

CORONA QUILT POETRY



Nina Postoway, 2020

BY RESIDENTS OF THE
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Table of Contents

The Group Corona Poetry Quilt Project

Fifteen Academy Villagers responded to a request to submit poems, brief images, or reflections to be turned into an Academy Village “Quilt Poem” that expresses hope, humor, moments of repose, anxieties, and sacrifices during this time.

The *group quilt poem* can be seen on the first page of this chapbook, and was quilted by Nancy Fitzgerald. Following this are the poems, images, and reflections that were used to create the quilt poem.

This project was supported by the Arizona Senior Academy.

—Nancy Fitzgerald and Virginia Richardson

Poet and Poem	Page
Nancy Fitzgerald, Quilter <i>Group Corona Quilt Poem</i>	1
Carol Poster: <i>Desert Wind</i>	2
Nancy Fitzgerald: <i>Be Still My Soul</i>	2
Celeste Schultz: <i>Its Our Turn</i>	3
Roxy Mitchum-Horn: <i>Mother Earth</i>	4
<i>Shuttered</i>	4
Leslie Evans: <i>The Cover Up</i>	6
<i>Covid Cocoon Quarantine</i>	7
Joanne Birdwhistell <i>Journey Beyond</i>	7
Kelly Poulin: <i>Lizard on a Hot Rock</i>	8
<i>Dying to the Doom</i>	9
Virginia Richardson <i>Angst, Ennui, Weltschmerz</i>	8
Beverly Robinson: <i>Poem for the time of the Pandemic</i>	10
Abigail Haglar <i>Corona</i>	10
Mary Stitt <i>Lessons</i>	11
Gayla Curtis <i>Corona Crazy</i>	11
Barbaranne Shepard <i>Thoughts During This Crazy Time</i>	12
Marna Broekhoff <i>Blind</i>	13

GROUP CORONA QUILT POEM

I walk the village in mask, sunglasses and hat
Slowly on hot asphalt, a Kabuki stage.
Lost identity.

Like a lizard on a hard rock
Jangled and jumpy,
There is no ease.

Spring migration proceeds
The birds move about freely

Responding to the rhythms of sun and wind.
The lizard darts off to play.
We marvel at the alien rose sunsets.
But the virus has clipped our wings
We are tethered to Rincon Valley.

Out of nowhere
This silent sinister shadow
Erupted.
The virus washed over us
Reorienting everything
The closing of a window or door
Blocking out the light.
When may we go out again?
Will it be the same world
how will we cope?

We miss music
We miss church
We miss work
We miss the bars
The movie theaters
Our family and friends

The wind shifts, striking my house head on
The screen rattles against the sliding glass door
I am fragile and alone.

Be still my Soul

I remember the great depression
Depression and drought
Loosing homes, jobs,
Now in my last years.
Another uncertainty. I am 92
Will I live to see the end?

The virus like an avalanche
of rearranged snow.

Angst, ennui, weltschmerz
Fearful watching and waiting
Knowing if we live
It will be different

Waiting for insight
The skies are clearer—
Trying to learn from it

Watch the birds
Hear Nakia's flute
Smell the fragrance
Floating away
Dissolving in the mist

Zoom ahead vaccine research
Help us be survivors
memories for our autumn years

This journey reaches beyond the stars
Embrace the change
Tolerate it. Master it.
We wait for renewed energy
To pack our bags
To be free again to roam the earth

—*Quilted by Nancy Fitzgerald*

Desert Wind

The desert wind outside my window shouts.
Tree branches, desiccated by the rainless winter,
toss and rustle with eerily sibilant sounds.
The wind itself moans as it angles up the wash,
tenor crescendo diminishing to hollow baritone,
with crickets performing a monotonous percussion
in the background.

The wind shifts, striking my house head on.
The screen rattles against the sliding glass door.
I am fragile and alone.

—Carol Poster

Be Still My Soul

Watch the rabbit
Pause in solitude
Stop the tasks
See the quail gamble
Hear Nakia's flute
Taste the bread
Touch the dog's fur
Groom her daily
Walk her slowly
Smell the blossoms
Sleep—wild dreams
Remember travel
Family food fiesta
Read and nap - rest
Serenity and patience
Be still my soul.

—Nancy Fitzgerald
April, 2020

It's Our Turn

Grandma in 1918
Family butcher store worker
A teenaged Spanish flu survivor

Mom in 1949
Single young nurse just graduated
Traveling with polio research team
Her dementia memories of medical magic

Arrive 2020 with corona as king
Stores silenced schools closed
Flatten the curve stay home
Vaccine elusive
Cries for tests tests tests
Numbers are high infections and death
Nurses doctors all wonder how long can we cope

Zoom for creative writing class
Zoom for Tom's wedding
Zoom for Liz's graduation
Zoom for Kristina's baby shower
A virtual explosion

When will the familiar fast zoom return?
Zoom by to pick you up for
Drinks and tunes at Chicago Bar
Fine food at Feast
Ride to the airport for the trip of your dreams
Hopefully soon

Zoom ahead vaccine research
Come back medical magic
Defeat corona king
Help us be this century's survivors
Fuel memories for our autumn years

—Celeste Schultz

Mother Earth

Mother Earth is not to be trifled with.
Arrogant and clueless
We humans constantly battle her.
She always wins.
One day we will push her too far
And she will wipe us off the face of the earth.
And let the cockroaches take over.
We will be extinct
But she will still be here.
Fat and omnipotent.
And happy that we are gone.
Hopefully the cockroaches
Will know not to mess with her.

Right now, she has the whole human race
On a giant time-out.
With Covid-19.
She probably hopes this will make us
Take her more seriously.
I hope she is prepared

—*Roxy Mitchum-Horn*

Shuttered

Shuttered.
The closing of a window or door.
Blocking out the light.

Shuttered.
Locking down and closing up.
To keep out the danger
The unwanted
The uninvited.

Shuttered
Preventing entrance and egress
Keeping people at a safe distance
Giving up social interaction.

Shuttered.
We are safe.
We are lonely
We are bored
We are worried
We are anxious.

Shuttered
We miss the music
We miss church
We miss work
We miss the bars
The movie theaters
Our family and friends.

Shuttered
When may we go out again?
Will it be the same world?
How different will it be?
Will we be able to cope

Shuttered
Unable or unwilling to cope
With a new world.
Retreating behind closed doors.
To keep out the danger
The unwanted
The uninvited.

Unshuttered
Embracing the change
Withstanding it
Accepting it.
Tolerating it.
Mastering it.

—*Roxy Mitchum-Horn*

The Cover Up

White bones, sharp teeth, hollowed eyes,
my skeleton hood scares school friends.
Costume make-believe.

A skinny Lone Ranger mask droops under my eyes
like a raccoon riding on a red, wood rocker steed.
Television heroism.

Noh ritual faces, carved wooden war pose,
hang on my walls, terrifying apartment decor.
Demon repellent.

White masked nurse whispers assurances
before making me count backwards.
Fear swaddler.

The grand masquerade allows the Phantom
to move among the crowd unnoticed.
Disguised deception.

Superheroes in blue become the front line
of nurses, doctors, first responders versus
Invisible virus.

I walk the village in mask, sunglasses and hat,
slowly on hot asphalt, a Kabuki stage,
Lost identity.

—*Leslie Evans*

Covid Cocoon Quarantine

I do not like to gamble
but I am expected to know the odds
from packages, gas stations, groceries,
buses, keyboards, family,
answering the door,
biking, hiking,
air.

Like driving on black ice,
it's easier to stay home.

—*Leslie Evans*

Journey Beyond

I don't know when it began
this journey reaching beyond the stars,
I'd been told you can't go there
and there is no place to reach,

Lights and colors sweeping across the vastness,
sounds and tastes melting into the distance,
cool flowing water lighter than air,
fragrances floating away, dissolving into mists,

thunderous booms and brilliant lights,
a full array of immense energies,
depth upon depth, immersed and exploding
in joy unimaginable and impossible to conceive.

—*Joanne Birdwhistel*

Lizard on A Hot Rock

Like a lizard on a hot rock,
Jangled and jumpy,
There is no ease.

Captive to solitude,
Confounded by mystery,
Shattered in fear,
Tangled in doubt,
Life is guillotined.

Yet, it is spring and nature awakens
Perfectly unfolding with quiet confidence.
Blooming flowers and sprouting greenery
In her relentless ritual of renewal

Ignorant of our plight
The lizard darts off to play.

—Kellie Poulin

Angst, Ennui, Weltschmerz

Which one?
None describes the
fearful watching, waiting.
Knowing
if we live
it will be different.

This happened before.
Where are the poems
telling us
how it ended
when it ended

what is next?

—Virginia Richardson, 2020

Dying to the Doom

Compelled to explain a sneeze
Robbed of hugs and connection
Nowhere to go

We sizzle on the hotbed of its power
As it forces us to give up our freedom

To reach out and touch ...

A hug given, a shoulder touched, a hand held

To connect ...

A smile revealed free from barriers
A gift received and opened
A melting into the warmth of love... up close and spontaneous

To breathe...

The scent of unvarnished floral perfume,
The confidence of a breath despite the proximity of a passerby,

The energy to break free builds
We simply are not meant to live this way

Yet here we are...deep in the despair and horror
Of broken hearts and lives...
Why?

—Kellie Poulin

Poem for the Time of the Pandemic

Spring migration proceeds.
The birds move about freely
responding to the rhythms of sun and wind.
But the virus has clipped our wings.
We are tethered to the Rincon Valley.

Hooded orioles arrive to challenge
hummingbirds at the feeder.
Nighthawks own the air at dusk.
White-crowned sparrows
merge with a south wind,
wing their way to the far north.

We take this time to
watch as the cactus wren remodels its nest.
We marvel at the persistence of the
Gila woodpecker
excavating a new cavity in the saguaro.
We listen to the roadrunner
silent most of the year
call softly to its mate.

We wait for the world to stop being hostile
to renew our journey
to pack our bags and
be free to roam the earth again.

—*Beverly Robinson*

Corona

A novel rearrangement of RNA.
As an avalanche is a rearrangement of snow.

—*Abigail Haglar*

Lessons

The lessons are there—
think of cause/effect and why
the skies are clearer.

waiting for insight
trying to learn from it all
about recovery

consider where we are,
the poetry of it all

—*Mari Stitt*

CORONA CRAZY

At first only on the

periphery

And seemingly out of

Nowhere

This silent, sinister shadow

Erupted!

Bringing disbelief, distrust, defiance,

Distancing!

Engulfing the stricken; creating anguish, stress

Panic!

The new normal is

Uncertainty!

—*Gayla Curtis*

Thoughts During this Crazy Time

I have been thinking about other times in my long life when there was uncertainty in my world and how were they similar and /or different from what I am experiencing now.

First there was the Great Depression. I was a child at the time and living in South Dakota which was doubly hit during that time period by the Depression and a drought. In farming country, a drought alone is catastrophic.

I remember vividly how worried my parents were when neighbors and relatives were losing their homes, their jobs, their health insurance. Fortunately, my father's small business survived. But the Depression really ended with what was my second period of insecurity and uncertainty: World War 11.

By the time of the war I was in junior high and much more aware of the uncertainty of those years. While my classmates were too young to be called into service, I was very aware of the ultimate sacrifices families were making as sons of family friends and a first cousin of mine lost their lives.

Now, in the last years of my life, another uncertainty is facing me and the world. While I try to remain calm and sanguine and fill my days with activities, there is an underlying sense of foreboding that I never thought I would experience. Will I live to see the end (I just turned 92) and what comes next or not? However, I am grateful to have my husband still with me and to be living in a community of caring people.

—Barbaranne Shepard

Blind

The world was too much with us late and soon

Getting and spending, we laid waste our powers (William was right)

We thought not of our families, our people, our world, our planet.

Then the virus washed over us, reorienting everything...

We breathed fresh air, called our friends, marveled at the aching beauty of the buds, the alpenrose sunsets in this ironic spring

Only temporarily? (We chafe to return to normal.)

But there will be no normal, just endless "new normals" of second waves, third waves...

Alas, those waves we see today blind us to tomorrow's tsunami of climate chaos.

The battle we fight now clouds our vision of this more distant war.

We are frogs in hot water.

Will we—will our planet—survive?

*--Cassandra
(aka Marna Broekhoff)*