The following pages contain the complete set of interview questions and responses that were used in preparing the article, “Quarantined at Sea: Judy DeMuth Talks About Their Cruise,” published in the April, 2020, League Letter.

1. When on your trip did you learn of the virus on Board? On the morning of March 4th, we received a letter under our door that stated that a passenger on the previous sailing had tested positive for the virus. At that time, it was not known if anyone on the ship had the virus.

2. As a nurse, what did the ship captain and staff do to cut down on contact with each other? Immediately in all the dining areas (buffet and dining rooms), passengers were not allowed to help themselves to food. The staff, with gloves on would dish up the food or use tongs to place rolls, butter on your plate. Salt, pepper and sugar were removed from all tables. You had to ask for them and then the staff would dispense it onto your food. The pools were shut down.

3. If there were their seriously ill people on Board, what was done for them and were they removed off of the ship? Each ship has a medical team comprised of doctors and nurses. They have a unit where they care for the ill. At one point, a passenger was helicoptered off the ship. I am not sure what medical condition that passenger was experiencing. There are many elderly people on the ship and sometimes, they have issues with their ongoing medical conditions. So not everyone in the infirmary was ill due to Covid 19.

4. Glad you are back without getting the corona virus. What did you do to prevent getting it? We were confined to our stateroom from noon on March 5th to the 11th. We were to wear a mask when answering our door. While at Dobbins ARB, we had to wear a mask any time we answered the door or went outside. Since we have been home, we are under another 14 day quarantine. We are able to run a few errands at non peak times and we always wear a mask and wash our hands well upon returning home. We have to monitor our temperatures twice daily and report that to our public health nurse.

5. What did you do to keep yourselves occupied? On the ship, the staff, supplied us with daily quizzes, and activity kits. They added 90 more movies and other programs to the TV. They also provided programs on the Princess channel doing exercise activities e.g. yoga. There was free internet and telephone access.

6. What do you think of the government’s present shutdown roles? This is a very political question. It was apparent when we were cruising along the California coastline for several days waiting for a port to be identified for disembarkment and that the government was ill prepared for this crisis. The Captain was having to deal with local, state and federal officials and would get mixed messages from them. San Francisco refused to let us dock there, so that is why we ended up in Oakland. I still believe that the federal government was not prepared for this viral outbreak. They continue to give mixed messages and have not done a good job at reassuring the public. I think the states are doing more to contain and control this crisis than the federal government.

7. What cruise ship were you on, and approximately how many passengers and crew were on board? We were on the Grand Princess with approximately 2500 passengers and 1000 crew.
8. When did you embark on the cruise, and what stops did it make? How long was the cruise originally scheduled to take? We departed from San Francisco on February 21st for a 15 day cruise to Hawaii and Mexico. The first four days were sea days, before we stopped at Kauai, then Oahu, Maui and lastly the big island of Hawaii. Late on February 29th, we sailed for Ensenada Mexico. It was supposed to take 4 days to sail to Mexico. When we were notified March 4th of the potential exposure, we were diverted straight to California.

9. What was known about the coronavirus when you set out? Was it still mainly present in Wuhan/Hubei Province, China, or had it begun to cross international borders? We knew that the virus had spread to other countries and there were a few pockets of the illness in the US.

10. Were passengers kept up-to-date throughout the cruise that the virus was spreading rapidly to other parts of the world? The ship has four major news networks, BBC, MSNBC, CNBC and Fox News. You could watch as much of the news as you wanted. The Captain would come on at least twice daily to give us updates about the ships situation.

11. At what point did you realize that things were changing, that this would not be a “normal” cruise trip? Did the change occur gradually over a few days, or was it abrupt? We were notified of the possible exposure on the morning of March 4th and confined to our cabins at noon on the 5th.

12. How did you find out that some fellow passengers and crew members were positive for the virus? What were the reactions of passengers to this news? How was it handled by ship officials in charge? On March 5th, CDC personnel were helicoptered to the ship by US Coast Guard. They tested the seven passengers that had been on the prior sailing along with 20+ crew. On the 6th, while watching news on MSNBC, VP Pence came on national television and announced the results of the testing aboard the Grand Princess; that 2 passengers and 21 crew tested positive. We sat in stunned silence to learn the results like that. Shortly after the press conference, the Captain came on the PA system and apologized for us hearing the news in that fashion. He would have preferred to tell us himself. You could tell by the tone of his voice he was very upset. I really can’t speak for the other passengers since we kept to ourselves starting on the 4th. Once isolated to our cabins there was rare contact with anyone, unless you called at someone in a balcony near ours.

13. Once the ship was in quarantine off the coast of California, what was life on board like for the two weeks you were in limbo? Describe the hardships of confinement to your room, the emotions that you were experiencing (fear, uncertainty, anxiety, etc.) My husband and I played a lot of cribbage, we read, I did my hardanger embroidery, we watched movies, the news and old TV shows e.g. Cheers. The major feelings we experienced was that of having no control of our situation and the lack of information. When would we dock; where would we go; how we would get there; and would we ever get home?

14. What measures were taken on board during the quarantine to try and prevent the spread of infection? Did you feel they were adequate? See question # 2. In addition all public gatherings, lectures, and other activates were cancelled. All the staff from food service and cabin steward wore face masks and gloves. There are sinks at the entrance to the buffet and hand sanitizers around the ship. Princess did a far better job of trying to prevent the spread of the virus than those in charge of the quarantine facilities at
Dobbins ARB. It took 10 hours for us to receive toilet paper, over 30 hours to receive a bar of soap and small bottle of shampoo. In the three days we were there, we never received towels despite repeated requests for towels. Water was delivered but not as frequently as on the ship. There were no hand sanitizers to be seen at Dobbins only in the area where the HHS workers worked in the parking lot in front of our buildings. When we left Dobbins, they still did not have all the equipment to do testing of those in quarantine. At Dobbins we were supposed to have our temperature taken twice daily. The temperature was taken upon arrival and only three more times (two of those times were on the last day there).

15. Did electronic devices work reliably on the ship? Were you able to communicate with family and friends at home using email or Skype or WhatsApp? Sometimes the ship's internet is a bit slow, but they added more broadband to facilitate the internet. We face timed our family daily. Once the crisis occurred, we were told that telephone access was free. The ships telephone lines to the mainland were always busy. We finally had cell phone access once we docked in Oakland.

16. Despite all the negatives of your experience, did you walk away with any uplifting feelings about human nature, e.g., did you observe kindness, generosity of spirit, self-sacrifice, patience, humor, etc., during your collective ordeal? All the ships staff were always pleasant and polite whether we called on the phone or when they delivered our meals or other items we requested. The military only provided the building and the management of our quarantine was under the auspices of HHS/CDC. There were different divisions from HHS present at Dobbins and all of the personnel were friendly and kind. We did not experience any negative interactions. However, it was apparent that the different branches of HHS do not always communicate well with each other.

17. How did your experience shape your views of future travel? Once the pandemic has run its course, will you ever go on another cruise or travel abroad? Do you anticipate limiting your travels from now on? We do have a cruise booked for late August, but are seriously considering postponing it for a year. Yes, we will cruise again just not sure when. Our travel plans will most likely be in the continental US for the remainder of this year.