

# Senior University of Greater Atlanta, Inc.

Winter Newsletter January 2021

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## **The SUGA Zoom Avengers**

**By Cathy White, SUGA President**

I am a big pop culture fan, so when I think about our amazing ad hoc SUGA Zoom Support Team and all the fantastic work they have done initiating SUGA's Zoom classes during trying times I immediately think of Marvel Superheroes. George Wieder would be Iron Man, and his very capable team members would form the powerful Avengers. In my crazy imagination, the story goes like this:

In the spring of 2020, SUGA realized the risk of COVID could bring down their peaceful SUGA Universe. A plan was needed and needed fast! As fate would have it, SUGA heard about Zoom conferencing, but knew nothing about how it worked. Fortunately, President Larry Pinson possessed the superpowers of foresight and inspiration and thought Zoom might possibly save our SUGA Universe. A crack team of volunteers was formed to investigate the possibility. George Wieder accepted the challenge of leading the team along with Mary Jones as co-chair. Once Mary established how SUGA could acquire Zoom capabilities and SUGA had an idea about how to use these new powers (spoiler alert), the rest of the story became Marvel-ous history.

Now, the SUGA Universe is benefiting from the unflinching dedication of the powerful Zoom Avengers. Ironman George embraced Zoom with determination and dedication spending countless hours conducting one-on-one sessions with instructors so they could feel secure in their instruction techniques, and he assisted students in overcoming their apprehensions and challenges with Zoom. He constantly researched and introduced new Zoom techniques, such as chat, raise the hand, breakout rooms, and speaker spotlight to enhance instructors' presentations. Other team members aided in the quest by working one-on-one with instructors and students, serving as class hosts, and laboring continuously to fine-tune class delivery. All this Zoom Avenger power-infused expertise was partnered with a curriculum formulated by the take-on-any-challenge Guardians of the Galaxy Curriculum Committee, thus forging comprehensive and masterfully run kick-ass fall and winter programs.

The SUGA Universe was saved and its people could all sleep peacefully knowing that tomorrow was a school day (albeit virtual) because Iron Man George and his team of Zoom Avengers and the Guardians of the Galaxy Curriculum Committee saved the day, making it possible for SUGA members to continue receiving the gift of community, continued learning, and hope during the time of COVID.

**The End**

**or is it just the beginning?**

# SUGA on the Go During COVID

## **DETERMINATION PAYS OFF: A KENYA SAFARI DURING THE PANDEMIC, by Tina Skinner**

When my friends and I booked a safari to Kenya back in April 2019, no one could have predicted a pandemic that would bring 2020 travel to a screeching halt. As spring wound into summer, our hopes of making the trip scheduled for September were dimming. Yet we still fanned the little flame of optimism, and in July Kenya announced it would reopen to foreign travelers in August. Yeah!! But the process of “threading the needle” would not be easy. The Ministry of Health required US passengers to have a negative COVID-19 test certificate issued within 96 hours before we arrived in Nairobi. Atlanta news was reporting lengthy delays on receiving test results so we were very anxious that we could have the test and results within the window required before setting off on our trip. We ended up having three tests at three different clinics, praying that one would deliver a quick turn-around. Thank goodness we did, because only one met the deadline the day before our departure.

Our trip outfitter, **Gamewatchers Safaris**, operates six permanent tented camps located in community-owned private wildlife conservancies, with most adjacent to national parks like Amboseli and the Maasai Mara. We stayed in four of their **Porini Safari Camps**. While they are not top-end luxurious, their rustic charm provided all the comforts we could want. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has gutted the safari industry, and we found ourselves to be the only guests at each camp on all but one night. While this treated us to the ultimate private safari experience, we were saddened that the camps had been closed for 6 months, with guides, drivers and staff furloughed. We had viewings of wildlife to ourselves rather than in clusters of 4WD jeeps surrounding animals with cameras clicking away that often has been my experience. One camp manager even told us that while they were closed, lions routinely wandered through camp!



Our first Porini camp was **Nairobi Tented Camp**, only 20 minutes from the airport. It is the only accommodation set within Nairobi National Park. No sooner had we left the airport than we saw a mother white rhino with her baby. My anxiety about this trip just slid away!! After a late breakfast and some much-needed rest, we set off on our first safari drive. Nairobi NP has the unique distinction of being the only protected area in the world close to a capital city. It was thrilling to be driving through thick bushland observing herds of zebra, buffalo, and antelopes with the skyline of the city clearly visible as a backdrop. Toward dusk, we came upon two male lions lying next to the track. The guide said they were two year-old brothers recently expelled from the pride. Their forlorn looks indicated to me that they had not quite gotten the hang of independence and would have loved to share a meal with the old gang!!

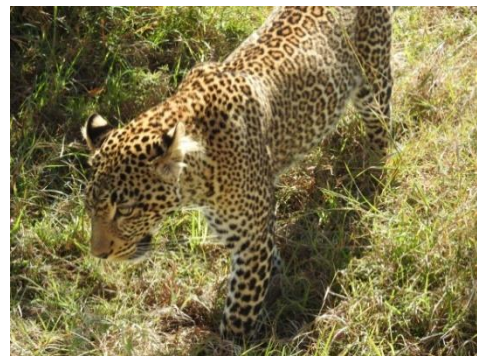
Our bush flight the next day took us north over the Aberdare Mountains, landing on the rough dirt airstrip. Small herds of zebra and impala graze nearby and frequently have to be shooed off the runway before planes can land. Our stay for the next three nights was **Porini Rhino Camp** located within the 90,000-acre Ol Pejeta Conservancy. This conservancy has the largest population of the endangered black rhino in East Africa, and we saw them on nearly every game drive. We also visited the Northern White Rhino Conservation Center, home to the last two remaining animals of this species on the planet. From the safety of our 4x4 vehicle, we fed carrots to the two lone surviving females, Najin and Fatu. Scientists hope to take their harvested eggs, fertilize them with frozen

sperm from the last two males (who passed away two years ago), and create a viable embryo that will save the species from extinction.

Late each summer, over 2 million wildebeest, zebra and gazelles migrate from Tanzania's Serengeti to Kenya's Maasai Mara in search of lush grazing grounds and life-sustaining water. Hoping to witness one of the iconic river crossings of these determined herds, we booked our next camp stay at **Entim Camp**, a property located alongside the Mara River at a favored crossing point. Although we were not able to see a crossing, the plains were full of the herds. Seeing a crossing takes luck and patience as it can take hours for that first wildebeest to pluck up the courage to leap into croc-infested waters. Our two-night stay here was rewarded with plenty of big cat sightings including two lion patriarchs, stars of the BBC TV series "Big Cat Diaries," and a rare coalition of five male cheetahs, whose strength in numbers has allowed them to specialize in taking down wildebeest. We also did a hot-air balloon ride, taking off into a fiery sunrise followed by the traditional champagne breakfast when we landed.

Over the next five nights, we stayed at two more Porini properties, **Mara Camp** and **Lion Camp**. Both safari camps are in private conservancies adjacent to the national reserve. Entrance is only permitted to guests staying at camps within the conservancies. While I love the adrenaline-pumping action of the safari drives, time spent in camp is also enjoyable. There is nothing better than falling asleep to the sound of lions roaring in the distance answered by a laughing hyena or even the ear-splitting screech of a tiny bush baby! None of the camps is fenced in so it was not particularly unusual to return from a night drive and have the entrance to my tent blocked by two huge African buffalo! And did I mention the three elephants that brushed up to my tent one morning making a low-pitched rumbling on the other side of the canvas?

We still had one elusive predator we had yet to see – a leopard. Before leaving on our trip, I watched a new program on Nat Geo Wild called "Jade Eyed Leopard", the story of Fig, a mother leopard and her young cub, Furaha. This program was filmed right in the conservancy where Lion Camp is located. On each game drive, our guides made a resolute effort to locate Fig or Furaha, driving along the rivers and gullies that they favor, with no luck. On our last game drive, we went in search again. After looking behind every bush and thicket, our game spotter quietly exhaled, saying "Finally!" Up ahead was Furaha! We watched her leap up a tree into a large nest of a pair of Egyptian geese. She proceeded to snack on their clutch of eggs while the distraught parents dive-bombed the nest again and again.



Furaha jumped down the tree on the prowl for a more satisfying meal. We followed her as she wound her way through a shallow ravine. Suddenly, she paused, changed direction, and headed directly for our open 4x4 Land Cruiser. My jaw dropped as she slowly crouched and crawled under our vehicle emerging on the other side and nonchalantly continued on her quest! It was worth the wait to see this majestic cat!! Great climax to a fabulous trip!

## COVID IN ALASKA, by Mary Jones

As many of you know, I am a Nurse Practitioner and have worked in the Native Alaskan health system on short assignments for the past ten years, along the Aleutian chain, on Saint Paul Island in the Bering Sea, and in McGrath in the state's interior. Each site is quite different in terms of community size (from 60 to 850 people per community) and clinic personnel; as there are no MDs outside the major Alaskan cities, NPs and PAs are the primary healthcare providers. And in each case, the clinic is the only medical service for the community. In most situations, I must serve as my own medical assistant, lab tech, and x-ray tech. In larger communities, I might have another NP/PA or a health aid, which is a non-licensed individual who works exclusively from strict diagnostic and treatment protocols. Serious medical conditions require medevac to the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage, a distance ranging from 300 to 1200 miles from the various clinics.



My most recent assignment was in the village of King Cove, which is the largest community served by Eastern Aleutian Tribes and is about 600 miles southwest of Anchorage. The clinic consists of four standard exam rooms, two emergency bays, basic x-ray services, a point-of-service lab, and a small pharmacy. At this site, I had a PA colleague as well as two health aids. I was in King Cove from mid-December through the first week of January when COVID was surging again around the world.

Working in the King Cove clinic was remarkably normal for the most part. Surprisingly, though, the clinic had three COVID rapid test machines! The staff estimated that 85% of the community had received at least one test, and residents could request a test at any time. One of the health aids was doing an average of ten tests per day. Based on organizational protocol, I was tested weekly due to my recent air travel. In the entire Eastern Aleutian region, there have been a total of 40 positive cases among residents but no COVID deaths. King Cove itself has had only two positive residents but several positive non-residents working at the fish processing plant for which the clinic provides medical services. Conditions in the processing plant are worryingly conducive to COVID transmission, particularly due to the living arrangements in which up to six workers share each dormitory-style bedroom.

I had one patient with life-threatening shortness of breath, and a COVID test was the first diagnostic test he received upon arrival. Although his test was negative, I remained concerned that it could be a false negative test, especially because he required nebulized breathing treatments and ultimately intubation.

The native Alaskan villages have been extremely diligent with their COVID precautions and aggressive with their COVID testing. Last April, as COVID was beginning to spread in the United States, local restrictions around the state ranged from mandatory 14-day isolation for anyone entering a community to a total ban on entry. And remember, of course, that nearly all villages in Alaska are accessible only via airplane or boat. So, if residents traveled to Anchorage or Fairbanks for any reason, they might not be able to return to their home. The basis for these limits is both historical (some communities were literally wiped out by the Spanish flu in 1918) and



pragmatic (health care options in the villages are extremely limited, making any serious illness potentially a lethal illness). As of January 15th, the Johns Hopkins COVID Dashboard showed a state total of 51,157 confirmed cases, 228 deaths, nearly 1.4 million tests with a 3.55% positivity rate. Their low positivity rate probably reflects the easy access to testing, thereby resulting in more negative tests. There have been drastic regional differences in case rates, with Bethel in southwest Alaska being particularly hard hit. Over the past month, the "slope" (the oil production region in the north) has had a major increase in incidence among its workers. Because slope work schedules are two-weeks-on and two-weeks-off, staff is constantly traveling to or from homes elsewhere in Alaska or in the lower 48. Workers are being flown to Anchorage via non-emergent "COVID transports" as soon as they test positive due to the limitations of the occupational health facilities on the slope.

As I have told many people, life in Alaska is quite different from ours. From the beginning, Alaska has taken an extremely strict approach to COVID safety. Currently, entry into the state requires proof of a recent negative COVID test or an essential worker letter from an employer. Otherwise, an in-airport rapid COVID test is required at a cost of \$250 for non-Alaska residents (free for residents). I can assure you that the airport concourses are well guarded for enforcement.

## ART'S CORNER

### **TWELVE COMMANDMENTS FOR SENIORS**

**#1 - It's okay to talk to yourself. There are times you need expert advice**

**#2 - "In Style" are the clothes that still fit.**

**#3 - You don't need anger management. You need people to stop pissing you off.**

**#4 - Your people skills are just fine. It's your tolerance for idiots that needs work.**

**#5 - The biggest lie you tell yourself is, "I don't need to write that down. I'll remember it."**

**#6 - "On time" is when you get there.**

**#7 - Even duct tape can't fix stupid - but it sure does muffle the sound.**

**#8 - It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for ten minutes, then come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller?**

**#9 - Lately, you've noticed people your age are so much older than you.**

**#10 - Growing old should have taken longer.**

**#11 - Aging has slowed you down, but it hasn't shut you up.**

**#12 - You still haven't learned to act your age and hope you never will.**

**"One for the road" means peeing before you leave the house.**

