

FULLTIMING

...during a pandemic

For members of the RVW Full Timers Chapter, living in our RV's since the new coronavirus changed the world can be challenging. Where can we safely shelter in place if we don't have a home base? How can we make summer plans when so many reservations have been canceled? What to do about this fall and future plans when so much about this virus is uncertain?

Several members of the Full Timers Chapter were willing to share their insights and their different stories of how their lives, and travels, have changed.

Sylvia Robinson and Dana Schodt

On March 31, **Sylvia Robinson** and **Dana Schodt** were happily settled in Huntington Beach State Park in their Allegro Bus 37 AP when South Carolina closed all state parks. The closures ended their plan to visit Myrtle Beach State Park, and they scrambled to find a new haven during COVID-19. A "dear RVW friend" offered them refuge for April at her home in Georgia while they regrouped. Since they are South Carolina residents, they were able to return to the state in May but found the state parks so packed that they moved to Hideaway RV resort in Myrtle Beach, where it is "practically empty." They are "sheltering in place as much as possible" with little socializing, wearing masks, and following the CDC's coronavirus guidelines. They enjoy occasional social distance visits with friends they feel haven't been exposed to the virus. They recently splurged on a happy hour visit to Bonefish Grill when South Carolina opened up restaurants. Their future may include travel to Florida.

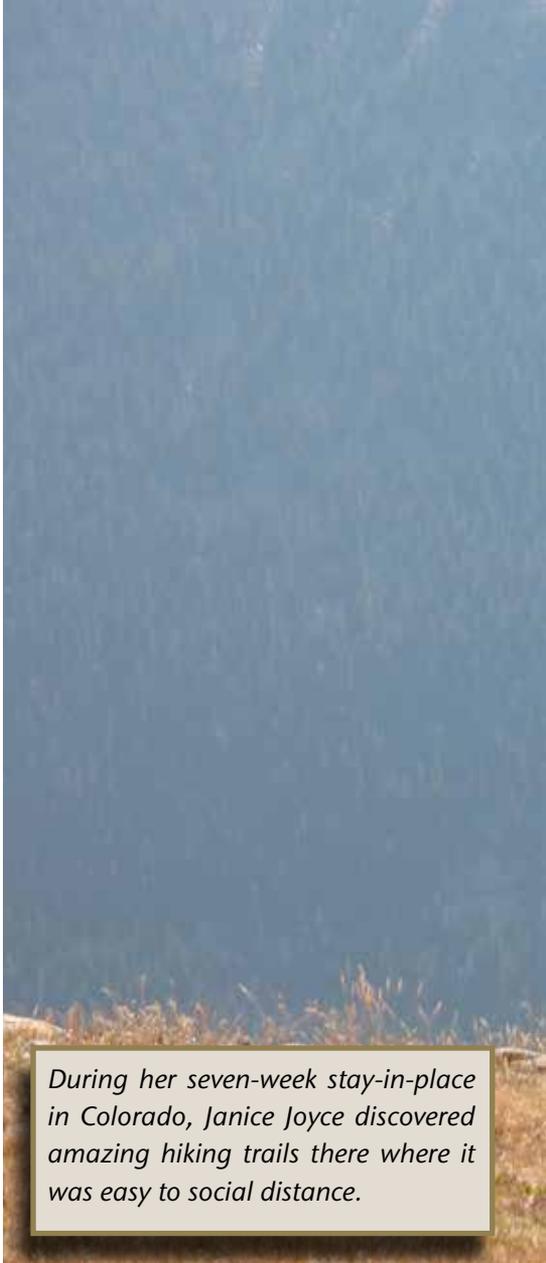
Lila O'Connor

Lila O'Connor left the road for the safety of staying in a friend's backyard in Georgia in March. With her Grand Design 367 BHS, it was already easy for her to work remotely, so self-isolating while working was an easy transition. "As a woman who frequently travels alone, I have always tried to be self-sufficient, because you can't always trust a stranger to 'help'. So, keeping my distance is part of my normal routine," she said.

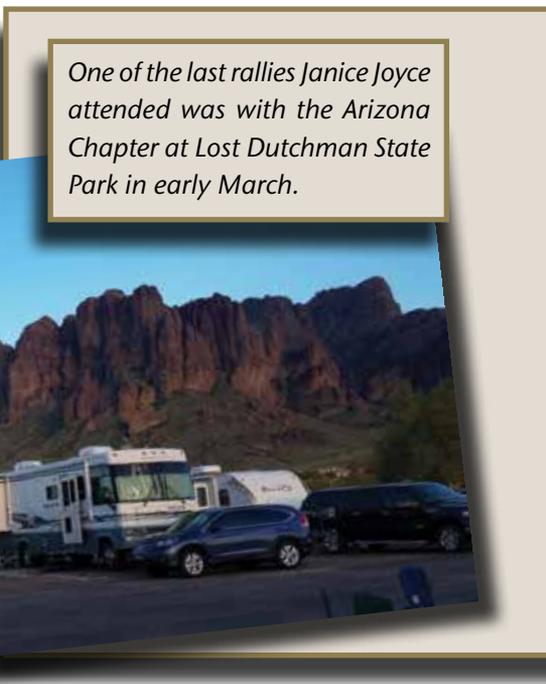
What is painful and "so heartbreaking, was not being able to hug my daughter and grandbabies" on their recent visit. Everyone wore masks and kept a safe distance, but "it was physically painful, and I cried when they left." Now that quarantines are lifting, Lila will soon move to camp in nearby state parks and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers parks because she feels "those kinds of parks give you the most space for social distancing." To relax, she plays FreeCell solitaire online and enjoys riding her Yamaha XT250. She admitted she sometimes feels lonely, so "I recently joined a couple of groups and am using social media to make some connections for caravanning in the near future."

Deb Spence and Robin Corddry

Deb Spence usually spends April meandering back to New England after wintering in Florida. This year, she and her wife **Robin Corddry** are still safely hunkered down in the Florida heat waiting to hear when campgrounds along the route will open to inter-state travel. Some of the campgrounds they have researched in Massachusetts ask for a 14-day quarantine in-state before visiting the campground, but it's uncertain how this will be enforced. A few campgrounds require a minimum of 25 feet between RVs, so the campgrounds will not be at full capacity. Deb and Robin were hoping to head back north in June, possibly visiting friends along the route.



During her seven-week stay-in-place in Colorado, Janice Joyce discovered amazing hiking trails there where it was easy to social distance.



One of the last rallies Janice Joyce attended was with the Arizona Chapter at Lost Dutchman State Park in early March.



Story by Janice Joyce

Janice is a member of the Full Timers Chapter as well as the Northeast Network. A certified Healing Touch Practitioner, Janice has volunteered for several years in a large hospital's complementary care department and would like to continue to volunteer while on the road.

Their biggest disappointment is missing family events because of stay-in-place orders. Their grandson's high school senior year was curtailed, and the planned graduation ceremony and the party were postponed. On the upside, because of their enforced immobility, they have "moved tons of yard waste" and abandoned buildings on their Florida property, rebuilt a shed and enjoyed many rounds of golf. They have also "cooked more in the last two months than in the last two years." Before making future plans, they have a wait-and-see attitude, but if they head north in June, they hope to return to their Florida home in September or October.

Lisa Mandelin

For **Lisa Mandelin**, a licensed veterinarian working as a private contractor in clinics providing veterinary medical/surgical services, life has made a major shift. Three years ago, she sold her California veterinary practice, gave away her belongings, and "hit the road" with her veterinary business. Because of COVID-19, 90 percent of her professional time is spent developing and serving her online education and membership service for pet parents. People quarantined are spending more time with their pets and on their computers but have less spending money. "I have educational resources and online digital courses that pet parents use to self-educate and learn how to treat and prevent common ailments," Lisa explained. She recently upsized from a 21-foot Outdoors trailer to an Arctic Fox 27-5L fifth wheel, giving her more working and breathing room.

Lisa has been working from an RV slot in a southern California Elks Club since restrictions started, spending 10 percent of her time in a local veterinary clinic. The clinic business has shifted to curbside pickup where clients drive up and drop off pets. All paperwork is handled from the car or by phone. She finds this more productive as it allows her more time with patients and less time with check-in/office tasks.

Now that quarantines are lifting, Lisa's plans include traveling to do clinical work in the Denver, Colorado area,

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UPDATE

With the magazine deadline in late May, many of the women in the article have moved on. Here's what they are doing in late June.

Sylvia Robinson and Dana Schodt

Dana and Sylvia are still in Myrtle Beach, but planning to move to the Ocala, Florida area in July. They appreciate Janice's work gathering information for this article. "We are proud to be members of such a great group!" said Sylvia. "We are also hoping to see lots of ladies in Sarasota next year!"

Lila O'Connor

Lila was able to get in three weeks of camping in South Carolina and Georgia in June and then met friends in Alabama. "The Nocallula Falls Campground in Gadsden, Alabama was packed. Social distancing was a challenge, but doable. I'm back at my moochdocking location until mid August when I hope to get out to a COE campground at Lake Allatoona in Georgia."

Deb Spence and Robin Corddry

As of the end of June, Deb and Robin had not yet headed north to Massachusetts. "I was sick for about four weeks," said Deb, "but it wasn't COVID-19!" They are being careful whenever they leave their Florida home since it is one of the states hit hardest by the virus, and are still planning to head north in late July.

Lisa Mandelin

After leaving California, Lisa had solar work done on her rig in Arizona and then dry camped in the Four Corners /Moab, Utah area and Montrose, Colorado. "I will now be heading to northern Colorado to visit friends, do some veterinary clinical work and continue working on my membership/educational programs for pet owners."

Fulltimers discover life on road became more difficult

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visiting with family, and continuing to develop her online business. To her, the silver lining of this pandemic is that people enjoy more time with their pets. “There is so much that we can learn from our pets,” she said. “How they look at life, they don’t take things too seriously, aren’t consumed by ego, live in the moment, and they love and accept us, no matter how bad our quarantine haircuts look!”

Leslie Connelly

Leslie Connelly has been full-timing since May of 2016 in a 19-foot Roadtrek SS Agile. In March, she was content “touristing” along the California coast. When her tour of Hearst Castle was canceled and the news became alarming, she knew COVID-19 was throwing a “wrench into all of my spring plans.” Just south of San Francisco, she learned the national forests and free campsites in California had closed. Since those were her usual go-tos for boondocking, her planned two-night stay at a private campground turned into an expensive 29 nights.

Thanks to medication for depression, Leslie stays healthy and sticks to a careful schedule. She goes to bed by 10 p.m. and is up by 7:30 a.m. She is also faithfully committed to three goals a day, like wash the RV, organize photos, etc. So being in “serious quarantine” for the 29 days was difficult, and she carefully monitored her emotional state. Although the highlight of her week was a trip to the grocery store, she daily walked the ocean cliffs and beaches and visited the dog park as part of her mental health regime.

Leslie already had a summer waitressing workcamp assignment arranged at a café in Cougar, Washington. She was very careful as she traveled there in May, only camping self-contained in truck stops and stopping just to pump gas while using gloves. The café eventually opened for curbside and take-out service. She said she was amused by a first in her life, serving “take-out mixed drinks” along with dinners. Now, the café is open at 50 percent occupancy and her duties include sanitizing everything in sight after every customer. Activities she usually does while workamping, like visiting museums and local sites, are not being done, just short hikes and scenic drives. Asked about future plans, Leslie is philosophical. “Who knows where I will be in the fall?” But she does have tentative plans to see a new grandchild in Denver and a sister in Atlanta.

Amy Mook

Amy Mook was relaxing on day 11 of a 35-day cruise from Buenos Aires to South Africa when the journey abruptly ended March 15. Since she had



Leslie Connelly



Amy Mook

UPDATE

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Leslie Connelly

Leslie is still working at Lone Fir Resort near Mount St. Helens in Washington. “I have taken some hikes (strolls) and scenic drives on my days off.” Next, she heads to Denver to see a new granddaughter, Atlanta to visit a sister, down the coast to the Florida Keys and up the Gulf to convention.

Amy Mook

Amy is still in Pittsburgh. She would like to get her Winnebago, which has been in storage in Arizona for eight months, and travel again, but realizes it’s a risk. As for her interrupted cruise, she moved the cruise credit to a 25-day Suez Canal cruise in 2021, “but who knows,” she added.

Linda Sims

“I left the Fort Worth area mid-June and headed to Dodge City, Kansas to visit my kiddos. It’s hot, windy and stormy up here! I’ve been playing pickle ball, golf and walking. I’m now headed to Ruidoso, New Mexico, barring no shut-downs due to the increasing COVID-19.”

Pat Mineo and Deni Smith

Pat and Deni made it back to New York. “We have settled back into our northern home, and after a two-week, self imposed, partial self isolation, we have started visiting safely with friends.”



Linda Sims

plans for a week's visit with her sister in Pittsburgh after the cruise, she was able to rearrange travel plans and arrive in Pittsburgh on March 16, where she has stayed safely in place.

Amy explained how her life has changed from solo, full-time travel to sedentary family time with her sister. "It's the most time we've spent together in 58 years. We are watching lots of TV, especially *Jeopardy* and *Wheel of Fortune*. We are sleeping late and taking naps, baking, cooking and eating well (thanks to my sister's superior skills). Three to five days a week, we

drive to local restaurants, take advantage of drive-through facilities and purchase lunch. Grocery stores are open, and we visit them weekly. I don't think that I have ever been in so many grocery stores!"

To stay connected, Amy has a daily phone conversation with one of her friends. To stay connected with her love of full-time RVing, she has re-subscribed to 13 magazines, mostly regarding travel. Her 2006 Winnebago View is stored in Surprise, Arizona, ready when this "love to travel!" RVing woman can get back on the road.

Linda Sims

Another member side-tracked by COVID-19 is **Linda Sims**, who found herself still at the Coffee Creek RV Resort in Santo, Texas, after the RVW Ramblin' Rose Chapter rally there in mid-March. At the end of the rally, she put her plans to travel to Fort Worth on hold as the state began to close-down. Being a self-confessed type A personality, she finds working 18 hours a week "a blessing, otherwise, I'd be crazy by now!" She also bikes or

walks every day and recently took up golf to fill up "leftover hours."

During lock-down, Linda's toughest time was missing her grandson's 18th birthday and high school graduation in May. He is in Dodge City, Kansas, the No. 1 virus hotspot in that state, and she wasn't able to travel there. But she is also counting her blessings that all her family is safe and well. She was hoping for a visit with them in June if the virus curve had flattened. Future plans included Ruidoso, New Mexico, in July for a couple of months since it's "too dang hot in north Texas." Linda has put 4,000 miles on her 2016 NeXus Viper 27V since starting full-timing in September 2019 and is eagerly anticipating getting back on the road. As someone who is "not a sit-still girl," she sends a message to her RVW friends and says, "I miss all at the rallies. I love the laughter, playing cards/games and the dang good cocktails."

Pat Mineo and Deni Smith

Despite the disruption COVID-19 caused in their lives, **Pat Mineo** and **Deni Smith** feel "incredibly lucky to have an extended 'family' to be self-isolated with." In March, they were happily wintering in a Venice, Florida RV park and enjoying what they call their "day camp for adults...so many activities we can't fit them all in." That all changed as everything in their resort began to shut down for safety reasons. "Social distancing and masks became the norm instead of happy hours and potluck dinners," they said. To stay positive, Pat and Deni gathered with friends in small groups, rode bikes on remote paths, and had a golf cart parade to celebrate birthdays for two 98-year-old neighbors.

After a couple in the park was diagnosed with COVID-19, restrictions tightened. Many of their neighbors cleared out. Pat and Deni decided to purchase a park model that has kept them busy cleaning, painting and repairing. They are now on their way back to western New York state for the summer. Future plans include purchasing a smaller travel trailer for next winter season and, hopefully, a warm winter in Florida.

Nan Nelson

COVID-19 has dramatically changed **Nan Nelson's** life. This past winter, after finishing a short-term RV park job in Yuma, Arizona, she enjoyed the full-time life and leisurely traveled "lovingly and aimlessly around in the Arizona sunshine." Finally, arriving in Silver City, New Mexico in late February, Nan first heard about what would soon transform her life. During a visit to the post office, she learned of



Dana Schodt

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Fulltiming helped prepare them for COVID

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of the devastating effect a virus called COVID-19 was having on the nation and that states were beginning to lock-down. Her time of traveling leisurely was over, and it was now time to shelter in place in Silver City. In late April, as the pandemic heightened in New Mexico, she began a “swashbuckling, two-day drive” back home to Minneapolis with friends.

Now, everything is different. At the end of June, Nan will stop full-time RVing, store her van for the foreseeable future and move into a small condo in Minneapolis.

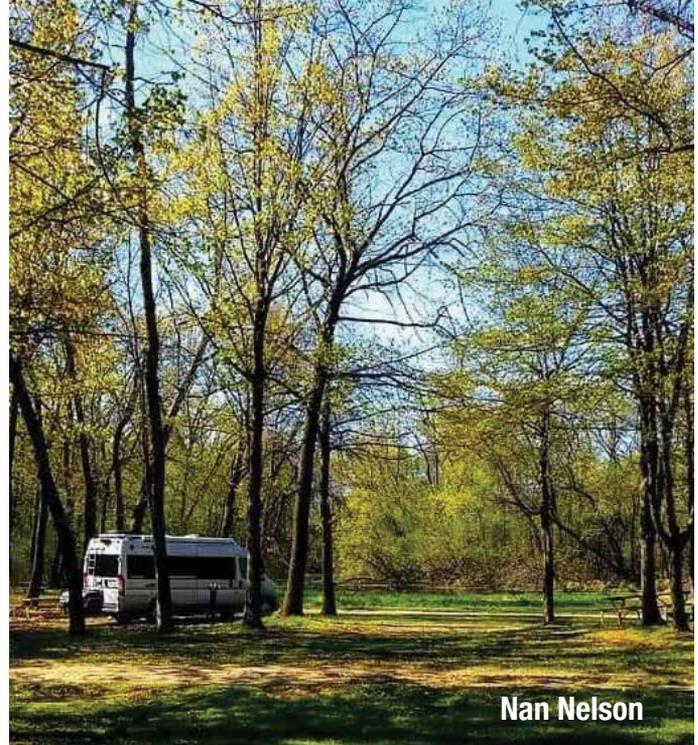
“At a time when tomorrow cannot be planned, much less fathomed, it seems to be a smart move,” she said. Her van will be available in hopes of a winter escape, but she’s not planning beyond the current moment.

Nan sums up perfectly the feelings of many RVers.

“Normally, I cope with any life turmoil by planning my next route, my next adventure. Sitting still, I’ve now turned to connecting with others in much the same way I learned while traveling remotely. It is, after all, the one thing I’ve really polished as a result of traveling. Wherever I ventured, I would post photos and write about it. Now I go on long walks. This started in Silver City and is something I’ve continued. I now walk, post photos and write about my much slower walking travels in this time of COVID-19.”

Janice Joyce

Personally, for me, full-timing soon is also uncertain. Last summer, after several years of part-time travel together in an 18-foot RPod trailer, my husband, Henry, craved downtime at home. When a used 2016 Roadtrek Zion popped up on *RV Trader*, it was the perfect vehicle to purchase to try full-timing on my own for a couple of years. Henry planned visits every few months to enjoy the sun himself, and we were able to enjoy a long warm January visit in Arizona’s state parks. In March, while boondocking next to a friend’s trailer on Arizona’s Forest Service land, I came down with flu-like symptoms and quarantined in place for a couple of weeks to



recover. Spring plans to meet Henry in the Texas Hill Country for the wildflowers and music festivals fell apart as Texas state parks closed to camping and events shut down. Arizona state and national forest land also shut down, and the state and private parks were giving mixed signals as to whether they would stay open.

The dilemma became finding a safe place to continue to quarantine for the short term. Since New York was a hotbed of the virus at that time, it was better to travel to a sister’s more remote mountainside home outside of Denver, Colorado. Once again, I isolated, this time in the separate bedroom/bathroom suite she had arranged. A planned two-week visit with Mary turned into seven weeks as we watched states shut down. Traveling with a New York state license plate seemed like hanging out a “Do Not Even Think of Stopping Here” sign, so we waited until restrictions were easing up. Luckily, Colorado has a multitude of remote hiking trails. With outdoor walking recreation, Mary’s good cooking, Netflix, and Zoom calls with family and friends, I became healthy and active.

I left Colorado in mid-May with Mary as a co-driver. We spent nights self-contained, mostly in Harvest Hosts sites, on our route back to upstate New York. The hosts were welcoming and left organic produce or other purchases outside closed shop doors as we parked in the far reaches of their parking lots. I hope that late summer will be spent in our 2016 RPod trailer in Maine with Henry and the grandkids, after first fulfilling Maine’s requirement for a 14-day quarantine in-state. All autumn plans are on hold as we wait to see what happens.

In all, these RVing Women stories reveal that members of the Full Timers Chapter have learned resilience, self-reliance and flexibility from their life on the road. These have proven to be essential skills during this time of quarantines and semi-isolation. We were, and are, well equipped for this crisis. We know how to weigh and evaluate options and make decisions carefully. The virus has also taught us how blessed we are with wonderful friends and family, and what a valued resource our RVW community can be.

May we all be together again at RVW rallies and along the road in the near future.

UPDATE

Here’s what the women are doing now.

Nan Nelson

Nan cleaned out her RV/van and moved into a condo. “If the world were ‘normal’ I’d be driving across Canada right now. I already miss my full time RV lifestyle, but I will be on the road again this winter since Minnesota gets a bit chilly.”

Janice Joyce

“Henry and I are heading to Maine in early July with our travel trailer to camp with the grandkids. We are still hoping to winter in the southwest. There’s a rolling rally with the Full Timers Chapter starting in Death Valley in December that would be fun. We’ll see!”