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QUOTE FOR THE DAY

“Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” Ben Franklin

NOT SO FAST BEN

In most cases Ben’s statement would seem to be good advice, but not when it comes to Covid- 19 (CV). Unlike the citizens of Germany who seem to be more self disciplined when it comes to keeping CV at bay, the U.S. is anything but. Recent articles about North and South Dakota are shocking in terms of the indifference shown to the threat until it was too late. Those two states just happen to be the most recent, as the last ten months have been witness to many, many regions of the country where the citizenry just didn’t get the word, or more appropriately, didn’t want to get it.

The non mask wearers and the non safe distancers are as much to blame for our problems as anyone.

Interesting article in yesterday's paper discussing beating the pandemic with a "swiss cheese defense" The concept being that if you lined up ten pieces of swiss cheese there would be very few consecutive pieces that would have any matching holes. Applying this concept to CV, by limiting the many pathways that CV takes to get into the body, you effectively dramatically reduce your own risk.

Ian Mackay came up with this concept, which contains two separate but connected parts: Personal responsibilities and Shared responsibilities. Personal responsibilities include: Physical distance, stay home if sick; masks; hands, hygiene, cough etiquette; avoid touching your face; if crowded, limit your time.

Shared responsibilities include: Fast testing and tracing; ventilation, outdoors, air filtration; government messaging and financial support; quarantine and isolation; vaccines.

We are all familiar with many of these steps and the more of them that we can follow, the less likely for the virus to find two pieces of “swiss cheese” with matching holes which it can penetrate and cause sickness.

Just as the two most promising vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) are coming out, the country is experiencing the worst CV surge yet. The daily map in the NY Times which show outbreak activity in shades from white to grey to black (black being the most serious) now shows most of the country to be dark grey to black.

On a very positive note, the CEOs of CVS and Walgreens were on a lengthy interview recently discussing the protocols that have been set up to vaccinate the citizenry – very impressive. While most health care workers and nursing home residents will be getting the vaccine on site, a large percentage of the rest of America will be vaccinated at the drug stores. The checking and double checking that has been set up is very comforting – just simple things like making certain if you get the Pfizer shot first, you don’t accidentally get the Moderna vaccine for your second shot. If you

miss your second shot, they have your information and will come looking for you. Thousands have been added to the staff, who have been properly trained to give the shots. Remaining question I have, which wasn't addressed – vaccinations will be given in a prescribed order – that is – after health care workers and nursing home residents, the next group will be elderly with predisposing conditions and other adults with predisposing conditions. So let's say you are an eighty year old with hypertension – guess that means you are in the first group, BUT, vaccinations will be given by appointment only so how many people will be manning the phones at CVS? How does the appointment scheduler know/verify you have a predisposition? When can you start calling to make an appointment? Hopefully, these and other questions will be clarified shortly.

In the meantime, we remain in the most serious phase of the pandemic yet encountered. To bring a numerical focus on how serious this is, here, from the internet are the deadliest moments in American history:

- 1. 1900 Galveston hurricane 8,000 died**

2. Battle of Antietam	3,600
3. 9/11/2001 attacks	2,977
4. Last Thursday Covid 19	2,861
5. Last Wed. “	2,762
6. Last Tues. “	2,461
7. Last Fri. “	2,439
8. Pearl Harbor	2,403

And, so I believe, if Mr. Franklin were still around, he would think it worthwhile to give up some liberties in favor of safety.

FURTHER DISTRICT ATTORNEY IDIOCY

With NYC, Chicago and Los Angeles as well as many smaller, but important regional cities like Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington experiencing up to twice as many shootings as all of last year, we have a batch of new coddling DAs who don't want anyone prosecuted unless they did something “really bad” a very subjective term. Oh, and cash bail, just totally unfair, the poor criminals are less able to afford it than the wealthy criminals.

Along comes the new DA for LA, George Gascon. Newspaper reports have him

establishing the most hands off attitude towards protestors and criminals of any other DA to date. One TV report states that he will not even prosecute for resisting arrest. Let's think about that folks. Why would you not resist arrest if you know you are not going to be prosecuted for it? Another cop's life put in jeopardy. Here's where I take off my neutral cloak. This is B.S.

WE JUST LOST A GREAT ONE

Chuck Yeager, a true American hero who came out of the West Virginia hills with only a high school education and a drawl that many of his fellow pilots never fully understood, has passed away at the age of 97. One of our best fighter pilots in WWII, he shot down five German planes in a single day and thirteen over the course of the war. But the thing for which he is most remembered was breaking the sound barrier on October 14, 1947, in what was essentially a rocket plane. Other test pilots had been killed attempting this previously. I remember reading years ago that something happened to surface controls as aircraft

approached the speed of sound rendering planes uncontrollable resulting in crashes.

Tom Wolfe wrote the book, “The Right Stuff” about flight test heroes like General Yeager. Gen. Yeager reported that when he actually broke the sound barrier in his modified rocket like plane, he referred to it as more like, “a poke through jello.” Nonetheless, it was something never before accomplished, which had taken lives along the way, but opened a whole new dimension for aviation.

Having become a test pilot where most every day was filled with danger, flying new untested equipment, Tom Wolfe would have readers of “The Right Stuff” believe all these pilots had ice water in their veins. As General Yeager told it, “I was always afraid of dying. Always.”

HAVE YOU HEARD IT’S IN THE STARS, NEXT JULY WE COLLIDE WITH MARS?

Well not quite, but a great song from, “High Society.” But, here’s the real deal: Jupiter and Saturn come fairly close to each other every 20 years in what is called the “great conjunction”,

but at Christmas this year they will be the closest they have been to each other in 800 years, so everyone had better get their binoculars out. If you miss this degree of closeness you won't have to wait another 800 years because there will be a repeat in 2080, but some of us might not show up for work that week.

For the best viewing you will want to look in the southwestern sky just after sunset. The two planets will create the brightest object in the heavens, resembling a bright ball to the naked eye, but they will actually be about the width away from each other as the two sides of a dime held at arm's length.

To give further perspective on stellar distances, during this brief period, starting December 21, we will see Jupiter and Saturn as one, they will actually be 400 million miles apart- no stopping over for Christmas punch.

**Your faithful scribe,
PB**

