

## *Simple Pleasures*

Composed from an interview with Leesa Ferris, Cortland, NY

Like the rest of us, retired educator Leesa Ferris thought, “This can’t be happening” in April of 2020 when counties and countries near and far began closing down and we were no longer allowed to do simple things.

“I watched the numbers, in New York of course, and what was happening in other countries too, how they were handling it.” Leesa’s new routines included shopping at TOPS at dawn, learning how to shop other places on line and picking up her library books with an open trunk.

Unable to see friends as much, she wrote lots of letters and cards and she developed a new appreciation for “snail mail.” “People who don’t see what an amazing mail service we have in this country should try living in another country for a little while,” she comments, remembering time spent in Armenia with one of her daughters and family.

Leesa’s three daughters and their families all live in the US now and their families were frequent visitors in the months that followed. One day Leesa noticed that there were seventeen shoes piled on a mat inside her front door. “Why an odd number?” she asks laughing. “My grandkids would be doing school on line, my daughters and their husbands worked on line. It was a whole new world.”

What else changed? The shortages of grocery items didn’t bother her too much. She was able to stay in touch with friends via phone, mail and zoom. She was especially glad she could keep phone contact with one friend who resides in a local assisted living facility. Leesa took books and puzzles to her, but the isolation was especially hard on her friend. Leesa has since been able to visit.

“These days I’m more intentional,” says Leesa. “I treasure my home as a sanctuary where my family could come and we were all safe.” Leesa also appreciates the people who work in stores, libraries, gas stations, people who deliver mail and people in restaurants and drive-throughs. “We were all scared, when everything was shut down and the numbers went higher and higher,” she says, “but those good people kept working and were courteous too.”

Now, as things open up in the spring of 2021, Leesa is taking a look at the things she missed and the things she didn’t miss during the more intense months of the pandemic. “It’s the simple pleasures that I’ll keep,” she says. “And I treasure my family, nature, reading, and of course, my friends.” Leesa taught for twenty-five years in the Homer schools and currently lives in Cortland.

