

# Thomson TRADEWINDS

DAVID & MARY THOMSON C.I. ALUMNI NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2021

## TCI HOSTS VACCINE CLINIC



The photo above appeared in a number of print, visual and social media in late April. The headlines with the photo indicated that the line-up for COVID vaccinations stretched four times around the track when a thousand people arrived for a pop-up clinic held at David and Mary Thomson Collegiate. As the age for “eligibility” kept dropping and the pandemic actually was growing worse, the photo told the story of how eager people were to get a “shot”.

Thomson grads, however, had another reason to look at the image. For many, this was the first glimpse of the new playing field beside the new school. You can probably tell that the track and the field are both synthetic - and looking great after a spring rain. Our alumni website ([thomsonforever.ca](http://thomsonforever.ca)) also included the photo, with some comments.

Unfortunately, the new field won't get tested any time soon, with the schools closed and learning carrying on virtually. And Alumni events (e.g. Spring Pub Night) are also still on hold. So we're devoting this issue to reports we invited some alumni to send us about how the pandemic and its restrictions have affected them and their communities. We'll travel beyond Scarborough, beyond Canada and even beyond North America to sample impressions. Read on!



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## HOW HAS THE COVID PANDEMIC AFFECTED YOU?

Our first item is close to home. **Elaine Selby** (class of 1984 and Alumni Secretary) reports from Toronto:

Picture it in 1918-1920: a global spread of influenza contaminating 33% of the total population of the world and ending the lives of 20-50 million. Who would have thought that 100 years later humanity would be dealing with another pandemic of epic proportions. Globally, we have experienced more than 147 million COVID-19 and variant cases and 3.1 million deaths to date.

When this began in March 2020, I strongly felt that this virus would be more devastating than anything we had seen to date. Little did I know how true this would prove to be. This virus and its variants do not discriminate against age, sex, race, religion or economic status. COVID-19 has proven that every single person is at risk.

I am a Registered Nurse and I work at St. Michael's Hospital in Surgical Day Care/Regional Anesthesia. During the first wave, all non-emergent surgeries were cancelled. We went from 120 km/hr to full stop. In the late spring when we started elective surgeries again, there was so much more to consider...patient COVID tests, hospital outbreaks, keeping yourself safe, washing your hands for the 1000th time in a day and wearing a mask all day....oh the mask!



This third wave really has our health care system under the gun. My background is critical care and I recently did a COVID-19 up-skilling for redeployment. Intensive Care Unit, here I come! I am more than happy to help those who have been dealing with this up front and personal, to give them a bit of respite. They are the true heroes.

During the last year I have had a lot of time to contemplate what has happened. All I know to be true is that every day I wake up, I am grateful to have a job, to have a pay cheque, to have never had to use government subsidies, to have a roof over my head and to have food on my table. I have realized that the small things in life that used to bug me don't matter any more.

We are all in this together. Get your vaccine, social distance, wear your mask and wash your hands. If you don't do this for any other reason, please do it for all the front line workers who have unselfishly kept this province going through the last 14 months.

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**Dr. Paul Thistle** (class of 1981) reports all the way from Africa:

Management of COVID-19 in a Resource Limited Setting: Karanda Mission Hospital in Zimbabwe

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the political, economic and social fibres of many countries. The responses to the virus are as varied as the countries affected. The following is a synopsis of how one rural hospital in Africa tackled some of these challenges. "Let's make a plan" has often been the response when the usual protocols and resources are unable to meet the current challenges.

Karanda is a 152-bed medical surgical hospital located 200 kms northeast of the capital, Harare. In the year 2020, there were 70,000 patients attended to, 3,000 surgical procedures and 1,600 babies delivered in the maternity ward. To date, Zimbabwe has witnessed two COVID-19 surges and a total of 37,000 infections nationwide, including 1500 deaths. Our numbers may be low in comparison with other countries, but we are reminded of our low testing capacity and access to public health care in general.



At Karanda, the pandemic response included these steps:

- ~Improve the knowledge of the health care workers and community leaders.
- ~Establish a team approach with a COVID-19 coordinator to facilitate communication.
- ~Create Standard Operating Procedures specific to our environment in Prevention, Screening, Isolation and Treatment.
- ~Mobilize resources from home and abroad. The “COVID Education Project” includes specific pandemic curriculum, but also health and hygiene in the schools and the drilling of 20 new boreholes in our villages. We have resumed our mobile clinic and have received donations of hand-washing stations, infrared thermometers, and personal protective equipment.

The second surge was 10 times the peak of the first from May 2020. At Karanda, we witnessed 100 cases for 700 antigen tests performed at the hospital, the majority in one week spanning the New Year (2020-2021). 40 staff were infected, but thankfully there were no deaths on site. That being said, we heard many reports of unexpected, undocumented deaths out in the villages for those who could not access health care. As pronounced at the height of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe two decades earlier, it is appropriate to say that for COVID-19, “we have all been infected by, or affected by the virus”.

We deeply mourn the loss of loved ones and the public health restrictions on expressing our sorrow. There is good news to share, a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. In Zimbabwe, daily cases have dropped to single digits nationwide. Vaccination commenced in February. At Karanda, we have survived as a functioning hospital against the odds, though we have learned some lessons the hard way.



*The Front Gate of Karanda and the COVID Screening site*



*Paul Thistle with a donation of ProtectENOL Sanitizer from ApplPaulied Lubrication Technology and the Rotary Club of Whitby, Ontario*

Paul didn't include the effects of the pandemic on his personal life. He and his wife, plus their two younger children, have had to stay in Zimbabwe since travel restrictions began, sacrificing regular “furloughs” home to visit friends and family - including their oldest son, living with his grandparents and studying at U. of T. The visits also used to include opportunities for the Thistles to attend fund-raising luncheons and dinners for the hospital - when such events were allowed!



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**Marcia (Keats) Rudolph** (class of 1971) reports from Nova Scotia:

Our family was in a split condition to begin the epidemic. I was living alone in an apartment in the Halifax area, near our children and grandchildren. My husband, recently retired, was tending to our house in Cape Breton, patiently waiting for it to sell.

My “job”, looking after grandchildren when they were off school, etc., and moms and dads were both working, immediately ended, thanks to emergency restrictions. Quite a shock to my system. That said, we improvised a little with the odd physically distant driveway visit. Face-to-face (and distant) when they dropped my grocery orders off, bless them.

Easter weekend in 2020 was very strange. I was preparing to move to a larger apartment within the same building the following weekend. Gene, my husband, drove down from Cape Breton; no restaurants were open and no gas station washrooms available. A four-and-a-half-hour drive there and back on empty highways.

The move (to the larger apartment) took place April 18th with my son, son-in-law, and myself shuttling the small amount of furniture, etc. The internet installation failed and without a landline, I was having trouble getting calls and texts. That night, the unthinkable happened, and our entire province has been in mourning ever since. Family was panicked because they could not reach me. We eventually connected. This was the mass shooting by someone pretending to be an RCMP officer. The first anniversary, sadly, is almost here as I write this.

May 15th, the province introduced family bubbles and I was delighted to spend some afternoons looking after one-year-old Max while mom and dad worked from home. The bubble was small at the start, so it was limited to just them.

Over the summer I kept busy unpacking as much as I could without much furniture and I took an online French course with l’Alliance Française about the geography of France. I read a number of books as well, and I am so grateful for library e-books.

We have all been safe up to the time of writing (early April). There were a few anxious moments and some testing was done. The house sold in October, and we are able to see all our immediate family at will. I feel extremely blessed and I wish everyone in the Alumni organization and all former Thomsonites the best of health and happiness.



*The photo from last summer shows Marcia with her three grandchildren. Left to right, in order of age: Max, Audrey and Sadie.*

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**Doug Mallenby** (class of 1963) reports from Omaha, Nebraska:

We had a tour to Russia scheduled for last May. We read pertinent books and my wife began learning Russian. The trip was cancelled. My wife gave up on Russian.

We scheduled a tour to the Middle East for December. We read pertinent books and my wife began learning Egyptian Arabic. The trip was cancelled. My wife stopped learning Arabic.

We scheduled a tour to the Baltic countries for this July. We ordered books and my wife began learning Estonian. The trip was cancelled. We stopped reading the books and my wife stopped learning Estonian.

Our oldest daughter and her family, who lived in Hawaii, became fed up with “Hawaii’s overbearing government response” to COVID-19. They moved to Tennessee last week. No more biennial trips to Hawaii for us.



The U.S. government decided to give away money to everyone. It was either an economic stimulus or a political bribe, but we accepted – twice.

In December 2019 we moved into a senior community. We taught line-dancing and arranged singalongs, trivia nights and a dance party the week of March 14<sup>th</sup>. The next week all activities were shut down. The whole country was shut down.

We could leave our building, but nonresident visitors were no longer allowed. I actually appreciated the fact that our six nearby grandchildren (one family, ages 3 – 15) could no longer visit our small apartment.

Our wardrobe was augmented by several colorful masks. (See photo below.)

Our unemployed daughter was able to secure a job in the growing industry of medical research.

My wife is a math professor at Creighton University. All her courses went online 16 March 2020. For two weeks she worked 14-hour days making the transition and preparing video lectures. She navigated between the 5 computers suddenly crammed into our small apartment office, all with different passwords and content. After that – she got to sleep in.

In August 2020, most Creighton classes went face-to-face again, or actually mask-to-mask. Fortunately, my wife has no fear of COVID-19.

We attended a strings concert recital via Zoom that included our three youngest grandchildren. It was the best-sounding ever. Only the instructor's Zoom screen was *unmuted*.



*Doug and his wife, Micki, when they were able to visit Hawaii often*



*Micki's idea of a good colourful mask*



*4-year-old granddaughter with (muted?) violin*

Here is why we are not afraid of COVID-19. We take daily doses of Elderhoney (a concoction of half honey and half elderberry juice). Research at the Mayo Clinic has shown that elderberry juice prevents viruses, including corona viruses, from entering human cells. It has worked for us for years. We purchase it from a small Omaha Company, All About Bees, where they make it from local ingredients. Full disclosure: No clinical trials have been conducted, but in the U.S., pharmaceutical companies may not patent naturally occurring substances such as elderberry juice.

If you find you're inspired by the COVID responses in this issue and want to add your own for the Fall 2021 edition, you're invited to submit it to [stanleyfarrow@rogers.com](mailto:stanleyfarrow@rogers.com). Deadline will be mid-October.



**Linda Offenburger** (class of 1964) reports from near Essen, Germany:

Germany managed the first lockdown well, but almost drowned in the bureaucracy involved in the vaccination campaign which is only now beginning to gather steam. The federal system meant that the states/provinces and not the central government made all decisions involving health and education. The whole country agreed on a system of vaccination priorities in which persons in care- and old-age-homes and staff were given the first “shots“. They also put aside the second dose so that they could be sure those vulnerable people would get it.

Then came the over 80s. You wouldn't believe what a mess the “well-organized“ Germans made of that step in my state. The registration was organized by a medical network used to arranging appointments for doctors. On the first day of registration they had over 800,000 calls in the first hour from over 80s or their children or grandchildren. Everything broke down. When you did get an appointment, you had to fill in 12 forms before you could be admitted into the vaccination centre. 90-year old men couldn't make a corresponding appointment for their 89-year-old wives. They had to travel to a vaccination centre, sometimes several hours' drive away, on two different days. That is all running more smoothly now. Almost everyone over 60 has now had their first “shot“ and an appointment for the second.

Each state organized things differently: many gave in to pressure from industry to open up early. Finally Angela Merkel took over and pushed through an emergency bill that came into effect on April 24<sup>th</sup>. It was an extension of our second lockdown, but all the rules had been tightened. We are hoping that the high number of new infections can be stopped. My husband and I have had our first “jab“ and should be fully vaccinated by the end of May.

We know how lucky we as pensioners are with a guaranteed income, a house and a garden. But I think it's our dog that makes the difference. You can read only so many books or clean out so many cupboards. After the first lockdown last summer we were able to meet friends outdoors, but with the second lockdown everything became more complicated. When you can't meet friends, go out to restaurants, visit a concert or go on holiday in your RV, you still have to walk your dog every day. And so you meet people who are also walking their dogs. We watch our dogs play, discuss the Corona (COVID) situation – at a distance – and feel much less alone. Sometimes a friend comes by, and we walk the dog together. It's so much better than talking on the telephone. The dog-walkers are special. You know when someone is sick and needs help, be it doing the shopping or walking their dog. Before Corona our attention was more focussed on our friends from farther away. We knew the neighbours, but we only knew their dogs' names. Now we have become a much closer community. And so we are keeping our fingers crossed that things will be better by the summer and that life will return to normal.



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**Rev. David Robson** (class of 1974) reports from Ontario:

Well over a decade ago, while living in southern Pennsylvania, I began researching spirituality in the postmodern society. When offered a wonderful early “pension” following my second neck surgery, I moved back to Ontario in 2017. I continued working, studying and reflecting on this topic. My goal was to finish writing “the book”. My passion was the journey, not the destination, but, alas, it is sometimes good to reach the last step of the journey. Some days it seemed the project was my lifeline to sanity while on other days I felt as if I never wanted to see it again. I think the stress of COVID and lockdown made these feelings more intense! As a hospital chaplain, it is difficult dealing with situations where families cannot connect. However, I am constantly amazed at the graciousness many exude given various restrictions.

During the entire COVID period, I became my mother-in-law's “Uber” and principal grocery shopper. I continued as our own family's shopper and driver. Besides the grocery and pharmacy runs, I enjoyed the opportunity to escape the condominium and discovered I did much reflection while driving. As the principal shopper for two (sometimes three) households, I had to learn discipline when walking down the cookie aisle.



Sometimes I think COVID-19 means that one will gain 19 kilograms (let us not consider this as pounds!). Sadly, despite almost mastering temptations, I find my clergy shirts tight in the collar! No comments, please.

After living in Pennsylvania for 18 wonderful years, I still stay in contact with many folks in York. It is amazing to hear how many people received their first COVID shot while our system was still evolving. Yet I also heard how many flaunt mask wearing. The specialty hospital where I received new knees became a COVID-only location many months ago! While many great things are taking place in PA, it was disturbing to have one of my colleagues, just retired, die of this disease. Yet we must be thankful for all the work of dedicated people on both sides of the border. Front line workers, truckers and store employees are indeed heroes! While we are learning what social distancing means, are we learning patience, taking time to increase wisdom and making a point of caring for others?

Dickens said it so well when he penned, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity...”

*Re the photo: While in the middle of a pandemic it is wonderful that hospitals, where I spend time, are so Canadian. Of all the locations to post, it is great to see Timmies.*



**Craig Pryce** (class of 1981) reports from The Beach in Toronto:

I'm a Toronto-based director/producer of film and television. This is what COVID life has been like in my part of the world:

**A new skill I learned during COVID:** How social media actually works and to ignore haters and trolls. *#embracethepositive*

**What I learned about during COVID:** My television series filmed a whole season safely - which proved that proper protocol and frequent testing works. *#staysafe*

**One of the things I'm proud about during COVID:** Releasing my new film, “The Marijuana Conspiracy” to Virtual Cinemas, and giving all the proceeds to the Independent Theatres, struggling like so many others at this time. *#supportyourlocaltheatres*

**One of my best alumni moments during COVID:** During a recent interview for the Digital and On Demand release of the film, I was asked when I first started to research marijuana for the script, and I replied: "During the late '70s in the schoolyard of David and Mary Thomson." *#partytillweredeadmen*

**One of the harder things during COVID:** Missing and not seeing most of my family and good friends for so long. *#somedaysoon*

**The nicest thing during COVID:** Spending more quality time with my wife and two daughters. *#neverbeencloser*



**What I wish comes from COVID:** We and all our loved ones are healthy and we put this collective global experience behind us and finally understand what “we are all in this together” really means. *#imagine*

*Craig directing on the set of “The Marijuana Conspiracy” (pre-COVID)*



We complete our survey with the one report from a former staff member, **Mary Hawkins**. Most students and colleagues won't recognize her last name. She was either Mrs. **Van Nice** or Ms. **Elder** (her maiden name), when she taught English at Thomson from 1975 to 1984. Her present address is the reason we called on her:

I feel quite fortunate to live on beautiful Grand Manan Island in the middle of the Bay of Fundy. In part because we are somewhat isolated even in the best of times, there have been no cases of COVID-19 here to date. Getting to Grand Manan requires taking a 90-minute ferry ride from the village of Blacks Harbour, some 50 minutes from Saint John, NB. Since the pandemic began, most of us restrict our trips to the mainland to essential travel only.

There is quite an extensive trail system here, so islanders can experience the natural world easily. The island is a paradise for birders, geologists, artists and whale watchers. I never tire of visiting Swallowtail Light. The 55 steps down and up make a cardio workout for sure! The southernmost part of the island features basalt columns similar to those of the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland.



*Mary just in front of Swallowtail Light in December*



*One of the island's beautiful beaches*

I am also glad that I am an avid knitter and quilter. We have a small guild on the island and continued to meet weekly except for the very worst of the provincial lockdowns. There is also a summer art gallery where I am a volunteer. This year we moved three successful shows on line.

Winter can feel a bit isolated but islanders are good at making their own entertainment. In summer we rely on the tourist industry, so have suffered financially because of all the border closures. Many "summer people" are from the USA and were definitely missed.

All in all, Grand Manan is the best place I can imagine in which to spend the pandemic. I am lucky indeed!

## RECENT STAFF OBITUARIES



At the end of April, Thomson lost two long-serving members of our former staff: **Anne Ellis-Taylor** (left) and **Ruth Russell** (right).

Anne died on April 25 at the age of 99! She was the Reading Lab instructor from 1967 to 1985. In retirement, she married former Director of Education, **Anson Taylor**. She attended historic Washington United Church, for 89 years, producing a book on its history. She also organized an annual luncheon-travelogue for retired teachers for many years.



Ruth was Thomson's Head Librarian from 1961 to 1993. She was also staff advisor to the Interschool Christian Fellowship. In both capacities she met and influenced many alumni. She continued to combine her faith and her library skills in retirement, serving on the staff of Christian academies in Germany and in Hungary, as well as in her local church, Bridlewood United and in many missions, home and abroad. She died April 30 at age 87.