

## **PET SITTING WHILE COVID-19 IS STILL A THREAT**

Covid-19 has certainly created a problem for anyone counting on being able to travel to pet or house-sit. My last sit ended March 5, 2020 in San Diego. My next sit was going to be Glendale, AZ for an old Pitty named Pooka and then down to Tucson to sit for a friend's dogs, but of course they had to cancel their plans.

After Tucson I would have taken care of my daughter Linda's four dogs while she and her hubby went to cruise around Great Britain and Ireland. Then I would have headed back up to Yorba Linda to care for Stanley and Lady for the third time. Instead, I had to arrange to stay with my kids for much longer than the usual short visits. I stayed home except to get groceries and always washed my hands and all the packages when I got home. Masks didn't become a thing until a few weeks in, even in California.

In mid-May, I noticed some chest pain, a racing pulse and a feeling of anxiety. Not knowing if these were symptoms of Covid-19, I didn't want to just run off to the doctor. After about a week, it finally got bad enough to go to the ER. Yep! I was having a heart attack! That afternoon the cardiologists put in one stent and I went home the next day. As surgeries go, this one was pretty easy on me even though I definitely had to take it easy for a couple weeks. It was also the only way I got tested for Covid. I was negative.

But then in June, a friend of my daughter was taking a family trip to the mid-west and asked me to sit at her home in Burbank. Finally! Something to do! But also worries developed on how to get there, would either of us unknowingly infect the other, and if I got sick, who would take care of her dogs?

First, I chose Amtrak to head north. The business class car always has far fewer passengers than coach and I sanitized the heck out on my tray and armrests. The homeowner Diana picked me up from the train station, so no need to use public transit or Uber to get to her house. I drove them to LAX the next morning using her SUV which she kindly allowed me to drive while they were gone.

Shopping for groceries was no different from what I had been doing throughout the quarantine. I unloaded items on one counter and wiped them down with Lysol as I moved them to another counter. After putting it away, I cleaned the first counter. Diana was already having anyone coming into her house leave their shoes outside and wash their hands right away.

The dogs loved me being there because where they usually got one or two walks a day, I was taking them on 3, 4 or 5 a day! The big dog, Ty, could be out of sight but the sound of me opening the Velcro on my visor had him up and coming my way. When I picked up their leashes, he would literally jump for joy. The little dog, Kobe, was older but kept up pretty well. The nice thing about walking is you can cross the street or turn around to avoid being in close proximity to strangers not wearing masks.

In the meantime, my daughter had secured a new job in Spokane, WA and made an initial trip up with her hubby over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. They brought my granddaughter dog Koda to Burbank and I drove them to LAX. Koda had met Diana's dogs before so there were no dog fights.



When Diana came back, I had Carey's car to drive myself and Koda back to San Diego. Easy-peazy. Next, I helped drive Carey and the dog up to start the new job. That was a long 2-day trip but by driving, we had control of our exposure to Covid.

My next move may not have been the brightest: their new rental was about to be full of other friends and family helping with the overall move, so I needed to vacate. I had been looking to buy a house in the mid-west (the only place affordable) so I checked with friends and family back there reference staying with them awhile. Each said to come and so I headed back. I flew Delta to St Louis. They were keeping middle seats empty and not trying to make passengers pay for it. I wore my mask and visor and the flight attendants handed out snack packs that included sanitizing wipes to use for cleaning the tray, etc. Of course, I had my own bottle of hand sanitizer.

I rented a car and first went to Springfield, IL to stay with friends Rob and Patti. The houses a realtor showed me (using masks and social distancing) were not what I wanted. Then I drove across to Springfield, MO to my niece's house. I really had no idea if I had been exposed at any time since testing negative in May, but the people I was visiting were not concerned and so I went. I was referred to a realtor and found a house the second day of showings. I close Oct 5<sup>th</sup>.

I flew American Airlines to San Diego (they filled every seat) because they had the best fare. I would have rather fly on one that was distancing passengers. I got a motel room and had three doctor appointments scheduled over the next two days. Next, I took Amtrak business class back to Orange County and have been staying at my daughter Linda's house. It is now September 7<sup>th</sup> (Labor Day) and I'm not sick. I've either been lucky, have good immunity to Covid (I am O-), or had it early on and didn't know it. I am careful to sanitize and wash my hands often. I always wear a mask when entering a store and try to socially distance once inside, but there are clearly people who have no clue what six feet is. Even outside I wear a mask within 10-15 feet of strangers. I sanitize when I get into a car and wipe down the steering wheel, handles and knobs.

The house-sitting websites were quite bare for a long time but are starting to get more and more listings. Some gave members free months to make up for the lack of listings. If I weren't buying a house, I would start sitting again. As it is, I have one more scheduled in San Diego starting next week but then head back to Missouri in a moving truck.

TrustedHousesitters.com has a thorough plan you can log on and see even if you are not a member. They want to remind people to not go to a sit if you've been ill at any time in the prior two weeks and to communicate with the homeowner. Homeowners need to have a back-up plan in the event a sitter cancels because of illness or must cut their stay short. These, of course, are the kind of back-up plans most people always consider but now it may be more important. They are

recommending a video handover instead of in-person contact for keys and instructions. They suggest homeowners not only clean before the sitter arrives but to have enough cleaning supplies on-hand (including 70% rubbing alcohol) so the incoming sitter has what they need. Also, the likelihood the pets will get Covid is very low and there's no indication pets can give it to humans.

Foreign house-sitting by Americans will be dependent on each countries' limitations on tourists entering from high Covid countries. Heck, we still have states that do not want people from certain other states to visit. It is going to be a challenge for some time.