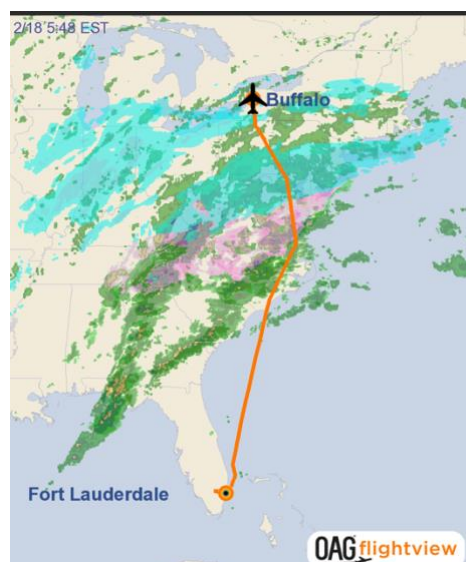


Dave Shapiro's 2021 Travel Journal (a post-Covid world)

February 18-21 Boca Raton, FL

Already 5:20pm on Saturday the 20th as I start first entry. Need discipline (and energy) if going to do daily entries.

Day 1. Thursday 2/18: Mary volunteered to drive me to airport at 5:15am for my 6:45 flight. Glad that Buffalo to Ft. Lauderdale is direct again as JetBlue increasing their schedule (Covid finally waning with over 10% of US now vaccinated and daily cases down from 400K in US to 50K although deaths only down to 1500/day as that lags 2-3 weeks). Trip started with anger towards TSA as they have totally messed up the lines at Buffalo airport. Now the Pre-Check line is on the right (instead of left) and sign not visible from entry if don't know, then u get a dirty plastic card that says "pre-check" and must go all the way thru other intersecting lines to reach "special" security line. It is inconceivable to me how people who made that plan and looked at it on a computer or whiteboard could think it possibly made sense, unless goal was confusion and delays. An annoying group of white trash Trumpublicans were seated behind me at gate and one guy kept taking his bandana down to talk. He walked onto plane with nose uncovered making the Flight Attendant have to correct him, which was I assume



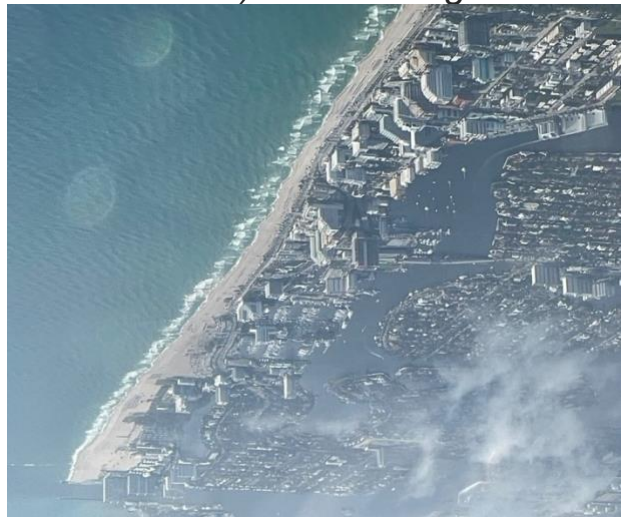
his goal (I WON'T GIVE UP MY RIGHT TO DIE/KILL without a show of passive aggressive non-compliance). Flight was fairly packed with reckless families and college students taking Feb. break week in Covidy Florida. But middle seat was empty in my "more space" row! Guy in aisle seat I said hi to when he sat down but either he didn't hear or just ignored me. Huge black man in top and bottom black velvety sweats, a big diamond earring and a black leather jacket with shiny metal details. All the flight attendants said hi to him, so I assume he was a flight attendant or athlete? Flight was a little bumpy but not much compared to how bad radar

looked. We arrived on time despite the small swerve in our flightpath. I am glad they have a schedule now with early AM flight south and late-night flight home, so I get 4 full days in Florida.

Slept half of flight and rest of time either read “A brief history of Seven Killings” on kindle or listened to “To Sleep in a Sea of Stars”. First, a long (and difficult because a lot of it in first person Jamaican slang) book that won Booker Prize about Jamaica and Jamaicans in NYC in the seventies and eighties loosely based on reality and the attempted killing of Bob Marley. Second, a VERY long science fiction story that started to become less “great” and more “meh” when it hit 800 pages.

Back in Buffalo again already, it is now 6am on Monday 2/22 and taking 20 minutes to write while basking in my Daylight Rx lamp (to battle S.A.D.) and drinking tea.

I made the mistake of picking seat A for flight, so sun was too bright once it rose to look out window until made final turn east before landing. Mom was right on time to pick me up and we were in Boca Pointe by 10ish (5 hours from DEEP Snow to sunny humid 80 degrees).



We stopped on the way at the Bagel store (they had the NY Post for sale, you can take the right-wing New Yorker to Boca but) and then enjoyed some coffee in her kitchen before heading to the Club at Boca Pointe for lunch. Thanks to Covid they



have outdoor dining now which was awesome. It is so much nicer to eat outdoors rather than inside the stuffy club. I only ordered a half-sandwich and fruit salad in a futile attempt to not gain weight on vacation (which seems to happen no matter how much training I do, I did read an article recently that said that aerobic exercise resets your resting metabolism slower as survival mechanism, not sure this is “fact”).

Taking a writing break, time to exercise in basement, my “20-minutes” became an hour so quickly. I do enjoy writing even if Alex will be my only reader for this. The Iceland Travel journal I will try to share with more people.

Now back to writing, it is Tuesday 2/23 at 4:38am; will set timer for 20” and then REALLY stop since it will then be time to feed and walk Fifa and then leave for swimming. Until spring I need my artificial daylight lamp time every morning so this works out well. Oh, also, I weighed myself yesterday and actually LOST 0.2 lbs on the Florida trip which is a total victory! I still need to work on not overeating though to get my weight back below 145.

After lunch we went to Publix and did our grocery shopping. Everyone was masked and the store had the same plexiglass for cashiers, etc. as up here. The selection of nice fresh fruit was better than at Wegmans this time of year. Mom usually walks on days she doesn't play golf so I went with her and we covered 2 miles in 45 minutes. She doesn't walk as fast as she did in past but still a good pace. She has no claudication at all since her Fem-Pop bypass in November and her knee and back are doing better than a month ago. Now that she has been vaccinated she has started going back to use the exercise bike in the gym and does exercises in the water a few days per week. She is in great shape for 79. On the walk I took some good bird photos and as ALWAYS had to get my lizard photos. There are two types, the smaller thin ones (salamander sized) and the larger more muscular ones with curly tails.



Timer has gone off; it is still taking me a little extra time to insert and arrange photos but getting used to using Word again.

Now Wednesday 2/24 5:52 AM. Working today at Sisters Hospital 7:30-3:30 but will spend 20 minutes having already fed and walked Fifa.

I went straight from walking to mom's building's pool. It is only a 2-minute walk from her apartment versus 10 minutes to the main health club pool. It is a full 25 yards long so perfect for me (and usually only a few people as long as don't go before 10am, the mornings are too crowded with old ladies, not swimming as much as just floating or standing and chatting/spreading Covid). I used for the first time my AfterShokz swim headphones. They have a tiny computer that I loaded a few albums onto via iTunes; Billy Joel, Counting Crows, Bob Dylan, Grateful Dead. I had noticed during my longer (2-3 mile) swims in Lakes Erie and Ontario over the summer and fall that I got bored and wondered about listening to audiobooks like I do on long runs and swims. I picked

up the AfterShokz on a black Friday sale. They came with earplugs and as I used without them, I realized it was to block out the water sounds in my ears. The headphones use bone conduction to avoid the ear drums. At maximum volume I could hear great under water and out of water but the bubble/splash sounds as I turned my head for each breath made it difficult to hear lyrics at times. I swam 30 minutes, 1650 yards by my apple watch. Hard to go much further as the pool was very hot and the



sun very hot on me and I think I was a little dehydrated to start. On the walk back to my mom's I detoured to see if the Iguanas were in their usual spot and there were several of the smaller dark green solid-colored ones and one BIG brightly colored old male.

They are wary of humans although I am not sure why since they have no natural predators in Florida. The ones in Guayaquil, Ecuador would eat lettuce out your hand and let you pick them up. Once in Florida with Alex we approached one that was at edge of water and got great video of it jumping in and swimming away. These golf course ones just tend to walk slightly faster than me into the tiny jungle at end of path. I got a nice video of him walking with iPhone live-photo.



Thursday 2/25 7:40am: Have only 15 minutes between swimming and Krav Maga (stripe test day, I committed to going to every class either live or via Facebook videos this month and was successful, would like to get next color stripe on my 2nd Degree Black Belt and? maybe go for 3rd degree in 2022).

After swim (and a refreshing outdoor shower to get chlorine out of my hair and skin) we just chilled in the apartment for a few hours. I listened to my audiobook and then dozed for less than an hour. My mom's guest room (with attached bathroom) is really perfect. Has a TV, fan, her laptop and printer are in there also. With Alex off at college I imagined Mary and I would visit here for a weekend now and then but of course ... Covid. Every evening before sunset a few hundred white birds circle over the lake outside my mom's window and settle into the trees on the tiny jungle to roost for the night. I think they are



American White Ibis (the first of the earlier three bird photos) which are everywhere in Florida. On the very short walk from my mom's building to the Boca Pointe Clubhouse I noticed a number of large circles of sand on the bottom of the drainage canal that passes through the golf course and when I got closer, I was able to see (thanks to my polarized sunglasses) a large fish sitting in each "nest" and hundreds of tiny fish also. As soon as I got close to the bank, the large

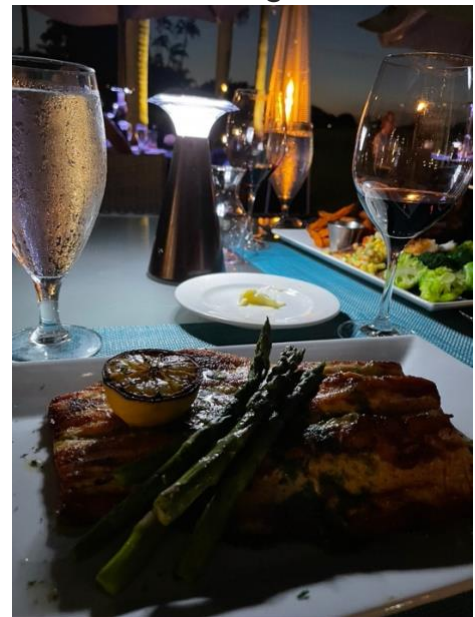
fish all swam out of sight, but the small ones stayed. They obviously must be very cautious due to all the large wading birds here (egrets, herons). After I stood still for a while a few slowly returned to their "nests" but even raising my phone for a photo spooked them away. I got a few marginal photos. I thought they might be catfish since they seemed to have wide mouths with some short feelers but a google search later revealed them to be Florida Bass.

Friday 2/26 0601: Back again. Going to do a full 30 minutes of writing before heading to basement for a short run and some stretching. Will be going skiing today (first time this season) but post Covid, Kissing Bridge has pushed opening time back to 10am except for weekends when they are open 8-10am also but ONLY for season pass owners. In 3 years when I am 60, I will qualify for a low-cost senior pass that will make sense even if go only 3 or 4 times, especially as I like to go EARLY.

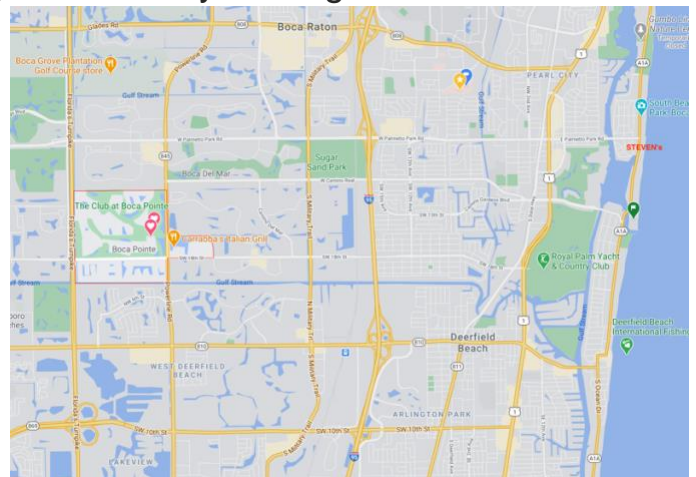
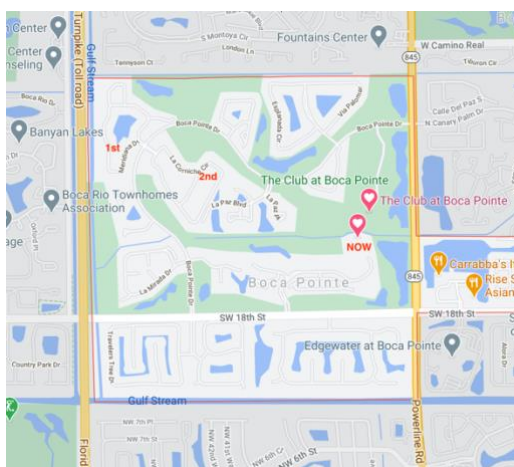
My google search for "Florida fish that build nests" had a great Florida Bass site that described their interesting breeding habits. They are the State's official Freshwater Fish and are a variant of their northern largemouth cousins. They can grow up to 20lbs versus half of that for northern ones. Spring (which can be February in Miami but April in Northern Florida) is breeding season and the male will build a large nest clearing away debris to have a sandy circle. He then finds and coaxes a female back to his nest where she lays her eggs, and he fertilizes them. She only stays a few hours, but the male will protect the eggs and hatchlings for 2 weeks until the fry are big enough to swim away on their own. It is legal to fish for them while they guard the nest (of course in Florida it is legal to ride a motorcycle without a helmet or let a 15-year-old fire a machine gun). This is called Spawn fishing and although it is very easy to find where the fish are (unlike the rest of the year when they tend to stay under dead trees, etc.) it is apparently a challenge to catch them since they don't eat much while guarding nests...



and will even make an effort to just move the lure out of their nest. I am always interested in nature, history, architecture, even religion (despite my atheism) and travel always allows me time to learn new things. With the iPhone and google there is almost nothing that one can't discover if one makes a little effort. I wonder if I stood by the bridge over the canal and asked the first 10 Boca Pointe residents that walked by if they knew what those sand circles were, how many would know? Do they even know that Boca Raton means "mouse mouth" (not Rat, that is rato in espanol, Raton is mouse). The city's name comes from boca de ratones, a Spanish term that appeared on early maps and referred to hidden sharp-pointed rocks that gnawed or fretted ships' cables. Dinner was again outdoors at the club. They fire up some gas lamps at night, but they really are more decorative than effective at warming. It was warm



even if a little windy, after our skin temperature checks we enjoyed our safely spaced meal. I had a wonderful trout and some red wine. At least with the buffet closed I couldn't gorge on the desserts like I usually do, as my only exercise today was a 45-minute walk and 30-minute swim! There was a beautiful moon overhead. Truly paradise. Glad that my mom settled in such a great place for her golden years. She first moved to Florida from Lake Success (Great Neck) in 2005 after retiring and divorcing from my dad who insisted he didn't want to leave Long Island but then went to South Carolina. My uncles Steven and Richard had already bought a beach front condo in Boca a few years earlier, so it made sense for her to be close to them. But she definitely needed a place like Boca Pointe that had golf and tennis and a giant clubhouse for meals, card games, book clubs etc. She first lived in a nice two floor townhouse with a garage and patio overlooking a lake and a nice "neighborhood" pool a block away. It was either a 20-minute walk or 5-minute drive to the main Clubhouse, Tennis, Pool, etc. Within a year or two of being in Florida she met Alan Young. He was a retired Hem/Oncology doctor from NJ who was a widower. He was quite wealthy with a large freestanding house with pool in Boca Pointe (which was, when his wife was alive, just their "winter" place) and he also had a pied-a-terre on the upper west side in addition to their large NJ suburban home. They quickly married and she sold her townhouse and moved in with him. So so sadly he was dead less than 2 years later of Liver Cancer that he had gotten as a result of hepatitis that he didn't know about but had obviously contracted from decades of preparing blood slides barehanded before HIV changed practices. Once he was gone the house was a little big for mom and despite him leaving her money to care for it (and his will specifying she could stay there as long as wanted to) about two years ago she decided that it



would be better not to have to deal with pool care, gardeners, hurricane worries, etc. and moved to her current place which is on the top floor of the building closest to the Clubhouse and has none of the issues of owning a house.

Saturday 2/27 0512: At this pace I may be on my next vacation before I finish this one's writeup! Only have 20 minutes before I have to leave for my 6am masters swim at UB and then at 7:30 will be competing in my first ever swim meet. As a triathlete and marathoner, I usually leave the swim meets to those who swam in HS or College but the coach said they needed competitors more than volunteers this time so I plunked down my \$30 to help the club, anything better than last place will be a surprise.

Day 2. Friday 2/19: I slept well and read my kindle for a while as I drank my morning tea. The view of sunrise from my mom's living room and den is always breathtaking.



The Atlantic is exactly 4 miles east of the apartment and from the 6th floor one sees the apartments along the beach. The one farthest to the left is where Steven and Richard live, a 15-minute drive. After reading for a half hour, I got out my exercise equipment from my "Florida box". During my visit in November to care for mom through

her vascular surgery episode I had bought a Yoga mat and some flex cords at Target and had moved a muscle roller stick and some hand grippers down so I could do a decent workout in her apartment while the gym there was closed for ... Covid. I needed to do the Facebook video of my Tuesday Krav Maga class since The Training Edge gym had been closed for snow that day (really, closed? For 8" of snow, it's not like we are in Baltimore!). With my iPad and Earbuds, I did the 45-minute class (shortened from an hour as I didn't need to let my "partner" do his/her sets) and by then (8ish), mom was up and prepared a perfect breakfast.



Sunday 2/28 0520: Back to writing. I actually finished 5/10 in the 1650-yard race yesterday (only triathletes bother with that distance since the serious swimmers don't want to exhaust themselves before their "real" events like the 200-yard breast or 100-yard free). I finished 11/11 in the 200 back and would have been disqualified anyway as

after a flip turn, I zoned out and my muscle memory had me rotate over and do three freestyle strokes before I realized and switched to backstroke, it made me laugh. I just finished reading Mrs. Dalloway (I am NOT afraid of Virginia Wolfe) and am reminded of a quote of hers from a different book. "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction". Probably very true in the 1920s. One also needs to prioritize writing so that it doesn't get put off in favor of "more productive" activities.

Our plan for Friday was a day at the beach with Steven and Richard. I could bike and swim in ocean while mom could hang with them. When I had visited in November, Steven had mentioned that they had bikes that hadn't been used recently and were only a few years old. After that visit I bought them some WD40 for the VERY rusty chains and gears (the bikes suffer living in a garage by the beach). I biked 20-miles at a slow pace (between the heavy bike, rusty chain, giant tires and the WIND which was 15-20 mph for my whole visit). I had looked at Google maps to see if I could bike to Palm Beach and say Fuck You to Trump's Mar a Lago (he has been sheltering in his fortress of solitude blocked from Twitter, etc), but it was too far. I biked as far north as Delray Beach. Highland Beach, which was just north of Boca Raton, had miles of HUGE oceanfront mansions, exotic sports cars and perfect bodies jogging, walking dogs, etc. There is a continuous bike lane all the way north and south along A1A

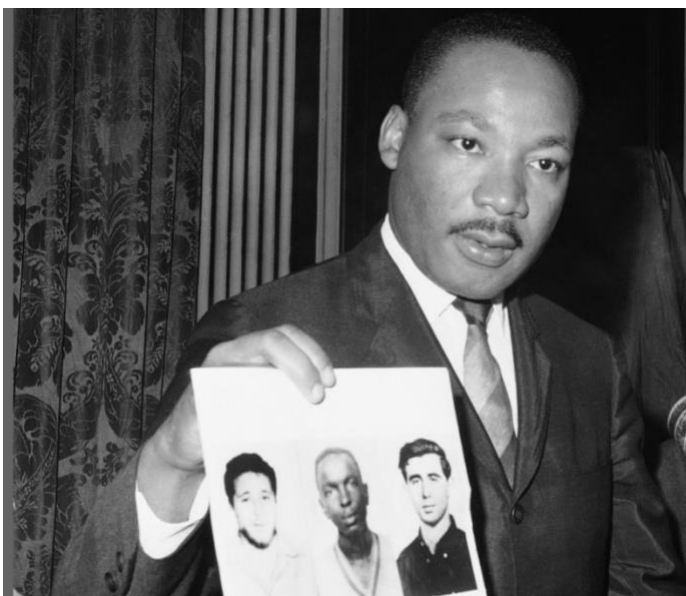
(Oceanfront Blvd) and enough bikers that I felt safe which I would not if biking in most areas of Florida where rider fatalities are VERY common, even whole Pelotons being taken out. Luckily Steven's helmet fit, so I had that going for me also. It was soooo great to be biking outside, in the sunshine after the long Covid isolated winter. It didn't even bother me when I was passed by people on nice carbon road bikes, it's all about the hours in the saddle, not the mileage. I would have liked to have been able to get aero into the wind though.



After biking I ate an apple and a bar (didn't want to impose on Steven and Richard for lunch as they were having us over dinner later) and we sat on the patio and chatted while watching the surfers. It was very choppy with the winds so I doubted I would swim very long which ended up being the case. I swam about 10-minutes with half of it being duck diving under breaking waves. As I had swum in the pool the previous day, I didn't need a serious swim and since there were a moderate number of large Portuguese Man-o-War jellyfish on beach I had no interest in swimming way out past all the breakers. During my November visit I had done a long swim early one morning when the winds were zero and the ocean almost lake flat. The water was so clear then that I could see the bottom even when I was far out and actually saw two good sized fish swimming. When I was biking, I saw a few signs that said, "this road kept clean by Waves Surfing Academy" and I think next time I visit I will try to get a lesson. I last surfed in 1994 when we still lived in Long Beach and I wasn't very good even then but



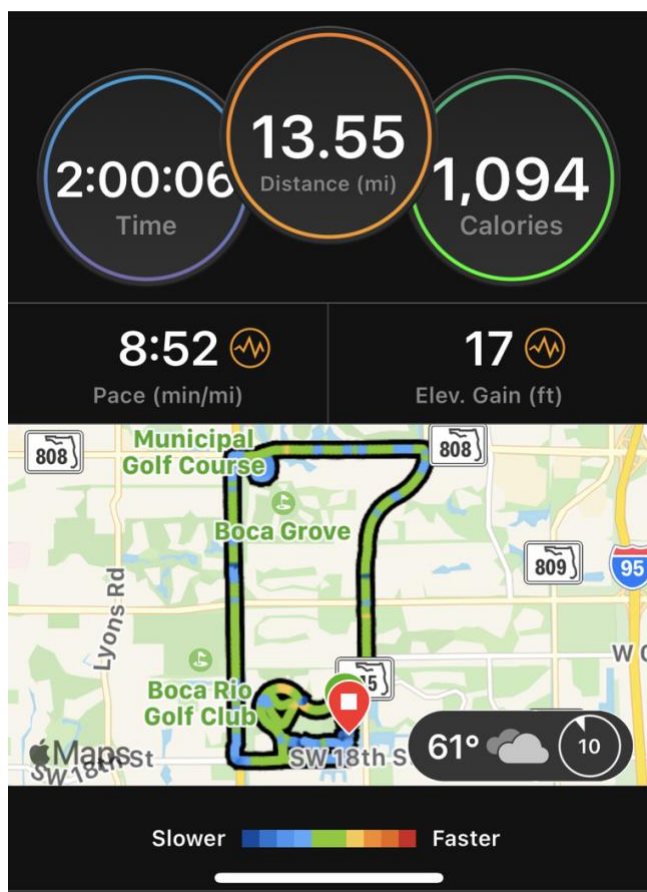
there is nothing like sitting on board on a sunny day. The surf place is in Deerfield Beach, maybe there is a real reef break up there, in Boca it is just a sandbar break and really need a strong swell and light winds to get any decent surfing waves. The people we saw mostly had 5-10 second rides but even a bad surfing day is better than staying home in front of TV or computer. Mom and I headed back to her place and showered, read, napped, I also helped her with a few computer issues, restored her paper statements from a utility, etc. We drove back to beach and had a nice dinner. Steven made delicious crab cakes (minimal breadcrumbs unlike the cheap appetizer ones at restaurants) and Richard had baked some desserts. Somewhere in our conversations about books, movies, etc. we touched on all the recent movies highlighting black history (I had seen Da 4 Brothers and One Night in Miami but not the Malcom X or Billie Holiday ones yet) and they told some stories I had never heard before (or not completely). Once when my mom and Steven's parents took the family to Palm Beach for a golf vacation (probably late 1950s), the two of them took the bus to the beach for the day and wondered why people were staring at them, only as they got off did they see the sign instructing blacks to sit in the back, where they had sat, having grown up in NYC they were used to integrated buses. Richard remembered being in the navy in Virginia and the only way from the base to the mainland city was a ferry where there were separate areas for blacks and whites and even the sailors (who had defended their country in WW2) were treated as second class citizens. This reminded Steven of the story that I had heard previously regarding the mother of one of the three voting rights workers killed in June 1964 (exactly a month after I was born). Michael Schwerner's mother was a teacher at the same school as my grandmother Bertha Shapiro. As tragic as their deaths were, they actually helped to force President



Johnson to push through the Voting Rights act of 1965 that sadly our current supreme court is slowly allowing to disappear. It was definitely a different time when our nation's best and brightest volunteered to help those being oppressed in America or overseas in the Peace Corps. Today it seems that our "best and brightest", if determined via college grades, all flock to make money, money and more money in finance, tech, media. I went into medicine because I did want to "help people" while studying and

practicing “science” but it was a VERY rare white, talented medical student who picked a specialty based on altruism. VERY few chose to go into family practice or gerontology or CHOSE to work in the poorest, underserved communities. It would be great if somehow Biden could reinvigorate the Americorps which tried in the past to get talented college graduates to work in underserved schools and communities but of course was cut whenever the Republicans controlled Washington. A bold initiative like paying off \$50,000 of student loans for each year of service would be amazing.

Day 3. Saturday 2/20: The weather forecast had called for a low of 60 degrees overnight (compared to 70ish the other nights) so I had planned do a long run today. My plan was to run a HARD half-marathon for time. A glass or two of red wine at Steven’s and sleeping late made me think that a more casually paced 2 hours would be better.



It was the promised 60 degrees with MUCH lower humidity than other mornings. The wind from the north was actually pleasant. I listened to my science fiction audiobook and kept to a sub 9:30/mile pace until the last few miles when I accelerated and pushed

myself. The stretch northwards was along a nice irrigation canal with interesting birds and other runners, walkers, and rollerbladers. I carried a water bottle on my fanny pack and was able to refill it conveniently at the bathrooms on the golf course. When I was done and had stretched, I took a selfie and then a second later the fountain

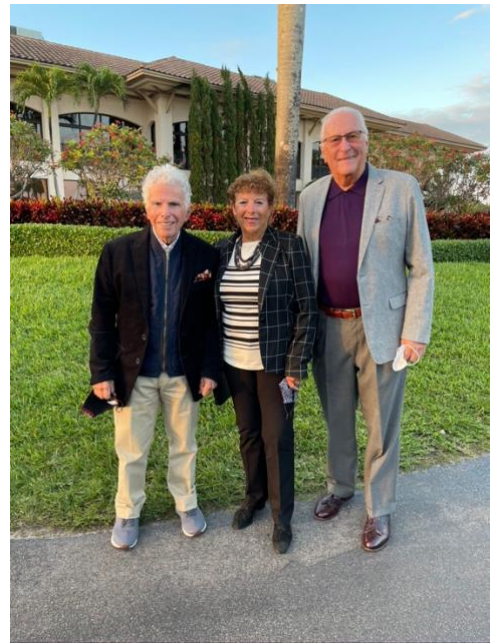
turned on, so I took a better one. Again, much nicer to be running under the sun than on the treadmill in basement or while avoiding black ice on sidewalks. But despite how glorious it is in winter the idea of living in south Florida in the summer (with continuous heat, 90 percent humidity, hurricanes) is not attractive. I am lucky to be able to visit whenever I want without any real estate ownership hassles.

Monday MARCH 1st 5:52am: Sneaking in 20" of writing and daylight lamp before heading to work at Niagara Falls Memorial today. Also working Wednesday this week so will be tight on time. Should have spent some more time writing yesterday afternoon but watched the first Yankee game of pre-season (they lost 4-6) from Tampa. Mary and I then watched taped SNL from the previous night. Nick Jonas was both the host and musical guest which meant a less than great show in my opinion. Mary is still awake in the family room with her MacBook on her lap. She keeps saying she is determined to go to sleep at Midnight but her "normal" 3 or 4 AM bedtime seems to be slipping closer and closer to sunrise.



After my run and some stretching mom prepared another delicious breakfast and she went for a walk while I showered and dressed. Our mission for the day was to replace her 5-year-old iPhone. She had mentioned a few minor issues with it, and it seemed better if she replaced it now rather than having it fall behind the latest available operating system at some point or fail completely at a bad time. The new SE that Alex got last year was perfect for her since has the same size and fingerprint home button as the older phones with new software and hardware inside and better camera. Also, at \$400 rather than over \$1000 for the 12 series fits with her thriftiness. We were lucky there was no wait at the Verizon store, but it still took a full 90 minutes between reviewing contracts, selling back old phone, etc. The worst was the time it took to upload the latest OS to the new phone before could clone the old phones data onto it. These are things I usually do for myself at home but couldn't risk having an issue and then leave her with a defunct phone. I was definitely ready for a nap after that ordeal. Steven and Richard came by at 5ish and my mom had prepared some veggies and cheese and crackers, and we drank Vermouth which I had never had straight (usually just a bit in a Martini), it was not bad but I would not ever pick it

over wine personally. We had reservations at the Club and as it was a “cool” 69 degrees my mom was concerned that I was not going to wear a jacket! I was fine, it was much warmer than when Alex and I ate outdoors in Greenwich Village in December. I had a delicious Sea Bass, the sun set perfectly over the golf course and there was a live duet playing jazz and seventies pop music. I bet they were happy to have a paying gig after the disaster that Covid caused for all artists. My mom was happy that every table was filled, and they had even expanded around the corner of the building for extra space. So many people did not renew their Club memberships during the pandemic that at one point there was a fear that some facilities would be closed. Now with the vaccine widely available it seems



like it will recover but perhaps



with less hours, events than In

the past. I remember how back in the financial crisis of 2008 there were a huge number of people who withdrew from the Club as their stock portfolios withered. I was in Boca actually when the S+P bottomed at 666 and I was buying stocks until at that point I was 100% stocks in my savings. I was still working full time then and figured it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. It was Baron Rothschild who said that “one should buy stocks when there was blood in the streets” (he did so in the stock crash after the Battle of Waterloo). I do not consider myself a stock “trader” (although I was for a while in TN in the late 1990s, making and then losing a lot in the dot.com bubble. After Alex was born, I decided that I didn’t have time to follow individual stocks and it has been just mutual funds for me since. I do shift balance between stock and bond funds whenever the market is very high or takes a big selloff. If I had just left every penny in stocks for the past 12 years, I would be VERY rich as the S+P is now almost 4000, however I am conservative and whenever market got 10 or 20 percent higher, I would shift some money to bonds. Also, once I cut back to working only half-time (when Alex

was 8 in 2012) I tried to make portfolio 50-50 stocks/bonds to avoid a total wipeout if there was another big crash. From the 1970s to the 1990s the stock market provided a reliable 5-10% gain per year until the 2000 dot.com bubble and “crash” and then the

S&P 500 Index

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WATCHLIST +

Last | 03/01/21 EST

3,901.82 ▲ **+90.67 (+2.38%)**

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2008 credit-default “crash” both of which reclaimed all their losses in 5 years or so. I bought some stocks in the post Covid bear market last year and plan to take profits when the S+P hits 4000. It is almost there but I imagine there is a big correction likely in 2021 when people realize the economy is not going to bounce back as rapidly as the optimists believe.

Tuesday 3/2 7:28am: Got off on a little financial tangent there yesterday. Ran on treadmill this morning after feeding/walking Fifa. Watching an interesting series on Amazon Prime, “Phillip K Dick” short stories, 10 free standing episodes with several recognizable actors in a few. It is a lot like “Black Mirror”. “Blade Runner” was loosely based on Dick’s “Do androids dream electric sheep?” short story.

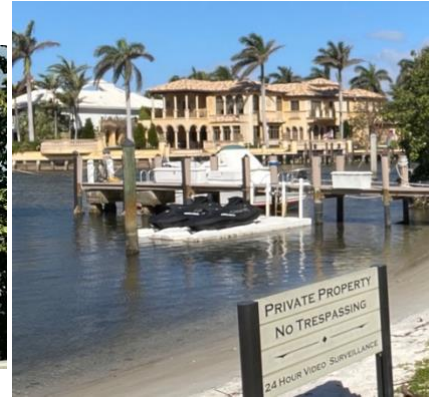
Day 4. Sunday 2/21: Writing ten days after the events (and not having made any notes, I must be more aggressive with Notes app on phone next vacation) I am relying on my photos from iPhone to stir my memories. My mom had gotten a call a day or

two earlier asking if she could play some golf with friends (she had cancelled all golf, on-line bridge games, etc. for my visit) and I told her to go ahead as I could entertain myself for half a day. After waking and reading with some tea for a while I did another on-line Krav Maga class to get fully caught up and then drove her car to Steven and Richard's place. I said good morning to them and collected the helmet and lock key and did a nice bike ride (again with intense winds, RED flags at beach this time). I headed south this time going as far as Deerfield Beach which was busy with Sunday morning brunch crowds and tourists. I chatted briefly with a guy in a Canadian cycling jersey at a red light, he was impressed with my speed on such a heavy bike. He had a nice road bike of course. I saw a sign for the "World Famous" Deerfield Beach Fishing Pier and stopped so I could walk my bike out and take a photo from there. But this being Florida (WE have no income taxes!) there was a \$2 charge (only \$1 for residents) to just walk out on pier. I don't ever remember seeing this before at ANY beach in CA, NY, MD, etc. Even if I had any money with me (doubtful they would accept Venmo from my phone) I was so outraged I wouldn't have paid. I have to remember to bring \$ with me on travel bike rides in future (at home my under seat tool kit bags always have some cash in them for a stop at 7-11 or a gas station if I need extra fluids or nutrition). The way back north was brutal into the winds, but I was in no hurry and certainly not racing anyone. There was a big charity ride occurring and I saw a bunch of people in large pelotons with police escorts and matching Jerseys. If I had remembered my Velcro toestraps (I used them Friday but forgot them today) I "might" have been able to latch on to peloton but didn't bother trying. On the way through Highland Beach, I tried to note where a few of the more amazing mansions were so I could stop on way back and get some photos. When younger I would have dreamed of being so rich that a I could afford a \$10 Million "winter place" or one of the \$200,000 sports cars I saw. Now I just think what a joke our maldistribution of wealth in America has reached. The minimum wage has not changed from \$7 since 2009 while the stock market is up 400% over the same time. The fact that tens of millions of Americans have no health insurance or adequate nutrition is directly related to the rich in our nation refusing to pay enough taxes to



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ensure a modern social safety

net like every other rich, industrialized country has. So here are the photos of those “pretty” mansions. Sorry for the politics, the CPAC convention was just a few days ago in Orlando and the fascists welcomed back their orange haired Leader, still claiming that the election was stolen and that they must figure out how to further limit the ability of poor blacks and browns to vote in the future so as to Make America “WHITE” Again. Near the end of my ride, I detoured into the Spanish River Park which is 100 acres between the ocean and intracoastal near 40th street. Luckily, I was on a bike, since the parking fee was \$20 (again, FLORIDA, it only costs \$7 to park at Niagara Falls state park), I guess that high parking fee keeps out the poor (non-white) people. I actually biked on some dirt trails thanks to my very fat tires. A 3-foot black snake was crossing a paved path as I approached so I stopped. It had slithered into the brush by the time I got my camera out for a photo. It was either an Indigo or Black Racer, both non-poisonous of course (although Florida does have rattlers, cottonmouths, and copperheads). It was very sublime to be biking through an empty jungle with just the



sounds of birds. Costa Rica is on my bucket travel list so maybe in a few years I will do some real jungle biking. There was a kayak launch area on the intracoastal side of



the park in a sandy beach area. It was very choppy and a lot of boat traffic but on a non-windy, non-weekend day I should try to rent a kayak next time I visit Boca. Alex and I kayaked through mangroves in Key Largo last year but that is a long drive. After my bike ride, I gave the gears and chain a thorough coating and wipe down of WD40 so hopefully at least it won't be any MORE rusty next time I visit. I noshed on an apple and sat with Steven and Richard for a little while watching the kite surfers go by at amazingly high speeds. I got a pelican photo, but it was only a few, not the large flock in "V" formations or long lines that I had seen a few times while biking both times. Although I had brought swim gear, not even I am reckless enough to swim alone under a red flag so after a little while longer with my uncles I said goodbye and headed back to Boca Pointe. I changed into a bathing suit and put all my dirty clothes in the washing machine. Barbara was done with golf by then and we went down to the pool where I swam for 35-minutes (about a mile per the Apple watch). I wore earplugs this time and the music was much clearer but still not sure how an audiobook or podcast will sound. Back in the apartment I put clothes in the dryer, showered, shaved and dressed and then packed up the few belongings that I would take home with me and put all of my Florida clothes, sports gear, shoes, hats, etc. away in the container I leave on the top

shelf of my mom's closet. I have enough stuff in there now that all I need to bring for a visit to Boca is my shower kits and electronics. Hopefully next winter with Covid behind us, I will visit more often and maybe can even coordinate a trip with Alex flying in directly from NYC.



I ordered Sushi from mom's favorite place and when I was getting it, I also filled my mom's car with gas and synched her new phone to her Toyota system. I used a car service to get back to airport since didn't want mom driving that much highway mileage at night. Airport was SO crowded. People all wore masks but with so much close contact and travel it is lucky the vaccine is here. Plane was packed again but I did have an empty middle seat again, it is definitely worth the extra \$50 for the "more space" row if I get no one next to me. Flight was on time and I was back in Buffalo before midnight. I had worn my noise-canceling headphones and listened to music while slept most of flight, so I was confused after landing when they opened door, but no one stood up. There had been a medical "event" in back of plane while I slept so I missed my chance to be a hero. A man was wheeled off on stretcher but was awake, it sounded like there had been a nurse on flight who helped with incident. I took a screenshot of my iPhone



before falling asleep because the song "Scare away the Dark" by Passenger came on my headphones. It made me think that I was a passenger right then and also the lyrics mean even more now in our Post-Trump and (almost, maybe) Post-Covid world.

Well, we wish we were happier, thinner and fitter
 We wish we weren't losers and liars and quitters
 We want something more not just nasty and bitter
 We want something real not just hashtags and Twitter

It's the meaning of life and it's streamed live on YouTube
 But I bet Gangnam Style will still get more views

We're scared of drowning, flying and shooters
 But we're all slowly dying in front of fucking computers

So sing, sing at the top of your voice
 Oh, love without fear in your heart
 Can you feel, feel like you still have a choice
 If we all light up we can scare away the dark

Mary was there within minutes of me reaching airport doors and I was home 20 minutes later. It was a balmy 30 degrees so quite the change for me. Fifa was happy

but seemed a little distant the next few days, not sure she remembers that her favorite human has to travel without her.

Thanks for reading! Until the next adventure



-David Shapiro. Amherst, NY. 3/2/2021.