



Lazer's Beam

By Ellen Lazer

At the end of our two Zoom Seders last week, where the joy of meeting with far-flung relatives and friends was tempered by the sparse table for two for my husband, Bob, and I, we dutifully read the usual ending, "Next year in Jerusalem."

That didn't sound right. "Next year in person," I said. "Together," everyone repeated.

The severity and universality of this health crisis is daunting. We worry about the people who have COVID-19 and the people who are treating them. We have added worry about the future of society and our economic welfare to our worry about climate change.

On a personal level, the biggest disappointment for my family has been the postponement of our son Stephen's wedding. It had been scheduled for May 12 in Victoria, Canada and the venue closed a few weeks ago. Gillian, our future daughter-in-law, is reluctant to make a new plan for fear it too could be cancelled. Next year in person, all together, Gillian.

We miss being with our grandkids. I am not the only grandparent who waved through a door on their deck while delivering a brisket for Passover. The older kids laughed; the two year old signaled, "Come in, come in Grandma. Why don't you come in?" Next year in person, together, Noah.

As a bona-fide Baby Boomer, I have been harassed (well, nagged) by the grandchildren's father, my

older son, Adam, to stay in, not go to the office or the store. But being a Boomer has its advantages, one being that we can read several daily newspapers that we still have delivered. Bob and I are able to start our mornings together reading them. I do the puzzles, he tells me about sports "news," and we both read the comics. We were inspired on April 11, the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 13 mission, to learn again about the rescue achieved by the astronauts and the mission control team.

Reading the papers has the advantage of delaying screen time for an hour. I have bittersweet feelings about the Internet and social media. I eagerly developed the first web sites for the schools (it was 1997!), then the township, and the library. I love digital media that is useful and compelling and, now, essential. But I fear what is happening to print newspapers like the *Tribune*.

Bob and I are working from home, fortunately in separate rooms. We meet in the hall to share comments about the stories I am working on and the training programs he is conducting online. It's a bit reminiscent of when we met at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and both worked in one of its research offices. The following year, in our first jobs in New York City, he worked for the Conference Board, a business research organization, and I worked for Catalyst, which promoted non-traditional careers for women. We footnoted each

other's papers about permanent part-time working and job-sharing, a new concept in the 1970s.

With time on our hands, we can really see things in the house. We began to deep clean a couple of shelves in the kitchen. We felt so good afterward that we had to ration doing the rest. One cabinet a day, folks. A fun item we discovered is a pizza cutter given at a wedding shower, called "a slice of love," that really works.

My clean-out gene, long hidden, appeared. I put down the rediscovered knitting and stepped away from the jigsaw puzzle and opened a drawer – one of many drawers and plastic containers – that holds memorabilia from family and friends. An only child, I kept lots of stuff from each of my parents and also from my maiden aunt.

Among the jumble of items – documents, letters, photos, a round eraser with a brush and old glue called "mucilage" – was a crossword puzzle I had published in the *New York Times*. My parents had saved it in an envelope from TransUnion, where my mother had worked. It was labeled in all caps by my father: "2-2-82/N.Y. Times/crossword puzzle/ Ellen Abby Lazer." That's the kind of parents I was lucky to have.

My new project is taking pictures of the old pictures, starting with the ones that are disintegrating. Some are of my parents and grandparents in younger days, with people I don't recognize. I can only do this kind of work in short spurts, it is very emotional.

Next year in person. Together.