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QUOTE FOR THE DAY:

**“ ‘What day is it’, asked Pooh. ‘It’s today’, squeaked Piglet. ‘My favorite day’, said Pooh.”
A.A. Milne.**

READERS’ COMMENTS:

My son, Carter, is a better researcher than his Dad. He reports that Sweden, which pretty much kept the economy open, has received some favorable notice (NY Times) for handling the corona virus, having a death rate on a par with Ireland and below that of the UK and France. Sounds pretty good doesn’t it, as the latter three countries have had rather strict lockdowns?

An article in the “National Review” uncovered by Carter tells a different story. Comparing Ireland, France and the UK to Sweden is like apples to oranges, with major differences in

travel habits and visitors. How about Sweden's Scandinavian neighbors, similar in size and not exactly tourist meccas in the winter? The death rate, adjusted per capita, in Sweden is six times higher than Norway or Finland and three times higher than Denmark, all of which practiced social distancing and strict lockdowns.

Hearkening back to Joel Ross' ideas mentioned in issue 23, advocating for a much more restraint free America – essentially saying, let the young and healthy keep working, keep everything open, and for those who are most susceptible – good idea to stay in place.

So, the "National Review" makes a good point, but omits one thing. I stand to be corrected, but I believe Sweden's rules were for all citizens. They were not advocating, as per Mr. Ross, that those with substantial comorbidity issues should stay home.

No doubt, that with more lax regulations the U.S. would have suffered more deaths, but the bill is just coming due on the human and economic costs of the prolonged lockdown.

Alida Meyers writes to inform about, apparently, serious trials being conducted in France. I use the word, “apparently” because I’m somewhat incredulous about the testing vehicle – nicotine! When my wife and I started our annual pilgrimages to France more than thirty-five years ago, I would estimate that 90% of the French smoked. Today, the estimate is that 35 % of the French are smokers. So, what is all this silliness about nicotine being a possible preventer of corona virus? Well, maybe not so silly.

You would expect in any group of covid 19 patients you would see a distribution that mimicked the overall population. What got the researchers’ attention was that in a group of infected French citizens (about 350) only 5% were smokers instead of the expected 35%. Similarly, in China, where 26% are smokers, in an examination of 1,000 patients, only 12.6% were smokers. I guess it’s something that needs further investigation. However, in a lighter moment, since I have never been a smoker, may I ask my fellow French readers, Antoine and Jean, to recommend if I should begin with Galoise or Gitanes?

A BRIDGE TOO FAR:

Every story of lives lost in this crisis is sad, but one that really made me gulp was the story of the ladies' Bridge club in Colorado Springs, which had always been a major social center for retirees, but unlike nursing home residents, people who were active and out in the community. The Governor of Colorado had just announced the first corona virus death in Colorado of an 83 year old woman from Colorado Springs and, as you suspect, she was a member of the Bridge club. That all started on March 13th. Since then 4 have died and 25 have been stricken with the virus – just one more example of the importance of social distancing – something not possible seated around a bridge table. I've seen no further information on this case, but you can only imagine the number of additional contacts each member of the club must have subsequently had with others in their community.

AROUND THE WORLD:

Shocking to read that hospital workers trying to save corona virus victims' lives are being attacked by ignorant people - notably in Mexico, the Phillipines and India. A nurse in Mexico drenched with chlorine by a crowd; another nurse in the phillipines attacked by five men who poured bleach on his face, and, in India there have been numerous attacks on people tending to corona virus victims. In Pakistan, a nurse with three children was told by her land- lord to vacate her apartment out of fear for his tenants. The eviction of this nurse, while not an act of violence brings up a vexing ethical/moral question - what would you do? Just the other day in the U.S. it was reported that a land -lord turned down a corona virus nurse for an apartment in his building.

On the one hand, all of these workers- Doctors, nurses, orderlies are our heroes, 24/7 and who wouldn't do anything they could do for them - buy groceries, wash their cars, pick up cleaning - but, be with them in the same building or have a burger and drinks? - that's a question for everyone of us to contemplate.

Back to the international arena, it is estimated that at least 50% of the population of Kashmir have mental/ severe emotional problems. In the eight months since India cancelled Kashmir's semi autonomous status, the citizens have been in a lockdown status similar to ours, now compounded by the corona virus being there as well. It's being called a "mental health crisis" - a template for some areas of the U.S.?

And, in Singapore, where more than 20% of the country's population of 5.7 million are low paid foreign workers living in tightly packed dormitories covid 19 is king. 88% of Singapore's 14,446 cases emanate from these dormitories.

Peru, Ecuador and Sub Sahara Africa are in turmoil with the virus, but unlike the U.S. where a high level of hardship exists, at least there is a government effort to help ease the pain. In these other countries - nothing - and we're speaking of (in terms of developing countries) more than 2 billion people, with virtually no economic or health care support.

CAPTAIN CROZIER CAPER:

I'm now calling this a caper because it is getting beyond ridiculous. The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) – get it? He's in charge of the entire Navy. Along with other top Navy brass, and after a full investigation, Admiral Gilday has concluded that Captain Crozier should be reinstated as Captain of the Air Craft Carrier, Theodore Roosevelt – looked like a done deal, but then we have another newly appointed acting Secretary of the Navy and, instead of closing this ugly chapter in Navy history, he decides another 30 days is needed to investigate the case – what a travesty! Essentially, if Admiral Gilday is overruled, then he and his fellow top brass admirals are finished with their careers.

UNSETTLING NEWS FOR ASSAULT WEAPON BUFFS:

Canada has banned military assault weapons. Owners have been given two years to keep their weapons, although they can no longer use them, trade them or sell them, except outside Canada to those with permits.

So, who is next? The drum beat gets louder in the U.S. The NRA may have to hire more lobbyists.

NCAA, IS THIS GOING TO WORK?

Interetingly, college actors, musicians, journalists and others have always been free to make as much as they want in college, plying their specialities, and, many of them, like the top athletes, are on scholarships. But, no money or gifts allowed for those top athletes who, especially, in the football programs, bring in tens of millions of dollars to their universities. Great anecdote, “25 years ago, Donnie Edwards, a star line backer at UCLA was suspended for receiving an impermissible benefit: An agent had dropped off a bag of groceries for him.”

Going forward, top players will be able to be compensated for their name/number jerseys previously sold in the University book store without the player getting a cent. Basically, it’s a whole new era, and it’s going to be a minefield for the NCAA. No question but these players deserve to be compensated, but this is

going to mean players having agents. Are boosters going to be able to dole out cash to players to insure they don't move over to LSU in junior year? And, what does this mean for top high school talent and how they get recruited to colleges? It's going to be a very hard change in policy to police. I'm sure we'll be in for some juicy stories if the teams ever get back in the stadiums.

AND FINALLY:

I stepped on my scale this morning and it said, "Please use social distancing, one person at a time."

Your faithful scribe

PB

