Perseverance
Picking up the Pieces and Moving Forward
Note by Joe Lambert

Years ago, when I was working in the UK, I remember collecting stories of folks that survived the London blitz. They would talk about the ordinary ways that life continued, despite the destruction, despite the trauma. I remember one of them saying, “after all, there was a war on, darling, what else could we do?”

It was all so obvious to the survivors. To the rest of us, it seemed heroic.

I don’t remember anyone in the last 15 months saying, “Well, that’s just what we have to do, there’s a pandemic, after all.” But I know most of us shared the thought. Whatever the inconvenience, whatever the sacrifice, we just adjusted and moved forward. Can you imagine if someone said in late 2019, the whole world will have to change our entire approach to public events, personal hygiene, travel, and social interactions for more than a year.... that vast numbers of us would move our work and social lives 100% online... that the places we take for granted; restaurants, bars, museums, libraries, sporting event venues, on an on would need to be re-invented as businesses. The world would fall apart.

It didn’t. Admittedly there were moments. As members of an intentional community, as a beloved group of neighbors, each of you found a way to support each other to stay safe and healthy. That’s just what was required. You persevered.
Perseverance continued

Here in the late Spring of 2021, we look at the shards of all these changes and we don’t fret over what was lost, we try and do something creative with the remnants. Our memories of the thousand acts of grace, of solidarity, of care, are what sustains us, and knowing that if we can have lived through a global pandemic, we can and will live through what is likely to emerge in the complicated years to come.

This issue is both dedicated to those that have not made it through, those whose lives have in fact been blown apart, but also to all those that found themselves willing to be useful in the face of the “inconvenience” of pandemic restrictions.

May we carry forward the supportive and nurturing attitude we developed to keep each other safe, may that be the legacy of Covid 19.

Newsletter Committee
Rosy Aronson
Kim Aronson
Christine Grace Gonzales
Joe Lambert
Dedications
In this edition we want to start a tradition of honoring and calling attention to the stories of some special residents. This month we'll honor two of our most amazing community members.

Marion Seymour

Marion shares her thoughts on her connection to the Commons Community

The best decision I have ever made is coming to New Mexico and The Commons. I travelled by train from Rochester, NY to Lamy Station in 1995.

I made so many friends and became closer to my cousins Joan and Allen. I’ve had wonderful experiences here and great neighbors. New Mexico has allowed me to enjoy the out-of-doors, especially hiking and swimming. John Otter became a brother to me. Once I traveled to South Africa with John and his friends, we met-up with my brother Jim at a NYC park near the airport. I rejoiced in John’s marriage to Suzi.

I have always enjoyed the children at The Commons. And, I am lucky to have Christine and Amaya next door now. We have become a family. Imagine at age 90 I acquired a daughter and granddaughter!

Cooking in the kitchen was a collaborative effort; producing community meals and providing an opportunity to get to know each other better. I enjoyed preparing the work day breakfast. Every month it was a challenge to get through the work day list!

I have faith in the excellent leadership here, and trust in the wellbeing of the community’s future.

Marion (D2)

We asked residents to share a single word to describe Marion, and what she means to them.

Thomas -Committed - Marion’s commitment to the possibility and potential of community is second-to-none. In all the years I have known her she has always placed community - whether the Commons or the wider community of which we are part, including the more-than-human world - as one of the indispensable ways to create a healthier, more sustainable, more just society.
Will- **Progressive** – She has stood up for saving the earth via the Green Party and keeping children thriving. The Commons, over the decades, has had numerous children and youth here because of her generosity.

Laura - **Courageous** - for her ability to be in attunement with her intuitive creativity and generous heart.

Louise- **Compassionate** - Marion has maintained fundamental values of simplicity and low impact on our planet and has not been swept up in the modern rush to consume the world’s precious and rapidly dwindling resources even when she could have been on an endless shopping spree- a model to us all!

Veena - **Remarkable** - I find Marion remarkable in how she continues to engage with the worlds around her, even with her physical pain and other challenges. I’ve watched her continually show up to each day ready to connect with something she enjoys doing - however small. 💗

Ken - **Adventurous** - 3 examples: 1, sea kayaking around islands off coast of Sitka Alaska; 2, xxskiing to and back the hot springs in the Jemez; 3, moving from New York to Santa Fe to live in the Commons!

Erica - **Generous** - Ever since Marion joined The Commons, she has looked for ways to help others. She helped several families financially so that they could own a home in our community.

Deborah - **Strong** - Woman in the commonhouse knows how things should be done.

Karin and Dick Roth (formerly D4) - **Generosity and Frugality** - Marion has enriched the lives of many. She has supported people who couldn’t afford to live in the Commons on their own, and helped others to pursue a career they wouldn’t be able to afford. She supports many humanitarian and environmental charities. She supported Dick’s work in DWI research; she owned one of the first Priuses in the Commons. She is a true friend.

Linda - **Dedication** - Marion actively supported social causes she believed in. Whenever she encountered someone in need she found a way to help them.

Ellen - **Generous** - Marion is my role model on how to transform concern for another into a concrete solution that reaps benefits for the person now and into the future. Her thoughtfulness is expansive.

Alice- **Dedicated**- Marion follows through diligently on whatever she considers important. What she chooses is not based on self interest but on the needs of wider communities.

Carol - **Stalwart**- - Marion is a core of this community, grounding us through her generosity and her determination to see the community achieve its best

Kris - **Caring** - a caring person who generously supports those closest to her — including members of The Commons. And she cares for the struggles of peoples around the world, and for our Mother Earth.
Angela - **Generous** - with heart, kind words, financially, openness, and love.

JiLL - **Lively** - Marion is action-oriented, a fantastic correspondent and an informed activist for a better world. Marion’s contributions to peace, justice and sustainability are truly immense; and when the legislature is in session she’s had a daily ritual of contacting our elected officials. She is an avid reader with deep appreciation for Willa Cather. Marion cherishes family, and remains dedicated to keeping their stories alive.

Christine - **Presence** - Each time I walk into Marion’s home, she extends her hand to me. A deeper and vaster gesture of love than any words I can equal in reply. I extend my own hand to meet hers. The preciousness of this one moment. She peers out her window for much of each day, observing and remembering. Marion knows every detail of her beloved Linden Tree, watches the hummingbirds come to visit, smiles at the children passing by. She waits for her own ship home. Death isn’t a hushed word to her; it is her everyday dance. She has taught me to surrender to life’s undulations and tides. To soften into this one moment. I’m still learning and stumbling, but thankfully, she’s not done teaching yet. Because, really, what do we even know anymore? But this. (And this). Love, hands outstretched.

And Celebrating Alice Ladas!

To honor the occasion of her 100th Birthday

May 30, 2021
How I Persevere During the Pandemic
By Erica Elliott

I have a mantra I say to myself during distressing times—this too shall pass.

In the meantime, I manage to persevere through my contact with patients, friends, and family, as well as spending time in nature.

Tending to patients and their problems, whether on the phone or in person, gives me a feeling of purpose, and gives me a way to take the focus of my mind off my own troubles. Some of my patients plead to see me in person. With mask in place and safe distancing—often outdoors—I usually agree. I can feel how healing it is simply to make human contact during these times of isolation.

In my community, our limited gatherings for shared meals, happy hour, outdoor meditation, Feast Day, and the Art Walk have been a godsend. I feel surges of joy when I can spend time with my neighbors. I’m deeply grateful that I live in The Commons and not in some isolated place without any sense of neighborhood.

Zoom and other virtual platforms are no match for in-person gatherings, but this new mode of communication has been critical in maintaining contact with friends and family from around the world. For that I am grateful.

On my daily walk in the dry riverbed, I have befriended every dog I come in contact with. I ask the owners of the dogs if I can hug their dogs. No one has denied me that pleasure. Now, many of the dogs run to me when they see me, looking forward to my enthusiastic hugs.

Being in nature is one of my greatest sources of solace and joy. When I’m up in the mountains, I forget whatever bothered me as my spirits connect with the earth. When I hike by myself, I sometimes stop to wrap my arms around a ponderosa pine or other tree.

Every morning, after I do 20 minutes of yoga, I do a short meditation that includes acknowledging what I am grateful for—in spite of these challenging times.

This too shall pass.
During the pandemic, when all the city pools shut down, we swimmers went nuts. Me and my mermaid pod of 60-somethings got serious and started our open water swimming early and dedicated two or three days per week for these endeavors. As our nearby reservoirs were too drained we started driving 100 and 150 miles each way in search of larger waters. One gal challenged the others to express why we swim and I wrote this:

When swimming in a local lake with my mermaid pod, I feel like I am the luckiest person in the world. Open water is my true swimming challenge. I might soak up the scenery as I fiddle with goggles or lay back waiting for a buddy but mostly it’s power on. We swim towards that faraway spot with confidence of a sure return even if the winds shift creating a 45 minute swim through a squall or choppy water. As much as I treasure drifting into my forever pace that clears my mind or solves all the world’s problems, I also value concentrating on my stroke, striving for each stroke to be better than the last. The ocean adds delight, tickling my soul encountering reef life below and tossing about with waves. There challenges escalate, I remember watching remora fish sucking on a sedentary sea turtle deep below me when I realized my swimming was taking me no-where. The current kept me in place at the edge of a bay. Time to collect my wits and streamline my body through the current. Of course, the pool is pure joy. Certainly the safest place to swim, to release body kinks, and perfect my monofinning. In my lane, focused on the black line, I swim in super slow motion, searching each inch of my body for its role in moving forward. I’ll pause mid-stroke, floating myself forward trying to maintain balance in my most streamlined self.

First I created Mertail Fitness LLC to share newly invented strokes designed for slow swims from one pool wall to the other (what’s the rush?). Now my goal is effortless swimming for everyone because I realized that many who never learned to swim fear the water and few adults swim properly streamlined thereby stressing their necks and shoulders. My lessons became mertailored for each trainee, at their pace with exercises created specific to individual needs. My successes are testimonial fodder. Swimming is the one sport (can’t think of another) that you can do longer and harder as you grow older. I’m living proof of that!
Snapshots of Perseverance

Carol Schrader

My grandpa grew up in Idaho. They were exceptionally poor, and he would recount stories of walking the railroad tracks with his brothers and sisters to collect coal that fell off the coal cars to heat their house. They would also walk the barbed wire fences to gather wool that rubbed off the sheep, and take that back to their mother who would use it to spend and knit their clothes.

His father was a fiddle player in the local saloon, and was shot during a poker game. According to family legend his dying words were "Don't let my son grow up to play the fiddle," because with questionable logic he figured the fiddle was the reason he was in the saloon, and therefore his ruination. Grandpa was very young but determined to play the fiddle, so he made himself an instrument out of a cigar box and taught himself to play. Finally someone took pity on him and gave him a real instrument. He was a musician all the rest of his life, playing in bands, singing, selling instruments and giving lessons.

Teri Caputo

What has been getting me through this pandemic and beyond? prayer, meditation, my cockatiel, Linus, and the wild birds I see when I hike along the picacho peak trail...

and the birds around here too...a townsend solitaire was bathing joyfully in the birdbath when I came home yesterday afternoon.
Youth Speaks

Image by: Sam

Image by: Ciela
Image by: Zubin
Drawings - December 2020 - March 2021

By Deborah John
Cosmic Play
Poem by Veena Vasista

Joy to the World.
We are alive upon her.
Extensions of her.
I feel her breath
moving from the ground
through the soles
of my feet
into my bones.

She is the Mother
I bow to
in the mornings.
She wants me to thrive.
When I thrive,
she feels vitality
through the soles
of my feet
down to her core.
She is tickled.
She laughs with me.

Mama’s belly laughter
moves through my bones.
Together we are an expression
of the Cosmos at play.

Recent Work
Art by Andrea Vargas

The ICE SCREAMS truck was produced with AXEL Contemporary. It recognizes the migrant children that died while in US detention camps, and the separated families.

Hot Rain
A new palette of colors I haven’t worked with before
New Textures, New Patterns
By Kristin Barendsen, with Carolyn Dechaine

My friend Carolyn Dechaine contracted Covid in March 2020 and is still experiencing long-haul symptoms. Then during a June rainstorm, her roof became a sieve and she had to live in an AirBnB for eight months of her convalescence. We recently had the following exchange, or something like it, on Messenger.

Carolyn: I’m moving back home on Monday, after 289 days away.

Me: I’m so glad your exile is almost over! I hope your process of settling back in goes well.

Carolyn: I’m in the process of replacing all of the fabric contents of my house (bedding, towels, curtains, etc.) because they all got contaminated with mold spores while in storage. I’m getting replacements that are very close to what I had, but because the exact items are not available, everything will be just a little different—a different shade or pattern, a different texture.

I’ve been thinking how dreamlike it will feel to go back home. Like finding oneself waking to another life that’s in the same vein as the life you had before, except all the details are altered.

I’m thinking that in a way, this may be everyone’s experience post-pandemic.

Me: Yes, returning to “normal” may be like reverse culture shock. After spending time in a foreign country, you return to a reality you’ve previously known—but both you and the place are different. People behave oddly in stores, the products are unfamiliar or missing, the traffic patterns are strange.

Last night I sat inside a restaurant for almost the first time in a year. I relished the familiarity: the low glow of the bar, Flamenco music piped in, the murmur of voices. But there were chasms of space between the tables. And I wasn’t sure how long I was supposed to keep my mask on. I pulled it down to taste my mezcal margarita—its salt, lime, smoke—then pulled it back up. The restaurant was its own mutated reality—one six feet removed from what I remember.

Carolyn: Are you loving your house now that it’s yours? Does it feel different?
Me: Owning C6 is a shift not in physical environment but in mindset. I could punch a nail into the diamond plaster if I wanted. I installed a new section of drip line in the garden. I fixed a leaky toilet with my own bare hands—that was quite the thrill! I even purchased a major appliance: the old dishwasher died the day I sent in my first mortgage check.

Looking around, I see things I never really noticed as a renter. The loose brick by the corner of my office, the crack in the concrete running across the bedroom floor. These flaws are mine now, and I kind of love them. But why are there sugar ants on the bathroom walls—and why are they dead?

Carolyn: Oh yikes. I hope there are no surprises like that awaiting me back home!

Me: Since I didn’t have to move, I’ve become obsessed with reorganizing everything—purging the cobwebs, restacking items in cupboards, clearing dead ants off the walls. Something like your having to replace all your linens with new textures, new patterns.

I’d wanted to buy the home for years, and it took years to creep over and around all the obstacles. But the previous owners also held the vision of me buying C6. And now here we are, the house and me—same same, but different.

Carolyn: I’m glad you persevered.

Me: The amount of time I’ve spent at home during the past year is itself surreal. I think I turned into the peach tree in my courtyard. My roots grew through the foundation, snaking around the pipes and under the pathways.

Carolyn: The huge aspen tree by my window was my bolstering companion through covid. While my symptoms progressed from digestive to respiratory to cardiac, I watched the white geometric patterns of the aspen branches on the light field of the sky, and then the first leaf buds emerged and erupted with small flourishes of vivid green. The whole tree leafed out while I remained prone on the sectional beneath it, grateful for the large window. I spent hours breathing in and out, meditating on the ways the leaves move with the air. The tree and the sky were my immediate connections to still being alive when I felt the line between life and death emerging from within my own body, so near and present as to be able to cross it or possibly unable not to cross it.

This time during the pandemic has been a ritual of endurance—to endure the isolation, the limitation of place, the time with one’s self, the closeness of mortality. I have viewed it as a sacred time and have not considered trying to make it resemble normal life, which I wouldn’t have been able to do, physically, even if I had wanted to try.
Against the Odds
By Frank Weissbarth

Our youngest son had the deck stacked against him from the beginning. He was the scapegoat child in a dysfunctional family in Colorado where he was the target of violence from both his father and older brothers. He was eventually removed by social services and then bounced from one foster home and residential treatment center to another until we adopted him when he was ten. When he came to us, he was plagued by anxiety and fear, terror really. He had never attended a normal school and he had trouble with learning and social relationships, things with which he still struggles. It was rough sledding, interspersed with times when he did remarkable things, like learning his torah portion and writing a moving talk for his bar mitzvah, and in high school making scholastic award-winning films and winning a leadership scholarship. But when he started experimenting with alcohol and drugs in his late teens, he went off the rails.

Eventually he landed in a residential program in Utah (there were none in New Mexico) that worked with dual diagnosis young people. There were lots of ups and downs, but a few more ups than downs. He spent three years, gradually progressing through the program, and he has now been straight and sober for nearly ten years, and even stopped smoking cigarettes. He still lives in Salt Lake City where for the past few years he has been attending Salt Lake Community College. He made it through the pandemic, living alone in a small apartment and taking classes online. He worked really hard, got good grades, and next week will be getting his Associates degree with academic honors. He will also be getting another honor for being a first generation (they count the biological parents) graduate. Now he’s looking for a full-time job and looking forward to the challenge.

As his parents, we have always admired how, every time he fell apart, against tremendous odds, he has somehow been able to pick himself up again and keep going.

Photo by Esha Chiocchio
Occupied Childhood
By Berit Leonard

I was born in March 1938 in Hamar, Norway. On April 9, 1940 the German army invaded Norway. They sailed north from Denmark up the Oslo fjord and landed in Oslo, where they expected the Norwegians to welcome them with open arms. No such luck. The King and Storting (parliament) refused the offer, and had to flee the capital. They went north by train to Hamar, and from there were transported to Sweden by car. The men of Hamar were called up to be drivers, and one of those men was my father.

Friends brought my mother, my 3 month old brother and 2 year old me to a farm outside town, because they thought the town would be bombed. That did not happen, and we moved back home after a few days. My mother did not know what had happened to my father, but after three months she got a letter from Sweden where my father along with his buddies were interned working on a farm. Sweden was neutral.

Eventually he came home and the family was reunited, much to my mother’s relief. Norway was occupied by the Germans for five years. When I was old enough to walk around town by myself, I remember men in green uniforms. My parents told me not to talk with them or accept candy. I don’t remember being particularly scared of them.

I remember grownups always talking about food, what they couldn’t get: coffee, sugar, cream, white flour. I don’t think we were ever hungry, probably ate lots of potatoes, carrots and cabbage. People who knew farmers sometimes got a ham or a sausage. My father had shop that sold paint, and I think he sometimes traded paint for food.

One time something scary happened. We lived just off the main highway from Oslo to Lillehammer, and it was traditional for relatives traveling to stop by for coffee and cake at our house. One day there was a knock on the door and there was my mother’s nephew Torbjørn. With him was a group of German officers! My mother blanched, but invited them in and set about serving coffee and such baked goods as were available. I remember sitting very quietly in
a corner of the living room and being scared, because I could tell my mother was very uncomfortable. I think we had heard rumors that Torbjørn was friendly with the Germans.

After the war we found out that Torbjørn had joined the Nazi party and actually fought on the German front. He was tried as a war criminal after the war.

The war ended in Europe on May 8, 1945. I remember seeing the Norwegian flag go up on flagpoles all over town on a beautiful sunny day. And all the grown-ups being very happy.

During the war the Germans had confiscated people’s radios, so the Norwegians could not follow the news. Another day in early May my friends and I were sitting on a stone wall by a birch allee leading to a nearby farm. A steady stream of people were walking to the farm. Then they came back carrying their radios which had been kept in a barn on the farm.

This is a very vivid childhood memory.
Art Walk 2021

Photo by Rosy Aronson

Photo by Esha Chiocchio

Photo by Rosy Aronson

Photo by Esha Chiocchio

Photo by Rosy Aronson

Photo by Esha Chiocchio
### The Commons Index

A snap look at our cohousing community
Compiled by Ken Hughes

- Resident Commoners: **79**
- Rank of 2020 in years with most Commoners: **5**
- Commoners under 18: **14**
- Age range of Commoners: **97**
- Dogs and cats: **10** and **9**
- Renters: **22**
- Homes not occupied by owners: **5**
- Fraction of homes sporting solar panels: **1 in 2**
- Homes resold more than once: **11**
- Homes currently for sale: **0**
- Times it has snowed on Feast Day: **2**
- Original Commoners ‘in situ’: **11**
- Decades represented, from youngest to eldest: **10**
- Meals cooked for the community peri-Pandemic: **4**
- Nuclear families: **5**
- Single parent households: **3**
- Native Santa Fe adults: **2**
- Precipitation normal year to date in Santa Fe: **5.26”**
- 2020 to date: **2.84”**
- July so far: trace
- July 23, 2018 in 1.5 hours: **3.21”**
- Types of fruit harvested in 2019: **6**
- Rank of apples for most fruit to be harvested in 2020: **1**
Foreign-born or holding passports from other countries: 9
Plug-in electric cars and bikes: 4 and 5
Elevation change in feet on the sidewalk scooter path from Pl D to Pl B: 35
Vegetarians: 4
Pocket vegetable gardens: 6
Trees, shrubs and perennial flowers planted in the Plaza in 1994: 2,000+
Trees around the Commons: 309
Weddings/receptions held in the Commons: 5
Births in the Commons: 9
Memorials for Commoners passed: 7

14 July 2020