

# **HERMIT HERALD**

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## **A MONTH IN THE LIFE OF A FLORIDIAN:**

Now let the reader understand one thing, what you are about to read will cause you to wipe a tear from your eye, but be assured our travails are 100,000 times better than the alternative.

So, this all started about a month ago. I call it the Gov. De Santis creep. Some would express it another way, “De Santis, the creep”.

It began with the mandating that all restaurants had to reduce seating capacity by 50%. We were very happy with that because one of our favorite restaurants, just across the bridge, was clean, had great food and was virtually empty, whereas, previously, we used to have to fight for a seat. It was with a feeling of dread that I told Marilyn, after four nights of this bliss, that I just couldn't believe this could continue. De Santis must have been listening because the very next morning all restaurants

**in Palm Beach County were closed, except some could stay open for take out. Oh, but one generous exception- restaurants with ten or fewer seats could stay open. Where have you ever found such a restaurant? I know of one, but I'd have to go all the way back to Ct to visit the Toddle House, preferred late night dining venue of my college years.**

**Time to really focus on this social distancing issue. De Santis ordered all the parks in Palm Beach County to close. Next he closed all the public beaches, but not before spring break and all the kids cross infecting themselves and taking the virus back to Mom, Dad, Gramps and Granny in Michigan, New Jersey and Missouri - some saying about horses and barn doors appropriate here. Searching about for a target that was an egregious example of overcrowding, he closed down all public golf courses- one foursome per hole just too much human density.**

**You knew it was only going to be a matter of time before he did the same with public tennis courts and public pools which fell victim to his edicts in short order.**

**But, hey- Shh- don't tell anyone- he hadn't yet said a word about private clubs and condominiums. As private club members and condo dwellers, many were feeling pretty smug, but some, including moi, sensed we were under the sword of Damocles. As it turned out, it wasn't the sword of Damocles it was the De Santis guillotine. In one single stroke he shut down all the condominium and private club, golf, tennis and croquet as well as access to the private beaches of those entities.**

**Now really, how are you going to shut down all the beaches? Easy, deploy several Sheriff's helicopters. Here's how the scenario unfolds. "Copter 007 to Town of Ocean Bilge Police- we have a perp on the beach heading north- should be at junction with Sea View drive in about five minutes. Do what you gotta do."**

**So officer Stanley is thrilled on two counts, but upset on another. He loves getting an action call and he loves turning on his ultra violet cruiser lights, but he hates going out on the soft sand of the beach which comes pouring in over the top of his Bates Enforcer Uniform**

**shoes. He makes the nab, issues a citation and the Town of Ocean Bilge coffers are increased by another \$25.**

**Here's the crazy thing- although no one has put any restrictions on going into the ocean, nobody is able to do so because you have to cross the beach to get to the water. Social Distancing on the barrier islands therefore gets a passing grade- no one in the water from here to Lisbon.**

**I'm thinking I really did want to get back to serious lap swimming, and club and condo pools had remained untouched by the governor. I swear he has a "thought police" unit because within 24 hours all such pools were ordered closed including the surrounding deck areas.**

**"That's it", I said. "Tomorrow they're coming for my chewing gum." I appealed the ruling on the deck area, our lawyer followed up and we were given permission to use the deck area, but with a list of caveats so long that every home owner had to be scheduled for a one half hour training session.**

**Last evening I walked across the property to the far eastern edge to gaze wistfully at the empty ocean. On the way back I saw four of our neighbors having a cocktail on the pool deck. I called out, "OK you guys, twenty minutes more and back to your cells." Everyone laughed. Moments later as I entered our apartment, I realized what I had just said was absolutely true. Even in solitary confinement in prison you get one hour a day in the prison yard- that's us.**

**Reflecting on a bit of inconsistency in our social distancing and other restrictive regulations, I had originally been excited to read that Publix was having special hours for seniors- defined as anyone over 65. Every Tuesday and Thursday we were told the store would be exclusively ours from 7-8 in the morning- not my favorite time of day to be out and about, but figuring Publix management was giving the creaky seniors a chance to grab some TP, fresh meat and dairy products before the whipper- snappers invaded, I pried myself from bed. Even though a special deal for**

**seniors, I didn't expect much of a crowd when I arrived at 7:30.**

**OMG!! The parking lot looked like the day before Thanksgiving. I mean the situation inside the store was seriously scary- people cheek by jowl in thirty minute check out lines with crammed carts, but in those carts nary a package of meat, not a roll of TP, nor a bottle of creamer to be seen. I would put the average of my fellow shoppers at 89. I fled the store empty handed, took a twenty minute anti viral shower and went back to bed with a good book.**

**We have the TV on most of the day, keeping it on mute until we see something interesting pop up. One visual on the screen every few minutes are these four rectangular boxes that show updated stats for case totals and deaths by both Palm Beach County and the country. These digital displays are almost identical to what you see in a large bakery where you place an order and take a number from a machine. When your order is ready the digital rectangle alert you. These numbers do not seem to get recycled so they are very lengthy. Therefore the customer focuses on only the**

**last two digits. So, I have this recurring dream. I see the digits 36. Is that my number as the most recent reported virus case, or is it the bakery telling me my sour dough baguette is ready?**

### **READER REFERRALS:**

**Antoine Blech writes to advise that Yuval Harari (The author of Sapiens which was discussed in issue 7) has written an article in the Financial Times, “The World after Coronavirus” 3/20/20.(free to read) Excellent article- two major take aways: cautionary note on biometric surveillance and the need for global solidarity.**

**Joe Knoll alerts us to a fascinating new book, “The Real James Bond”. By Jim Wright “It was the literary crime of the century- Ian Fleming, while creating his iconic spy character, decided to steal a name from the spine of an authoritative birding tome, ‘Birds of the West Indies’, by one James Bond.”**

**Twelve years later Fleming and Bond met and Fleming was very pleased that Bond did not**

**take umbrage at the use of his name. On the contrary, Bond said it helped him get through customs. Bond did go on to say that he never read Fleming's books, but that his wife read them all. Excellent review by Dominic Green, 4/2/20.**

**Green's tantalizing lead in is,"The ornithologist, James Bond, like the secret agent who shares his name, was handy with firearms and able to work around officialdom."**

**Be safe**

**Your faithful scribe,**

**PB**