

A Time for Warriors

Pandemic 101. A relief to close the business. Counting my blessings. Paperwork, unemployment block hole, PPP, SBA loans. CNN. Dr. Fauci. Wuhan, China, Kung Flu. Masks, no masks. Social distancing. My husband should be retired. Counting my blessing. A UV box for his respiratory odds and ends – pulse oximeter, stethoscope. Ninety-nine percent alcohol. White Merlot. Trump. Mask, no mask. Respirators, warehouses full of respirators. N95. Italy. More paperwork. Lines at the grocery store. Little sheets of hand sanitizer. Amazon. Build a vegetable garden. Rototilling old brick walkway area. MTD tiller cotter pins. Digging by hand. My daughter tests positive – six months pregnant with our eighth grandchild. A girl who will tie the score. Sending soup. Sending pulse oximeter. Sending incentive spirometer. Advice from her father. Grandson positive. Rubik's Cube, headphones. Son-in-law positive. CNN. Daily briefing. Digging in the dirt. New York City. New York State. Don't read articles on COVID-19 pregnancy. Time to plant the squash. She's still positive. What does that mean? Amazon. Governor Baker. Daily respirator report from husband. Ten co-workers test positive. George Floyd. Four-hundred years. Watching grandsons practice for baseball games they will not play. Zoom dance classes. Clean the grill. Aubuchon curbside pickup. Write. Scallops fresh from the boat. Counting my blessings. Hair color to-go kits. Weeding the patio. Dragging loam. Paperwork. A book launch in an un-launchable time. "Read my book. It will help." Will it? Social media. Social inequities. Social reform. Social Distancing. Social no longer means social. She's still testing positive. What does that mean? When to plant beans. You Tube videos. Don't watch the one video that breaks your heart. Be an Ally. Eight minutes and forty seconds – a long time to take a knee. Silent protest. Silent vigil. Silent funeral procession. Should we speak? Is it too late for a white woman's words? Be an Ally. Husband's boss in ICU. Husband

tests negative. Pulling weeds between carrot shoots. Carrots coming out with the weeds. Kenny's chemotherapy. A new mattress for mom. A new girlfriend for my sister. My brother's car. She's still testing positive. Eight weeks. I want to sleep in my husband's bed. Don't forget how to touch me. Fear is the devil. Phase one. Phase 1.2. I am not phased. Baby not moving. Blessed relief. Scheduled induction. Can't stand – my sciatica. I can kneel. Crying into the weeds. Counting my blessings. Visualize back pain working at a grocery store – a homeless woman with sciatica. Zoom physical therapy session. Counting my blessings. A knee in my back. Sobbing. Wichita Lineman running through my head on a loop. Sobbing. Begging my husband to stop working – an astronaut's wife, "Please don't go to the moon!" Using a walker. Using a cane. Wearing a back brace. Arnica cream. A knee on my neck. Finding a mistake in my book. Please don't go to the moon. Antibodies testing. Positive antibodies and positive nasal swab. What does that mean? Waiting. Telling a story about ants to Jackson. Watching him cry. Skateboard. Waiting. Sleeping. Waking. She's here. Seven pounds, eleven ounces. They choose a name. Sloane means warrior.