

# **HERMIT HERALD**

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## **QUOTE OF THE DAY:**

**“I can’t believe I’m going to say this, but I would rather be at school.” Syeda Saima, 15, Queens, NY. A sentiment I’m sure is shared by her parents.**

## **POTUS THANK YOU:**

**Very good thinking to avoid conflict with the governors over when, and if, restrictions can be eased. No people in a better position (on the ground) to make those decisions than the states’ top executives.**

## **COVID -19 UPDATES:**

**Biogen: an example of what can happen. Here we have one of America’s top drug companies. They know a lot about safety and controls.**

**In late February the mood was ebullient as the company was just announcing the roll out of a very promising Alzheimers drug. They were also having their annual company leadership meeting in Cambridge, Mass. which was attended by 175 employees.**

**What happened as a result of that meeting is called a “super spreader event”. There were one or more attendees who had the virus, but did not know it at the time. At the end of the conference everyone either got in their cars or hopped on packed planes and headed home.**

**The reader may recall, from an earlier issue, that the airlines only have contact information for about 50% of their passengers. You can guess what happened next. To date there are 99 cases (employees and their contacts) just in Massachusetts. There is no accurate count regarding the other exposed attendees who departed for locations around the U.S. Certainly Biogen will have reached out to all attendees by now, but it is highly likely that many hundreds of infections have resulted from this meeting.**

**Secondary infections: In an example of what can happen when initial restrictions on social distancing are loosened, Hokkaido, Japan declared a second state of emergency this past Sunday as a new wave of infections kicked off- a cautionary note for all those communities/ states that are chomping at the bit to loosen things up. At the very same time Germany, Austria, Italy and Spain are tinkering with selective openings- a little frightening, but probably being very carefully monitored.**

**Some interesting statistics:**

<b>Country</b>	<b>date</b>	<b>cases</b>	<b>deaths</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>1/26</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>2/7</b>	<b>13,603</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>3/24</b>	<b>50,006</b>	<b>2,526</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>3/1</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>3/31</b>	<b>183,000</b>	<b>3,700</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>U,S,</b>	<b>4/14</b>	<b>603,000</b>	<b>25,710</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>NYC</b>	<b>4/14</b>	<b>202,208</b>	<b>10,000+</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>4/10</b>	<b>95,000</b>	<b>14,300</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<b>4/10</b>	<b>162,482</b>	<b>21,067</b>	<b>12%</b>

**Tragic all around, but can't explain high numbers in France and Italy.**

**Mismatched aid to states: A lot more clarification is needed here, but, at the current time, Federal aid is not being distributed proportionate to the impact of the virus. The initial \$30 Billion in payments is based on past medicare revenues and not on how many patients have been treated. Therefore, Minnesota gets about \$380,000 per case; West Virginia, \$471,000 and New York, \$12,000. No, that is not a typo- \$12,000. Obviously, someone has to be in the process of rectifying the situation- just inexplicable.**

**Troubles enough here, but look at the Mideast: One third of Saudi Arabia's 34 million people are foreigners. In Bahrain and Oman almost 50% are foreigners, and in Qatar and UAE foreigners outnumber citizens by 9 to 1.**

**Most of these foreigners are laborers who are generally treated terribly. As the coronavirus pandemic worsens, migrant have been locked down in cramped unsanitary dorms; deprived**

**of income and unable to return home because of travel restrictions. In some of these encampments as many as ten men sleep in one room. In one compound 450 men have to share six bathrooms – a cruel and tragic way to live and a time bomb for the coronavirus.**

### **REFLECTIONS ON WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AND WHERE WE ARE GOING:**

**It is totally human nature when people are unhappy or in pain to look for someone to blame, but I find it disheartening to see how the “blame game” is so up front and center as we contend with this awful contagion.**

**Being a presidential election year, it’s not surprising to see the parallel tracks of critics with their respective political parties. The administration is roundly criticized by Democrats for being slow to react, not prepared, etc. But, as an example, when the former head of the CDC (as discussed in issue 12) makes reference to his estimate that 5,600 lives could have been saved in New York, if Governor Cuomo had instituted social**

**distancing two weeks sooner, not a peep of criticism is to be heard.**

**My view is that both Governor Cuomo and the administration have been trying their hardest. Go back to the chart I put up earlier. In two months, China went from 698 cases to 50,000 cases. In the United States we went from 70 cases to 183,000 cases in 30 days. I continue to believe, as I articulated in issue two, that this is such a calamitous event (so far beyond SARS, MERS and Ebola) that it is very hard to fault anyone for not being prepared.**

**Interestingly, along the lines of not taking action quickly enough, a very small article can be found in the April 14<sup>th</sup> copy of the NY Times entitled, "At Briefing, Fauci Defends Trump". Quoting from the article, "Dr. Fauci said the president approved social distancing measures the FIRST TIME (my caps) they were recommended to him." Dr fauci is then quoted, "The first and only time that Dr. Birx and I formally made a recommendation to the president, the president listened and went to the mitigation."**

**So, my bottom line is, can't we fight over who is to be the next president on a different battlefield, drop the "blame game" and pull together in trying to squash this contagion?**

### **SEASON FOOTBALL TICKETS ANYONE?**

**Oh boy!! Even if social distancing is relaxed, will it fill the football stadiums this fall or, will there even be a football season?**

**At stake is a \$4.1 Billion dollar revenue for the 50- plus public colleges in Power Five conferences, an average of more than \$78 Million per school.**

**It's hard to imagine, absent a silver bullet, that we will be able to end social distancing by this fall. This could be as big a downer, or bigger, than losing March Madness.**

**I'll try to find some more upbeat topics for the next issue, but now it's time for my one outside hour in the prison yard.**

**Your faithful scribe, PB**

