

**January 2022 Theme: New Skills for The New Year**

**Sarah Darer Littman** -- My new skill for the new year is that I achieved my open water scuba certification. I never thought I could do scuba because I've got asthma, but apparently they have new guidance and after going through a pulmonary function test my doctor signed off. After I got my PADI certification, I managed two boat dives with Hank (a keen diver) as my buddy.



It was great to finally be able to join him in this amazing hobby. We saw sea turtles (magical creatures!) and moray eels and rays and octopus and beautiful fish. We also saw the coral nurseries being planted underwater to try to regenerate the reefs being killed by global warming and destructive human activity.

Alas, after that wonderful experience, the next day I developed ear equalization/sinus issues. I got down to 10 feet and it felt like my face was about to explode. Saw a doctor later that day and he told me not to dive for the rest of the trip. It was amazing while it lasted, and hopefully I'll get in more dives next time!

**Doris Mady** -- My new skill for the new year will likely not win me friends. Dare I say that it could make people mad? Perhaps. It's even bound to have people ask, "Hey, what's going on with her?" I've been kicking the new skill around in my mind for a while. You see, I've been practicing saying "No." Sometimes I'll turn my head left & right. (Some will think I'm doing double chin exercises. As you know, real chin exercises are facilitated by having the head go up & down. *Check with a doctor before you try this dangerous maneuver.*) I may say: no, NO (with an exclamation point), nope, I'd love to... but I can't, no-o-o-o, or even nay. In my pursuit of this new skill I now know Russian (Нет), Chinese (不), Urdu (naye), etc. There are so many endless possibilities for this new skill and luckily so many languages use the word "no" in their own language. Phew! That's a relief.

Incidentally, should I ever slip and say "Maybe" be aware that is code for "No."

Am I glad I'm learning this new skill? **Yes!!!**

**WHAT? NEW SKILLS FOR THE NEW YEAR? Lee Paine 12/15/2021**

This title hit me between my eyes -  
"New skills for the new year?"  
What about the old skills?  
Put them aside? Oh, dear!

I guess it really depends  
on how "new" is defined -  
new skills improving on the old ones?  
Or in entirely new fields, undefined?

And are skills what we do physically -  
the output of our hands and voices -  
or are ideas yet to materialize,  
skills we develop through choices?

I'm thinking, of course, of my artistic skills -  
writing, photography, singing -  
that all diminish if not kept sharp,  
skills one can't keep up by winging.

I know the idea of "new skills"  
is to challenge oneself to learn  
new concepts, try things out,  
give fresh thoughts a turn,

but living in this Covid world  
requires multiple new living skills per day,  
pulling energy from practiced artistic skills,  
which hurts me very much to say.

New skills for the New Year?  
I've got "older" ones I'd still like to perfect,  
but if I have time to improve even one,  
which one would I select?

Sing more, no poetry or photos,  
or all photos, stop writing, sing less?  
For me, it must be all three  
or my life will be a mess!

So here's to doing what I can  
with any new skills I'll learn,  
adding "new"ances to all three,  
and be proud of what I've earned!



*Feelings In The COVID World* by Lee Paine

**Adrienne Reedy** -- My New Skill for the New Year is Iconography

It all started when our son's nanny Amy went back home to Cyprus for vacation and when she returned, she surprised me with a combined miniature icon of St. Peter and St. Paul. I enjoy contemplative meditation practices with the use of sacred art. After I fell in love with my little icon, I purchased a larger one of the Nativity at a Greek festival. Iconography is something that intrigues me. By the time you read this, I will have completed a six-week workshop on Iconography.



What I learned in this class is that unbeknownst to me, I already painted two icons. I submitted two of my paintings to the class facilitator after she made a request to the class. When she received my paintings, she asked if she could use them in her power point presentation and asked if I would talk about my works and what inspired me. One piece of art is called The Suffering Jesus and the other Fulfilling Righteousness, a pastel of Jesus preparing for his baptism. What's unique is both paintings portray Jesus as a black man.

Of course, I was delighted and honored to share my art and to realize that my pieces were already considered icons just not in the traditional sense. It was, the subject matter and use of symbols that told the story and made them icons. But for me the artist, it is important that Jesus appears black and how I want him to appear to the generations to follow. So I will take this year to explore Sacred Art and paint God, Jesus, Saints as well as Contemporary saintly characters to have brown skin like me. It's important for icons to also have tanned colored skin like my sons. I want to do this for my grandchildren to come, as well as for other people of color to be able to see themselves in the Sacred.

**Heather Sandifer** -- My new skills are learning and relearning to finish a quilt. My mother created this quilt 25 years ago with vintage fabrics and those from clothing my sister and I wore. She had intended to have it finished by Amish quilters before she died. I learned, through a local fabric store, how to hand-tie the body of the quilt to keep the batting in place, shown here. My next step is to re-learn the quilting stitch techniques for an inner border around the central design. Finally, I will complete the quilt with blind hem stitching to create a finished rolled border. All by hand.



**February Theme: My Totem Animal\***

In Native American culture, a totem animal is the spiritual symbol of an individual, family, or tribe. Your totem animal, according to American Indian belief, is the main guiding spirit that stays with you for your lifetime or your family throughout its lineage.

**For fun and to find your Totem Animal please visit:**

<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-totems/>