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QUOTE FOR THE DAY:

“Lord! How sad a sight to see the streets empty of people.” Diary of Samuel Pepys.

TO LOOSEN, OR NOT:

With our readers scattered across the country; Arizona, New Mexico, Missouri and the entire east coast, we are all seeing evolving situations that are trending towards a lessening of the restrictions that have kept us in virtual lockdown. There is some hope that our streets may soon no longer be empty.

Here, in Florida, today is the first day we can dine in restaurants in Palm Beach County, albeit with 25% occupancy limitations. With some trepidation, I may stick my toe in that water this evening, not because I’m desperate to go out, but as your scribe wanting to

observe how our citizens react to their new found freedoms.

The state of Georgia, which was in the early vanguard of loosening restraints has found customers, “largely unwilling to come back.” There has not been the expected jump in new coronavirus cases, likely a function of people hesitating to return to the market place. “Each step towards reopening, then, is also a set of experiments with whole societies serving as guinea pigs...”

We should also include in our observations that there’s a large segment of the population that just can’t afford to go out and, maybe, a few, like myself, who used to dine out quite often, but now find a quiet pleasure in dining much less expensively at home while watching three of my favorite TV segments instead of one.

I have to reflect for a moment on the unemployed and how difficult it is for most of us to comprehend large numbers. Unemployment is currently said to be 23 million people. One news service says the real

number is more like 40 million. For the purpose of this example, 23 million will do. We've all seen the Goodyear blimp covering major football games and those aerial views of the 100,000 fans packed into the Ohio State stadium. Now envision 230 stadiums, similarly packed – that's 23 million people.

To finish up on reopening and the uncertainties it entails – a lot has been learned in the past several months and tracking the growth or decline in the coronavirus (CV) is now much more accurate. As a result, “modeling” has become the operative word. The state governors are hopefully watching their county statistics on a daily basis. They can give you your pools and restaurants one day and take them away again at the first sign of a CV resurgence.

RATS:

No, not the cute ones in, “Ratatouille”, but the ones who called home your favorite deli or restaurant. Guess what? With all the dining closures, much of the rat population has migrated to new homes. That, in combination

with the fact that many cars have sat untouched in their garages for weeks at a time, has created a perfect storm in the engine well of your car. Rats just love these relatively warm, cozy, dark environs. To make matters worse, they don't go outside to go to the bathroom, and, worst of all, they like to gnaw. Admittedly, there is no nutritional value in the wires and cabling under the hood of your car, but the rats have to gnaw them or they will die. What? Didn't know this myself, but rat incisors Grow four to five inches a year. Without gnawing to keep them trim, the incisors would pierce the upper roof of their mouth, killing them.

The net result has been an epidemic of damage to cars' electrical systems; good idea to take a regular peek under the hood. Interestingly, in becoming a chronicler of rat behavior, I have learned that the common brown rat appears to have arrived in North America around 1775, "perhaps when European ships docked at Manhattan's South Street Seaport; the species is believed to have originated in Asia." Given the sensitivities to the origin of CV, it's

important to note that this is not a xenophobic statement, but “rataphobic”.

BACK TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE?:

In this CV era, this is already a hot topic, but will be dramatically more so, with Summer coming and Fall not far behind.

First, we have the practical implications of two working parents with school age children. If the children have to stay home, they still have to be educated, albeit, remotely. But, who stays home with the children?

Then, there are the college students. What can be worse in any young person’s life than missing the learning, academic and social, that comes from the on-campus experience?

Oh, and don’t forget the big boy universities with those Division one football programs. They stand to lose tens of millions of dollars.

Into the fray steps Christina Paxson, president of Brown University, stating, “Colleges Must reopen in the Fall.” What a brave lady! From

the backlash, you'd think she was responsible for the sinking of the Titanic. I would love to see an on-campus year as a reality, but there are more questions than answers at this time. The biggest issue I see is not the students themselves - youth being very much on their side vis a vis the CV. But, then they return home for Thanksgiving/Christmas - how many are asymptomatic carriers and do we, as a result, have a huge spike in new CV cases?

AIRLINES, BUT SERIOUSLY:

Seriously, how do they survive going forward? How quickly things change. 2019 was Delta's best year ever, sharing \$1.6 billion in profits with its 90,000 employees. Today, they are averaging 23 passengers on their domestic flights and losing \$350 to \$400 million a day. Passenger traffic is down 94% and 6,215 unused planes sit on the ground around the country. Delta and other airlines did get money from the stimulus package, enough for them to make payroll through September, but they are collectively aware that congress is unlikely to extend more aid.

To think that just a few months ago we thought nothing of hoping a plane to go out to San Francisco and Napa for a couple of weeks, going to a destination wedding in Santa Fe, or planning a month long summer visit to France and Italy – gone, gone, gone. A recent national poll recorded that 60% of respondents said they would not want to fly even if stay in place restrictions were lifted. Who knows how long it will be before that fear abates? Just as the country has previously lost TWA and PanAm, there will be casualties to come.

HACKERS OF THE WORLD:

You probably thought I meant China, and in this instance I do, but I think any country that doesn't have pro and counter cyber capabilities could wind up like the dodo bird. No question, for example, but that the U.S. has created havoc in Iran and North Korea.

So, what are the Chinese up to now? They have this new cyber attack tool called Aria-Body with alarming new capabilities. The hacker group is called, "Naikon" and has been traced to the Chinese military. "Hackers could

remotely take over a computer, copy, create or delete files and create extensive searches of the device's data." All, with very sophisticated ways to avoid detection. Aria-Body was only discovered by human error. But, having discovered its existence does not in any way mean it will not continue to be employed as a front line cyber tool. Aria-Body can replicate typing being done by the target user, allowing who ever controlled it , "to see what a staff member was writing in the premier's office, in real time." Wow! Instant espionage. Eat your hearts out at the NSA and CIA.

COVID 19 TESTING KITS, FDA APPROVED:

Developed by Rutgers University in partnership with Spectrum Solutions and Accurate Diagnostic Labs - home saliva testing kit- must be approved by doctor with patients showing CV symptoms- mail in kit- response within 48 hours- can process 20,000 tests/day.

Your faithful scribe,

PB

