

Gardner Newsletter

Volume 24

~ Issue 95 ~

Summer 2021

Gardner Newsletter Subscribers Tell Their Own COVID-19 Stories

Here it is, Summer of 2021, and we're still coping with the tragic effects from COVID-19. I'm sure everyone thought that by now we would be through with this pandemic. Unfortunately, it seems to be abundantly clear that we are experiencing a third wave with the Delta variant of the virus raging through the country and the world. We could suffer even more sickness and death from future variants which may develop resistance against the current vaccines.

The *Gardner Newsletter* first made reference to COVID-19 in the Spring 2020 issue. That particular issue published

various Facebook posts that several of our subscribers published on-line. The follow-up to that was the Summer 2020 publication which talked about the dual crises facing America at the time – the pandemic and the social unrest generated by the killing of George Floyd.

Here in the present, a year later in Summer 2021, not much has been resolved on either front. Maybe the *Gardner Newsletter* can contribute to the historical record of the pandemic by publishing some of what

you, our subscribers, wrote about how you and your family are dealing with the ongoing consequences of COVID-19.

Gardner News thanks all of you who returned in the mail the recent survey detailing your various accounts of life during this awful pandemic. Perhaps you can derive some comfort in knowing that what you talked and wrote about will become part of a permanent archive that future generations can refer to, much like scientists and doctors referred to and learned from the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918. The Charleston Historical Society, who many of you support and where all the issues of the *Gardner Newsletter* permanently reside, will contribute greatly to making sure future generations hear what you had to say about COVID-19!

In this issue, you'll read six stories from the many surveys you returned. The first two stories – Tyler Seeholzer's and Teresa Vasko's - have BOMBSHELL news in them.

Laura Gilmore's contribution is a touching response to how the Gardner family have influenced her life and emotional development. Her thoughtful and well written survey will warm your heart and make you glad that you're a part of the Gardner Family.

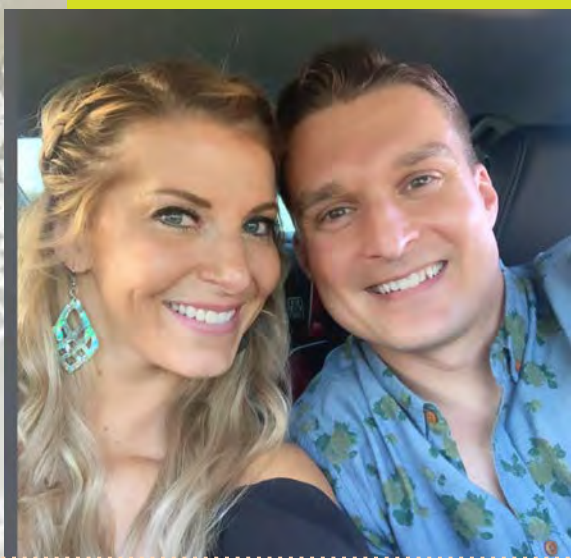
Let's begin with Tyler Seeholzer.

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The Seeholzers, far away in California, survived the pandemic through *patience*, *Facetime*, and *Zoom* – just like so many others!

For us, *patience* included waiting months (or in the case of my grandfather, over a year) to hold proper funerals. It also included my second four-month deployment to Italy in as many years.

To say that Italy was different the second time around



Chantelle and Tyler Seeholzer, Cousin Lorraine Gardner Shelton's daughter-in-law and son.

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is an understatement. The way they locked down was quite more extreme than my experience here in the U.S. More than once, I took my team out to explore a village only to learn the hard way that it had been designated a "Red Zone" and everything was shuttered. It felt a bit like visiting ruins, but with the surety that there were a lot of eyes watching us from behind their blinds.

Facetime made the deployment easier despite the COVID lockdowns, and Chantelle and the kids proved as resilient as ever – managing homeschool and everything else a family of four requires when Dad isn't home, and yet want to talk for hours!

What did we learn? What are we going to do differently?

We learned how hard raising a family can be, and how much children are affected when they lose the chance to socialize with their peers – or even share a playground! We learned that while technology is preferred over nothing, distance does not shrink – no matter how fast your Internet connection is!

AND SO ...

Moving forward, I have decided to retire after 20 years in the Air Force, and Chantelle and I are bringing our family home to Vermont!

We are not sure of the timing,

though it will be sometime in 2022. But we are sure we are ready to offer our children a community and family connection they have never-before realized.

Patience, Facetime, and Zoom will still be required, but maybe just

P.S. Note to Paul Gardner: Thanks for sending the stamp, Paul! And great idea. I've appreciated your part in feeling closer for a very long time now.



Tyler with Archer, Tatum, and Desi

until the next reunion.

We hope this finds everyone well - and we can't wait to start a new chapter that prioritizes family and togetherness; because, if the pandemic taught us anything, it's that you are never guaranteed the next vacation.

Always,

Tyler, Chantelle, Archer, Tatum, and Desi Seezholzer.



"I have decided to retire after 20 years in the Air Force, and Chantelle and I are bringing our family home to Vermont!"

Editor's Note:

Won't it be wonderful in 2022 when the Seeholzers join the other "Gardner" families living in the Northeast Kingdom and around Massachusetts as well?

I can just picture all the kids running around the North-Woods Stewardship Center when we finally schedule our next Gardner Reunion.

How spectacular it will be to meet Chantelle in person and learn about her and her family too!

Let's welcome the Seeholzers to the old stomping grounds of Tyler's grandfather, Original Gang of Ten member, Adelbert Gardner.

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Cousin Teresa Vasko shares her BOMBSHELL news with everyone.

Living in the northeast of Vermont and being retired is as good as you can be in this pandemic! We didn't have to go out except for food, and Price Chopper had 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. for seniors only. Three times I was the only customer there.

At the beginning of 2020, I heard a voice say, "Call Becky Reynolds." I thought, "Okay, I know her ... teacher, principal, and superintendent in Lyndonville." I asked her how she was doing. She said her life had not changed. She didn't go anywhere unless someone came to get her. I offered to do that. On Tuesdays, I take her to her hairdresser and run errands. Every Wednesday, me and two other ladies play Rummikub.

My church stayed open, but we could not sing. How I missed that!

I got a call asking if I would sit with Agnes Sears one afternoon a week. She is the lady who played the organ at our wedding and at our 50th anniversary. Agnes plays and sings hymns. I am with her for three hours. One day we played and sang for two and a half hours!

God has been good.

There are hard things too. JJ was coming home in July. We have not seen him for two years. Uganda is in lockdown, so he will not be coming. Travel is "iffy" anyway.

I have been diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's. I feel the lack of social contact brought it to our attention. It is not a surprise when you consider our family history. I am taking meds that seem to help. Praise God! There is no cure and I am concerned about the future.

My pastor said, "Live one day at a time and do the things you enjoy." A former student said, "Don't worry. You might get run over by a Mac truck and never see the end." I

wondered if he wanted to say that to me when I was his teacher. Ha Ha!

I had a wonderful surprise soon after the restrictions were lifted. Gary and Sheryl Hosford dropped in. Fortunately, they had Aunt Beulah with them. I didn't recognize them, but Aunt Beulah does not seem to age. We had a wonderful visit – post pandemic!

Aunt Beulah asked what I thought about the *Gardner Newsletter* pandemic survey. I had not gotten it. So, when it arrived, I was excited to read it. Surprise! No reading **HOMEWORK!!**

I have learned to trust God, live one day at a time, treasure friends and family wherever they are – and BEWARE OF MAC TRUCKS!



John and Teresa Vasko cut the cake at their 50th wedding anniversary.

"I have been diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's."

Editor's Note:

In the wake of this diagnosis, it's time for the whole Gardner family to step up and rally around Teresa and John as they begin this new and uncertain journey.

Cousin Teresa is an education icon in Lyndonville and beyond. For decades, her quick wit, sense of humor, and amazing story-telling abilities have mesmerized all those who know her!

Teresa's light shines so brilliantly around everyone she comes in contact with. We certainly want that to continue for many more years.



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Laura Gilmore sings the praises of the Gardner Family.

Hello, Dear Friends and Family,

It was asked of us to report on how we got through the pandemic. My answer is simple and has a lot to do with little seeds planted by the "Original Gang of Ten."

The simplicity of my answer is: To look more like Jesus! I'll back that up by stating that the spiritual seeds the Gardner family have planted have been sprouting and yielding a full harvest this year! Our Heavenly Father delights in ALL of you! What I mean is that, by example, your family thrives on loving people; but not out of selfish gain, doing it because the motivation is Jesus!

My mother was Dixie, and your clan embraced us, loved on us well, and showed us the love of Christ from the get-go. I remember traveling in the motor home every summer to New England and having the time of my life at your reunions – getting to spend time at Ames Cove and swimming with Dawnita. (She's one of my "faves!")

Even being so little, the Father let me pick up on how much your family is there for each other. That quality time mattered. There were no judgments, only the sound of joy and laughter (and music) and being together.

Now, with the current events, your family continues to make Jesus the center by rallying around one another, serving communities, and celebrating birthdays and encouraging folks.

Being selfless and looking like Jesus is what my memories contain. I'm very grateful that the Gardner Family was a

piece of my life and the influence that it had on my mother and me. After Earl passed, she was wanting to find a community to embrace her and comfort her with morals much like the way your family cared for us.



When my ma passed in January 2020, it was about a month before things were shutting down; about the time I was in touch with Paul and started receiving the "Round Robin" (as my mama would say). In receiving those updates and the newsletters, it was such a healthy reminder that people are so valuable – that every life matters, because we are ALL His children.

And that we go to the Father and ask Him how we can be a part of healing and restoring. That birthdays can be extra special; and if it looks like a "drive-by," then that's what will happen! Honoring a vet and giving them a "wel-

come home," or writing an inspirational article to love on your grandparents.

The pandemic taught me that, in the name of Jesus, if we aren't able to physically spend time fellowshiping, then we can love with intention and with our words.

"Proverbs 18:21: The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

Going forward, I will send random texts to folks just to tell them they are loved. I will make phone calls a little more often to catch up. I'll write letters and send them "snail mail." I'll write encouragements on a note card to cheer my co-workers on AND ...

I'll tell the Gardner Family that through your example of "Christ-likeness," that you are a SHINING STAR!!

Ummm ..., what pandemic?!?

Your sister in Christ, *Laura Gilmore*

Editor's Note:

Laura is the daughter of Earl Gardner's third wife, Dixie Spitler. Even though Earl wasn't her dad, she quickly adopted the "Gardner" family as if they were her own.

Isn't it amazing to know that Dawnita Ames became one of Laura's favorite Gardner family members? Way to go, Dawnita!!

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Katrina Joy Parsons Jenkins finds silver linings throughout the whole pandemic.

Truthfully, I'm not entirely sure how we survived the pandemic.

My husband, Kyle, got a COVID layoff as his company looked to save some money. I went back to work in the movies 60 hours a week starting in November, while he Zoomed the kids into school, and we paid for our health insurance out-of-pocket.

Before that, we actually enjoyed the extra time together-time, while of course bemoaning the social losses we suffered like everyone else.

We missed the end of

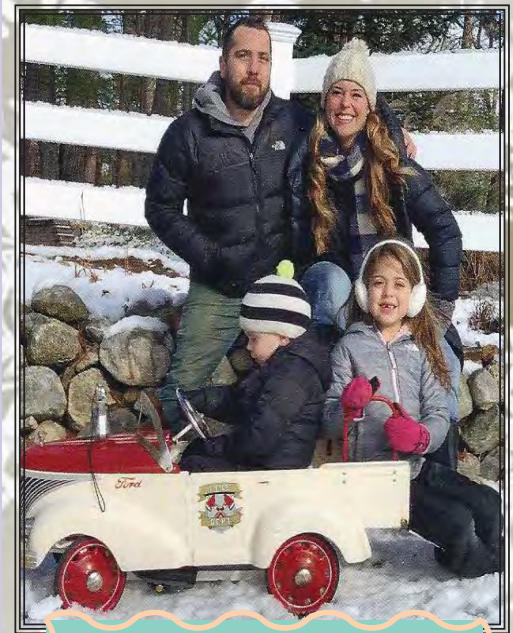
school picnics and the big kindergarten field trip, seeing our cousins regularly, and grocery shopping together. We washed our groceries for a long time (like many did) fearing that Kyle, a Type 1 diabetic, would not do well with COVID.

My favorite thing about the pandemic was the Christmas sleepover with mom and her pup, Boomer. She lives so close that we've never done that before. It was lovely. The kids didn't want her to go home and neither did Kyle or me.

We spent the days play-

ing games and doing crafts, and the evenings binge watching "The Queen's Gambit" after the kids had gone to sleep.

I do feel like there were many COVID-fueled silver linings (however difficult it was) like strengthened family bonds, deepened gratitude for the social ties we have, and a better understanding of the things we found we were happy to let go of, a renewed appreciation for the beautiful place in the world where we live as we spent time hiking in places we'd never visited before.



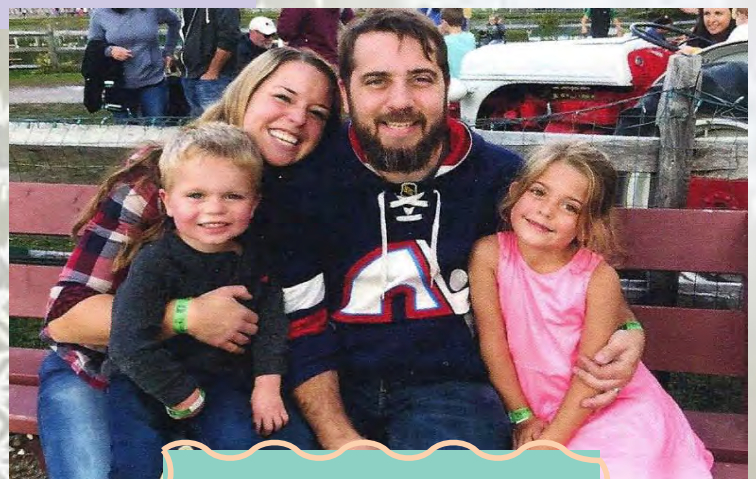
Kyle and Katrina Jenkins with their two children, Owen and Eva

Editor's Note:

Katrina is Uncle Raymond's granddaughter. Her parents are Cousin Gloria Parsons and Bob Parsons.

Gardner News did an exclusive interview with Katrina way back in 2012. It was in the Fall, 2012 publication, Issue No. 60. This was when Katrina was first working full-time in the movie industry.

Why not reread that article again and reflect upon just what an insightful and articulate young woman Katrina truly is!



The Jenkins Family

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A "Wizard of Oz" metaphor inspires Lisa Cove to reflect upon the pandemic.

I have contemplated many changes that have occurred because of the pandemic. Those that know me, know I am "the glass is always half full" kind of person. So, you can imagine me trying to find the silver lining to the loss that so many people have endured over the past 15 months. Here is my "silver lining" response.

If I had to pick one lesson learned from this change in our world due to the pandemic, it would have to feed off a famous quote from my favorite film, *The Wizard of Oz*.

"If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own backyard. Because if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with ... There's no place like home."

I realized how lucky I am to have a beautiful life filled with people I love. I realized that slowing down and staying home is a true gift. I realized that I don't have to have something planned every second of every day to feel happy. I experienced a way to enjoy my quiet, free time at home.

I started to love puzzles and reading in my PJs, slippers, and favorite blanket next to my dog, two kitties, and, of course, my usually busy, never-at-home husband, Dr. Chris Cove. I

fell in love with my house and my "own backyard."

The solitude I was able to enjoy may have been forced in the beginning, but then I found it as an amazing gift. I learned unique ways to give back to people who struggled during this time by offering free Zoom yoga classes for friends. It went over so well that I now have a new business teaching yoga to people all over the U.S.! What a surprise for my students and for me!

I had time to think about the future in a "not so sure" light, allowing the universal changes that made so many people frustrated turn into an exciting adventure for me. My faith in God grew, securing me to trust His plan even through the misunderstanding and the unknown.

As I look over the rainbow, I smile with what I have learned and how this experience verified the need to love and take care of one another. The expression, "We are all in this together," really resonates with me.

So today, I see beyond a sparkly pair of ruby red shoes with an understanding that we all have the power to appreciate what we DO have and notice that we may certainly be living in our very own "Emerald City".



Lisa Cove poses for a picture with her Mom, Mrs. DiPasquale

Editor's Note:

Lisa is married to Cousin Chris Cove, our very own world-renowned heart surgeon.

Lisa is a nurse, yoga instructor, and a former Mrs. New York State.

Gardner News did an article on their historic home in Pittsford, NY. (See the Winter 2020 issue, No. 89.)



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Cousin Gloria Parsons gives us a detailed account of what happened to her whole family during the pandemic.



What did I do during the pandemic?

It was lonely here with only my dog, Boomer, to keep me company. Early on, I sewed around 100 face masks. I made them for family and got requests from someone who knew a nurse or friend's daughter

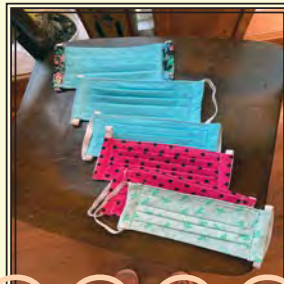
was a nurse and was working without PPE. Masks went as far South as North Carolina to my son-in-law's cousin. Also sent some on requests from someone who knew a nurse in Mass General and to Deanna, Stephen's daughter, and people she worked with at Lahey. I also made a dozen or so nurses caps.

I got visits from time to time from my children and grandchildren. We rarely went into the house. I also visited them at their homes and stayed outside. We even had a game of catch from porch to lawn.

Early on, I ordered and had groceries delivered to the house. But that service got so popular that groceries were going to be delivered too far out and I started shopping with mask on and sanitizing my hands. My groceries were carefully washed with Clorox wipes when I got home.

We celebrated birthdays usually tailgating; each family in their own car next to another family. We got a little more adventuresome with children's birthdays. For Owen's 4th birthday, (Katrina's son) we tailgated next to a park field and had relay races one family at a time to the opposite end of the field. We had music and cupcakes. My brother-in-law came tooting down the road with his car all decorated and a happy birthday message for Owen.

Later in the summer we celebrated Jordan's 7th birthday in her backyard with an outdoor movie. Each family was asked to bring their own chairs and blanket; and even though we were outside, most wore masks. Robyn prepared snacks for families inside a box containing popcorn, Mike & Ikes, kids juice boxes, and hand sanitizers and placed them on each family's blanket.



Homemade masks for the pandemic

Christmas was spent with Katrina and family. (I think she wrote about this.) We wore masks inside her house except when eating.

We couldn't gather in March yet, so Dad's 95th birthday was a drive by marshalled by a police cruiser – also, one cruiser in the middle and one on the end with sirens blaring. Friends and family cars were decorated with posters and balloons. Then they reversed directions and went by again. The church commissioned a sign in the front yard wishing Dad a Happy 95th. Some people stopped to talk to Dad and grandchildren ran around the house with balloons after the drive-by. Before the event, Sharon, Dad and I had lobster bisque and cake at his house.

Every day, rain or shine during the pandemic, I walked three miles or more on trails in the woods with Boomer. Walking and silent prayer got me through.

On February 13th, Dad and I got our first Pfizer shot at Fenway Park followed by our second shot on March 6th. On the 6th, Sharon also came and got her first shot. We were able to do this as caretakers for Dad.



Jordan and Taylor Demand <two of Cousin Gloria's grandchildren>

Dad has been staying with Sharon and me taking turns - and Raylene, Ellen, and Cheryl stay at his house with him when they can make it. Now we have a caretaker with Dad five days a week for five hours a

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day so he can be in his own home at that time.

My daughter, Robyn, had it tough. She and her husband, Frank, had to separate for four months. He lived in the basement and she and Jordan and Taylor were upstairs. This was recommended by Robyn's doctor as she has an auto-immune disease. Robyn was working 30 hours a week as a dental hygienist but was furloughed for four months. Frank is also in a high-risk job. He is a fireman and EMT, a first responder, going to many COVID 19 calls.

During their time apart they could meet in the backyard and they had walkie-talkies delivered so Robyn and the girls could talk to their Dad. Frank built a raised garden and a treehouse for the girls when he was home. There was a full bathroom in place, and they had to buy another washer and dryer, flooring, a sleep sofa, air fryer, toaster/oven, mini fridge, coffee pot, and cook top. He had a slop sink in the garage, and he cleaned their groceries with Clorox wipes for the family.

Frank is also an electrician and put his skills to work to rewire the breaker system to enable the new items. He laid a floor in the basement and painted. Robyn home-schooled Jordan and Taylor.

In July 2020, Robyn went back to work with shortened hours. At this time, her work was as risky as Frank's work, so he came back upstairs again. Robyn

goes to work with street clothes and shoes. When she arrives at work, she changes into scrubs, a smock that she



Robyn and Frank Demand

puts her arms through and ties in the back, covering neck to ankles. She also wears an N95 mask and cover mask, bouffant cap, glasses, gloves and a face shield, and different shoes. She wears an N95 mask and another mask over that because the N95 is expensive, so she removes the outer mask between patients as well as the smock and bouffant cap and gloves.

The face shield gets disinfected between patients. Her office washes her scrubs, all the masks, smocks, and bouffant caps she wore that day and has them ready for her when she

returns to work. The office is sprayed down with disinfectant every night and the air vents for the office were upgraded. She finds it hard to breathe and pours sweat at work. The clothing is still mandated. She calls it the "astronaut suit."

Katrina's husband, Kyle, got a COVID layoff from Cole Haan as the company looked to cut expenses. He lost his job in August 2020 after already taking a pay cut in the Spring. He got severance pay for a while; and when that ran out in November, Katrina went back to work in the movie industry. She worked on the movie "Don't Look Up" and a TV show, "Dexter."

In July 2021, Kyle got hired at Keen. During the pandemic he cared for Eva and Owen. Now Katrina is home again and looking for more normal work hours in her field of communications.

My son, Eddie, continued to work in the construction industry during the pandemic. His fiancée, Eva Quickland, continued her work in the pharmacy industry. Their wedding was scheduled for September 2020 but got cancelled. We have that event to look forward to this coming September.

Editor's Note:

Gloria Parsons is Uncle Raymond's eldest daughter. Her children are Katrina, Robyn and Eddie. She gives us an update about all of them in this article.

We need articles for the Fall 2021 Issue NOW!