and are fine now.



Scott Buzard

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My wife Barbara and I, two retired Glenview Middle School teachers who trouble-shoot and long term “guest teach” as needed (which is often), in Glenview District 34 have experienced the “Year Of COVID” as so many other educators have. We were both working in roles at Springman Middle School on March 13, 2020, when it was decided to “go remote” for a couple of weeks to cut down on contagion. Finally on April 7, 2021, I was back in a social studies role teaching a full classroom of students for the first time in over a year. In the interim Barbara taught three months of totally remote sixth grade math and eight weeks of totally remote eighth grade language arts. I am currently teaching three months of U.S. History, (post World War Two to the present - we lived that) which began in a hybrid model (half the students at school the other half at home/alternating days) and has now gone to a “all students in class but distanced and masked” model. It feels great. Zoom teaching was like trying to teach while piloting an airplane in the dark when I first started. Eventually it settled into sort of a “radio DJ” feel, with an occasional “caller.”

Like so many others, we have missed seeing our grandchildren beyond “Facetime” and have kept in touch with friends (many reconnections since the reunion) via Facebook. We have done several house projects, walked our little dog a lot, and watched a great deal of streaming television (much of it quite enjoyable.) Throw in home cooked meals, gardening and reading and we have found that the simple life has its own form of appeal.

Glenbrook South basketball had an abbreviated schedule, but the boys were highly successful and ranked in the top ten in the state, only a few points away in close games from an undefeated season. There was no state tournament, just league play.

Fully vaccinated now, we are looking forward to face-to-face get-togethers with our sons and their families this summer. Two of our sons and their wives had pretty stiff cases of COVID that kept them knocked low at home, but they gradually recovered. All three of our sons and two wives are educators, so their professional lives necessitated the same adjustments that ours have. The annual school trips I sponsor to Washington DC and Springfield, Illinois, did not take place, and are even just tentative for the future. Moving 250-300 middle schoolers in and out of public venues, buses, planes, and buffets is still going to sound risky for a while.

Still, all in all, there is much to be grateful for, especially compared to so many others. Spring is here, we are emerging from our caves, the White Sox are playing in front of fans -- we are thankful and hopeful.

I am going to throw in a movie recommendation, since Hank Nelson shared with me that he has enjoyed my book recommendations in the past newsletters. My favorite movie of all time, and one that I have shared with thousands of middle school students over the years, is *The General* a 1926 silent film which Buster Keaton wrote, directed, and starred in. It is based on a true story from the Civil War involving the Union army stealing a passenger train (“The General”) in the South as part of a military strategy and the train's engineer's (Keaton) efforts to retrieve it and foil the plot. It is a dramatic comedy, full of amazing stunts and effects done in real time and with great danger to the cast. Roger Ebert consistently rated it among his top ten movies of all time, and it was the last great silent film, as the talkies arrived in 1927. (Keaton did one more silent movie, *Steamboat Bill Jr.*, which I also recommend, but it isn't a top ten all timer.) The best version of *The General* is a crystal clear version by KINO films, that can be found on Youtube. It is great for all ages!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m33VfG6-4vQ>

I still feel a fond glow as I recall our reunion weekend and the continuing realization of all the positive ripples that were sent out through the years by our class of '69. I hope you are all well and look forward to catching up, thanks to Rick's quarterly curating.

Sharon Michalove (was Sharon Grodsky)

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Now that we are more than a year out from the start of the pandemic, I'm taking a little time to assess what it's like to live isolated with two cats. The good news is that we are all alive and well. And living in a 1000 sq. foot condo is surprisingly comfortable.

The cats needed some adjustment to having me home all day, every day, and they love to let me know that I don't pay enough attention to them. Instead of giving me great ideas for my writing, they are more likely to knock things on the floor or, in Nico's case, grab onto my arm to keep me from typing. I had to learn that I could write at home and that being in a coffee shop was nice but not necessary.

Be that as it may, my first novel, *At First Sight*, will be published on October 22, 2021. It will be available as an e-book and a paperback from Amazon. I plan to put up the preorder soon. Right now I am learning the ins and outs of indie publishing. Fortunately I have author friends who can hold my hand. In the meantime, I am busy writing the second book, which I hope won't take another three years. The goal is to get it out in May 2022.

I miss the travel, theater, concerts, and eating out as well as spending time with my friends and family. I compensate with Zoom and various delivery services.

I write a blog post every week for the website I set up not too long ago. The address is sharonmichalove.com.

Jim Eldert

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In Ontario, most businesses are locked down, meaning, no sit-down restaurants but only take-out. At Wal-Mart and Costco, you can buy groceries but nothing else.

Whatever happened to retirement at 65?

Canadian Retirement Plan: Big Bag of Weed and Netflix. Pot is totally legal here. They have edibles, too. What would Officer Holler Say? I could walk to 2 pot stores from my house but don't. Of course not, I ride my Harley! (not).

Maybe next time a new poem.

Tom Fletcher

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Hi, GBS 1969 Alumni.

After leaving GBS I studied at Harper College & Southern Illinois University. My early years after college had me employed in the architectural and engineering world for a few years. I then stepped into the fire protection world. Yes I did marry my high school sweetheart Nancy LaVine (GBS 70) in 1977. We bought a home in Buffalo Grove that I'm still in since 1984. We had a beautiful daughter Kelly. She attended Stevenson HS then Columbia where she graduated with a BA in Advertising Art Direction. She got married in 2015 to her high school sweetheart also Mike Fishkin and they had my gorgeous granddaughter Charlotte in Feb. 2019. Nancy sadly had health issues for 19 years and bless her soul we lost her in 2012.

My interests throughout my early years were traveling, 16" softball, and running (5k, 10k, ½ marathons) and landscaping. My loves now for last 20 years: tennis and still my yard work. I recently retired Oct. 2020 after 45 years employed in many Fire Protection Design & Management positions.

Sadly we lost my very good friend of 50 years from GBS 69 Mike Anderson. I agonized over that and let the 2019 reunion slip by. Miss seeing you all & hope all are healthy entering our well earned retirement years.

Keep laughing, dancing, and also sending hugs to all.



Arleigh Stein

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Hello, Class of '69!

I've read the newsletters from fellow classmates, and decided to write about life in New Zealand as a contrast. We have a woman Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, who is presently in her second term. She won the hearts and votes of Kiwis with her handling New Zealand's very first mass shooting in which 51 people died by getting gun control legislation passed in less than 10 days. She banned all military assault weapons whose main purpose was killing people. She handled the unexpected eruption of a volcano, had a baby while Prime Minister (and took that infant to the UN when she gave her speech there) and is now handling the pandemic with stellar results.

We have no COVID19 in the wild here. Out of a population of 5 million, we have lost a total of 26 people, and the preponderance of those were octogenarians with dementia from one ravaged nursing home in the first weeks of the pandemic. Jacinda shut down our borders and imposed a strict lockdown, and it worked. We now safely walk around with no masks, gather in theaters, restaurants, weddings, and generally live as though there is no pandemic, because there isn't here. The only changes in our lifestyle is that masks are to be worn on public transportation, it is requested people use a tracing app, and our borders are shut to overseas travelers. People who come in from overseas get picked up at the airport on the tarmac and transported to a government-run isolation facility for 14 days, and they will pay for it. People in isolation are held in 3 or 4 star hotels, they are basically locked in their rooms,

and they have one exercise period a day in a fenced-in yard with the military making sure no one leaves without permission. New Zealand doesn't crap around with COVID19.

Early on, we had one strict lockdown of about 6 weeks duration. My husband and I used it to do all the stupid cleaning jobs that never get done, like washing the mini-blinds, and I found myself cleaning the joint between the floor molding and the wall with Q-tips. It sounds dumb, but it was strangely satisfying. I perfected my challah and also croissants. There was no run on toilet paper here as Jacinda asked us all to be kind, and promised that shipments would still be arriving. Hand sanitizer was in short supply as it was all imported, so a Maori Marae [*] started making it and giving it away, and then a boutique maker of vodka (I think it was vodka) quit production and started making hand sanitizer and selling it at cost, so we were all good in that respect.

When we were on strict lockdown, Kiwis for the most part observed it. Every day, Jacinda and our top epidemiologist (who is now a national icon-hero, on the level of Dr. Fauci) gave a briefing on COVID cases, their location, whether the source of the infection was known, and more, so the country knew exactly where we stood. Every contact of every COVID case was traced and tracked, and close contacts were isolated.

We have 2 nieces who are Registered Nurses working in hospitals in the States. In a sign of how different our countries have handled the pandemic, we were sending our nieces N-95 masks, as their hospitals were requiring nurses to re-use the ones they were issued for weeks on end.

I have friends and family who have had COVID, friends and family who have lost loved ones to COVID, and my heart goes out to them as the pandemic and it's sequelae go on and on and on over there.

We are hoping the vaccine helps end the pandemic, and hope the stupidity of the anti-vaxers is successfully thwarted so there is no reservoir of COVID in the wild to mutate into a vaccine resistant strain.

Cheers to you all.

*

[A Marori Marae "is a communal or sacred place that serves religious and social purposes in Polynesian societies." –Ed.]

Phil Levy

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Greetings from Scottsdale, Arizona to all my dear classmates. So, what has been going on in the last year and a half since our soiree? We all know that the answer to that regarding the last year, is that one click North of nothing has been going on unless it happens within the walls of the prison...errr...house. Who knew that jewelry would come to mean an ankle bracelet to ensure that I sequester a respectable distance away from my fellow man. Who knew that I would discover that my ignorance of politics was actually grander than I imagined and that my Republican sensibilities were an illusion, a philosophy that was ill-fitting for an intellectual who hoped he was bestowed with a modicum of common sense to go with it. I retreated into a cocoon and the moth emerged as a butterfly, a Democrat.

It has been too solitary of an existence but a healthy and happy one and for that I am thankful. The pandemic did not contribute to the new bachelorhood that I faced just before lock-down. Again, one of the blessings is that I would concentrate on noticing Joy; and that my work life continued without missing a beat, not requiring human interaction or going to an outside location but a quick stroll of fifty feet to my

Research and Development Studio where technology meets passion and discovery.

My entire family, which all reside nearby, have all been fully vaccinated and that has helped to start the process of return to the new flavor of what normal looks like in this mid to post apocalyptic world we now inhabit. I have to give thanks to Jeff Bezos for Amazon and let's not forget Grub Hub. A day on the town now is a trip to Costco or even to the mailbox. I live in the natural desert in the foothills of the highest mountain range in the Phoenix/Scottsdale area, so dirt roads, horse country, and no shortage of redneck sensibilities. But there is low density, lots of open space, clean air to breathe, amazing sunrises and sunsets and broad vistas with few man made encroachments. "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot" is not the refrain that I hear Joni Mitchell singing to us; plenty of wilderness but a short drive to the delights of infrastructure and civilization. This is a nice time of year in these parts, with the climate being a comforting eighty degrees and of course, every day is sunny.

It has been a year and a half since our reunion and the memories and connections are still fresh. I am so glad that I attended. The blustery weather for the Football Game just added to the full Monty of the Chicago experience. We had talked about having the next one as a five year follow-up; not 10. We don't have a bunch of spare decades to squander. So I am marking off the calendar and it will take another 1300 dates to X off. I'm already tired of that, even thinking about doing that so if anybody wants to hasten the next one, I would be all in on that.

A curious thing that the reunion ignited was my still alive and well passion for you high school girls. It was of no matter that you were a few years older than the cute, sweetly naive girls next door that I remembered adorning the hallways of Glenbrook South. I am sure you are enjoying all that your journeys have brought to you in the following fifty years and you have earned that patina of life and experience. But in some ways I see the "then and now" in your eyes and there is so much more for me to appreciate in you. But it is also the bittersweet of dark chocolate. I hope that in the interim we can get together in person or at least on social media, phone, Skype or Zoom. Please feel free to contact me anytime. I can be reached at 815-276-7644.



Ford Colley

fordcolley@fordcolley.com

After spending their careers in Broadway, Radio and Television, three fellow GBS classmates from the class of '69 have united after 50 years to create music again. Having played together in high school in various forms, Rob Rees, Ford Colley and Phil Reid began meeting every other Thursday evening this past year for a COVID Cocktail hour via Facetime. During these sessions much was discussed from our careers to old friends and everything in between, including the idea of making music together again. Rob lived in New York and spent his theatrical career on the stage as an actor, director and sound designer appearing in multiple Broadway shows. Phil's career in television began at WGN as a cameraman for Cubs games and other sporting events, eventually becoming a director. His favorite directing gig ... "Siskel and Ebert: At The Movies". My radio career was in Chicago as a personality on a bunch of stations including WSDM, The Loop, WIND, WDAI, WLS, WBBM, WCLR, WTMX over 25 years. Since then, I became a voice over talent narrating literally thousands of commercials and documentaries.

So you've got three guys who lived in the entertainment business eager to do something ... entertaining. With a simple program called Garage Band and using our iPads and Macs, we've produced this song together from three different locations. Rob's in Maine; Phil and I are in Florida living about a half hour apart. During lock down we tried our first song

... and after about 9 months, it's still not finished. In the meantime, we started and hastily finished our second song, recording it and mixing it together this past week for its debut here on GBS69. It's not one we planned to lead off with ... it's very bluesy with a touch of country and is not about a happy subject. It came about from the times ... an older song from the 60's with profound relevance now when observing life around us.

We have no name and we can't decide on the dozens we've come up with, so for the time being, and subject to change, we are ... Vintage Titans.

Thanks for listening.

Song Info: [Death Don't Have No Mercy - Vintage Titans](#)

Rob Rees: Vocal, Rhythm Guitar, Piano (Recorded in Portland, ME)

Ford Colley: Lead Guitar, Rhythm Guitar, Bass (Recorded in Longboat Key, FL)

Phil Reid: Percussion and Drums (Recorded in Sarasota, FL)

Vintage Titans

Rob Rees (rob@rcreesmusic.com)

Ford Colley (fordcolley@fordcolley.com)

Phil Reid (zoomout@aol.com)

Have an interest in playing or singing with us ... let us know your interest / talent!

Jim Siwy

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Was the Reunion just a year-and-a-half ago? Seems like a long, long time ago, in a land, far, far away.....

I am fortunate to have an occupation where I can work from home. The commute down the basement stairs is so much easier than Atlanta traffic! As a psychotherapist, most of what I do is simply listening to people. I now do it by phone or video. I don't wear pajamas, but it is convenient and comfortable to wear jeans and slippers. Now that we are fully vaccinated, I am facing the decision of when to return to the office and actually see people in person. I am being very conservative about this and frankly do not like the idea of talking through a mask. Working remotely has been fine with patients I already knew in person. It is less satisfactory to meet someone via video; you never quite make direct eye contact, as you can't look at the person and the camera at the same time. And so much is communicated nonverbally.

The work is so sedentary. This old body does not allow the sports that used to be so central. So I take long walks (as the knees and hips allow). I also practice Tai Chi, which I hesitate to mention because it seems I will always be a beginner, which is okay, as it is definitely noncompetitive. In fact I only practice it alone on the back patio. I spent a number of months trying golf, but decided it would be better not to let the remainder of life's precious years descend into insanity.

Janet is retired from teaching, except periodic substituting at local private schools. We enjoy a quiet life together with good neighbors. I have deepened my career through psychoanalytic training, which should be completed this year. We have lived in a frenetic culture. More and more I enjoy the inner world of the mind and the heart, accessed person-to-person through language. There is no end to what can be explored, especially when you witness decreased anxiety and greater joy. The spiritual and psychological swim together.

Now, don't let me mislead. Life is not always so deep. We had a week's celebration of my 70th with the extended family in a TN cabin. There's nothing like three grandchildren to bring you reality. Craft beer and Japanese whiskey (gift from my son) also help. Remember what 70 looked like when we were 18? Appearances are deceptive.

Yesterday I watched Margie Skelly read a bunch of her poems to a Chicago literary group on Zoom. What a wonderful thing to witness. I felt warmth and pride--here's a member of our GBS '69 family! I later wrote her and said that she should

have included her reunion poem, which I treasure. You can find it on the website. As a poet, she goes by Marjorie; to her current friends she is Marge. She says it's fine that I prefer Margie, as we all knew her back then.

I look forward to hearing from other classmates. Shout out to Rick for keeping this connection going!

Suzanne Mitchell (was Carol)

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Some of the benefits from our 50th class reunion included the chance to reunite in person with friends with whom I was close in high school and to meet some wonderful people who I look forward to seeing again. I have enjoyed several long phone calls in the last year-and-a-half learning of the life adventures and interests of high school pals. I've also connected on social media with even more people. The saddest part of the reunion was looking at the In Memoriam display. I am reminded of how precious life is and was over too soon for some I would have liked to have seen. Then, of course, there's the whole COVID thing.

Thankfully, I have not had Covid-19. I received one vaccine and am due for the second one in the first week of May. My sister got COVID in Seattle in February of last year when it first became known and my brother got it in September in Glenview. His wife still cannot taste or smell anything seven months later. Gary and I give ourselves high marks for sheltering in place as after we filled the gas tank in March last year it didn't need filling again until July. I made a list of 19 Covid-19 projects and to date have completed 14 of them. One of my projects is reading the Complete Works of Shakespeare; 1661 pages long and I am on page 1471.

Gary and I are still broadcasting our radio show on Fridays and Saturdays. In addition to interviewing authors and experts in various fields, we have added more interviews with baby boomer celebrities. In 2020, we talked with Hank Garrett, the last surviving cast member of *Car 54, Where Are You?*, Harry Thomason, the co-creator of *Designing Women*, and the incredibly delightful Jerry Mathers of *Leave It To Beaver*, who mailed us autographed photos unasked!

We are looking forward to getting out and traveling as soon as it seems safe to do so. There are still national parks to see, friends and family to visit, and as much adventure as we can pack into our senior years.

[Their website: <https://mantzandmitchell.com>. You can hear their show here: https://1150kknw.com/podcasts/mantz-mitchell/?episode_page=1 -Ed.]

Some Thoughts On Getting By

Jacinda Arden

Arleigh's note mentioned New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Arden. You might enjoy this video of her with Stephen Colbert: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUPo62ouU84>

Mr. Rodgers

Ok, quick, what color was Mr. Rodgers' sweater? (My memory was "red."). See if you, and I, guessed correctly: <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/501173/every-mister-rogers-sweater-color-visualized>

The Louvre

"The Louvre Just Made Its Entire Art Collection Accessible On Its Website For Free, And Here Are 30 Of The Most Impressive Artworks." See here: https://www.boredpanda.com/louvre-art-gallery-online/?utm_source=feedly&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=organic&utm_source=GetTheElevatordotcom

and here: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/>.

Less Than a Third

We been in touch with less than a third of our classmates. That means there are about 270 people we haven't been able to find and with whom we haven't made contact. In the Directory, these missing classmates are indicated by a dot before their name, like this:

	<p>• JAYE, CAROL (GRILL)</p>
	<p>Possibly a school teacher in Chicago.</p>
	<p>206 South Pine Street Mount Prospect, Illinois 60056-3116 847.255.7090</p>

If you're in touch with any of them, please send them to the website (www.gbs1969.com) and urge them to send a note. Thanks.

And Now, a Word on Herd Immunity

In the next few months, and most especially around July 4th, you'll probably be seeing and hearing a lot about herd immunity. *What's the magic number? Have we already or when will we achieve it? Once we have it, is the virus over?...and much more.*

It turns out that there's a simple-looking formula for calculating the percent of a population that must have some form of immunity (through vaccination or infection) before others are unlikely to get infected (the threshold). Here it is:

$$\text{Herd immunity} = 1 - \frac{1}{R_0}$$

...where R_0 (pronounced R-naught) is a measure of how infectious or transmissible a disease is. And R_0 , in turn, is defined as

$$\beta / \gamma$$

...where β is the transmission rate (number of infectious contacts by someone who is infected over some defined period of time) and γ is 1/the average infectious period.

You can probably see where this is going; even after a year+ of the pandemic, we don't know with certainty what these variables are, and some, like β , seem to change over time.

As of January 23rd, β is generally somewhere between .84 and 1.11, depending on which state you live in.

And γ is somewhere between 10 and 20 days.

Plug in those numbers and you get a pretty wide range of 88-95%. And remember, that's 88-95% of the entire population, including children. To give you some perspective, some 31.9 million people have been infected in the US and 91.2 million have been fully vaccinated, which combined (and assuming no overlap) is only 37.5% of our population. So we still have a way to go.

But wait...there's more! Depending on peoples' behavior, these numbers can vary far more widely *locally*. If someone is infected, has no contact with others, immediately isolates and doesn't infect anyone else, their β is zero. On the other hand, for example, the pastor in Maine (who was infected, ignored COVID, and performed a marriage anyway) infected at least 177 others. And one thing we've definitely seen is wide swings in behavior, depending on geography, time of year, "COVID-fatigue," political persuasion, etc.

And all of these calculations are just for a single strain of COVID. Every variant (and the

number of those seems to be increasing) will have its own herd immunity threshold. So nation-wide or world-wide a herd immunity calculation would have to factor in the relative prevalence of each variant, which of course is also constantly changing.

And a lot more that I haven't mentioned.

So be suspicious if someone tells you that there is one, precise herd immunity threshold (percentage) for COVID and just continue to do those things that we know for certain decrease the rate of transmission and by extension the incidence of deaths. Though the formula turns out to be more complicated than it at first appears, this prescription is simple and easy to follow: even if you are vaccinated, wear a mask in public, avoid large crowds, maintain social distance, and wash your hands frequently.