

Person Interviewed: Jean Berensmeier

Date Interviewed: February, 8, 2021

How has your daily life been affected by the quarantine or Corona Virus?

Because I'm 88 years old and my husband is 88 we are strictly staying at home and we have not gone out of our house for maybe 2 months. My son is staying with us and he is doing all the shopping and anything else that needs to be done.

Do you feel supported by The Valley community during this time? If yes, in what ways has your community supported you? Can you think of any other challenging time in The Valley that would compare?

Yes, the answer is, yes. I do feel the community has supported me. I'm a founder of the San Geronimo Valley Community Center and I worked on that board for 30 years and they have carried on. They're doing wonderful things in the community and the school. The Valley support is just my many friends that I've made over the sixty years I've been here, who have supported my efforts to save the SGVCC from being torn down and stopping the plans to have 20,000 people and 5,000 homes in the San Geronimo Valley. I was the leader on that effort, and we won. It's a very difficult question when you ask about any other challenging thing, because you could be talking about the nation, the state, Marin, or The Valley. I have lived here for almost 60 years and I own 30 acres in Lagunitas that connect to Taylor Park. Our whole life is spent protecting wildlife, nurturing native plants, and it's very important. When the storm of '82 brought down a half mile of land slide from the edge, it tore out our pool and deck and even a part of our house. Now that was a challenging time! Of course the sad part of that 1982 thing, although people in Woodacre were not affected except for some slides and San Geronimo or Forest Knolls, but in Lagunitas Aneice Taylor had a home near us. When the landslide hit it came down the creek and part of the landslide came down and hit our house. The other part of the landslide hit her house and pinned her down under a refrigerator and she became paralyzed. I think of that from time to time. Who knows what caused the split? Who Knows? It made it difficult for us when we all survived in our family. It changed her life completely, and that was definitely a tough time.

Do you think that the safety precautions such as masks, social distancing, and hand washing are too much, too little, or just enough?

It's not too much or too little, and I'm actually not sure if it's enough. The reason I say that is that the people that are wearing their masks, some of them are not wearing them properly. Some people aren't washing their hands long enough, and social distance? People cheat. I think it comes down to not only what the rules are, but you have to implement them very strictly because your children are watching what you do,

just like you are watching what your parents do. Those are the role models and if they cheat or they are soft on it, it'll be very difficult. Before I hunkered down here for the last couple of months I was going out and I went into a couple of stores. I was appalled that some people were saying, early on, of course, "It's too much trouble, we really don't need it." All these little excuse things because they don't want to do it, but we are in a critical time because if we don't it will just last longer and longer. One thought that has occurred to me is that people who don't mask or don't social distance, fine them! Fine them a percentage of their salary. Don't fine a millionaire \$500 and someone experiencing poverty the same thing. Go by a percentage and make it hurt if you break the law. Why? To protect you, your family, and me, and my family.

Have your thoughts about the pandemic changed at all since March of 2020?

Well, yes. The surge has increased, and we've had more deaths and more cases. That's my understanding. I read an article yesterday that said the masks that we were using aren't quite good enough. I got an appointment for my vaccination which I'm very excited about, and that's just super, but the safety thing is not handled very well.

5. Would you like to add anything about what your Valley community has meant to you during the past year?

I have a growing respect and love for people who are volunteering to help others. At church every Wednesday and Sunday at noon, they're there, the volunteers. They're not being paid and they are helping people get food and I find that absolutely critical. The SGVCC is doing a good job as well. They're there on Thursdays helping others.