

November 2020

Dear Friends

As I reflect at this year's end, I look down past decades and see another year's end, the closing of 1980, when I was stunned to note that the 60s had ended 10 years earlier. Many of us remember the 60s as a tumultuous time for society, but in my memory they were a dim backdrop to a transformative period in my personal life. In 1980, I was comfortably settled and still seeing my life in a 60s light. The period I was in still felt so fresh that I was astonished to realize that it was more than 10 years along.

Now, as 2020 closes, the 60s are 50 years gone. I note that the freshness hasn't waned, and my gratitude hasn't waned. I think seeing my life against the despondency of the earliest years gives me an optimistic perspective. Although these 50 years span long stretches of unemployment and illness, I call them fundamentally happy years because I came through without sinking back into profound hopelessness. When I look ahead, I expect to continue living independently, doing freelance volunteer work, and pursuing other interests.

In this year of epidemic, spring, summer, and fall came and went without the joys of the seasons. It felt as if we did not have any summer. Lockdown stole the concerts, the plays in the parks, the yard sales, the picnics with friends, even our 55th annual Bastille Day celebration. I felt I should be out nursing the sick, as my grandmother did in 1918, but people in my age group who go out are more likely to add to the number of cases than mitigate them. I stayed home, made masks, ran very few errands, and took walks to ward off isolation. As many friends did, I caught up on projects at home, wrote more letters, made more phone calls, and sent more emails to friends I could not meet. I sorted through books, papers, and household goods that I'm not using any more, gave some to people who were interested, and bagged some to donate. I had time for more at-home volunteer work.

We will always remember 2020 as the first year of the epidemic in our country, as the parents of people my age remember the years of Depression and world war. Probably for most of us the epidemic was the salient development in our lives this year, and we haven't yet "come out the other side" as the saying is.

I hope you are all safe and well. Keep wearing your masks and washing your hands. Stay away from crowds. Check on people you don't see often. Let's all help each other. See you on the other side.

Ellen