

## How I Spent My Pandemic Isolation

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In 1972, David Stampe, a doctoral student at the University of Chicago, wrote one of the more noteworthy, and no doubt risky, doctoral dissertation titles ever to be successfully defended in linguistics, “*How I Spent My Summer Vacation*”. David, a phonologist in training then, was later a long-time faculty member in phonology in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, including the period in the late 1990s when I was a student there. David had a jovial character in the department and was always approachable for a conversation. And though David died last year, I have long kept his title in mind, believing it always a gutsy stroke of genius.

2020, in addition to David Stampe’s death, brought the pandemic we are all currently experiencing, with at present, three full semesters of Zoom classes, and general isolation from everything. On a personal level, 2020 also brought another death, that of former Hononegah High School English teacher, Fred Peterson. The death of a high school English teacher would normally be not particularly remarkable, except here. And like David Stampe, whom I knew on a friendly level, but whom I never studied directly under, I never studied directly under Fred, yet Fred was a mentor to me. From about ten years old until I left for university, I was Fred’s lawn and garden helper, and the basic caretaker of his house while he traveled. Over time, and after leaving my hometown Rockton, Illinois, Fred and I had hundreds of conversations. Though those conversations and through watching how Fred chose to live his life—he was well-traveled, loved good food and conversation, and had a screened-in porch/reading room with stacks and stacks of books—Fred was indirectly showing me how to lead an intellectual life. The impetus for this paper can be found in the final line of Fred Peterson’s obituary,

*“Fred said if anyone wants to honor his memory they should read a good book and use proper grammar.”*

Fred always had a good sense of humor, and he was a strict grammarian in the prescriptive sense, something I am not. Yet, per Fred’s wish, out of respect for someone very important to me growing up, and with an unknown amount of time in isolation due to the ever-expanding pandemic, I decided that I would read a good book in honor of Fred. The book I chose, was a 1933 collection of poems by British poet Rupert Brooke, a book chosen for the author’s shared connection to the University of Cambridge and to the fact that (in my view) we physically

resemble each other. Brooke was a member of the Grantchester Group, that also included novelists Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster, philosophers Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, artist Augustus John, and economist John Maynard Keynes. I purchased the book many years ago for a poem called *The Old Vicarage*, set in the town of Grantchester, near Cambridge, where like Brooke, I used to wander on the weekends. Completing that first book, and more out of the somewhat agonizing boredom of not being able to go anywhere, I decided to read every unread book in my office, most of which had been given to me over the years by friends and colleagues. And when those were complete, then, the pandemic still not over, I began ordering books for the library that I wanted to read, and began exploring the underground library stacks for stories to pass the time. What follows is the list, a pandemic reader, and a documentation of what one professor at Otaru University of Commerce did during his time away from the normal life of working directly with students, meeting friends, and traveling. So here is, *How I Spent My Pandemic Isolation*.

### A Pandemic Reading List

1. *Complete poems of Rupert Brooke*. Sidgwick & Jackson. 1933.
2. Bergen, Benjamin K. *What the f.* Basic Books. 2016.
3. Gilbey, David. *Pachinko sunset*. Wistman Publishing. 2016.†
4. Penn, Wilhelmina. *An expat's guide to growing old in Japan*. Forest River Press. 2017. †
5. Balsley, Alice. *A grandmother reminisces*. Balsley Printing. 1993.†
6. Pronko, Michael. *Motions and moments: More essays on Tokyo*. Raked Gravel Press. 2015. †
7. Everett, Mary. *My white orchid*. Gustavus Adolphus Press. 2009.†
8. Polley, George. *The city has many faces: A love story about Mexico City*. Tortoise and Hare Publications. 2014.†
9. McGloin, Naomi Hanaoka. *A students' guide to Japanese grammar*. Jain Publishing Company. 1989.
10. Greenwood, Pippa. *Gardening hints and tips*. DK Adult. 1996.
11. *Mr. Bean's diary*. Boxtree. 1994.
12. Ernst, Tim. *Japan sketchbook: Chronicles of a gaijin artist*. The Japan Times. 1989.
13. Ernst, Tim. *Gaijin*. The Japan Times. 1987.
14. *近なともだち町の鳥野の鳥*. Hokkaido Shimibun. 2020.
15. Kelts, Roland. *JAPANAMERICA: How Japanese pop culture had invaded the US*. St. Martin's Press. 2006.†
16. Mihailescu, Teofil. *Brasov: Atmosphere, architecture and urban space*. Editura Universitatii Transilvania din Brasov. 2014.
17. Chino, Naoko. *All about particles*. Kodansha. 1991.
18. Agatston, Arthur. *The South Beach diet*. St. Martin's Press. 2003.
19. Campbell-Galman, Sally. *Shane the lone ethnographer*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 2018. †

20. Kerouac, Jack. *On the road*. Penguin. 1972.
21. Ekirch, A. Roger. *At day's close: Night in times past*. W.W. Norton & Co. 2006.
22. Altucher, James and Claudia. *The Power of No*. 2014.
23. Williams, Margery. *The velveteen rabbit*. 1905.
24. Steinbeck, John. *Tortilla Flat*. The Viking Press. 1935.
25. Beddow, Tim and Burns, Natasha. *Safari style*. Thames & Hudson. 1998.
26. Norman, Jason. *Behind the screams*. Bear Manor Media. 2016.
27. Brendan O'Carroll, *The mammy*. Plume. 2000.
28. Pronko, Michael. *Beauty and chaos: Slices and morsels of Tokyo life*. Raked Gravel Press. 2014.
29. Flynn, Errol. *My wicked, wicked ways*. Cooper Square Press. 1959 (2003).
30. Pronko, Michael. *Tokyo's mystery deepens: Essays on Tokyo*. 2014. Raked Gravel Press.†
31. Thomas, James et.al *Flash fiction*. W.W. Norton & Co. 1992.
32. Hearn, Lafcadio. *Dream of a summerday*. Kairyudo. 1894 (1932).
33. Galsworthy, John. *The dark flower*. The Sojinsha Press. 1936.
34. Swinnerton, Frank. *Summer storm*. Bernhard Tauchnitz. 1927.
35. Miura, Ayako. *Shiokari Pass*, Tuttle Press, 1968 (2011).
36. Burke, Thomas. *The English inn*. Longman. 1930.
37. Grydehoj, Adam. *I have not answered*. Beewolf Press. 2014.†
38. Gallai, Jozsef. *I hear the trees whispering* (Screenplay). 2020.†
39. Bolton, John. *The room where it happened*. Simon and Schuster. 2020.
40. Ferguson, Will. *Hokkaido highway blues*. Canongate Books Ltd. 1998
41. Drahos, Peter. *Intellectual property, indigenous people and their knowledge*. Cambridge University Press. 2014
42. Mayle, Peter. *A year in provence*. Penguin. 1989.
43. Campbell-Galman, Sally. *The good, the bad, and the data*. Routledge. 2013.†
44. Gilbert, Elizabeth. *Eat pray love*. Riverhead Books, 2007.
45. Trump, Mary L. *Too much and never enough*. Simon & Schuster. 2020.
46. *The palace of the Soviets*. Charles Rivers Editors. 2018.
47. De Botton, Alain. *The art of travel*. Pantheon. 2002.
48. Diederich, Bernard. *Seeds of fiction: Graham Greene's adventures in Haiti and Central America 1954-1983*. Peter Owen Publishers. 2012.
49. Greene, Graeme. *The comedians*. Penguin Classics. 2005.
50. Snyder, Timothy. *On tyranny*. Crown. 2017.
51. Benen, Steve. *The imposters—How republicans quit governing and seized American politics*. William Morrow. 2020.
52. Roth, David Lee. *Crazy from the heat*. Ebury Press. 2000.
53. Ensminger, David A. *Out of the basement—From Cheap Trick to DIY punk in Rockford, Illinois 1973-2005*. Microcosm Publishing. 2017.
54. Des Barres, Pamela. *I'm with the band*. Omnibus Press. Revised Edition. 2018.

55. Potts, Rolf. *Vagabonding—An uncommon guide to the art of long-term world travel*. Villard Books. 2003.
56. Bell, James Scott. *How to write dazzling Ddialogue—The fastest way to improve any manuscript*. Compendium Press. 2014.
57. Ping, Derrick. *Failed miracles*. Unpublished manuscript. 2020.†
58. Diederich, Bernard. *Pamir—Sailing the Pacific during WWII*. Createspace Independent Publishing. 2015.
59. Young, Neil. *Special deluxe*. Blue Rider Press. 2014.
60. Bell, James Scott. *How to write short stories and use them to further your writing career*. Compendium Press. 2016.
61. Burdick, Robert. *Growing up in Beloit*. Book Services US. 2018.
62. Kowalski, Charles. *Simon Grey and the march of a hundred ghosts*. Excalibur Books. 2019. †
63. McBride, Tom. *Bent dead in Beloit—A mystery*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. 2017.
64. Konnikova, Maria. *The biggest bluff—How I learned to pay attention, master myself, and win*. Fourth Estate Ltd. 2020.
65. O’Carroll, Brendan. *The granny*. Plume. 2000.
66. Jones, William Henry Samuel. *A history of St. Catharine’s College, Cambridge—Once Catharine Hall, Cambridge*. Cambridge University Press. (1936) 2010.
67. Cohen, Michael. *Disloyal*. Skyhorse. 2020
68. Tobaccowala, Rishad. *Restoring the soul of business—Staying human in the age of data*. Harper Collins Leadership. 2020.
69. Flexner, James Thomas. *Washington the indispensable man*. Back Bay Books. 1994.
70. Cutmore, Graham. *Going up*. Independently published. 2018.
71. Mead, Margaret. *Coming of age in Samoa*. New American Library. 1949.
72. Goodkind, Terry. *Wizard’s first rule*. TOR. 1994.
73. Rounds, Daniel. *Eros zero*. Ad Lumen Press. 2017.†
74. Fatland, Erika. *Sovietistan—Travels in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan*. Pegasus Books. 2020.
75. Schalansky, Judith. *Pocket atlas of remote islands—Fifty islands I have not visited and never will*. Penguin. 2014.
76. McGuinness, Patrick. *The last hundred days*. Seren. 2011.
77. Lonsdale, Kerry. *Side trip*. Lake Union. 2020.
78. Bowrey, K., Handler, M., and Nicol, D. (eds.). *Emerging challenge in intellectual property*. Oxford University Press. 2011.
79. Halford, Rob. *Confess: The autobiography*. Hachette Books. 2020.
80. Raven, Chris and Raven, Simon. *Driving the Trans-Siberian—The ultimate road trip across Russia*. Samosir Books. 2015.
81. McCullough, David. *John Adams*. Simon & Schuster. 2001.\*
82. Brown, Nicolas C. *Better than rich and famous—My Papua New Guinea days*. Mereot

Books. 2020.

83. Wolf, Erika (ed.). *Ilf and Petrov's American road trip—The 1935 travelogue of two Soviet writers*. Cabinet Books. 2007.
84. Gallai, Jozsef. *Project skyquake*. (Screenplay). 2021.†
85. Strayed, Cheryl. *Wild—From lost to found on the Pacific Coast Trail*. Knopf. 2013.
86. Antonson, Rick. *Walking with ghosts in Papua New Guinea—Crossing the Kokoda Trail in the last wild place on Earth*. Skyhorse Publishing. 2019.
87. Osborne, Lawrence. *The naked tourist—In search of adventure and beauty in the age of the airport mall*. North Point Press. 2006.
88. Okawa, Ryuho. *The art of business revitalization*. IRH Press Company Limited. 2014.
89. Stevenson, Robert Louis. *A child's garden of verses*. Eikosha. (1885) 1970.
90. Crichton, Michael. *Timeline*. Arrow Books. 2000.\*
91. Hemingway, Ernest. *The old man and the sea*. Jonathan Cape. 1952.
92. *Nine stories by J.D. Salinger*. Bantam. (1953) 1983.\*
93. Yeats, W.B. *The secret rose and other stories*. Papermac. (1959) 1987.\*
94. Baillot de Guerville, Amedee. *Au Japon: The memoirs of a foreign correspondent in Japan, Korea, and China, 1892-1894: Translated, annotated, and with an introduction by Daniel C. Kane*. Parlor Press. 2009.†\*

\* A book not yet finished.

† A book written by a friend or acquaintance.

From the list above, it may appear that reading was the sole activity that occupied my pandemic experience, and to a large degree that was true. I read in the morning. I read while waiting for Zoom classes to begin, and sometimes I read in order to fall asleep. But, I also continued a long career of writing, putting down some 70,000 words on two books, one autobiographical and one a series of essays based on my experiences of my nearly quarter century living in Japan. In addition, I wrote three short stories—*After You*, 校長, and *The Old Professor*, and I wrote six poems—*You're just an English teacher*, *Five thousand miles from home*, *The creek*, *In a meeting*, *Morning*, and *Disappointment Avenue*. And for those wondering, I completed two journal articles as well. I have also begun the outline for a screenplay and have written parts of a song. And during this time, I was interviewed twice (April 10, 2020 and April 4, 2021) by the *Rockford Register Star* newspaper in Illinois about how the pandemic is affecting my life in Japan, the two articles appearing one year apart. I was also interviewed for the *Saluki Stories* podcast, the official podcast of Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, about my time at that university in the 1980s and early 1990s, and my career and life in Japan since graduating. The first podcast aired on September 24, 2021 and the second part is set to be released on October 8, 2021.

The ability to remain productive and to basically keep busy during a time of extreme stress

has been important in preventing some the dread and anxiety that accompany the continued requests from the government to stay home, to socially distance from humanity, and to give up most activities that until 2020 were taken for granted. As stated above, what I have tried to present here is a record of what one professor did to cope with the upending of everyday life during the, as yet, ongoing pandemic. The purpose to provide one account for future reference to those who wish to know what we did during this period.

### **Bibliography**

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*Obituary of Fred S. Peterson Jr.* (March 30, 2020)

<https://www.walkermortuary.com/obituary/fred-peterson> (Retrieved 8/26/21)