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A pair of wing chairs frame
the doorway to this renovated
Potomac sunroom.

Can You Get a
Covid Vaccine?

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State Pushes Ahead
With Toll Lane Project

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Let the Sunlight In

HomeLifeStyle, PAGE 7

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JANUARY 13-19, 2021

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KENNY LOURIE, PAGE 7

PHOTO BY ANGIE SECKINGER

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Getting Shots into Arms

A glimpse at Montgomery County's COVID-19 vaccine plan.

BY PEGGY MCEWAN
POTOMAC ALMANAC

County residents looking for when and where they can get COVID-19 vaccines can only wait and wonder.

Though the County does have a chart listing a priority line-up, how fast the line moves down the priority list depends on the number of vaccines shipped to the county each week, according to Montgomery County Deputy Health Officer James Bridgers.

"We are challenged by the amount of vaccine we get each week," Bridgers said at a press conference with Montgomery Council President Tom Hucker and Vice President Gabe Albornoz on Monday.

Of the 12,900 doses received so far, he said, 8,939 were administered by Friday, Jan. 8, and by Tuesday, Jan. 12, he expects 100 percent of the doses to be given.

At this point, he said, the County is administering between 1,500 and 2,000 doses per day.

Hucker said he was satisfied with the rate the county is administering what they get, but, he added, "We are at the mercy of the state" regarding when and how much vaccine the County does get.

Bridgers said he is expecting to receive 6,700 new doses on Tuesday, Jan. 12. The doses are doled out weekly by the State.

With more than one million residents in the County, it is not a simple matter of figuring the number of people minus the number of doses given each week to calculate when it will be your turn to get the



Christine Knoell, RN (left), vaccinates Dr. Kathleen Sachse (right) during the first days of the Reston Hospital Center Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine effort for healthcare providers.

vaccine. It's hard to know exactly where you stand on the phases delineated by the County because any one person can fit into more than one category.

For instance, you could be a County resident but a hospital front line worker and get a vaccine from your hospital rather than the County. You could also be a nursing home worker and get the vaccine from your workplace.

"We don't manage that," Bridgers said.

"Congregate living spaces are handled by Walgreens and CVS."

The County is still in Phase 1A of its three-phase priority group distribution plan as of Jan. 11, according to the Montgomery County website.

Montgomery County is in Phase 1A for vaccine distribution. Vaccine in this first portion are administered as this:

County staff are vaccinating



Photo Contributed by Virginia Hospital Center.

frontline health care workers and first responders (those who come into contact with ill and injured residents).

The State is providing vaccines to hospitals, who are administering vaccine to their staff.

A federal contract through CVS and Walgreens is providing vaccine directly to nursing home staff and residents.

Next comes Phase 1B, residents over the age of 75 and frontline essential workers. Then Phase 1C, residents over the age of 65 and residents with specific medical conditions.

Phase 2 is for people in "critical infrastructure roles." Phase 3 finishes up with "general population."

There is no cost for the COVID-19 vaccine. "Medicare, Medicaid and most private insurance will cover the cost of the vaccine. Montgomery County will cover the cost for anyone who is uninsured," according to the website.

There have been very few adverse reactions to the vaccines. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System detected 21 cases of

anaphylaxis after administration of a reported 1,893,360 first doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (11.1 cases per million doses); 71% of these occurred within 15 minutes of vaccination. These included 17 reactions in persons with a documented history of allergies or allergic reactions, seven of whom had a history of anaphylaxis. The County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is prepared to respond to anaphylaxis/severe allergic reactions after the COVID-19 vaccination and is pre-screening individuals to determine if there are any contraindications or precautions.

The CDC recommends that everyone get the COVID-19 vaccination when it is available to them; none of the currently available COVID-19 vaccinations is available for children.

For more information visit [montgomerycountymd.gov](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/vaccine/) COVID-19 Information Portal and or sign up for vaccine updates. Updates can be delivered by either email or text. <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/vaccine/>

Don't Go to DC for Inauguration

The chief executives of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia held a joint call to discuss planning for the 59th Presidential Inauguration. The leaders discussed the need for enhanced planning and preparation compared to previous inaugurations given the chaos, injury, and death experienced at the United States Capitol during the insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021. The Mayor and the Governors agreed to urge Americans not to come into Washington, D.C. for the Inauguration and to instead partici-

pate virtually.

They issued the following statement:

"Jan. 6, 2021 is now a seminal moment in American history. We are grateful for the courageous efforts of every law enforcement officer, Guard member, and first responder who heroically worked to secure the Capitol and ensure our nation's democracy prevailed.

"On Jan. 20, there will be a transition of power, and we will work together, and with our partners in the federal government, to ensure the safety of the National Capital Region. Due to the unique circumstances surrounding the 59th Pres-

idential Inauguration, including last week's violent insurrection as well as the ongoing and deadly COVID-19 pandemic, we are taking the extraordinary step of encouraging Americans not to come to Washington, D.C. and to instead participate virtually.

"In this very trying time, Jan. 6 was a dark moment for our nation.

But we know that we will get through this period because American ideals are stronger than one extreme ideology. Together, we will overcome extremism."

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](https://connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar). Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

MLK WEEK OF SERVICE

Every January for more than a decade, the Montgomery County Volunteer Center has brought thousands of area residents together for an afternoon full of volunteer activities featured at its large-scale Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Day of Service event. This year, the event has gone virtual and expanded to a week, with a variety of home-based and safely distanced service opportunities available online at <http://bit.ly/MoCoMLKDay>.

The Volunteer Center's 2021 MLK service event runs January 16-24 and offers residents of all ages the opportunity to honor the life and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by participating in one (or many!) remote service projects that help others in our community. Activities include creating toys for service dogs, making blankets for hospice patients, sending well wishes to COVID patients, and donating books on diversity for students. MCPS students can earn student service learning (also known as SSL) hours for most projects except donations. All event activities are free, but space is limited for some projects and registration is required. In ad-

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 4

State Moves Forward on Preliminaries for Toll Lanes

\$11 billion project still faces many unanswered questions on environment, community impact and need.

BY KEN MOORE
THE ALMANAC

Last Friday, Jan. 8, 2021, the State Highway Administration released names of three bidders to do preliminary work necessary before building \$11-billion toll lanes. The effort will already cost approximately \$1 million, since losing bidders will be awarded up to \$500,000, according to page 180 of the Request for Proposals.

The project to add four toll lanes to the American Legion Bridge, around the Beltway and up 270 has not yet been approved, and faces opposition and many unanswered questions.

The SHA issued its final Request for Proposals on Dec. 18, 2020, asked for proposals to be submitted by Dec. 23, and only released its timeline to the public two days before Christmas, at the close of business.

"They tried to slip this thing through in the dark," said Del. Marc Korman, speaking at a meeting of CABE, Citizens Against Beltway Expansion last Thursday, Jan. 7.

This is after hundreds of people testified against the P-3 program this summer; declining traffic during the pandemic showed how effective taking a percentage of drivers off the road during rush hour can be to mitigate congestion; and the Purple Line fiasco.

But despite public opposition, SHA offered platitudes.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) "marked another important milestone toward achieving Governor Larry Hogan's vision for transformative traffic relief in the National Capital Region by addressing some of the nation's worst traffic congestion and the chokepoint at the American Legion Bridge," according to the State Highway Administration.

"They are in Governor Hogan-legacy mode right now," said Korman.

Phase 1 of the Public Private Partnership

Program would widen I-495 from the vicinity of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia, across and including the American Legion Bridge, to I-270, and I-270 from I-495 to I-70, adding two toll lanes in each direction. The American Legion Bridge to I-270 and I-270 to I-370 would be delivered first. Tolls would vary depending on traffic. Peak tolls could reach more than \$2 a mile or more than \$40 one way for some routes, according to estimates.

"On a parallel track, the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study will progress with MDOT expected to announce a Recommended Preferred Alternative in the coming months with the study's federal Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision issued by Fall 2021," according to the State Highway Administration.

MARYLAND'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY begins Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021, and Delegates Korman, Kumar Barve (D-17) and Jared Solomon (D-18) have discussed how to act.

Rep. Kumar Barve says he, Korman and Solomon will have to call "an audible on game day" to determine strategy and how to proceed. Last year, bills that could have created new oversight on Public Private Partnerships passed the House but didn't receive a vote in the Senate.

"I could pop out 50 Billis in the General Assembly and the result will be the exact same unless we change leadership in the Senate," said Barve.

"We will have to figure out if we have more allies in the Senate," said Solomon.

Sen. Susan Lee (D-16) also attended CABE's meeting last Thursday. And while the project isn't a sure-thing to reduce congestion, she said it will "cause decades of harm to the environment and quality of life."

And with the pandemic and the resulting grief and economic pain to Maryland busi-



PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

Preliminary work for adding four toll lanes on the American Legion Bridge could begin soon, even as environmental concerns remain unanswered.

"They tried to slip this thing through in the dark."

— Del. Marc Korman (D-16)

If work begins soon on the American Legion Bridge, it could begin years of congestion caused by construction.



ALMANAC FILE PHOTO

nesses and people, the General Assembly just finished its most difficult session, said Lee.

"There's no reason to rush this," said Korman. "If this is such a wise project, there's no reason why we can't wait," he said.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 3

dition to the Volunteer Center's virtual MLK service activities, several partner agencies are coordinating service projects for MLK Day 2021. Residents can find more information about them at the virtual event page at <http://bit.ly/MoCoMLKDay>.

MOCOMCON

RETURNS JAN. 16

MoComCon, Montgomery County Public Libraries' fifth comic convention, returns as a full day of online activities on Saturday, Jan. 16, 2021. The virtual event will celebrate all things comic, graphic novel, and fandom. This free convention is open to all, including

seasoned comic conventioners, novices, and the curious of all ages. More details, including schedule, cosplay, art, and essay contest, are available on the website: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/programs/mocomcon.html>

JAN. 20-MARCH 10

I Do Crew. 3 p.m. At Kentlands Mansion FB and IG pages, 320 Kent Square Rd., Gaithersburg. Get expert advice and insider tips from the I Do Crew - Expert Advice Series. Every Wednesday from Jan. 20 through March 10 on the social media sites, hear top, local wedding vendors, answer trending wedding planning questions. Visit the website: [https://www.gaithersburgmd.gov/about-](https://www.gaithersburgmd.gov/about-us/city-facilities/kentlands-mansion/kentlands-mansion-calendar/the-i-do-crew-expert-advice-series)

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THURSDAY/JAN. 21

Potomac-based Dr. Mark E Klein, author of the new book Franklin Rock, will hold a (virtual) book event on January 21, 2021 at 11 a.m. with the Potomac Library. Dr. Klein is a radiologist in D.C. He's treated more than 100,000 patients as a physician and The doctor his colleagues call when they have a patient who needs an ear or shoulder to help calm down and cope with what's ahead.

REQUEST FOOD ASSISTANCE

Residents looking for information on food assistance resources can now

request help by completing a simple online form. Available in seven languages (Amharic, Chinese, English, French, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese), the form is reviewed by a trained resource specialist, and residents receive a return phone call within one business day. The specialist will determine a resident's individual food needs and help them locate food assistance in their community. No Personally identifiable information is needed to get help. Information is available about free food distribution sites, free meal and grocery delivery, SNAP (Food Stamps), local food assistance providers, and other resources in Montgomery County. Residents can also call 311 and ask for the Food Access Call Center to

get help with their food needs.

COVID-19 VACCINE ARRIVES IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

The first round of COVID-19 vaccine doses, manufactured by Moderna, arrived in Montgomery County last week at the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This initial shipment will be earmarked for County health staff engaged in managing the pandemic response. The first group to receive the vaccine in Montgomery County is the core team of public health clinicians who will become responsible for vaccinating residents across the County once additional

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 5

NEWS

Happy Birthday Falls Road Golf Course: Share Your Memories and More

The 60th anniversary of Falls Road Golf Course is coming up in 2021. The course seeks your help to celebrate and remember, looking for any photos, score cards, logoed attire, news clippings and memorabilia related to the course, to curate a display sharing the history of your Falls Road Golf Course. Contact Mike Kenny regarding any help you can provide in this effort. mkenny@mcg-golf.com 301-299-5156

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 4
vaccine arrives.

Montgomery County is following the priority designations outlined by Governor Larry Hogan and that all Maryland counties will follow:

- 1A: Frontline health care workers, staff and residents of nursing homes, and first responders
- 1B: Essential workers and residents over the age of 75
- 1C: Individuals over the age of 65

YMCA OFFERS FREE PRODUCE

The local YMCAs are offering free produce distribution during the coronavirus crisis. Produce is available for anyone, free of charge, regardless of their affiliation with the YMCA. Produce will be distributed at the following location: YMCA Bethesda-Chevy Chase, 9401 Old Georgetown Rd., Bethesda. Available Wednesdays 4-6 p.m., Thursdays 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

CRISIS PREVENTION SERVICES

EveryMind Crisis Prevention and Intervention specialists are available by phone, text and chat every hour of every day. The community can also look to EveryMind for mental health professionals who are prepared to talk about warning signs and ways anyone can help to prevent suicide from ending lives far too soon. EveryMind is an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Visit Every-Mind.org. More resources include:

- ❖ Call or Text Montgomery County Hotline: 301-738-2255
- ❖ Chat: Crisis Prevention Chat: <https://suicide-preventionlifeline.org/chat/>
- ❖ Call: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- ❖ www.every-mind.org/services/crisis/
- ❖ www.every-mind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Talking-to-Kids-about-Suicide.pdf
- ❖ suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- ❖ www.suicidology.org

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CENTRE VIEW



Pictured: One of the several historical buildings that has housed the Alexandria Gazette Packet since its 1784 founding.

The pandemic has crushed many newspapers across the country, and one of America's oldest newspapers and its affiliated Connection Newspapers, websites and digital media is at risk. The Northern Virginia, DC, and MD area's best read and most trusted source for community news, which includes the Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and all Connection Newspapers in the metropolitan region. The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyperlocal news to residents. Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years - countless residents have grown up with this local paper covering significant moments in the life of your family and children, news, sporting events,

school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cars. Internet news and large national newspapers do not provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers provide.

Help save these historical papers. If your child, dog, mother, father, neighborhood, school has been featured, you understand the value of a local community newspaper.

Thank you for helping to keep your community dialogue alive throughout Northern Virginia and Potomac, Md. All funds will be used to continue providing vital community dialogue and meeting obligations to our loyal and patient employees, contractors and suppliers due to continuing loss of advertising.



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Register at 20854HelpDesk@gmail.com

Artistic Endeavors for January

Two contests open.

BY PEGGY McEWAN
POTOMAC ALMANAC

Montgomery County and the C&O Canal Trust have each announced art contests, open to all, to promote ongoing programs.

Information for each is below.

Competition Open to Artistic Climate Change Advocates

Montgomery County is hosting a competition for artwork to be featured in the county's climate action plan.

Art is an important tool that will engage all county residents from a variety of backgrounds.

Through this contest, we hope to reach those who might not have previously been engaged in the climate planning process, especially those from marginalized backgrounds who will be disproportionately impacted by changes in climate.

The competition is open to students and county residents of all ages. Help us harness your creativity to sound the alarm about the climate emergency.

Submissions can be photos, drawings, poems, videos and original memes that invoke the need to protect the community from climate change.

Artists may submit work in any of the following categories:

Engage!—What is the connection between community and climate?

Sound the Climate Alarm!—Capture the emergency of climate change.

Adaptation and Resilience—How can our community adapt to a rapidly changing world?

Environmental/Climate Justice and Racial Equity—Capture the inequalities exacerbated by climate change and highlight the voices



Winning
Artwork from
previous years.



es of the historically marginalized.

Future Vision of Montgomery County—What will the county look like in 2035 if it meets the greenhouse gas reduction goals in an equitable way? The contest encourages submissions of digital art to create future landscapes, concept art and your utopias.

The deadline is Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021. Winners will receive \$100 and their work may be featured on the county's climate change plan and in other materials.

For complete rules visit <https://mygreen-montgomery.org/2020/calling-all-artists-and-climate-justice-activists/>

Artwork Contest to Find New Canal Community Days logo

The C&O Canal Trust is conducting a t-shirt artwork contest to find a logo that will represent our 2021 Canal Community Days events.

Amateur artists are invited to create and submit artwork that celebrates these annual volunteer events that bring community members together to beautify the C&O Canal National Historical Park for the spring season. The winning design will be printed on our Canal Community Days t-shirts and worn by volunteers as they work along the

C&O Canal during the spring and summer months.

Formerly known as “Canal Pride Days,” our Canal Community Days events are volunteer project days throughout the year that tackle the backlog of maintenance projects in the C&O Canal National Historical Park. During 2019, the Trust hosted more than 40 different events with over 1,000 volunteers, who were all vital in helping to maintain the 184.5-mile towpath and 1,300 historic structures in the Park. In 2020, with modified operations due to restrictions around COVID-19, we had 200 volunteers collect 2,000 pounds of trash in small groups. Our volunteers help keep our Park safe and clean for 5 million visitors each year.

How to Enter:

Submitted artwork should represent some aspect of the C&O Canal and the Canal Community Days concept. Each design must include the words “C&O Canal Community Days” and the year “2021”. Please keep artwork to six colors or less, as printing color artwork on t-shirts can become expensive. The artwork will be used on either grey- or natural-colored shirts. Entries from both adults and children are welcome.

Entries should be submitted by February 19, 2021 to the C&O Canal Trust at photos@canaltrust.org or can be mailed to us at: Canal Community Days Artwork Contest, C&O Canal Trust, 1850 Dual Highway, Suite 100, Hagerstown, MD 21740. Please include your name, address, phone number, email address and age (if 18 or under) with your entry. If you are under 18, please obtain permission from your parent or guardian before entering this contest.

The C&O Canal Trust staff will select the winning entry based on visual appeal, the use of six or fewer colors, and the representation of the Canal Community Days theme. The winner will be notified by March 5, 2021.

The winner will receive a C&O Canal Trust prize pack that includes a one-night stay at one of our award-winning Canal Quarters lockhouses.

Also, the winner's artwork will be printed on our 2021 Canal Community Days t-shirts, and the winner will be provided with three shirts to keep.

Winning artwork from past years, plus a full copy of the rules can be found here:

<https://www.canaltrust.org/2020/12/community-days-artwork-contest/>

Activities, Entertainment Available with Zoom

BY PEGGY McEWAN
POTOMAC ALMANAC

Three local groups have joined together to offer Zoom lecture and videos to residents during this time of quarantine and social distancing.

In an email to members of Friends of the Library from Carol Westrick the group's membership chair, explained to the Friends via email that each group, Friends of the Library, Potomac Area Neighborhood Club and Potomac Community Village were sharing information but not members' email.

“Realizing how challenging these times are for most of us,”

Westrick continued, “three groups in the Potomac area are working together to not only sponsor a variety of programs, but to publicize them to each other and to the community. You need not be a member of any of the groups to register for their events. ... Periodically we will forward events from these groups that our program committee believes you might find of interest.”

The first event listed by Potomac Area Newcomers Club (PANC) is “TRAVELS IN AFRICA” with Cinematographer Scott Duncan from 5-6 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 14.

Scott Duncan is known for his emotional, visual, storytelling images and has earned 16 Emmy Awards for Individual Achievement in Cinematography and Best

Documentary (www.duncan.tv). He has traveled around the world creating content for the Olympics, the World Cup, and shows like Survivor. When not working, one of Scott's passions is traveling the back roads of the African continent. He will share with us some of his personal photos and stories of his travels. Register by Jan. 12 at info@potomacneighbors.com.

On Thursday, Jan. 21 from 1-2 p.m. speaker Susan Commander Samakow will discuss “Boost Your Resilience and Productivity During Unsettled Times.” Samakow will share strategies for building confidence, creating a positive and productive outlook, and developing resilience during times of change and uncertainty. Register for this

talk at info@potomacneighbors.com.

Montgomery County Public Libraries now has a virtual branch offering online activities including meetings with needle craft groups, author discussions and classes on computer skills, among others.

For a complete list of January activities visit <https://mcpl.libnet.info/events> or call 240-777-0005 for more information.

POTOMAC COMMUNITY VILLAGE offers a number of Zoom events for Jan. They are listed below:

❖ Tuesday, Jan. 19, 1:30 - 3 p.m. The PCV Book Group will meet to discuss Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic by Sam Quinones. Book Group is

open to all PCV members, but non-members can come once to try us out. Members can register using the event list on the PCV website. Non-members, please contact the PCV Help Desk at 240-221-1370 or 20854HelpDesk@gmail.com by noon Monday, January 18.

❖ Wednesday, Jan. 27, 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. CHOOSING ASSISTED LIVING FOR A LOVED ONE - WHEN YOU HAVE TO

Members can register using the event list on the PCV website. Non-members, please contact the PCV Help Desk at 240-221-1370 or 20854HelpDesk@gmail.com by noon Tuesday, Jan. 26



PHOTOS BY ANGIE SECKINGER

The Potomac, Maryland sunroom was redesigned by the Anthony Wilder team to include a coffered ceiling and classic green and white furnishings.

Sunroom with an Abundance of Light

Large windows make the space bright and airy.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE ALMANAC

When the owners of a colonial, built in 1963 in Potomac, Md. decided to renovate their home, they wanted to make sure the traditional charm was maintained in an updated aesthetic that allows for streams of natural light. Designers at Anthony Wilder Design/Build were hired to take on the project, which included creating light-filled sunroom.

Large windows offer dramatic views while giving the space a clean and airy feel. “You don’t always need to knock down walls to have an impact,” said architect Sean Mullin. “You can revamp a room by adding details like a coffered ceiling. For [this] project, we installed a tray ceiling and added a fireplace to complete a new look.”

Timelessness in architecture, finishes and furniture was a priority. “[It] was paramount in this home’s renovation [including] the classic white and green furnishings in the sunroom,” said Keira St. Claire.



A pair of wing chairs frame the doorway to the Anthony Wilder-renovated sunroom

The new design allows for an abundance of natural light. “The widened, cased openings ... also expand sight lines from room to room, even making the eight-foot ceilings feel taller,” said Mullin.

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In Effect, a Trade



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Incurable but treatable non small cell lung cancer, stage IV for incurable but treatable papillary thyroid cancer stage IV. And though it may have taken a while to get re-diagnosed: nearly 11 years, the eagle, as they say, apparently has landed. Nevertheless, I’m glad to still be here. Let me amend that. After being given my first “terminal” diagnosis in late February, 2009, with an accompanying “13 month to two year” prognosis, I am glad to be anywhere. Still, it would have been preferred had I received the thyroid cancer diagnosis originally. If that had been the case, I might no longer be a cancer patient with an incurable form of papillary thyroid cancer. If I remember correctly, generally speaking, papillary thyroid cancer is called “the friendly cancer” because it’s so curable. Not for me, and not now.

But “alas poor Yorick,” papillary thyroid cancer was not my original diagnosis. As such, I have been treated and lived as a non small cell lung cancer stage IV patient whose life expectancy was shortening by the hour.

However, since I was being treated for lung cancer exclusively, my underlying/real cancer was left untreated - for 11 years. And sure enough, after 10 years or so, the thyroid cancer finally manifested itself with the appearance of my “adam’s apple” tumor, as I called it. Left untreated for 11 years, it morphed, if that’s even the right word, into a rare form of papillary cancer, the “terminal” kind. The thyroidectomy I had in late Jan. 2020 confirmed it once and for all.

And by “terminal” I mean, there is only one drug presently recommended, Lenvima, for my cancer, and its projected effectiveness is three years, give or take. So far the side effects have been fairly minimal and my first two quarterly CT scans since I began this regimen have shown tumor shrinkage. Very encouraging. However, as they say in the mutual fund business: “Past performance is not an indicator of future results.” Therefore, though this trade was officially confirmed in the first quarter of this year, I still live and breathe - with somewhat shorter breath, from one CT scan result to the next. I may think I know how I feel, but not until I receive the results from the oncologist, electronically, will I truly know. This is when the rubber officially hits the road. The diagnostic scan results outweigh any feelings I may have on the subject. As is so happens, my next scan is scheduled for Jan. 13. I should have the results before the weekend. A timetable I’ve experienced many times since Feb. 20, 2009, the date of my original diagnosis.

The trade, unfortunately did not change this cycle. Nor has the situation of there being one drug available left to treat my cancer. I can remember more than once when my oncologist told me the drug he was prescribing was the last one he had confidence in to treat my lung cancer. Now, the drug I’m taking is also the last best choice available. Different from lung cancer drugs, when the drugs worked until they didn’t, the thyroid cancer drug I’m taking has a three-year-ish effectiveness limit. After which, as we say in Boston, “it will be Katie bar the door.” At the moment, there aren’t any additional drugs to recommend. Given what I anticipated my life expectancy to be, considering the age to which both my parents lived, I would say my thyroid cancer is “terminal”.

But that’s a rabbit hole I’m not going down. Three years may not be a normal life expectancy (that would age me to 69), but it’s ample time, I hope, for the cancer researchers to do their work. And I expect there will be some kind of progress even though the type of papillary thyroid cancer I have is not particularly common. Regardless, I will continue my routine of miscellaneous pills (upwards of 60 per day), alkaline water, lab work, scans, treatment and living my life on semi borrowed time. Granted, it’s not ideal, but it’s a life with which I’m extremely familiar. I have been there and I will continue to do that.

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