

# **HERMIT HERALD**

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### **QUOTE FOR THE DAY:**

**“Weakness is provocative” Donald Rumsfeld, two-time Secretary of Defense, as both the youngest and the oldest.**

### **COLUMNIST BRET STEPHENS**

**really jumps on this quote as the basis for a recent NY Times opinion article. He points out how weak and feckless various U.S. administrations have been when up against threats, real or perceived, from our enemies; the classic ones being Obama’s line in the sand regarding Syria and Biden’s Afghanistan pull out debacle.**

**For Putin, weakness issues are non existent. He doesn’t have to have the consensus of anyone. There isn’t even the old Politboro, which served as a leveler in the old Soviet Union. You disagree with Putin, you get polonium 213 in your tea. Polls show 79% of Ukranians have a favorable opinion of the E.U. while only 11% have confidence in Mr. Putin. Not to worry, Mr. Putin. In a poll from last month, 66% of Russians blame NATO, the U.S. and Ukraine for current tensions, while only 4% blame Russia. Ah!- nothing like a common enemy to unite your country.**

**In the U.S. you have an administration that is totally aware of a constituency that doesn't want more war, as well as a congress and senate who, in fear of losing their jobs, are in lock step with the folks who put them in office.**

**At the end of the day, we are essentially isolationists, but all of us are to blame, not just the leaders. It's going to take a lot to drag us back into a shooting war and Putin and Xi are well aware of that. Churchill wanted us in to WW II for a long time, but it wasn't until Pearl Harbor that FDR knew he had enough support to make the U.S. commitment.**

**So, with NATO and the U.S. having essentially told Putin that no one is going to be dropping bombs on Moscow and no one is going to shoot any Russian soldiers, it all comes down to a matter of economics. Will our threatened sanctions and other actions (short of bullets and missiles) deter Mr. Putin?**

**We talk of the powerful effect of cutting Russia out of the international banking family and keeping their second gas pipeline from starting, but Russia controls their first pipeline (Nord Stream 1) which provides 40% of Europe's energy needs. Guess who has the cut off valve? As the old saw goes, "The U.S. is taking a knife to a gun fight."**

**The diplomatic impasse is that Putin is adamant that Ukraine not become a member of NATO. NATO is adamant that they have the right to extend membership to any country who agrees to their rules and wants to be a member. There is one other test, however, which should give Putin some comfort, that being that all 30 countries in NATO have to approve the addition of new members. With NATO members pledged to defend fellow members**

**militarily in the event of invasion, Biden, for one, has demurred at the prospects of Ukraine joining NATO, and both Germany and France are against it given their geographic proximity to Russia and entangling alliances which they desire to keep in place.**

**Nonetheless, Putin, the realist, knows that only diamonds are forever and he cannot abide Ukraine's ever closer ties to NATO countries, including the fact that those countries have been selling arms to Ukraine.**

**The point has been previously made that the U.S. was ready to go to war over Russia's attempt to move missiles into Cuba. That's how Putin views Ukraine, and it appears Putin's fellow Russians share the sentiment. No crystal ball here, but Putin seems to have the stronger hand. Talks are going nowhere and Vlad doesn't worry much about approval from his fellow countrymen, even though he appears to have it.**

**N Y Times reporter, Steven Erlanger notes that after this past Monday's talks, "Sergei Ryabkov, who led the Russian side, warned that if the West did not agree to Russia's demands to pull back NATO's footprint in Eastern Europe and reject any future membership for Ukraine, it would face unspecified consequences that would put the, 'security of the whole European continent' at risk."**

## **PORCINE PROBLEMA**

**We awoke the other day to the encouraging news that a 57 year old man with serious heart disease had been the recipient of a genetically modified pig's heart and, thus far, is surviving. What a wonderful break through- EXCEPT-**

**turns out the patient, David Bennett, Sr. stabbed a man numerous times in the back in 1988 in a jealous rage because the man was paying too much attention to his wife at a bar. Instead of being charged with intent to commit murder, Bennett was convicted on a lesser charge of battery and carrying a concealed weapon for which he received a 10 year sentence. No surprise that he never paid a penny of the \$3.4 million in damages that the court ordered he must pay. His victim, Edward Schumaker, never had a normal day thereafter, being paralyzed from the waist down since the time of the assault, having suffered numerous medical complications and having had a stroke leaving him cognitively impaired before he died at age 40.**

**Wow! David Bennett, hardly the heroic medical survivor we would wish for. All concerns dismissed by the University of Maryland Medical Center where the procedure was done. "It is the solemn obligation of any hospital or health care organization to provide lifesaving care to every patient who comes through their doors based on their medical needs." Officials said. Too bad they couldn't save Mr. Schumaker as well.**

## **HALF OF EUROPE?**

**That's how many the World Health Organization estimates could be infected by the Omicron variant in the next six to eight weeks.**

**At the same time, the world eagerly awaits the release of the Pfizer pill, which if taken within the first three days of infection, reduces the risk of hospitalization by 88%. Then**

**comes the recent news on cannabis treatment for Covid 19.**

**If this weren't being reported in Forbes Magazine, I'd throw it away, but A. J. Herrington writes that, according to a study published by Oregon State University, Cannabis compounds prevent infection by Covid 19. "Cannabinoids block cellular entry of SARS- CoV2 and the emerging variants" was published last Monday by the Journal of Natural Products. Two cannabinoid acids found in hemp bind to the spike protein preventing the virus from entering the cells and causing infection. Further, these acids have a history of safe human use- potentially great news, but why isn't this all over the media?**

## **TWO "UNBIASED" VIEWS OF OUR DEMOCRACY**

**Jonathan Stevenson, Institute for Strategic Studies and Steven Simon, a fellow at MIT co-author an opinion piece in the NY Times telling us we must run models and scenarios for the terrible things that could happen to the U.S. What might those terrible things be? Their hypothesis is as follows: "The next national election will almost inevitably be viciously (perhaps violently) contested. It is fair to say that the right-wing threat to the United States and its apparent goal of laying the groundwork for a power grab, if necessary in 2024- is politically existential."**

**I know nothing of the political backgrounds of either Mr. Stevenson or Mr. Simon, but I suspect they might both be a bit biased towards the left. Harken back to Thomas Jefferson who said, "Great innovations should not be forced on a slender majority." So here we are with a heavily left leaning skinny majority trying to push through**

**major transformative legislature on the rest of the country. So desperate to ram their excessively costly programs through that the left has so viciously attacked the hold out voters as to ensure their never coming on board. To add insult to injury, in a further attack on hold outs for the voting rights act, the president compares them to people like George Wallace, Bull Connor and Jefferson Davis - that's from the president who was going to unify us.**

**You see, Messrs Stevenson and Simon only identified half the problem. To give equal time to the right, the last part of their quote should have an ending directed at the far left as well. That would read, "It is fair to say that the far left-wing threat to the United States and its apparent goal of laying the groundwork for a power grab, if necessary in 2024- is politically existential." The only real difference is that, in speaking about the right wing, the authors are referring to 2024. Many would contend that, with regard to the left wing, it's happening right now.**

## **MEDIA ON A SUGAR HIGH**

**So, with the background of all the rancor and divisiveness regarding Build Back Better and the Voting Rights Act, what's the latest cause celebre? Don't know who started this ball rolling, but some marketing genius came up with the idea of a Hillary Clinton run for the presidency in 2024. The press in general, and CNN and FOX news in particular became almost giddy over the prospect, conjuring up a rematch of Trump vs Clinton. Now, for many who may not have been following Republican politics too closely, the very mention of the Trump name may cause some quizzical looks, like, "You're kidding. With all his**

**problems, how could he possibly run again?" Politics is full of miracle comebacks, but, in Mr. Trump's case, he's never been off the field.**

**The rumor mill had been touting Gov. DeSantis and Nikki Haley as future standard bearers for the Republicans, but the most recent Reuters poll reflects the following support for potential Republican presidential candidates in 2024: Trump, 54%; DeSantis, 11%; Mike Pence, 8%; Nikki Haley, 4% and Ted Cruz, 3%.**

**On the Hillary Clinton side of the equation, the commentary runs to the expected, "There's no way Joe Biden is going to run again." And then, "How do they throw Kamala under the bus?" One wag suggested, by giving her a really big job, like head of CBP (Customs and Border Patrol).**

**Anyway, the media are just licking their chops over the rancor and divisiveness a Clinton/Trump rematch would create with never a dull moment in the 24/7 news cycle. As they say, "Stay tuned.**

**MAGAWA, -- RIP**

**Yes, it's my sad duty to inform our readers that Magawa has passed on at the age of eight. Magawa was an African giant pouched rat trained to sniff out land mines and other explosive devices. Magawa was extremely successful in Cambodia sniffing out more than 100 such devices and saving untold lives. She/he (not sure which) was awarded a gold medal by the UK Veterinary Charity, PDSA – a true and beautiful story – thank you Magawa.**

## **UFOs, I ALWAYS WANTED TO BELIEVE**

**Well, who hasn't? Notwithstanding some spectacular film of flying unidentified objects in recent years, a brief contemplation of space travel reflects the impracticality of alien visitors. 186,000 miles per second is how fast light travels. So, with the sun being 93,000,000 miles away from earth, it takes 8.5 light minutes for sun shine to get to us. Looking through a high- powered telescope at Mars, 142,000,000 miles distant, we are seeing images from 12 light minutes ago.**

**Then there's Alpha Centauri, the star nearest our solar system, four light years away – got that? Light travelling at 186,000 miles a second takes four years to reach us.**

**I guess you can say, “never say never”. What if some advanced civilization had developed an incredible propulsion system that enabled their space- craft to fly at 186,000 miles per hour? Well, compared to 186,000 miles per second that's a ratio of 1/3600. Now someone check my math here (maybe our science contributor, Susie Baker) At 186,000 miles per hour it would take 14,400 years to reach Alpha Centauri. OK, even if my numbers are off by a bit, it's a pretty long way. So here are the problems – unless the aliens are already living among us – I have been told I'm a suspect – how often do they get home leave? Do you need special permission to go to your kid's Bar Mitzvah. How do you keep your space vehicle fueled up and supplied with TP? – hey, might have been a factor in the empty shelves during the pandemic - just a bit of speculation to take your mind off the crazy world in which we live.**



**Your faithful scribe, PB**