

COVID Letters

This is a series of e-mails I sent my Advisees and some former advisees during the spring and summer of 2020 dealing with the Pandemic & our responses... – John Anderson

On Sun, Mar 22, 2020 at 8:12 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:

Dear Everyone,

Some lovely backcatchas from many of you, great to hear how people are coping and how life does really move on. Please keep me posted, I DO Fuss. Good news of the day was that although Croatia was rocked by a significant earthquake that caused a lot of damage in the capitol, former advisee Melita Peharda and her family were safe in their island retreat off Split.

So, boring news from your dull ol' prof: Yesterday was a Turkey Day on Arrowhead rd. after a challenging morning creating Google Klassrooms I was convinced by The Pup to go out and enjoy the day a little. we wandered off for an hour or two and encountered enormous Turkey prints in the dried mud of our road. also what looked like fox prints, grouse, deer... a whole wonderful story all embedded in the dirt. I am trying not to obsess over numbers, but I am under orders from former-student-now-primary-care-giver Angie to Get More Exercise & Eat Veggies, SOO today Karen the Dogs, and I walked from Eagle Lake Road to Jordan Pond House. Yes, it is only 5.5 miles & yes, my 82 year old Aunt in Scotland regards 4 as her "morning romp with the dogs" BUT it means that two days running I have broken the 10,000 step barrier for the first time since I was sick. SO THERE!! Snowdrops are almost over, Croci are about to flower. Daffodils are working on it. David has converted me to Vampire Weekend.... Yesterday we ordered Pizza from Reel (PLEASE people , if you possibly can, support local small businesses. They are taking it on the chin & the real impact of this virus may be conversion of the world into a chain-only wasteland if we aren't careful) Reel drops your 'za into the back of your car to maximize Social Distancing. Washed part of a High Plains Drifter down with the remarkable Forge beer from Foundation Brewery down in Portland. If you haven't discovered Foundation (run & brewed by the husband of former Grad Student Christie Mahaffey) you don't know what you are missing out on. I really don't like beer but I DO like that Forge!! Karen and David are Beer Enthusiasts & haven't found a Foundation brew they don't like. Just sayin'.

I am old enough to take advantage of Hannaford/Don's shop n' save Early Riser For Seniors shopping -6am on Tuesdays. we will see if I can crawl out of bed that early on the off chance there is hand sanitizer and Corned Beef at that hour. What is the craziest thing you have noticed shops have been sold out of?

so, call me a dreamer, but here is my prognostication: I feel about as close to Britain in late May of 1940 as I ever want to be. The BEF has just been evacuated, leaving behind everything except the clothes on their backs. the Nazis have smashed France and Belgium. Yes, I know it is stretching the metaphor, but I can't help myself. Things look ugly. BUT there is hope on the horizon, hope from basic common goodness in people. I predict we are going to see a BIG spike in infections in the next 2-3 weeks as all the folks who needed to get somewhere else bring COVID with them or encounter asymptomatic infectees back home. Then, IF we are good about Social Distancing, things will start to stabilize & by the end of April we will start to see a drop-

off. Things will get better into May, spike again briefly when people think "oh well, its over" and let their guard down, and by late June we will be really taking stock of what just happened. In the meantime, work really hard to support each other. Be serious about your health, both mental and physical. Reach out to friends and family (even at the risk of being boring). Get exercise. Eat Carrots when available. (yes, Rachael. It is me). Do NOT binge-buy TP. Wash your hands with SOAP. It works. Write dull ol' prof when you have nothing better to do. Journal. your Grand-kids-nieces-nephews really WILL be amused

Be well

John

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[Preview YouTube video Tell Me There's a Garden Cover - Jess, Ivy, Malia](#)



On Sun, Mar 29, 2020 at 6:12 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:

Dear Everyone,

so, so far nobody has said "fer Gawdsake John stop writing" and many of you have sent nice newsy updates from literally the four quarters of the world, so I guess I will keep on keeping on (I hope you do too).

So News from MDI. Lots of Dog-walking, which makes the Orange Dog feel cheerful. The Old Dog is less certain about all this & is a bit sore, but she hates being left. I am afraid we had a big scare (while I am on the subject of animals) today the Gray Kitten Snuff, who at 15 really ISN'T a "kitten" except to me, had a massive seizure & i was really afraid that we had lost him. He was very shaky for an hour or so afterwards, but lots of stroking got purrs out of him & right now he is on the counter snarfling down his dinner as if nothing had happened. Very scary for Karen & me... Oh dear, why can't pets last as long as us?

Most exciting Natural History observation of the week was the emergence in full fruticosity of British Soldiers lichen (*Cladonia* to you hard core taxonomists) Just one little patch at the south end of the road, but definitely Sign o' Spring! So entertaining moment of the week -we dragging my carcass out of bed at 5 am now that i am officially a Senior to go to the special 'Senior's Hour' at hannafor's. I drove in imagining shelves stocked with flour & TP. NO such luck. Shelves just as bare as at regular times (WHAT are folks DOING with that TP? Etta, who some of you will remember with fondness, needless to say said "There is something very Freudian about this whole virus thing" when we ZOOMED with Bill C. this afternoon. Yuck. ANYWAY, after being in the store for maybe 15 minutes I made a Human Ecological Observation: The great majority of Seniors were 60-70+ year old men. ALL of them (except for the Ressels, who were also trying to Shop Early together) were on their cell phones. When I passed each I could overhear that they were on the phone to their wives: "honey are green onions the same thing as Shallots?" "did you mean Kale or Spinach?" "I can't find the laundry soap..." Hypothesis? Demographics. Older husbands, younger wives. Husbands haven't had to shop before & are helpless. Anyone who thinks that women only hold up half the sky hasn't been in Hannaford's at 6 am!!

SO, tomorrow is the Big Day. Break has flown by (Thank GOD Grading is done!) and tomorrow we start On-Line teaching (hence the title of this note) please wish me (and the students oodles of luck!!) Everyone has different and often completely conflicting ideas as to "what works". One on-line forum that I foolishly joined for tips was dominated over the weekend by professors basically saying "F%&k it, I am too stressed. I am just going to give everyone an A & go back to bed". I REALLY hope they don't mean it. Yes, lovelies, we are ALL stressed, but The Show Must Go On somehow. I have been immersing myself in Conservation part of the time and the Peloponnesian War (plague o' Athens) the rest. I forgot how much I love History. No I didn't. I just love History... I wonder if I can pull this off..

Like I say, some lovely notes from many of you. Please keep them coming. It seems like people are running the full gamut from "Just fine" to "trapped in NYC with racist bigots". The latter breaks my heart. Why DOES disaster bring out the worst as well as the best in people? For those of you who like me are the prayin' kind, can I ask you to put your hands together & say a few good words for Erica who is expecting Child Number One very soon now. The "local" hospital is

3 hours away from her, and it is in lockdown anyway. I have a deep and abiding faith in Erica and in you all, but good thoughts are always good things to share.

The Puppy misses his students. I miss you all. Stay safe, wash your hands, let me know how you are doing.

be well

John

On Fri, Apr 3, 2020 at 1:25 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear Everyone,

well Week One of Spring term is almost behind us and we are still here. It feels like it has been a Woodpecker Week. Everywhere the Pup and I went it seemed we heard the happy call of Pileateds, or found fresh shavings beneath dead trees, or magically rectangular doors into the heartwood... Gulls are definitely feeling a rising tide of hormones -lots of calling back and forth and strutting their stuff, High School students at the Homecoming game... The rain must have brought earthworms to the surface, as there was a small flock of gulls foraging on the north lawn when I came in yesterday to do class with Dan down in the Drury Reading Room. I am sooo looking forward to seeing who comes back to Great Duck in Spring! The Coasties are supposed to fly both islands on the 11th & have promised to tell us how the buildings and boat-ramps have fared over winter -and to send pictures. if they do I will share them.

So, COVID notes. The island feels very quiet. Driving home from school yesterday in the middle of the day & taking the longer loop over eagle Lake & up 102 I counted a total of 25 moving vehicles. many of them delivery trucks. I think that people really are taking the point of staying at home in a serious fashion. In spite of that we have had our first two confirmed cases of COVID in Hancock County this week, at least one of them being here on the island, so we are now really part of it. It was vain to think that the Penobscott might be a secure barrier, but for so long it somehow managed to be... Really sad seeing all the COA entrances except the North barricaded -apparently Millard was told that COA wasn't taking things seriously enough, so now we have our Tank Traps deployed sealing campus off from who knows whom.. Same thing up at the High School. Visible reminders that Things Are Not As They Seem. Senior Hour at Hannaford's this week was interesting and exciting. Interesting in that already about half the people in the store were wearing home-made masks, carts are all being wiped down between use, and if you bring your own bags, you do your own bagging. There is also talk of no more than maybe 15 customers in the store at one time. That was not being enforced weds at 6am, but we shall see what the next week brings. Exciting part was that Flour and Rice were back on the shelves -and even a few rolls of TP!! can the crazy Hoarding phase be perhaps maybe please getting out of people's systems??? would be SUPER nice!

In COA news Hallie steered a record 116 participant Virtual ACM on Wednesday. I don't think much in the way of business was done & Millard announced what I have been expecting since the New Building was first proposed that the Shrine's days are almost certainly numbered (WHY do we always have to smash the past to create the future??) It was really nice seeing folks from California to Sardinia reaching out across times and oceans to feel that we still ARE a College & that there is a place here for you all. Really. There is.

Karen is working on Park stuff from home -lots of video conferencing. She had been catching up on GPS work, but it looks like Acadia may be Closed Closed any day now, so that means all At-Home all the time. Snuff The Gray Kitten seems to have more or less recovered from his seizure of last week & is just as demanding of Bikkies as ever, but I feel that the tone of his meow is changed & i wonder how much brain disappeared in the spasm..

Oh. On-line teaching. Honestly? on the one hand so far it is working better than I expected. i adore COA students. They are so willing to give things a shot & they are even starting to talk (Class 2). As best we can we are trying to create a classroom with classroom dynamics. At the same time, I find it really exhausting. yesterday i was just about weaving with tiredness when i walked Pup at the end of the day. I think however it is good for me in terms of trying to become a teacher. I am working on being kinder, speaking slower, being more patient, letting ideas go where they go. This is good up to a point, but I kept my poor Conservation folks well overtime on Thursday, so Time management needs attention.

Again, thank you to all of you who checked in!! I REALLY appreciate hearing from you and getting some sense of how life is in a wider world. the list for this e-mail seems to be getting longer and longer, which is lovely, but please feel free to opt out if you get tired of my wanderings.

Bless you all and look after yourselves and each other

John

On Fri, Apr 10, 2020 at 12:07 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear Everyone,

well, as the would-be Minister for Morale I shouldn't say it has been a hard week, but it has been a hard week. I'll get the bad stuff over right away so you can all laugh at me for being so silly given what other folks are dealing with & then we can get back to optimism. Zoom teaching really is harder than real classes, I don't care what the experts say. I find myself really exhausted at the end of class & constantly worrying that I am not worth the students' time. Then we lost John Prine. He was never a huge deal in my teen music listening years but he was always an important background. His albums comfortably "there" in the bins at Rasputin's Records on Telegraph when I was looking for something else. *Hello in There* always made me cry. Still does. Wednesday the known hypothetical became reality when Millard announced that they would be demolishing the Sun Shrine at COA. I have known this was going to happen since the architect first showed initial plans for the new building. Architects hate old stuff cluttering up the space next to their shiny new creations, Architects have egos as big as their buildings, and this is a big building, so the Shrine never stood a chance, but I had always kinda hoped it could squeak by. One of our former Historians said that COA was the most ahistorical place she had ever been to, and she was right. We smash our history with enthusiasm. The campus is littered with plaques with the names of Big Donors who are otherwise forgotten as soon as the cheque clears, while old faculty simply vanish, or adorn faded gravestones in odd corners of campus. I tried to "challenge the minutes" in defense of our history, and Ken Cline, bless him, seconded, but we lost by one vote, so it is on to the secular world of steel and glass and compressed fibers, and in five years no one will remember that there was once a Shrine and a place for prayer, and classes, and plays & just sitting.

Thursday wasn't much fun either. The "Covid Team" decided that it was somehow "too dangerous" to have a Great Duck season, because it would lead to "bad optics" so no Great Duck this year. No ITT. The island will be left to the gulls and the eagles & learning will have to happen elsewhere in other forms. I am not going to comment further on the decision because as your Minister of Morale it is unseemly for me to burst into tears. We will survive. We will get by. Any alums wanna be part of a "scratch team" to try and do an island count at the beginning of June? I am not allowed to do anything that involves students, but they haven't said that I can't go to the island myself (yet).

On to happy stuff. so Lots of snow last night and this morning, just when the last ice had disappeared from our road! The Pup, Tinge and I got really wet and cold hammering out our last few thousand steps in the evening (but we did our steps!) Pup and I saw our first Great Blue Heron of the season at the beginning of the week, over on the Great Meadow loop. Wood frogs have gone silent with the renewed cold, and my woodpeckers are back at the suet. they make me happy. Gulls are calling calling calling, and for the first time in over 20 years we won't be there to band their chicks and witness their lives... Oh dear. STOP.

I am enjoying DOOMSDAY BOOK -the sci fi we have assigned the Plagues class. It brings up interesting questions of personal freedom and collective responsibility in times of plague. Then I turn to the paper & read that Amon Bundy, that dark shadow over the western lands, is

organizing mass meetings for Easter because no government has the right to tell Free People not to assemble.. . where does this all end.

Oh dear, this is a gloomy post. Poetry Group continues to meet every Friday & we blew our minds with Adrienne Rich's Yom Kippur, 1984:

"your voice like the mockingbird's
singing *Yes, you are loved, why else this song?*
in the old places, anywhere?"

dear people, yes, you are loved. I will be more cheerful next week.

Be well

John

On Fri, Apr 17, 2020 at 4:47 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear Everyone,

Your Minister of Morale checking in again with the next episode of the Covid Letters. I hope everyone has had as reasonable a week as possible, it is so strange, at one level time seems to have slowed to a crawl, and yet suddenly we are the end of Week 3 of Spring term! The non-human world knows this, Karen and I saw our first Garter Snake of the season sunning itself on the Park Loop road by Great Meadow back on Sunday & a few peepers were peeping. That "few" turned into a roar by Tuesday after we had a Most Bodacious Storm come in from the south Monday night. The weather station on The Rock recorded gusts of over 70 mph at one point, so no surprise much of the island lost power (we just blinked here). Big trees blown down all over, including two on campus, but the frogs like the rain as did the salamanders who started marching their slow determined march across Arrowhead Road, much to the fascination of the Orange Dog, who was totally intrigued by each that he encountered! Speaking of Spring and the Plush Pup, he has decided that he is actually a Baby Hippo and wallows luxuriantly in all shallow bodies of water he encounters on our walks. Dogs are good for one, when one is about to bail on one's commitment to thousands of steps, they look at you with that "you can either totally suck or take me for a walk" look and, well, you go walk... On the botanical front, my Rugosa rose is showing signs of leaf buds, the lawn is greening up daily, and the Daffodils that Kate & I planted several years ago are starting to flower!

Before I get any further. Thank you all who volunteered to be part of the "scratch team" to count/map Great Duck this summer. It made me very weepy to get so many messages of "I'd love to come". Demonstrated (as if there was any need for demonstration) that Once a Duckling Always a Duckling. Bless you. I will keep you posted as the situation develops.

On-line teaching is, well, on-line. So strange that my "physical classroom" now stretches from Sardinia to California. Kudos to the folks at the end points for dealing with time shifts!! I think for many of us the initial -dare I call it excitement?- of the new way of doing things has come and gone, and I confess that when I sat in on the Board meeting Zoom just now and heard a number of Trustees talking excitedly about "what an opportunity this is to Embrace new Technologies and to Really Become Part of The Digital Revolution, I found myself sighing. I think it entirely possible that for some institutions, particularly medium to large places can and will get away with that sort of transition, but we simply don't have the depth on the bench to really take on much more. Your Minister was On Good Behavior so he did NOT say "cool concept, retire all of us, hire a new on-line faculty & have the 50th anniversary the Re-founding of the College" but he could have... fortunately the Trustees simply would NOT do that to us, and on a happier note, Finance Committee reported that we are definitely solvent for the moment & indeed better off than many other institutions. Yay! So here is MY take on that whole discussion: COA is and always has been a Niche school that really isn't for everyone, but there has been, is, and will be a solid segment of people out there who are really hungry for the type of education we have tried to make a reality. It is never going to be a huge number, but what you folks may lack for in numbers you more than make up for in amazingness. We just need to find the right students and treat 'em right. Thank you by the way to all of you who have been so kind about talking to Patrianna as part of her Senior project. I know I was imposing on you at a time of stress, but I knew you would be wonderful!

Town is feeling very empty. they are shifting the "shopping for Oldsters" time to 7am next week, which will be nice. Shelves at the grocery are still either bare or full depending on the aisle. Flour is back two weeks in a row, as is limited amounts of TP. Veggies are abundant, Tofu is non-existent, and meat is much scarcer than a week ago (news of processing plant closures in the Mid-West). Everyone was wearing masks (mostly home-made) when I was in the store. Gas is now ridiculously cheap at \$1.59 a gallon (though When I was A Child I can remember gas at 20 CENTS a gallon, a dime a gallon during something called "price wars"... we have been paying for Vietnam my entire life & now we have given you Iraq & Afghanistan to pay for for all of yours... OOPS. bad Morale!!

please look after yourselves and each other. This is more a marathon than a sprint & we can but do our best. Please keep me posted on your lives (one joyous part of this project is the letters/notes I have received from so many of you, so so long as you don't tell me to shut up & as long as electrons are cheap I intend to keep filling your inboxes. Do thou likewise!!) Till next time

Be well

John

On Fri, Apr 24, 2020 at 5:53 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear Everyone,

your Minister of Morale back atcha broadcasting VERY asynchronously from Arrowhead rd. First of all thank you everyone who sent updates on their pieces of the world. It is so very nice to hear from you all!! Please stay well/get well. So far it seems like you folks have managed to avoid COVID but there are other things out there that can be wretched too. Congratulations to Hilary Rose for being faced with the awful choice of whether to go to Cambridge or Edinburgh for Grad School! Congrats to Hale, Franklin and Jenny Lou for each making it through 4 weeks of teaching COA on-line (Forestry on one hand, Philosophy on the other, and Art and Science on the third -that last all the way from New Zealand!!). If you are on the Facebook you may have seen some of the lovely things that Anna Stunkel has been creating in her quarantine!! In the meantime Brittany got not one but TWO interviews this week for professor type jobs -keep yer finger crossed!! Also in the news Rachel is the proud Commodore of two bodacious kayaks... keep that news coming!!

I get the sense that many of us may be suffering a bit from the "week 4 blues". Yeah. It sucks. days blend together. I confess I am definitely behind on grading

Here on that little island I hope you all think of with fondness, Spring is taking her sweet time. We still get hard frosts some mornings. Crocuses are basically over, but daffodils are in full swing. Also lots of tree buds out there -i do agree with karen that in some ways the "spring colors" really are more delightful than fall -much more subtle, but so long awaited & intense in their own way... Warblers are screaming their heads off, and my woodpeckers have forsaken me because I haven't replaced the suet -don't want bears around, once was enough for THAT! the Red Pup and i see LOTS of deer on our rambles first thing in the morning -the absence of people from much of the Park Loop seems to have really emboldened them, they ignore us until we get close & then flash those white tails. Big Hen Turkey strutting down the road to the Cove when we went to count gulls this afternoon -still lots of mergansers out there plus delightful Buffleheads & a mean ol' Bald eagle chasing the gulls...

Town feels very empty as I drive through. Hannafords is much better stocked than even a week ago, though meat is less diverse. Flour is definitely back, as are dairy products. Not only is Tofu not to be had, the very place that Tofu used to be is no more... who'd a thunk it? They have instituted "one way" lanes in all the aisles to keep people apart. Everyone (including staff) are now wearing masks in public -lots of flowery hand-made designs. Who knows how effective they are, but it does show solidarity! We had some amazing locally grown mussels last weekend, and FarmDrop continues with nice veggies and flowers. SO lucky to live in a place where at least some of our stuff is local.

COA is in full debate about what the Future holds. Thanks to skillful work by Turrets, we qualified for significant "bailout" funds, which have been a BIG help in keeping us in the black for the moment. The two huge issues are of course Fall and FTEs. Admissions numbers are hanging in there for the moment, but if we have to stay "virtual" (Heaven Forbid) through fall I suspect we will see some deferrals and Leaves of Absence. Big Faculty Meeting next weds to discuss/hear about options. i continue to be super impressed with the patience, wit and energy

of folks in both Conservation and the Plague class. The latter is also fun in that I get to teach with Dan and be the Hippy in the room (Dan is VERY serious about science, i think folks are getting the whole of Bio 1 in like 6 lectures!) I get to slip in the odd & the weird (like, did you know that there is some evidence that you are drawn to folks with particular MHCs?) My really exciting acquisition this week was a very old copy of Nicholas Culpepper's English Herbal. Culpepper is teh "Doctor of medicine in Kipling's Rewards and fairies, where he cures the Plague by (he thinks) Astrology. the Herbal is a delight -not just medicinal plants, but also what sign of the Zodiac they associate with & how to prepare them. I think it will be of even more use if Suzanne & I teach the Moon course in Winter.

Other than that I am reading The Susan Effect by Peter Hoeg (very odd, but i do like his imagination) and still moving slowly through The Mirror and the Light. Drop em a note and tell me what i SHOULD be reading. here is a stanza from Yeats that we read today in Poetry Group:
*I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.*

Bless you all. Stay in touch, stay healthy!!

John

On Fri, May 1, 2020 at 12:23 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear Everyone,

well, you know it must be weird if your Minister of Morale is quoting Paul McCartney & Wings (George was always the MofM's favorite Beatle). It is pouring outside & the Puppy really wants to go walking & I really DO need to walk. Good news? The Pup and I made our Steps goals every day this past week -some days way over Goal! also, blood pressure is trending down, Oxygen saturation seems to be trending up. Drink water! Eat greens! both are good fer ya!

Ok, so not so natural History, the amaryllis in my study is in full flower. I mentioned to a couple of you that I have been a long-time lover of Amaryllis, and to prove it I attach a photo of Yours Truly aged about 3 with his first Amaryllis. Also, for you cynics who refuse to believe that I was once a Cute Kid, I attach a picture of me and my first dog, Copper. Copper was without doubt the smartest dog I have yet known (this was before breeders had destroyed Irish Setters by breeding them for long noses and feathers). He could open & close doors, balance a bicky on his nose until told he could toss and catch it, pulled us around the neighborhood in a dog-cart.... a Very Fine dog....

Back to this little island in the North Atlantic. i really think this is a record woodpecker year!! They seem to be everywhere & where you don't see them you hear them drilling. Grouse have been drumming off in the distance with that delightfull ultra-low sound that you "hear" in our bones. Most exciting Natural History observation happened on Weds when i whistled for he Pup & my whistle was answered by a Broad winged hawk, chasing and being chased by a crow. yes, it is Spring!! The Forsythia is flowering in the yard, Daffodils are hanging on bravely, the lawn is greening up, and gulls are calling to each other all the time. We still have lots of Buffleheads in the cove, plus a flock of 20 mergansers!! I adore those guys!! so jazzy & yet so cool!

Price of gas has plunged to \$1.53 at the head of the island, toilet paper is back on the shelves (though just the generic... remember when there were about 10 different brands? what happened to them?) Soup is back on its aisle though in somewhat reduced variety. dairy seems to be doing fine, as does meat (at least as of Weds). Fish can only be had in pre-packaged lots, and much is made of whether it is "Local" or "Canada". Masks of many styles and colors are de rigueur, and one way lanes in the grocery are violated only with savage stares. the roads seem to be more occupied with cars than a week ago, but still feel very empty.

Campus is ghostly. I keep expecting to encounter tumbleweeds piled up against the door of Witchcliffe when I go in. Speaking of which (Witchcliffe, not Tumbleweeds) that building is MOst Definitely haunted I have to go in on Weds Nights to stream Movies for Great West (*Broken Arrow* this week, sweet/sad 1950's Cowboy & Indians flick; *Only the Brave* next week) and when we come out the Pup & I RUN to the car not daring to look behind us. Something is There. SO, if I disappear some Weds, you know where the problem is..

Faculty meeting was scary in its own way. i think everyone is very much on edge & there was a group of faculty that were demanding an end to uncertainty -basically saying that if we couldn't definitely be face to face in fall, we should all be definitely On-line. So far calmer heads have prevailed & we are taking a wait-and-see approach. Whereas i have been SO impressed by how

well you students are dealing with On-Line, i think that for many of us this is NOT what we came for. Now, if they weren't going to knock down the Shrine, we could have Socially Distanced Outdoor classes.. Meow Meow. Obviously ken and I hope to be on the other side of the Continent with Great West, come Fall, but we just have to wait and see.

So, dear ones. That is All the news That comes to Mind right now I need to go do grading. please write back & tell me your joys and sorrows (oh, YAY!! two Real Good news pieces this week, on Monday Clare passed her Comprehensive Exams and is a Doctoral Candidate, and on Tuesday Erica wrote & told me that baby Ryan was born on April 15, and Mom and Babe are doing well! A Grand Advisee!! How exciting is THAT!!??). let me know what you think of the on-line world. The pluses and minuses of synchronous vs async... what you are reading (I am just about to start THE MADNESS OF CROWDS on Kate's advice, still plugging through The Mirror and The Light and The Susan Effect), what you are watching (Karen and I finished Season 2 of WESTWORLD, it really is ill ill TV).. Life in general!!

Be well, wear masks, wash your hands, look after each other, stay in touch

John

On Fri, May 8, 2020 at 5:26 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear Everyone,

well Gosh. Week 6 went faster for me than any other so far. Hard to believe it is Friday & time for an update from your Minister of Morale. Before I say anything else, let me say "Happy Birthday Gary Snyder" 90 years and still amazing folks. If you don't know who I am talking about, you are sooo missing out. go google him & then treat yourself to some amazing poetry. Among the many things I treasure as a COA faculty member it is a picture of GS with the first Great West class at Mono Lake in 2014... He was SOO cool & so gracious. Happy birthday also to Wade Lyman, Gary has 60+ years on you, but clearly May 8 was a Good Day!!

Congratulations to Seniors. Today was my last chance to flunk y'all, but it seems that all if you got Permission to Graduate. Well done. I will miss you.

Ok, so time for a story. Today as the Pup and I were walking on the Great Meadow loop we saw that the Shadbush was flowering. Spring really IS here, and that is wonderful, but Shadbush always make me both happy and sad & for the same reason. Some of you were lucky enough to have been taught by Craig Greene, who was our Botanist when I arrived back in the beginning of time. There has been a lot written about Craig, some of it is true. I was lucky enough to team teach with him on the Great Baja Death March my second year (Jeff Miller, looking at you) and together we took Intro Zoology & Intro Botany and made them into the two term Intro Bio sequence that actually worked...We threw darts together, drank beer together & explored Great Duck back those first two summers. I would be less than honest if I didn't tell you that Craig was one of the dullest lecturers I have ever heard (he would boast that he was still using the lecture notes whose edges were scorched in the Kaelber Hall Fire -he was) BUT put him in the out-of-doors, give him a piece of vegetation or a bird to identify, and he was transformed into a brilliant Naturalist, and every field trip with him, in any weather was a joy and an education (he was also a fanatic nude swimmer every Spring, couldn't keep his clothes on him if we were near Lakewood, but THAT is another story).

SO, what about Shadbush you ask? well, my two major markers-of-time my first years at COA were the late AUtumn day when Craig would come in with a special gleam in his eye that meant that he had broke trail through the snow around Witch Hole, and in Spring, his "shit-eating grin" which meant that the shadbush were flowering. He was also intrigued by their weird genetics, but what he really gloried in was their beauty & their promise of long summer days ahead, "and maybe a fish will rise...." I still miss you Craig.

Well, the shadbush may be out and the daffodils may be waning, but the forecast is for snow tonight. Gotta love Maine "if you don't like the weather, wait a moment". In the meantime I am starting to see leaves where there have been none, and noseums are waiting to pounce. Flickers are starting to put in an appearance, and a glorious cardinal whipped across the road as we drove home this afternoon. We still have mergansers and buffleheads in the Cove, but their numbers are much reduced, and two days ago i heard goose music for the first time since Autumn...

downtown a choice of Toilet Paper continues to be available, as does flour and a growing array of soups. Meat is still with us, though we are mostly veggie/piscivorous on Arrowhead these

days... The Cow appeared outside of Udder Heaven this afternoon -can it be that ice cream is in my future? Mainely Meats is also opening for Take-out, so if I want to betray David I can slink up to Town Hill & indulge in a barbecue pork sandwich!

Finished The Susan Effect (not all that keen on it, sorry Jenny) Working on The Madness of Crowds. also just started William Dalrymple's latest -The Anarchy- a history of the Honourable Company of Gentlemen Trading to the East Indies. It looks good so far. I confess I have retreated into my Georgian Roots and have been reading John Buchan's Island of Sheep. NOT as good as Greenmantle (few things are) but still a lot of fun. We are going to watch In the Matter of Sex this weekend (about Ruth Bader Ginsberg) I hope it does its central character justice. So to Speak.

School is, well, school. I continue to be super impressed with the students' pluck, persistence and patience. I really enjoy teaching with Dan, but he puts me to shame in terms of the hours he devotes to lecture prep. We still have NO idea what the Fall will hold, I am a bit grumpy with some of my so-called colleagues who have been telling folks "No field classes will be possible, everything will be on-line, when NO such decision has been made. I will totally support everyone as individuals in whatever choice they need to make for themselves, and I hope that they will do likewise. In the meantime, I plan to teach face-to-face so long as there are faces to teach & I am still hoping to do it in a Western setting (call me an optimist if you like, that is why I am your Minister of Morale!)

Now, go outside if you can & breathe deeply of that sweet air (but wear a mask if anyone is around you) scrub your hands and your phones. Eat lots of veggies. Take whatever exercise is available, look after yourselves and each other & please keep me posted.

Be well

John

On Fri, May 15, 2020 at 8:26 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear Everyone,

is it just me or is time-dilation kicking in. Can't believe how fast week 7 just went. LOTS of homework waiting to be graded, but first a word or seven from your Minister of Morale. Much of the M of M's week was spent stressing out over having to go in for a Routine Physical Exam. Not actually so "routine" as I had to confess to my primary Care provider that my last Routine Physical had been during the second Nixon Administration. Angie was NOT amused. - and let me just say here what a real joy it is to have one's amazing students all grown up & professional & providing one with Primary Care. When I booked an appointment, Angie Delvecchio asked me if it would be embarrassing to be examined by a former advisee. I gave it a thought & then figured "why not the best" and assured her that I had no pride left. No need for details, but shall we say that the initial stress put my blood pressure back up into the Danger Zone (back down nicely as soon as it was all over) Angie was awesome & I am glad to report that the only real thing seems to be that your Minister is too fat. Well, you didn't need years of training and clinical experience to know THAT... so much food, so little time... i MUST do better! May you all be blessed with half as amazing students as I have and have had and a primary care provider that is at least half as kind and professional!

Moving on. Well, in the Great Maine Tradition we got Snow, sleet and freezing rain last weekend, followed by sun, clouds, rain, sun... Who knows? Larch/hackmatack/ironwood is beginning to leaf out. Red wing black bird males are going nuts in the little marshes around the island. A totally hateful ginormous poison yellow-green & black Porcupine came & slithered across the yard just as I let the Pup out. Fortunately he was a Good Boy and came straight back to me before he could get pricked. I know it makes me a bad person, but I Do Not Like porcupines. they are Evil on Four Legs. deer are getting outrageously brash. they seem to be everywhere. The Buffleheads seem to have left us, but there are still Mergansers on the Cove. Ken Cline, Ivy, and I had a Socially Distanced meeting outside of Witchcliffe on wednesday before our Movie & four vultures came and circled over us. I told them "not yet, brothers" and will NOT take that as a bad omen. I will always remember standing on the North Ridge of Cadillac with Bill Drury and seeing a Vulture and Bill saying "mark my words, in twenty years they will be common up here". A wise man, Bill.

Down in the town Golf is back. Earnest blokes stomping across the greens in search of small balls.. who called that "a good walk spoiled"? In Hannafords the Round Table has done its thing & King Arthur Flour seems to be back for real. There are choices in toilet paper again & we do not seem to be suffering much from the meat processing issues. Soups are still noticeably restricted, but veggies & dairy are in full tilt. had a nice Lamb Gyro Burger from McKay's last week as part of our Support Local Business efforts -David had the non meat Remarkable Burger & i swear if i hadn't known I woulda sworn it was beef. Mainly Meat is BACK!! Hurrah!!

SOO, good news of Ducklings in far flung flock! Aly Pierik has been accepted to medical School in British Columbia, and Brittany Slabach has accepted a teaching position at Trinity University in Texas! Yay team!! No real COA news. Turrets continues in Buddha like silence saying only that they will Do What Is Best when the Time Comes. Totally awesome Guest Speaker in Plagues and Pandemics -a grad school friend of Dan gatti's who was zooming in from

Addis Ababa, where she is working on TB as well as COVID. A genuine bad Ass -previous missions for NIH included Haiti right after the earthquake & West Africa at the height of the Ebola outbreak. Lots of fascinating but heartbreaking stories... make sure you are saving stories, gang, and let's all try to avoid heartbreak. Here's a picture of Nice Dogs to cheer you up till next time. Look after each other & yourselves. be well

John

On Fri, May 22, 2020 at 1:25 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear Everyone,

so your Minister of Morale would be a lyin' hound if he didn't admit he has had better weeks. Tuesday the Covid Team brought the hammer down on Great West for 2020. A REALLY hard thing to swallow for all of us involved. I confess to having walked around for much of the day feeling totally hollowed out. Wednesday was even worse as we had to have a faculty meeting plus a potentially difficult ACM (Hallie headed THAT puppy off at the pass) plus we had to tell the Great Westerlings that they needed to take three deep breaths & trust us that we WILL do the expedition in 2021. We will.

before that the week had looked positively promising. Toby dropped me out on The Magical Isle for three blissful hours on Sunday. Gulls are back. many GBBGs are on eggs, HERGS are just starting. Saw several fresh Petrel diggings as i walked down to the house... two trees down across the road, the front gutters ripped off the house (and much of the shingling on the east side of the Gen Shed roof), but the electricity came up with no trouble, the Outhouse is still upright and intact, and it is just so so glorious to stand on the tower ledge with the gulls and watch the great world spin... Hope to be back out next weekend to clear the road, get the Kubota running & be ready for Island Count the weekend of the 6th...

back on shore Hummingbirds have shown up, Cardinals were flitting across Crooked rd on thursday... so very very red. In the meantime the red Squirrels are totally into sex & driving Charlie NUTS. If those darn squirrels don't watch out they are going to be lunch meat... Black Flies are definitely here and it is 85 degrees on the porch!! Seems like summer. Week 8 is behind us, four more of each class to go... working on the Fall already. Ken Cline and i are brooding on a Voyage to Norumbega (NOT the mountain, the legendary lost city on the Penobscot) sorta a combo of White Water/White paper & history/ecology of this part o' maine... Thoughts? We think folks can Socially Distance in canoes. Oh dear, it is so very hard NOT to be dreaming of the Aspen above Grand Staircase, but we will survive. we WILL get there.

Please look after yourselves and each other. Drop me a note & tell me how you are all doing.

Bless you

John

On Fri, May 22, 2020 at 1:30 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
forgot to add this link for those of us who needed a cheering up. Some of you will recognize who is involved:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJQaZ4aqMyk&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1QA-zVHj4qXgLm-B5z8HzWNAy8I19-cxbrYIDhSxiJ5omEgiArM_SvZNQ

On Fri, May 29, 2020 at 4:53 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear everyone,

so turkey really have been the theme of the week. Huge Tom strutting his stuff across from the old Fogg Farm on Crooked rd & 3 or 4 hens ignoring him. Then the Pup and i were walking the Loop Rd and we encountered 3 lovely little chicks right by the road. We looked over to investigate & a 4th popped out of the grasses. We were trying to work out whose chicks they might be when we heard a HISS and a huge hen Turkey struck at us. We ran. The Pup had a Horrific Terrorifying experience when he leapt into a beaver pond a little down the road & it was over his head. He can't swim, so he sank like a rock. I had to haul him out by his scruff. He spent the rest of the walk shaking his head to clear the water out. Still MORE turkeys on Indian Pt rd yesterday -they are getting very Bold, as are the deer, who seem to have forgotten that we even exist. The blueberries are in flower as is Rhodora & the last couple of days the lilac has all come out "When Lilacs last in dooryards bloomed..." Lilac will now forever be linked in my mind with graduation. So sad for seniors having to do this virtually, but know that we miss you all & hope to see you back many times down all the long years...

What else? Pup and I are trying to simulate Bio Form & Function field trips by parking at COA and seeing how far we can walk in 3 hours to be back in time for students' next Class. We can get round Great Meadow & up to the Duck Brook Bridge no problem. suggestions for other trips? We will try Bar Island when we get the tides right. Seriously. Any suggestions as to how to make it worth the newbies time to come to campus would be MUCH appreciated. I want them to have a good time & serious learning opportunities. i want to be as face-to-face as possible. I just ordered a bunch of hand lenses as microscopes will be off limits. Is it unreasonable to encourage them to bring binocs with them when they come? It would be a great day when binocs were as required as computers... I think that is the bulk of news and gossip here. Town is opening up. the Mt Dessert bakery is BACK!! Yay! and their blueberry muffins are as good as ever. I am starting to see obvious folks "from away" (how can one tell... something in how they dress) roaming around including in Hannafords, with NO masks, but looks of total entitlement. Soup is still in short supply, meat seems back as does flour. Sugar was low today.. can never tell what people snap up.

look after yourselves and each other & until next time this is your Minister of Morale saying well done making it through all these weeks, let's keep on keeping on!

XX

John

On Fri, Jun 5, 2020 at 3:30 PM John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> wrote:
Dear everyone.

So indeed all things must pass & Spring 2020 is passing as I type. It has been a hard term/a hard three months for many folks, but we are still here. I am so very proud of students who have adapted to what has really been the antithesis of COA style school with grace and tact. Seniors, I will miss you, as I miss all of you former and current advisees.. stay in touch as best you can you are all dear to my heart. Be advised: I am developing Cunning Plans to lure at least some of you back to campus when travel is once more possible!

I was going to say that life has been quiet in Bar Harbor in contrast to the madness elsewhere, but the Virtual campus has been marred by a particularly bitter series of flame wars. Deep sigh. Some year we are going to end without someone being hateful, but that isn't this year. Campus itself is still spookily quiet, with barriers in front of most entrances, a flurry of notices down the North drive saying that we are closed (apparently random tourons had been driving onto campus) and folks in the Community gardens all masked and mysterious. Work on the New Building seems to have been pretty sporadic, I am not at all clear where they are in the process, but new buildings always seem to be like that -weeks of seemingly nothing happening and then suddenly huge visible progress.

The Pup and I continue our adventures in search of suitable Biology labs. We got out to Bar island & had a pleasant ramble around thinking of Things We Could Tell First Years. Please everyone, any suggestions for outdoor labs would be MUCH appreciated. Hallie has gone off with the Dissolved Oxygen meter to see if she can design a physiology lab with Scallops, a big box of hand-lenses arrived yesterday (no microscopes while COVID rules apply) but be creative! :-)

One of the really positive things that has happened as a result of the lockdown is a real return of wildlife to public spaces... there were three deer on the lawn of the motel just past campus the other day, quietly grazing feet from the road with nary a care. Coming down Crooked Road a mallard Duck with two adorable ducklings waddled across right in front of me and safely into the woods at peggy Rockefeller farm. The Robin chicks in their nest on the Blue Horizons sign have hatched and are growing like weeds (they are still desperately ugly, but should have feathers soon) e-chatting with Steve katona and he agreed that wildlife was staging a comeback & said that it made him think even more highly of Ed Wilson's 'Half Earth" idea. I am tempted to agree. A barred Owl has been calling me to sleep every night this week -particularly noisy in last night's lovely great Moon! I saw my first tern at the Cove this morning -we usually don't get them there till late summer, so i wonder whether they are back nesting off Indian Point, that would be exciting!! I may and try to take *Laughing Gull* round for a look when I get back from the Magical isle. -yes, some of us ARE hoping to get to Great Duck soon to do a count & at least get SOME stuff done this summer. This means that I will be at least partially off line for the next couple of weeks & perhaps it is time to bring this series of COVID letters to an end. I hope that it has been at least marginally entertaining. I think of each and every one of you periodically and with fondness. I deeply appreciate your willingness to share some of your lives with your pudgy

old professor. Please look after yourselves, each other and this battered old world. Until some future time this is your Minister of Morale sending you love & signing off

Blessings

John

Checking in XIV -time for a summertime dream

Inbox



John Anderson <janderson@coa.edu> Jul 3, 2020, 7:22 PM

to Addison, Hallie, Molly, Silas, Ivy, Lundy, Brittany, Kate, Rachael, Ky, Elizabeth, Franklin, Jenna, Ronan, Aya, Maya, Andrew, Sage, Iris, Regan, Chloe, Adaline, Ekaterina, Sara, Giaime, Lillian, Kathryn, Doderick, Judith, Hilary, Rose, Molly, Gemma, Sophia, Porcia, Amber, Anna, Anneke, Mikey, Mikus, Seth, Lucy, Sarah, Chloe, Wade, Rebecca, Amanda, Zoey, Chelsea, chel, Jessica, C.M., Sadie, Anne, James, Zinta, Ariana, johannah, jrock, AnneMary, christie, cerissa, Clare, Bill, Alan, Melinda, Linnea, Heather, Annika, lindsey, Rachel, heather, Charles, Maddy, Erickson, Natasha, DC, jessica, Weronika, sa12533

Dear Everyone,

so there have been enough "gee John I miss the COVID letters" messages that maybe some of you actually found them amusing, so here is another before i turn a year older (how old? you ask -as old as the hills & twice as fur covered (Charlie is shedding)).

SO, term ended & two days later Toby dropped a scratch team of me, David, Ivy, Hale & Franklin out on Great Duck to do what we could. We did a lot! We counted the whole island (1103 gull nests corrected to 1298 for comparative purposes, 17 Eider nests! YAY!). For those familiar with the island the North continues to lose nests, while the South has gained. Eagles were there from literally Day 1.. sigh.. Of even greater worry we found otter scat plus multiple petrel wings on the way to the marsh... It seems like the otter may possibly be still around. Addie & Nathan have deployed Game Cams to look for it... We also mapped all the nests in the South end -a MUCH quicker task with 3 high quality GPS units!! (not to mention a talented crew, but I always seem to be blessed with Talented Crews. It is nice to be able to give them tools worthy of their ability!).

Then DIH&F had to leave & were replaced by Dan Gatti (new faculty member in Data Science) and Addie Huckins (repeat from last 2 summers) and Nathan Dubrow (Rock Alum). Nathan & Addie are being allowed to stay out for a minimal season so long as they don't get sick. Dan has Projects in mind involving environmental sensing & needed to get the lay of the land. I got to stay a few more days & then Toby picked me up & dropped off new faculty member heather Lakey for what was supposed to be a couple of nights. Toby and i had a delightful cruise down to Stonington, where Osprey was supposed to have some minor repairs. We stopped off at many wondrous islands, saw many lovely birds & really had a joyous day of it. Ivy & David picked me up & we had a delicious dinner of Tinder Hearth Pizza. I DO recommend this to anyone in the Blue Hill peninsula area!! delish!!

Unfortunately it is always dangerous to let your boat lie in the hands of a dockyard & the dockyard found lots more to fix, so poor Heather's 'couple of nights stretched out to a week -half of it in thick fog. I was perhaps less than helpful by singing the theme from Gilligan's island

whenever Dan or Heather tried to call, but then I am perhaps the last faculty member left old enough to remember The Captain, The Professor, The Millionaire, His Wife and Mary Anne:

" Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale, a tale of a fateful trip, That started from this tropic port, aboard this tiny ship. The mate was a mighty sailin' man, the Skipper brave and sure. Five passengers set sail that day for a three hour tour. A three hour tour..."

They were eventually rescued by Rich Borofsky's fisherman & I picked them up in SW harbor not too worse for wear...

What else? Bar Harbor is thankfully still not up to usual Summer Crowds. Lots of parking downtown, but i have already recorded 19 different licence plats (NO Canadians so far, the border remains closed) COVID continues to creep up state wide, but we are in so much better shape (SO FAR) than the South or West. How long can this last?? Toby and I have decided to teach a new course together. It is called "Working the Sea: Knots Knavigation, and Knovels". Two lecture/discussions a week where we talk about good books & poetry & then much of Saturday down on the shore & out on the boats "messing around in boats". The idea is to have a whole new contingent of "salty" students ready for future adventures. PLEASE, send me interesting **marine** poems, ballads, shanties or short stories!! We already have half a dozen books that we are reading... actually, now that I think about it, it is up to maybe 7 books... so many books, so little time... I am really pretty excited!! This could be a hoot!! The class filled up almost instantly, so THAT is a good sign. Let us all pray for health!! COA is such a "huggy" group, can we REALLY hope for Social Distancing? I believe in Pods.

barred owl calling yesterday evening as I walked the Pup. HUGE bullfrog tadpoles in the firepond!! The Robins at Blue Horizon are all fledged, and the one in our barn is getting there. My Rugosa has flowered, the surviving Old Roses are working on it. Fireflies brighten my evenings (I DO so love that aspect of evening in the East). COA is, well, COA. We lurch from crisis to crisis. I do so hope people come back in Fall!! It is so much harder to be mean face to face. Social media just isn't. Please look after yourselves, look after each other, and keep me posted

Hugs (virtual only)

John

