

A note from Steve Johnston

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Sarah Stevenson
Tuesday Forum
C H A R L O T T E

A note from Steve Johnston

The July 4 holiday seems an appropriate time to share some issues on the future of the Forum and its mission. So bear with me for a few words. I am not a public speaker, so in order not to mangle this I will write it down.

1). As custodian of the Forum's funds, I have today moved \$150 from the Coffee Fund to the Action Fund. The Coffee Fund balance is now \$96.12, and the Action Fund balance is now \$488.18. Sarah Stevenson was focused for many years on supporting worthy causes during the Christmas holiday. The last dispersal from the Action Fund, however, was in December 2018. I hope your facilitators will revive this annual tradition in some form, now that there is a substantial balance in the fund. Additional donations to the Action Fund can be made by cash in an envelope marked "Action Fund" dropped into the coffee donation box. Such donations are not tax-deductible because the Forum is not a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

2). In 2004 I contracted lymphoma, a cancer that lives in the body's lymph nodes. As longtime attendees might remember, I was present every week in winter 2005 but would occasionally wrap my bald head in a durag. All of you

were most kind then, and also when a bit of lymphoma returned in 2007.

In April of this year I thought I had been injured when my left foot swelled. A compression sock pushed the fluid to my thigh. But the fluid has pooled in the thigh since, and this foot episode became the equivalent of the canary in the coal mine: Tests have now confirmed that a lymphoma has returned, effectively blocking the fluid from being re-absorbed by the lymph system. I will know more about the type of cancer on the afternoon of July 9, along with my oncologist's treatment plan. I expect the cancer to be treatable. I expect I will again schedule treatment so as not to miss Forum meetings. I expect to carry on my small part of the Forum's work. But like ol' Joe and ol' Don, I am older now, and my crystal ball broke many years ago.

In the run-up to my PET/CT scan last Friday, I kept Jackie Walton and Laura McClettie apprised of my situation. But now that I have confirmation of the lymphoma, I hope to avoid rumors by just sharing what I know with all. As treatment plans are put in place I will be happy to share more.

In the event of my absence, facilitators will need help finding volunteers to carry on some of the Forum's work. It's premature now to guess what the facilitators will want to continue, and what they will choose to suspend. Be thinking about what you might do, and who you might ask to help with: videography; writing; website maintenance; attendance tracking; e-blasts; being custodian of funds; setting up tables; brewing the coffee and acquiring supplies. In the last 20 years I have approached dozens of young people about doing any or all of these tasks. Declines revolved around the meeting hour, the lack of pay, and/or the weekly nature of the commitment.

Thank you for reading, and for contemplating how you might strengthen the future of the Forum. I look forward to seeing some or all of you at the next Forum on the 9th. In the meantime, and as the flashes and booms reach a crescendo out in the neighborhood, Happy Fourth!

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