

From the editor —

# Taking flattening the curve seriously

Saturday Nikki Hamilton, a friend of mine from church, died of the COVID-19 virus. She was a member of the Skagit Valley Chorale, which made the decision to practice earlier in March. That decision was based on public health guidelines. Now the group of 60 is a "cluster" and Skagit County Public Health has found that "more than half of attendees who were at this gathering are now confirmed or probable cases of COVID-19."

Sunday folks from at least Seattle and Everett were shopping on First Street and picnicking at the pocket parks on the boardwalk. Know what? Without testing, no one knows who is healthy and who is carrying the virus. As much as merchants want — need — their business, we don't want out of towners here.

Our rural Skagit County has the fourth highest number of cases in the state as of Tuesday. The young nurse in Shelter Bay under self-isolation this past week-plus was one of the first four in the County and the first La Conner case. Several members of the Skagit Chorale are greater La Connerites. Who have they hugged or even walked too closely to on a trail in the past two weeks?

Two weeks. On March 10th the Skagit County commissioner declared a public health emergency. The first COVID-19 case in the County was also announced that day. There were four cases that week, seven a week later and 18 cases March 19. It was up to 28 cases by the 21st. The 45 cases and the first death listed Tuesday are only yesterday's totals. The numbers will continue to climb.

COVID-19 is here and, as the Town of La Conner stated on its website: "We must act now to mitigate the spread of this dangerous disease."

Every day is day one. Every day we are at ground zero. This is a real life version of a bad "Ground Hog Day" movie. It is a nightmare. It will get worse. You can be safe, or your coffee buying customer can be safe today, and tomorrow either of you may have gotten too close to someone who is carrying the virus. Any person might be infected.

We are told to hunker down. Washington, following other states, has now mandated that people "Stay home, Stay safe".

How long is hunker down? When the British hunkered down in London's subways for safety against the German air attacks in 1940, that Battle of Britain lasted almost four months. Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously said, "we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

The duration is just that: until the end. This community has pulled together in defense of our restaurants. The duration might be too long and our population too small to pull all our locally owned businesses through. We need to — and will — keep ordering take out, but our resolve may be larger than the dollars needed for owners to pay their bills. This week, next week, as long as they are open, call them up and place your order. And then do it again with another meal at another place.

This is, literally, a world defining moment. All of a sudden, this is our time. Defending our Town means defending ourselves. This moment is not merely a moment, it isn't only going to be a month and the length of the season isn't now known. Our fight is going to last longer than we want, perhaps longer than we believe possible. We are only at the start. We are nowhere near the middle. Don't believe the end is in sight. That is whistling in the dark.

Nikki Hamilton loved to see her name in print. She will not read this, of course. How many more Skagit County names will be printed as fatalities, victims of this virus? Working to minimize the spread is the work of every citizen.

— ken stern

## Musings — on the editor's mind

Timothy Eagan wrote a book titled "The Worst Hard Time." I have been thinking of my mother's journey and the hard times that shaped her.

My mom, born in 1920, would have been 100 in May. She was nine in 1929 and a child of the Great Depression and, at 20, not old enough to vote for Roosevelt in the 1940 election.

But more than that, she was 100 percent Lithuanian. All four

of her grandparents were born in Lithuania. My mom grew up in the ghetto in Brooklyn and didn't speak English until she started school.

All of that, more than I know or can surmise, went into making her my mother. She went into the grocery store with an envelope full of coupons she clipped and saved. We only bought clothes from the sales rack. Best were the clearance sale bargains, as if she won the lottery.

She bought not only toilet paper but tissues and all soaps: bar, dish and laundry detergent, on sale. We had stockpiles before stockpiles were needed or fashionable.

My mom saved cottage cheese and yogurt containers once technology made them plastic. She saved egg cartons long after her five children were out of school and her parent volunteering days were past. This was before anyone conceived of a food bank, where eggs come in by the caseload, and poverty was more hidden.

I have always, for decades now, defined myself as a child of a child of the Depression. As every parent and household does, my

(Continued on Page 7)

## • OBITUARY •



**ROBERT BIBEAU**  
2/2/1934 — 3/15/2020

Robert Bibeau, a long-time resident of Shelter Bay, died in Burlington, WA, on March 15, 2020. He was born in Somerset, MA on February 2, 1934. Robert went on to have a successful career as an aeronautical engineer working in Florida, Utah and Washington State. He was proud of working on the first space program while in Florida and with the Green River Space Program in Utah. Bob completed his career working for Boeing until his retirement in 1990. In 1991, he built a home in Shelter Bay and lived there for the remainder of his life. Bob thoroughly enjoyed hunting and fishing. He loved to joke around and enjoyed speaking and singing in French.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Mary. Bob is survived by his wife, Ann; his five children, Bill Kosanke, Tom Kosanke, Cathy Pitts, Greg Kosanke, and Angela Stewart; his three step-children, Michelle Parmelee, Rick Chorpenning and Deidri Heniff; and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

You may offer your condolences and share memories of Bob with his family online at [www.kernfuneralhome.com](http://www.kernfuneralhome.com). Arrangements are through Kern Funeral Home, Mount Vernon.

## • LETTERS •

### Flowers and other support

Letter to Editor:

My name is Connie Funk and I feel so blessed to be a part of this amazing community. Like everyone else in this current time of challenge, I am looking for ways I can be of service to others and helping to create positive connections. As a long time gardener and mosaic artist, I have created a table out on the road in front of our home with free bouquets and damaged china, which is the mainstay of my mosaic art form. We are located near the Rexville store on Dodge Valley Road-13973 Dodge Valley Road-Mount Vernon 98273

I have more than enough china and tiles and would love to share with others who now have time to practice at home with children. I will replenish the table daily, so bring your own box and take what you would like. There are many YouTube videos of how to get started with mosaic projects — take precautions with adhesives, sharp materials, etc.

I have facilitated projects with children over the years and they are super creative and enjoy the process.

I will also happily send you a complimentary class outline for mosaics as well as offer a guided PSYCH-K(tm) session over the phone at no cost to help reduce stress associated with the current uncertainties. You can search [www.psych-k.com](http://www.psych-k.com) to find out information to see if you have an interest.

If you would like a complimentary phone session, contact me at: [constancefunk@gmail.com](mailto:constancefunk@gmail.com) and we can set up a time to connect — as it has been said, this is a time for physical distancing, but socially we can remain connected in many ways.

Counting and sending blessings, Connie Funk, Pleasant Ridge

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# If I ran the zoo

By MEL DAMSKI



When I started writing this column in my head two weeks ago, it was a lighthearted approach to a potentially serious problem. I was telling everyone I ran into that it's time to really take the Melbow seriously.

I invented the Melbow years ago and it became the official handshake of La Conner thanks to Mayor Ramon Hayes, who agreed with me that when someone offers you a bare hand, you have no idea where that hand might have been or what cooties it could be passing around.

When the COVID-19 virus started to become something to be taken very seriously, I actually called our Governor, Jay Inslee, and left him a phone message advocating the Melbow as the official handshake of the whole state of Washington. I didn't hear back from him but I'm guessing he has some more important matters to deal with right now.

And truth be told, the Melbow is no longer the right way to say hello or greet a new acquaintance. Things have gotten so serious that we are encouraged to stay at least six feet apart and you would have to have very long arms to still be able to rub elbows.

This kind of a lockdown is a tremendous challenge for people like me who love to be on the go interacting with people all of the time. No karaoke, no dancing at the Old Edison and, on a more serious note, no trip to Uganda where I was supposed to be filming a documentary right as you read this.

My wife is teaching from home in California, my kids are doing their jobs online and we are basically being sentenced to voluntary confinement. Voluntary for now, unless people keep crowding beaches in Los Angeles and parks in Manhattan, in which case the National Guard is likely to step in.

There are many people who are not taking this seriously and perhaps they are right that this is being blown out of proportion. But this is a case in which you have to err on the side of caution. Luckily, we live in one of the most beautiful places in the world, with some many incredible trails and quiet and peaceful places to explore.

The isolation is extremely challenging to me, and it is ironic, but also awful, that the Jews of Skagit will not be having our Passover Seder this year because of a Plague.

Whatever your normal activities are — playing or watching sports, hanging out with buddies, working amongst others, dinner parties, family celebrations — they have all been put on hold because finally, the people who are run-

ning our country and our state and our towns and cities have finally come to their senses and are taking this very seriously and I applaud them for that.

If I am wrong, sorry for the inconvenience. If the doubters are wrong, who knows what kind of damage they might have done to friends and family and strangers. And, ultimately to themselves.

So, let's be smart and extremely cautious and follow what our leaders are asking us to do. And when this, God willing, eventually runs its course, we can take the Melbow a lot more seriously!



## Moments in time

THE HISTORY CHANNEL

- On April 11, 1814, Napoleon Bonaparte, emperor of France, abdicates the throne and is banished to the Mediterranean island of Elba. Napoleon is credited with reforms that had a lasting impact on European society, including rights for all men and the end of feudalism.

- On April 7, 1891, American showman Phineas T. Barnum dies in Bridgeport, Connecticut, at age 81. Barnum had requested that a New York paper run his obituary before he died so he could enjoy reading it, and the paper obliged.

- On April 12, 1908, a fire at the Boston Blacking Company in Chelsea, Massachusetts, leaves 12 dead, 85 missing and presumed dead and more than 17,000 homeless. Due to high winds, a good portion of the city burned.

- On April 6, 1917, the U.S House of Representatives endorses a Senate declaration of war against Germany, and America formally enters World War I. Some 50,000 American soldiers would lose their lives before the war ended on Nov. 11, 1918.

- On April 10, 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt establishes the Civilian Conservation Corps to put thousands of Americans to work during the Great Depression. The CCC was open to unemployed, unmarried U.S. male citizens between the ages of 18 and 26.

- On April 9, 1959, NASA introduces America's first astronauts to the press: Scott Carpenter, Gordon Cooper Jr., John Glenn Jr., Virgil "Gus" Grissom, Walter Schirra Jr., Alan Shepard Jr. and Donald Slayton. The seven men, all military test pilots, were selected from a group of 32 candidates.

- On April 8, 2005, Eric Rudolph agrees to plead guilty to a series of bombings, including the fatal bombing at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, in order to avoid the death penalty. A 40-pound pipe bomb that exploded in Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park killed one woman and injured over 100 people.

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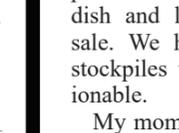
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## Ken Stern, Publisher & Editor

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### Postmaster:

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La Conner Weekly News

PO Box 1465, La Conner, WA 98257

Michelle Havist, General Manager  
[michelle@laconnernews.com](mailto:michelle@laconnernews.com)

Bill Reynolds, News Editor  
[news@laconnernews.com](mailto:news@laconnernews.com)

Cindy Vest, Production Manager  
[production@laconnernews.com](mailto:production@laconnernews.com)

Eileen Engelstad, Community Calendar Editor, Proofreader

Rick Shorten, Special Projects

### Contributors:

Anne Bayse, Judy Booth, Robin Carneen, Nancy Crowell, Don Coyote, Mel Damski, MaryRose Denton, John Doyle, Janna Gage, Bob Hamblin, Ollie Iversen, Katie Kramer, Bobbi Krebs-McMullen, Patricia Paul, Brad Reynolds, Claire Swedberg.