WINDMILL – MAY 21, 2020

The President of the Day was accorded to the effervescent Aly Shoji. With her hair up and bubbly personality intact, Aly opened the meeting formally after a few minutes of member chit-chat on the Zoom screen.

Aly asked Treasurer Terry M. White to lead the pledge, which he did with our country’s flag in full view. Mark Rogo then recited the Invocation with a series of special thank you for our many blessings and to those who are assisting others during these difficult times.

After introducing several guests Aly asked if there are any announcements. PP Marsha Hunt immediately told of some ‘good news’. Her niece, Lisa, has a grandmother who is 106 years old (that’s not a typo!) and just recovered from Coronavirus. Wow, that is good news. Brian Whitney said he was excited to engage Eugene Volohk , a constitutional lawyer at UCLA, as a speaker in June. If there are specific questions on second amendment rights, etc., let him know. When Mike Newman asked a question as to the timing, several remarks were made as to certain member’s facial hair growth during this isolation period. It seems Mike, Gordon Fell and Curt Smith all have abandoned shaving. They appeared to prefer the ‘gray’ color of hair growth! Diane Good mentioned the Pageant of the Arts awards will take place this coming Wednesday at 6 p.m. Mark Rogo offered his office and computer for Zooming if a member does not have camera access to Zoom the weekly meeting.

Interestingly, Marsha Hunt then mentioned that the Faculty Center would not be opening this Fall. Mike Newman then countered that some of the labs in the Science Dept. at UCLA would be opened. Then Phil Gabriel then followed that the UC Chancellor Janet nep….? (Napolitano) has not made a decision on reopening the UC System. So, there you have it regarding our time to return to the Faculty Center.

Speaker of the Day – Molly Herber. Curt Smith, who’s father was a famed journalist with the LA Times, arranged for his brother, Doug, a long-time reporter for the Times, to introduce Molly Herber. Molly’s role with the Times is to head up the High School Insider Project. Her program is to work with young journalists of high school age who aspire to enter the literary field as reporters, writers, novelists, etc. Doug said it gave him a great deal of satisfaction as an ‘old senior reporter’ to work with a ‘young reporter.’ Before coming to the Times, Doug said that Molly had graduated from UC Davis and subsequently worked in the arts for LA Unified School District.

Molly took over the shared screen and told of her objectives as the Lead in the High School Insider Project. Her intent was to help students foster a community of young readers, thinkers, and storytellers to amplify and develop voices on issues that matter. Essentially, she works with young potential journalists to assist in choosing a college, meet with reporters, arrange virtual meetings, both social and training.

Molly explained that over 6.1 million students in California have had their education disrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic. This has affected her programs and those who are enlisted for internships in the project.

The project is based on three principals: Engagement, Enrichment and Professional Development. Students come to the High School Insider Project’s website from all over the nation. This brings students together for online programs to discuss issues such as the current pandemic as it affects their education. Molly explained how professional development teaches a student to be a strong and competent reporter, describe and relate stories and encourage students to write in the narrative style.

Molly then introduced one of her interns, Elana Marin, a senior student at the DaVinci Communications School in El Segundo. Elana is a reporter on the student publication, The Vitruvian Post. She is on the Advisory Board of the Project which helps lead and shape the program. Elana said she has loved writing since a little girl and joined the Post as a pathway to continue to improve her writing ability.

As part of her internship Elana reported on her experience with the Hospitality Kitchen, an organization that serves meals to those homeless on skid row. The purpose of the Hospitality Kitchen is to reimagine hospitality in the age of Coronavirus. Molly and Elana exchanged a conversation on Elana’s story of the Kitchen, the need to help others, how to arrange the details together and form a story. Elana said she would visit the Kitchen every Saturday until the pandemic broke out. Then, virtual visits and reporting took over. The discussion generated several interesting questions from WVRC members.

What is your most memorable moment? Elana indicated that an owner of apartment building for older people came to the Kitchen and picked up meals for some of his tenants. Very gratifying, Elana remarked. Where do your donations come from and is the Kitchen a non-profit? Private donors fund the Kitchen, she explained, but we are not a non-profit because Christians do not accept rewards (tax breaks) for their donations. (Humm…I have not heard that one before.)

Several other questions were asked of Elana and Molly before POD Aly wrapped up the meeting by giving a Polio Plus donation in Molly’s name.

Commentary by Tom Barron