



Personal Reflections

12/15/2020

Dear IMSA Community,

On Saturday, December 7, 2020, I got up early at 5:00 a.m., put on a white shirt, a black jacket, and shorts, and joined a zoom call broadcasted from Alexandria, Egypt. A longtime friend, Bill, passed away at age 90 from COVID-19 complications. Bill and his wife Peg, who passed away 12 years ago, opened their home to me in 1980, when I was only 20 years old and needed a place to stay. Six months later, I found a more permanent home. While my time living with them in their home was short, this experience and our continued relationship for over 20 years permanently etched Bill and Peg in my psyche and spirit as people who cared for me. After Peg died in 2008, Bill (78 years old) returned to the mission field where he had served for many years.

Hope in dark times. I have been reflecting on these four words for over four weeks as the Pandemic has surged again. With Bill's passing, I wondered, how do we maintain hope in the dark? Yet, during that zoom memorial from Alexandria, Egypt, I heard story after story about how Bill had brought light to others. He secured a legacy of service. His death reminded me of how we should live every day.

Death has a strange way of reordering our priorities. I know that a very busy Government official canceled all of his appointments overnight when his mother passed away. Whether COVID-19 contributed to her death, we may never know. This government official could not otherwise find a 10-minute opening in his calendar, but was able to clear his calendar overnight. Death has a way of prioritizing things.

Maira Kalman said, "We hope. We despair. We hope. We despair. That is what governs us. We have a bipolar system."

Do you remember how back in March and April 2020, when we all began our quarantine, we did so with lots of hope? From Italy, across the United States, and in our neighborhood, there was singing from balconies and home-made signs stating "Don't despair" and "We can do this!" Over the past few months, we have grown weary. We are fatigued. I've heard people say, "I'm tired. I'm not going to stay away from my friends any longer." I haven't seen the sign in the window, but I won't be surprised if someone places a home-made sign that says, "when will this end?"



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Amazingly, today, there is hope! Amid this Pandemic and crisis, a vaccine is already in our state and nearby hospitals. In record time, science came through. Back in March, we didn't know if we would ever have a vaccine. In less than ten months, there may be multiple vaccines bringing us hope.

If we all do what we ought to do over the holidays, using our masks, washing our hands often, and keeping our physical distance, I am hopeful the virus numbers will allow us to return to IMSA for face-to-face instruction. We hope this will happen even in the midst of living in this dark period.

Many of our students received boxes with materials for next semester. Believe me when I tell you that it wasn't "Santa's elves" who packed these boxes, but a group of incredibly dedicated "behind the scenes" IMSA employees who often work without receiving much credit. Please join me this holiday season in recognizing the employees who packed, taped, labeled, and shipped the materials for our students to be ready to engage in our second semester this academic year. They were Dottie Krett, Jocelyne Alberto, Vicki Burgholzer, Joyce Symoniak, Karen Gholson, Nancy Pavlik, Minerva Ratsamy, and Brenda Bazan. I have always found that gratitude increases my hope. If we take things "as granted" we won't take them "for granted."

I want to end by wishing all of you happy holidays. Whatever holiday tradition you celebrate, know that many of us are making new traditions amid the Pandemic. To help you celebrate with IMSA students, here's a link to our [\*\*Quarantunes 3: Musica da Camera - Sleigh Ride Around the World\*\*](#). In-joy the music, may it lift up your spirit and increase your hope!

Respectfully,

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