

HERMIT HERALD

ISSUE 150

MARCH 19, 2023

FINAL EDITION

QUOTE FOR THE DAY:

**“All good things must come to an end” Geoffrey
Chaucer**

NO!

**I’m not talking about this being the last issue of the
Hermit Herald, I’m talking about the United States
of America.**

YEARS OF THE PLAGUE AND IRE, 2020-2023

**This heading derives from, “The Year of the Plague
and Fire”, referring to 1665-1666 when twenty
percent of Londoners died from the plague and one
quarter of the city burned to the ground.**

**To date, 1.13 million Americans have died from
Covid 19 and 6.88 million worldwide, except that
many believe the worldwide number is greater than
10 million, due to suspected under reporting from**

China and India. Compounding this tragedy, untold millions of others continue to suffer with the multitude of issues referred to as, “ Long Covid”.

The first issue of the Hermit Herald appeared exactly three years ago, 3/19/20, the day after Florida’s governor shut down the state and relegated all of us to months of isolation, hence the “Hermit” moniker.

As our collective sense of fear and gloom escalated, scarcely two months later, on May 25th, George Floyd was killed by police officers, which set off three years of ire – anger and rage – which is still evident today. These two occurrences (the pandemic and the killing) have been a constant presence in what will be recorded as one of the most tumultuous periods in U.S. history.

Looking back over three years and 149 issues, the numbers of critical events that have had, and continue to have, a major impact on the country are substantial. Some were one time, discrete, events, but many, like the “ plague and ire”, and Roe V Wade have very long shelf lives. A review of those events follows:

COVID 19

What confusion this pandemic caused. Every week a new curative was touted, reminiscent of snake oil. It seemed the medical profession was as befuddled as the public, and then we had the debate – did it start in a wet market or in a Wuhan virology lab? That debate is escalating even as this is written. Then we had the self-proclaimed hero, Governor Cuomo, sending hundreds of infected people to nursing homes in NY State, which subsequently caused horrendous mortality rates. Finally, Moderna and Pfizer to the rescue with effective vaccines, only to encounter massive misinformation causing many to refuse to get vaccinated. And, don't forget, "To mask or not to mask?". That was the question, resulting in normally sane people punching each other out in grocery stores over demanding that unmasked people cover up.

GEORGE FLOYD

This was an event, or actually the last of many similar events that still reverberate today, resulting in minority and black store owners losing their livelihoods to looters and arsonists in Portland, Seattle, Richmond and Philadelphia, to name a few. The cry went out to defund the police, which has now come full cycle as crime has ramped up and politicians are vying with each other to see who is the most pro law enforcement.

Popularity for Black Lives Matter (BLM) surged, but has fallen greatly with the ensuing months. The New York Times informed us that, “ blacks” are now, “Blacks”. We are further advised that, “whites will remain, “whites”. A feeding frenzy developed, tearing down statues and removing names from schools and buildings that might give offense to blacks and minorities. A typical example predates the years we discuss, but is symptomatic of the controversy. John Calhoun, one of our most prominent early statesmen had his name removed from Calhoun College at Yale in 2017. He had been an advocate for slavery. Fair enough, but Elihu Yale, who did not own any slaves, was president of Fort George and oversaw its slave trade. What’s wrong with this picture?

The inconsistencies persist, as the monument defilers prefer attacks on Jefferson more than on Washington, both of whom were slave owners. All of this gives life to the formulation of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which has liberals and conservatives at each other’s throats.

THE TRUMP EFFECT

How so many could have been sucked into the “stolen election” vortex is really not that much of a puzzlement. The misinformation promulgated by the likes of Carlson, Hannity, Ingraham, and others

was enough to keep the challenge going forever. We only just recently learned that they all knew and believed Trump had lost, but played on the lies to keep their fan base tuned in- what a shameful episode in journalism!

But how about the other side of the political spectrum, starting with (pre 2020) when it was discovered that senior FBI official, Peter Strzok and his lady friend, Lisa Page, a lawyer at DOJ, were exchanging emails, essentially saying that Trump was an existential threat, while at the same time supposedly conducting a high level, non-biased investigation into his activities. I questioned at the time, "Is this the tip of the iceberg"? I'm afraid it was. I was so proud of my days in the FBI, and fear it has become a highly politicized agency.

FIFTY PLUS INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS

published a letter stating that the Biden laptop had all the earmarks of a Russian disinformation operation. Well, they didn't say it definitely was disinformation, but for the public reading their letter, it had the total effect of, "if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it must be a duck."

It is doubtful that Clapper and Brennan had even seen the laptop contents, and certainly none of the other signers, who must have been told, "sign here", had seen it either.

The reason for this full court press by senior intelligence officers was to defuse any last minute information that could hurt Joe Biden's election chances. The point being that they collectively believed, like Peter Strzok, that Donald Trump was an existential threat to the country and had to be stopped at all costs. Think about this for a moment. When people, who are sworn to follow the facts dispassionately, engage in this type of partisan behavior, it is they, not Trump, who are existential threats to the country.

NOT SO FAST

for some of my pro Trump readers who may have been clapping after the last paragraph. No question there has been a broad based effort to nail Mr. Trump for many years; law suit after law suit, two impeachment trials and constant negative articles throughout a huge segment of all media. Several of those law suits have real traction and are going forward, but the overall impression Trump supporters have is that the left is trying to get their guy. This only hardens the resolve of his supporters.

UNTIL

Until 1/6/21. Inciting his followers to march on congress and the Capitol to overturn the election

was just insane. The vast majority of Americans watched that whole thing in disbelief. Could Trump be charged with sedition, treason or any other crime in conjunction with his actions that day? We have yet to learn.

The major point is that a large percentage of voters think he should never be allowed to get near the White House again. He may not have been an existential threat to the U.S. prior to 1/6/21, but his disregard for order and the Constitution on that date disqualify him from ever returning as president of the U.S. in the eyes of many.

That said, at the end of the Conservative PAC meetings on 3/5/23, 62% of the attendees supported his bid to return to the White House; a further indication of how divided the country is.

TRANS GENDER ATHLETES

This one has really roiled the waters for nearly half of the three- year period, especially the waters of the swimming pools. The science still says people who transition to females have residual unfair benefits in competition, notwithstanding testosterone lowering medications. Again, huge division of opinions on this topic, but safe to say any parents of non- trans girls think it unfair. How about a compromise? For sports where strength and

endurance are primary requisites for top performance, trans athletes will have to compete amongst themselves; including sports like swimming, rowing, cross country skiing, gymnastics and track. Other sports like archery, curling, badminton and fencing, they can go head to head with biological females. Apparently that line of thinking is going no where, as the board that oversees power lifting (weight lifting) has decreed just this month that trans women can compete against biological women. Hard to imagine a sport where trans women would have a greater advantage.

U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

A disgrace for the United States. One only has to read Hank Crumpton's book, "Lessons from a life in the CIA's Clandestine Service" to realize the effort and sacrifices made to stabilize the country and eliminate those complicit in the 9/11 attack. This withdrawal in August of 2021 was a total debacle; a forever stain on the president, secretary of state and chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

#ME TOO

How dramatically this movement has mushroomed over the past three years- a necessary awakening and a call for changed behaviors and attitudes. The

only downside comes from the, thankfully few, examples where Me Too complaints have been shown to be attempts to extort money or gain media attention.

CRYPTO CURRENCIES AND NON FUNGIBLE TOKENS
Warren Buffet says he wouldn't give \$25 for all the bit coins in the world. Jamie Dimon likens crypto to the pet rock fad. The FTX founder, Sam Bankman-Fried, and his cohorts will have years in jail to further contemplate the benefits of "corporate altruism", and how they bilked thousands of people out of their life savings. NFTs - you folks don't want to go there. It's instructive to look back at the tulip mania in the Netherlands in 1634, when a single tulip bulb could be sold for ten times an artisan's annual wages - it's called a bubble.

ROE V WADE

Another major dividing issue for Americans as the Supreme Court declared abortion was not protected under the Constitution, and decreed that it was a matter for states to individually decide. This has resulted in confusion throughout the land, and it seems the fight between pro choice and pro life will go on forever.

RUSSIA INVADES UKRAINE

That was just over a year ago. The U.S. strongly supports the Ukraine side in this conflict, but did the U.S. take all steps to avoid the invasion? Putin's big public issue was that NATO and Ukraine's nascent efforts to join were a step too far. We could have called Putin's bluff and promised no membership for Ukraine. If he had still invaded we would have known it was a false issue. Past Secretaries of State, Warren Christopher and James Baker had warned against expanding NATO beyond twelve members. It now has thirty. So here we are fighting a proxy WW III without having to console any gold star mothers. How much longer until Zelensky and Biden become Churchill/FDR redux?

CHINA AND TAIWAN

What is with all this war-mongering talk about China? That is the most unthinkable of all conflicts. Is it an ill -advised effort to pull the country together by identifying a common enemy? I don't know, but the U.S. keeps turning up the heat. While we give lip service to the "One China" concept, we keep talking about how we are going to militarily defend Taiwan if China ever tries to take control. The Rand Corporation, under contract to the defense Department, ran 15 military simulations of a China/U.S. war over Taiwan. Score: China 15, U.S.0. We should be paying more attention to diplomacy and business. Just in the past few days China has

brokered a diplomatic coup in the mid-east, bringing together arch rivals, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Chinese are eating our lunch. As the editorial board of the NY Times wrote on 3/12/23, "The best guarantee of American security has always been American prosperity and engagement with the rest of the world. That's true for China too."

BORDERS

Ok, this has been going on for longer than the 150 issues of the Hermit Herald, but the issue has spiraled out of control, again with great divisions within the country. Does anyone, Democrat or Republican, have a solution to stopping the illegals who, once inside our borders, are given a number to call to set up an asylum seeking interview at some distant date, and who then just disappear into cities throughout the country? It was reported a couple of weeks ago that NY City is spending \$4.6 million a day just to feed the city's hordes of migrants. Experts who project population densities predict the 23 million illegals in the U.S. today will result in 270 million people in 70 years.

CANCEL CULTURE AND THE WOKE WORLD

The cancel culture has really done a job. Free speech on college campuses has all but vanished.

In 2019, 54.7% of college students said they were afraid to speak freely. By 2021 that percentage had jumped to 63.5%.

Cancel culture's kissing cousin (oops, guess I shouldn't use that term) is, of course, the woke movement. My score card on woke pronouncements is ten percent make some sense and ninety percent is silly nonsense. Three of my favorites: You can't ask a person about their field of study because it might bring up images of slaves working in the field, or could be farmers, or maybe agricultural workers, but we don't want to offend anyone's sensibilities so now the word "field" has been replaced by "practicum". "Honey, I'm going to the soccer practicum."

And, how about, "Latinx", meant to be inclusive of all people from central and latin America? Here's a clue, Latinos and Latinas hate it. Only three percent of them use it. Who has the temerity to invade other peoples' culture and language?

And, always being sensitive, not wanting to use names that might be hurtful, we are introduced to the term MAP. You might need a little help. That stands for "Minor attracted person" previously known as a pedophile. And, no, that is not a joke.

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS

Having made a table of contents for the previous 149 issues of the Hermit Herald, I was able to go through them and pick out these many topics that have so permeated this three- year period. I am sure I have missed a few, but as I view what I have lifted from this period, it is not a happy meal menu.

I'd like to be more upbeat, but except for the Civil War, the country has seldom, if ever, been more divided. A possible way forward is for moderate Democrats, moderate Republicans and Independents to broadcast their views as loudly as the radical liberal left and the hyper conservative right. Viewing the contentiousness of many of the above issues, that is easier said than done. Somehow, I hope we can prove Geoffrey Chaucer's quote wrong "All good things must come to an end".

YOUR SCRIBE'S SELECTION

Since I control the key board, I can add a personal item that does not qualify as one of the most news worthy over the past three years.

Six times, in 150 issues, I have advocated for a U.S. Marshall Plan. Credit must be given to president Biden for getting bi-partisan support for the \$1.9-\$2.2 trillion Build Back Better legislation. It is heavy

on infrastructure (much needed), but doesn't do that much for the individual.

I have spent very little time on inner city streets since my days in the FBI, but back then, I was on those streets a lot. From photos and articles I see today, very little has changed for the better. Folks, "inner cities" is a euphemism for "Ghettos". These are areas devoid of hope. Crime is what gets most of our attention. Is it a need for more police, or a need for a better life and economic opportunity? Schools are terrible, housing is decrepit, health care is mediocre, recreation facilities are largely non-existent. Good schools, new housing, improved medical care and boys and girls clubs are the change makers.

I recognize we can't be an isolationist country, but we've got to take care of our own people. The seeds for increased crime, civil unrest and possible revolution are planted in those mean streets.

CODA

This is a good ending point for the Hermit Herald. When the pandemic first appeared on the scene, Arizona State University (ASU) through its School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies recognized that it would be important for future generations to construct a record of this terrible

time we have gone through. ASU attracted more than thirty universities and colleges into this noble endeavor and sought input from all who wanted to record their impressions of this period. Entries include photos, poetry, diaries, films and writings such as the Hermit Herald; essentially every type of media. Everyone involved at ASU is to be congratulated on this herculean project. The archives can be accessed by going to covid-19archive.org.

Three years is a long time, and many of you have been with me the entire way. Thank you all for your support and commentary. With regard to the pandemic, a toast to those who have made it through these years, and a prayer for those who did not.

**I always loved Carol Burnett's sign off:
"I'm so glad we had this time together, just to have a laugh, or sing a song. Seems we only just got started and before you know, it comes the time we have to say so long."**

Be well

Your faithful scribe,

PB

