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Remembering Merriem Palitz

Merriem Luck Palitz died peacefully on 14 September 2020 at the age of 98.

Born in 1922 in Milwaukee, Merriem attended school there, graduating from high school at age 16 and the University of Wisconsin (Madison) at 19. At 22, she graduated from Marquette Law School, valedictorian and editor of the Law Review.

While practicing law in Chicago, Merriem met Shepard Palitz. They married in 1950, started a family, and moved West, making their life together in California, in Bakersfield and more recently in Carmel.

In Bakersfield, Merriem embarked on a second career as an English professor at Bakersfield College. She chaired the department, started the Women’s Center, consulted on legal issues regarding women’s rights, and was honored for leadership and scholarship over her 38 year tenure.

Merriem engaged in political advocacy (opposing the John Birch Society) and promoted social causes (serving as a member of the original Guild House effort in support of the Child Guidance Clinic). She travelled, wrote poetry and played tennis well into her 90s.

Small in stature yet large in spirit, she was a skillful leader and fierce advocate wherever she lived and worked. Possessing great wit and sense of humor, warmth and sensitivity to others, she was devoted to the family, friends, colleagues and students she inspired throughout her long, beautiful life.

Merriem leaves behind her husband of 70 years, Shepard; her children, Marsha (John) Palitz-Elliott and Albert (Pam) Palitz; five granddaughters and six great-grandchildren.

Merriem was a fearless champion for our department. My biggest regret is that I didn’t get to work with her longer. I have missed her since she retired and shall miss her even more now that she has gone.

Pam Boyles
Bakersfield College English Department
I’m having a hard time separating the friendship I had with Merriem and the times we shared as colleagues. In short, I loved her. In retrospect, I can see that Merriem became a sort of mom-figure for me as my own mom slipped away, suffering years of Alzheimer’s dementia. But those stories are mine.

What I want people to know is that she was a force. Tiny, yes, but she stood up to anyone, administrators included. She defended our department when needed, supported faculty too. She was gifted in her ability to listen, gather facts, and lead. And she did it all without a spotlight. Just Merriem doing what had to be done, what should be done.

Merriem had integrity and compassion. I never heard her say an unkind word about a student—she met them where they were and did what she could to get them where they needed to be. She was a tennis player, too, and as recently as a few years ago, was taking lessons on her tennis serve. That’s a life-long learner!

She talked much of her dear Shep, her grown children and their spouses, and her talented grandchildren. I can see her clearly, walking down the sidewalk from Humanities to the parking lot, listing to the left or right, but moving forward, always forward.

Carol Cunningham
Bakersfield College English Department, retired
When I came to BC in 1967, I was 23 years old, loved literature, and saw sharing it as my only choice of profession. but I had no practical guidance in how to share that love except to “talk about” the works, which I did, to anyone I could corner. Lucky for me and...
all my future students, I met Merriem Palitz that first semester.

Merriem’s education was in law, not literature, and her lit teaching was extraordinary. What struck me most was that she began with the audience, not the work. Merriem was interested in finding out students’ responses to the reading first, helping them refine and validate those responses, and only then reacting.

Her method was to go back to the root concept of the word “education” in Latin: educare: to “lead (knowledge) from” a person – to guide students with their own thoughts and experiences to engage a work directly. The listening involved learning on my feet as well, which made teaching such a constantly fresh joy to me for nearly forty years.

What I first misread as Merriem’s teaching expertise was actually her ability to ask and really listen, perhaps in part from her law background, but I suspect simply her great innate talent for sharing ideas. If I became a successful teacher, I – and my students – owe it all to Merriem.

Marci Lingo  
Bakersfield College English Department, retired

Merriem was my first English teacher at Bakersfield College. As a first semester freshman, I was in her Introduction to Literature class, and I was, initially, quiet. On the first test, an essay test, of course, Merriem wrote a note, asking me why I was so quiet in class when I had so much to say. So, she started calling on me. And, I suppose, that is part of her legacy in my life: calling on me.

When I graduated from the University of the Pacific with my BA, I taught adjunct English at BC. When a full time English position FINALLY opened, I was hired. I had to wait over Memorial Day weekend to find out if I had been hired, but Merriem called me to reassure me that even if I weren’t hired for the full-time position, she would keep me busy as an adjunct. Thank goodness, I was selected for the full-time job.

Merriem was the department chair for the early years of my career, always attentive, always pushing me to be my best, occasionally calling me to task for not living up to her expectations. And, that was the way with Merriem: she expected a great deal, but she gave a great deal in return.

I was always struck by the fact that although she had taught for decades, she still worried over individual students, good and bad, worried over whether she was meeting their needs. Her fierce devotion to students extended to her colleagues and her department and her college. She possessed a very strong sense of right, and she fought for it. So whether her cause was women’s rights or the wrongful dismissal of a college president, she went beyond advocacy and acted according to her principles.

Merriem was, in my professional life, very like a mother. I know that for others she fulfilled that role even more completely. But, first and foremost, she was a beloved mother, grandmother, and wife. We all knew how completely she loved Shep and her family. She was devoted to them.

So Merriem called upon me, and I am very fortunate indeed that I fell into her sphere.

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Bob Allison  
Bakersfield College Chemistry Department, retired

When I think of Merriem Palitz, the words that come to mind are brilliance, warmth, strength, and, most of all, passion. She was passionate about a lot of things, a few of which included Shep and family, tennis, bowling (more on that later), and, of course, the English Department and teaching excellence.

Merriem was small in stature and usually cheerful and charming, but when serious issues were at hand, her strength and determination became evident. I recall an instance when one of my science colleagues and I were discussing faculty load with Merriem in her office, and my colleague suggested that English composition loads should be increased. Her response was such that he quickly left her office, and as far as I can recall, did not further comment about composition assignments.

And then there was bowling. I was on the faculty bowling group back then and remember what may have been the first time she “threw” a bowling ball. Actually it was more like placing the ball on the foul line with minimal momentum and sometimes uncertain direction. The ball would wander slowly down the lane, and upon reaching its goal, pins would fall in what appeared to be slow motion. It was a unique style, but amazingly effective.

Heidi, my wife, and I got to know Merriem and Shep, and, after their retirement, visited them when we could in Carmel. We would have long conversations and lunch at a local restaurant. Merriem called me shortly before her passing, and we chatted about old times and of the “golden years” at Bakersfield College. I will miss her.
Every Four Years: Presidential Campaigns Through the Decades at BC by Allan Krauter

The rise of 24/7 news and social media has intensified the sound and fury of American politics to alarming levels in the 21st Century, including the divisive presidential election year we have just experienced.

Politics – whether local, state or national – were largely absent from Bakersfield College for several decades, but a search of BC newspapers and yearbooks shows that the college would eventually participate in the quadrennial national debate about who should be elected President.

Renegade Rip Becomes Forum of Student Opinion

The first mention of a presidential campaign in any BC publication came in a 1924 Renegade Rip editorial that carefully avoided partisan bias, declaring, “The election scrap is over, a candidate has been elected, and the country has again returned to normalcy…For the good of America, we hope that in the younger generation there are none of those blind sheep who follow political propagandists.”

The 1960 presidential campaign marked the first time an opinion favoring either candidate would be expressed in the Rip, when editor James Houck declared John F. Kennedy the hands-down winner over Richard M. Nixon in the nation’s first-ever televised debate. Houck’s judgment was excoriated in two letters to the editors, one from Jerry Takier charging, “It is quite obvious that you have taken a completely Democratic stand in the upcoming election,” and another in which Gayle Anderson wrote, “After reading your article, I was given the impression that you were outrageously prejudiced. After more consideration, however, I decided that you are not a bigot, but that you merely suffer from a hormone deficiency.”

The Democratic Party’s wounds from the 1968 convention battle between mainstream candidate Hubert Humphrey and the progressive Eugene McCarthy were also felt at BC. Student Jack Joseph took a Rip editor to task for asserting that there was no difference between Nixon and Humphrey as presidential candidates. His letter defended Humphrey for representing the “rank and file” members of the Democratic Party and criticized Nixon’s “stale cry for ‘law and order’” while dodging the issues. In the next issue, Rip staffer Joann Johnson mourned Humphrey’s defeat of Eugene McCarthy, arguing that people wanted a change from President Lyndon Johnson, not a perennial “second-best” Humphrey. Her prediction about Humphrey proved true in the 1968 election.

Although members of the editorial staff would debate the merits of Democratic and GOP presidential candidates on many occasions in the Rip, the newspaper has unanimously endorsed a candidate only once in its history, supporting Bill Clinton over George Bush in 1992.

The Rip did not print an out-and-out endorsement of Ronald Reagan in 1980, but Rip editor John Motz wrote an opinion in the weeks before the election criticizing President Jimmy Carter for allowing the Iranian hostage situation to fester for more than 300 days. Following the election, Motz enthused on the editorial page over Reagan’s victory, writing, “America has entered a great new era! Americans have more than a new president in Ronald Reagan, they have entered themselves into a new positive phase of American history.”

The Rip also ran a rebuttal by guest writer Robb Lightfoot warning that Reagan gave only lip service to equality for women, the environment and school integration while not appointing women to his cabinet (although President Reagan would appoint the first woman to the Supreme Court, Sandra Day O’Connor), urging repeal of clean air laws and supporting private school tax vouchers that Lightfoot argued would result in “white flight” from public schools. “And some people are wondering if getting government off ‘our’ backs means turning loose the people who gave us Pintos, DC-105, Three Mile Island, and Love Canal,” Lightfoot concluded.

In 2004, Rip Editor-in-Chief Victor Garcia opposed the Iraq War and expressed alarm at discussion in Congress of
under a political science class offered every four years to immerse students in political campaigns. Reading and writing assignments were supplemented by campaign work for a candidate or cause of each student’s choice. Started by faculty member Bill Thomas in 1966, the program was later headed for many years by Greg Goodwin when Thomas began his long and successful career in elective office. BC’s Speech Team, Political Science Department, and the League of Women Voters led a presidential debate viewing and panel discussion course at BC in 1976.

Thomas was not the first BC instructor to “practice what you teach.” History instructor Jack Casey was elected in November 1960 to the State Assembly seat vacated by the death of Kern County’s legendary Dorothy Donohoe, and social sciences instructor Ray Gonzalez was elected to the Assembly in 1972 before being defeated by Thomas in the 1974 election.

Most BC students could not participate directly as voters until 1972, when a constitutional amendment lowered the voting age to 18. Newly empowered Young Democrats and Republicans working to register new voters on campus and in Bakersfield neighborhoods encountered a familiar obstacle that has plagued American democracy for decades: apathy.

The problem would persist for decades. A 1988 Rip editorial urged BC students to vote, noting that a 1972 high of 50% turnout among voters aged 18 to 24 had fallen to 39% by 1980 and that an estimated 15+ million of people 18 to 24 years old would likely not vote in 1988.

In 2000, only one in six people in this age group voted in the presidential election. When George W. Bush lost the popular vote but won the Electoral College after Florida voters delivered a razor-thin victory, political science professor Steve Holmes noted that the 2000 election held a valuable lesson. “Many individuals simply believe that their effort and thus their vote doesn’t count,” Holmes told the Rip. “Hopefully, this close election is going to reinvigorate Americans to understand that their voice will make a difference.”

Younger people and racial minorities, historically underrepresented on voter registration rolls and at the polls, found reasons to participate in the 2008 presidential election when Sen. Barack Obama opposed Sen. John McCain, a Vietnam War hero. Both major political parties registered record numbers of new voters during the campaign.

The 2008 election of Barack Obama would expose national differences over race and governing philosophies that have defined presidential campaigns since then. These opposing sentiments surfaced in the editorial pages of the Rip following the election.

Staff Writer Elizabeth Meeks warned, “The country is in for a shock when the only change Obama brings is that a black person can get elected with little experience in politics, the United States goes from a democratic country to that of a socialist country and welfare recipients continue to get a free ride on the coat tails of hard-working people such as myself.”

“It would be great if we could all just drop the hate against our 44th president-elect, Barack Obama,” Editor-in-Chief Joel Paramo wrote. “No, he is not a socialist, a terrorist or a Muslim, and even if he were Muslim, we have freedom of religion in this country.”

As 2020 draws to a close, the national stalemate continues.
Below is part 2 of an article about BC’s early years based on oral histories from the BC Archives as well as reporting in Raconteurs and Renegade Rips from the period.

As rising unemployment in the 1930s brought an unusual increase in local students and enrollees from other states, Grace Bird expanded instruction at BC to respond to the Depression.

BC courses reflected the changing needs of industry and evolving technology. Agricultural offerings in farm management, plant science and animal science were built around basic college courses in chemistry, botany and zoology. Police training began at BC during the ’30s, when the college also recruited John Van Osdel to launch a curriculum to prepare students for technical jobs in the petroleum industry.

For Bird, a high point of the ’30s was a 1937 Carnegie Foundation grant for library books, one of only three given to California JCs. Bird said BC received the grant not because the small collection in the basement of the JC building was in poor shape but because it was so well curated by Librarian Goldie Ingles.

Bird also recalled that the BC Forensics team won highest national honors in debate and extemporaneous in the 1930s, and drama students won highest national honors for their “Treasure Island” production at Whittier College. After joining the BC faculty, he and legendary BHS band director Wesley Moore produced Harvey Auditorium’s first dramatic production when it opened on the BHS-BC campus in 1948. World War II further transformed the college. Under a federal contract, BC expanded its technology courses in auto repair, machining, welding, aviation, and airplane construction and maintenance, training 300 people over three six-week periods in 1940.

“We ran as many shifts as we could,” Bird said. “We might have operated 24 hours a day had we not had to take time for the machinery to cool before our regular day classes began.”

BC started training civilian pilots under contract with the Civil Aeronautics Authority. BC’s Flying Knights pilots club numbered more than 30 students, and when the U.S. entered WW II, most graduates of the BC program became Navy or Army Air Corps officers. Bakersfield’s first Navy ace, Lt. Cmdr. Jack Gist, was a BC pilot training grad who also flew to the South Pole with Robert Byrd and later became an aviation law attorney in Washington, D.C.

Soon military flight training replaced civilian flight training. BC enrollment fell as more men over 18 were being drafted for military service in 1942 and many women worked in war industries or for the Red Cross and hospitals.

Besides leading a highly successful war bond drive in Bakersfield, Bird wrote monthly group letters to American servicemen reporting the news from the college, Bakersfield and different theaters of the war. Eventually, 700 service members received these letters. Bird’s wartime letters so united and inspired former students that they formed one of the nation’s first community college alumni associations in 1946.

Postwar Boom

With the end of the war came a tide of GIs returning to civilian life, and for many, college was their first stop. Among them was Ed Simonsen, who had taught music and coached athletics at East Bakersfield High School before serving in the Marines during the war. He now held a Master’s degree from Berkeley, and in 1946 Bird asked him to serve as Dean of Men. (Simonsen would eventually manage the college’s transition to the new campus and would become President of Bakersfield College in 1958.)

“The reason that I happened to end up at Bakersfield College was that Grace Bird...
decided that there was a little difficulty on the campus with all these veterans coming back,” Simonsen said in an interview for the Archives. “They were playing cards and they were smoking and causing real problems. So they thought that if they could get a Marine down there that maybe it would be possible to restore order.”

BC added extra calculus, physics and chemistry courses to meet demand among pre-engineering majors. Three-fourths of the students at BC in the late ’40s aspired to transfer to four-year schools, and the veterans among them quickly gained a reputation as top students.

“Veterans, particularly enlisted people, had seen that the officers who were calling the shots weren’t any more experienced than they were except that the officers had the sheepskin,” Simonsen said. “So, the enlisted men realized that perhaps if they were going to do a little better in their lives than their parents had done, the answer would be to go to college.”

Enrollment continued to swell in the postwar years. In Fall 1949, enrollment was more than 1,200, more than twice the number when the JC building had opened in 1931. That year, Grace Bird’s last at Bakersfield College, would bring memorable achievements. The mens’ swim team brought home national JC medals. The women’s debate team won the national title in a tournament hosted by BC.

When Bird left BC to take a post at UC Berkeley in 1950, the Board of Trustees honored her 32 years of devotion to Bakersfield College by naming the college library in her honor and establishing a fine books collection. In 1976, trustees formally recognized that despite her titles as dean and then director of BC, Grace Bird had truly served as the first college president. They retroactively designated her as a president emeritus of BC.

The College on the Hill

For years, one of Grace Bird’s greatest hopes had been for BC to get a true college campus of its own. With overcrowding becoming worse each year, trustees began looking for land. Bird gave the search a nudge toward the higher ground she sought by discreetly asking the president of Kern County Land Company at a dinner party about the potential price of some 200 acres it owned on the bluffs.

“Carl Melcher and I were guests at the same dinner party,” Bird recalled, “and when the group broke up into small clusters for coffee in the living room and the library, Mr. Melcher and I sat together. So, when an unheard voice whispered, ‘Here’s your chance; take it,’ I took it.”

When the sale went through in March 1950, Bird was already at Berkeley, and the search had begun for Bird’s replacement. They found their man in Colorado. Dr. Ralph Prator was a University of Colorado graduate with the same energy, magnetism and vision that Bird had possessed. His new employers made his mission clear: get the college off the BHS campus and get the new campus built. Under Prator’s leadership, BC’s tradition of excellence would soon begin a new era in the new home that Bird had long imagined: “the college on the hill.”
Peace Garden Plans
Keep Alive BC’s Landscaping Tradition

by Allan Krauter

When plans for a new Peace Garden near the Performing Arts Center were announced in September by a group of BC faculty and administrators, the occasion marked the latest renewal of a tradition that was born with the new campus in 1956.

The Peace Garden, which will honor peacemakers of the world such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Dalai Lama, is being proposed by BC President Sonya Christian to serve as a space for inspiration, reflection, discussions, and learning. The project will encompass several areas “where people can re-energize, learn, and be inspired by the world’s great peacemakers,” according to anthropology professor Krista Moreland. Eventually, a 5-kilometer walking path will provide its own journey of reflection.

Christian’s inspiration for the Peace Garden was the BC Gandhi celebration in October 2019, but its roots reach back to the original design of Bakersfield College’s current campus in the 1950s.

When the Kern High School District hired the architectural firm of Wright & Metcalf to design the new campus for Bakersfield College, it also engaged one of the nation’s pre-eminent landscape architects. Together, they conceived the courtyard-centered classroom structures that remain today.

Recognized as the dean of Southern California landscape architects, Ralph D. Cornell completed his education at Pomona College (B.A., 1914) and Harvard University School of Landscape Architecture (M.L.A., 1917), according to a brief history of BC’s architectural style provided by architect John Powell to BC administrators in 2016.

Cornell founded his Los Angeles practice in 1919 and proved equally skilled working in the formal vocabulary of the French Beaux-Arts tradition and in the less formal Mid-Century Modern style, according to Powell. He was also an ardent proponent of indigenous plantings appropriate to the geographical locales of his projects.

During his planning role for Bakersfield College, Cornell also served as the campus planner and landscape architect for UCLA, the University of Hawaii, and Pomona College. His design was keyed to architectural plans for the college that featured landscaped courtyards where students could gather between classes and retreat at less busy hours.
BC President Ralph Prator, whom trustees had hired in 1950 to propel the college’s move from the BHS campus to its current site, outlined the architectural and landscaping plan in a 1954 article for College and University Business Magazine entitled “The Faculty Planned This New College”.

“Bakersfield is ideally adapted to outdoor living the year round, and in landscaping the total campus site extensive use is planned of attractive and functional patios, convenient areas for the assembling of students between classes,” Prator wrote.

“The campus was laid out as a traditional cross-axial college plan with major axes running west to east from the Campus Student Center to the original temple-like Arts Building at the top of the green, and north to south from the Administration Building to monumental Memorial Stadium,” Prator continued. “Campus structures were based on a central courtyard model of the International Style for abundant classroom light and natural cross-ventilation.”

Through the years, the courtyard concept built into the original Business and Administration, Humanities, Science and Engineering, and Trades and Industry buildings has found new expression in other spaces. The Agriculture Department garden and pavilion designed by Lindsay Ono is a place of solitude that has also hosted many large gatherings. A newer addition is the William and Florence Wheeler and Nancy Wheeler-Smith Courtyard by the Library that is shaded by a magnificent Italian stone pine, one of many trees planted under Cornell’s supervision in 1955 that still grace the campus today.

The original courtyards are not widely used by today’s students, who might spend only a small part of their day on campus as they juggle jobs and family duties with school, but another original landscaping feature remains prominent. The pine-shaded esplanade envisioned by Ralph Cornell connects the first completed structure on campus, “monumental Memorial Stadium,” to the construction clamor that is transforming the heart of the BC campus, reminding us how important green and quiet spaces are in a place where people are thinking and learning.
SUSAN BOYD always dreamed of teaching in a college so she earned her Master’s in History at Texas Christian University and then a teaching credential in 1997. She taught History as an adjunct BC professor for 15 years, retiring in 2013. Susan Pinza describes her as a selfless, giving person who was a CASA volunteer and played the organ and piano for her Mill Creek Christian Church.

LOWELL DABBS joined the BC English department in 1955 and stayed for 24 years. He co-wrote two collegiate texts (with BC colleagues Hulon Willis, Les Wilbur, and Don Stansbury) as well as plays, short stories, poems, and articles for journals and magazines. He served as faculty editor for BC’s Campus Arts.

KITTY JOHNSON’s real name was Catherine, but for 27 years in the BC Math department she was beloved as our Kitty. Her vibrant, upbeat, youthful intelligence added verve to the primarily male department and paved the way for Shirley Trembley’s arrival a few years later. She was our Irish lassie.

DOROTHY MEERT was both a BC staff member and a faculty wife. Her husband Paul was a professor in the Math department while Dorothy was a Departmental Secretary. They met at BC and became loyal rooters for the Renegades football team. They celebrated fifty years of marriage a few years ago. Becky Hawthorne recalls Dorothy as “the sweetest person you ever met.”

YVONNE MILLIKEN came to BC first as an English instructor and counselor, soon becoming an associate dean in Student Services. Known for her leadership in Financial Aid and in the formation of the Bakersfield College Foundation, Vonnie was also known as an accomplished actress in the community and on the BC stage.

BILL NELSON came to BC to take over the golf team in 1966, following legendary Jack Frost, and coached that sport for thirty-six years, retiring in 2002. He had short stints at coaching basketball (1967-73), bowling and teaching health courses. He was known for his boyish good looks and ever-present grin.

MERRIEF PALITZ was a BC English professor and a lawyer who followed Hulon Willis as head of the English Department in the 1980s. She was the second coordinator of the newly formed Women’s Center and a planner of the Women’s Program at BC. With her lawyer’s mojo, she led the women coaches in a successful appeal to President John Collins for equity for women’s sports and coaches pay.

CHARLES “CHUCK” PALMGREN died at age 81 in Wyoming, where he and his wife Magi spent their summers. Chuck was the Director of Maintenance and Operations for many of his twenty-three years at Bakersfield College, retiring in 1997. He supervised the huge asbestos abatement program on all original campus buildings in 1988.

Dr. ROBERT “BOB” SHELDON was for almost four decades the volunteer Renegade team doctor alongside Dr. Romain Clerou. Bob himself had been an All-Conference Tackle on the Renegade football team in 1936 when he was a student at BJC on the high school campus. At the Celebration in 2013, Bob was named as one of the 100 STARS in BC’s history.

DANA STOCKTON was an alumna of Bakersfield College who became a social worker, a probation officer, and finally an adjunct professor of Criminal Justice at BC from 2005-2016. Susan Pinza says “Characteristic of Dana’s nurturing spirit, she ensured her students received praise, guidance, and encouragement” and Dana in turn frequently received positive feedback from her students who expressed their appreciation for her method of instruction.”

CHARLES “MONTY” SNYDER was one of those hidden IT technicians who are invaluable but rarely get out on campus. Eric Carillo said Monty provided IT support for the former Graphics Center and Print Shop computers and printers and really knew what he was doing. There was never a problem he couldn’t fix. Kristin Rabe said he ended “every email with ‘Cheers.’” His license plate said NETCZAR!

AMY VALLEJO, the name by which we knew Armido, was the multi-talented redhead who loved to cook for and interact with the BC students. She cooked for the BC cafeteria for 21 years before retiring in 1992. Maureen Walsh-Meyers said Amy was “a GREAT employee and always kept us entertained with her upbeat personality.”

BARBARA WATERS served more than twenty years starting in the Work Experience Office under Charles West and then many years in the Behavioral Science office with Lynn Knaggs who described Barbara as “the person who really knew what was going on” and was extremely helpful to staff and students. She was an enthusiastic participant in BC events across campus.
This has been a difficult time for us as we have been staying at home separated from family and friends. My family lives in Boston, and I don’t know when I’ll be able to see them again. Yet, with this virus plague, the plague of massive, destructive fires in California, and the plague of rancorous political divisiveness we still have reason to see in them reminders of how important love and care for others is in our lives. This is a recent poem I have written with that in mind. ~Jack Hernandez

### A Time

A time when  
smoke mutes  
the sun  
fires blacken  
the forest skin  
political rage  
burns compassion.

A time when  
the heart opens  
to refugees from pain  
bears the scars  
of those severed  
from homes  
of those struck  
by love’s loss  
of the stranger  
waiting to enter.

A time of burning  
A time of sowing  
new seeds daring  
all to care  
as one.
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