

PLAGUE JOURNAL

A Documentary Account

By Jonathan May

INTRODUCTION

Early in April 2020 I began to look back on writings I had produced in the last weeks that touched on the progress of COVID-19. There were emails to friends, posts on Facebook about the progress of the virus locally, and a few blog entries. I thought it would be useful, if just for me, to organize all of this into one document.

The latest email with no mention of the virus was March 3. I'll start with that one, since it still has a breath of the normal in it, and it also gives just a touch of the me that was.

Like so many, I had been aware of the virus back in January from the first reporting of the outbreak in Wuhan. Yes, I knew it was serious, but that was way over there on the other side of the world. If it ever made it to our shores we would be prepared, for our medical system and our hospitals were fine indeed. I was innocent back then.

My main discussion of the virus in China and the Far East in those earlier weeks tended to be by telephone with a librarian friend from my Columbia University days who had been born in China and raised in Hong Kong. She has two brothers living in Hong Kong, one a doctor, and she was particularly interested in the availability and price of facemasks in the South: there seemed to be none left of the shelves in the northeast, where she lives. Walmart still had some, I discovered, but not in large bulk packages. I didn't bother to pick up a package for myself. I could always get them later if I needed them.

In the emails reprinted below I have edited out names of most people mentioned, and I have tried to edit out many redundancies. Omissions within text tend to be indicated. I have not included replies or commentaries of my correspondents, except in one case when a reply of note was included in my own email to another. I have not included the names of those to whom my messages were sent.

On March 23 I began posting on Facebook each day the total number of cases first in my home state of Alabama and later including data from my county, Hale, and the four counties surrounding Hale County. My motivation was to let my Facebook acquaintances and friends scattered over the nation and the world what was happening in the heart of rural Alabama's Black Belt and to help raise the consciousness of local citizenry concerning the virus and its spread. These brief posts are included as they were written at the time.

The blog posts are included as written at the time, minus the accompanying photographs.

From time to time as I move along I will be adding further thoughts and commentary, identified by NOTE.

So here goes:

20.03.04. Email.

Much enjoyed the obit. I do like obits that express something about the deceased. Obits that, perhaps, border on the edge of tasteful. But that's a good border, I think.

There was bad weather maybe 15 miles SE of me the other night, the night that messed up TN. Not bad here, just heavy rain and some electrical activity with little thunder. Storm systems tend to split and head both north and south of me. Except, of course, when they decided to split the difference and head straight toward me. Been 9 years now since the Big Outburst of April 2011, and at that time a biggie crossed the highway a half mile west of me and passed about a thirds of a mile north, killing 4 in the Sawyerville area. I guess we're overdue. I don't really have a rabbit hole to dive in should such occur again, but as I've said before, if the house goes I'd just as soon go with it.

My movie collection (DVDs, Blu-ray's, 4Ks) has just reached 500. It's what I do now, since I don't collect books anymore. As a good librarian does, I build on strength, and just recently my purchase of "Badlands" completes my collection of Terrence Malice (except for his latest, not yet out of DVD). And having recently added "Parasite" which brought my Bong Jun-Ho collection up to 3, I decided to get his "Mother" which I'd seen some years back via Netflix DVD and watched it with even more admiration this time. In some ways it is the closest to "Parasite" of

any that I have, with a fantastic performance by the titular character. His giant pig movie is not yet available on DVD, but I keep hoping. On the way, a major collection of Mel Brooks movies I found for a great price.

I've been awake since 3 and finally forced myself out of bed about 5. Constantly flickering distant lightning kept me awake, and I finally gave up. Chances are I'll be going to bed earlier than usual tonight. Or maybe I'll just over-caffeinate all day. No. Not that. Makes me weird.

I ordered HBO some months back and am really enjoying it. Currently I am almost all the way through the miniseries "The Outsider," based on the Stephen King novel of the same name. A central character is portrayed by Cynthia Erivo, recently an Oscar nominee for "Harriet." and she is wonderful. As is Ben Mendelsohn, doing a brilliant job as a sheriff who made a terrible mistake, Erivo's character, Holly Gibney, is white in the novel and in the earlier novel and miniseries "Mr. Mercedes," but it works wonderfully to make her black. Holly is a woman with serious attention issues who uses her strange talents to locate people. Or other things.

Am also getting a kick out of the 2d season of "The New Pope." John Malkovich plays the too-elegant British present pope being blackmailed by another priest for youthful gay indiscretion. Jude Law plays the preceding pope plus 1 (he who died mysteriously), and Law has been in a coma for a year. In an early scene he developed an erection while a nun was washing his body, and the latest sequence, the one in which he miraculously awakens, starts with him emerging from the ocean in scanty brief and parading around in front of a bevy of Italian beauties, two of whom faint at his beauty. And trust me, he is beautiful! Law is middle-aged, but he carries it well, along with buffed-up body and hairy chest. The series is scandalously pulpy and sexy, but (and?) oddly spiritual at the same time.

Am about a third of the way into a Ramsay Campbell novel called "Thirteen Days by Sunset Beach." Campbell is a highly respected British writer of horror fiction, but I have found it hard to enjoy his work. He writes about incredibly gray characters in incredibly gray settings, mostly rain-soaked Liverpool. This one I am liking, and I find it much helped by its being set on a sunny Greek isle where an extended gray British family goes on holiday. I had thought a new setting would be more enjoyable for me, and I am glad to have this one on my Kindle. Very psychological, its horror only hinted at sort of between the lines.

Hark! Thunder, this time closer!

I'd better shut down these ramblings and send them off while maybe I can and head off to cereal.

20.03.09. Email.

I'm fine, so far as I know. The virus remains at bay, but I sense that it is much in the minds (and fears) of the populace locally. Lots of flu, and I hear that one woman being treated in the hospital in Greensboro about 3 weeks back did volunteer that she had flown in from a country in the east the week before, necessitating certain procedures and cautions. One woman in town had a son and daughter-in-law in China who managed to get out in the nick of time.

But of course Trump and Fox News say that it is all a big Democrat plot to bring down the President and other than that we don't have to worry. If it weren't so serious it would be funny as hell watching the Administration stumble all over itself re the coronavirus.

Glad you are seeing some warmer days. I gather that a warm front had pushed north, and I guess that's what you got. We've had some days in mid-70s so far. March tends to be problematic down here, with unexpected highs and lows.

Yesterday watched Don Noble interview with Guy Hubbs re his history of Tuscaloosa (I think it was a repeat but I had missed it last year). Interesting. Tried to find a link to send it to you but failed.

[A mutual friend] called a week back and seemed fine, although she reported that she had been under the weather but didn't give details.

So back at teaching! How's it going? How's the book going?

NOTE: How much has changed in less than a week!

20.03.13. Email,

. . . News out of DC re the medical excitements continues to astound me. It sounds like a bitter black comedy along the lines of "Dr. Strangelove."

Spring is here, with attendant allergy-inducing plants a-bloom. I sure would hate to be quarantined for 14 days because of hay fever!

Wednesday was in Sam's Club and experienced the toilet paper/Kleenex shortage for the first time. The shelves were practically empty of both. Managed to get one of the last 4 Kleenex bundles and had to settle for a more expensive TP bundle than usual. I wasn't panic-buying, just replenishing the larder.

Trashy Movie of the Week that I loved: "Rapture-Palooza." Netvlix DVD describes it thusly "In this revelatory comedy, a pair of teenagers survives the apocalypse only to find themselves on an all-or-nothing mission to defeat the Antichrist -- who turns out to have numerous psychiatric issues and a powerful yen for an Earth virgin."

That doesn't do justice to its wild profanity (in every sense). Nor does it mention that the kids accidentally shoot down Jesus as he rides down on his White Horse. Nor does it alert one to the big fight between Satan and God at the end, which results in them accidentally falling into a wading pool together and dragging a plugger-in radio with them which effectively finishes off both.

Well, I loved it. So sue me.

On which happy note I'll sign off for now.

Stay well, and prosper.

20.03.14. Email 2

Have been wearing orthotic inserts for about 10 days now, and they seem to be positive. The degree of improvement has not been as great as when I first started wearing the ones I got a Walmart, but I think I had maxed out the improvement I was getting from them. I'm glad I followed your advice and kept my orthopedic appointment.

Hope that you . . .and all your loved ones are all fine. So far as I know I am. I'm reasonably well equipped for a lot of hunkering in at home, but I may make a trip to Walmart tomorrow for a new other standard items for the larder.

Cousin [] wife . . . was shopping in Tuscaloosa Friday and reported that the Publix Supermarket was thronged and it took her over 2 and a half hours to shop and check out. Biggest empty space = pop tarts. I guess parents were stocking up on instant kiddie foods: I gather than schools will be closed for a month.

We have (last I heard) 2 reported and confirmed cases in Alabama, one in Birmingham and one in Montgomery, plus 3 possibles.

My friend [in New York] reported nigh-empty buses going down Broadway yesterday. He had taken one down to a pharmacy where he gets a soap he needs. The pharmacy had closed doors, with pharmacist bringing filled prescriptions out to the street. All his staff were ill, and he thought it too dangerous to have people in the store, for their protection and for protection of his stock. I hadn't considered it before but or course a lot of sick folks would be going to pharmacies.

He had this to say in his email: "It is something of a silver-lining moment realizing that with a federal government response to this public health emergency that has been worse than nothing, we (we the people, state governments, local governments, business, the scientific community, the health care professionals, the media) have all been collaborating in an exercise of self-government, working together to try to flatten the curve enough to save lives and preserve order, while Rush Limbaugh and Mike Pence continue to try to explain to the MAGA-hatted how it is all Obama's fault."

The government's (and by that I mean Trump and cronies) response has been beneath contempt.

Took friend G. to the VA for an appointment on Wednesday, and already they were screening for coronavirus all people entering. 4 questions: Do you have cold or flu symptoms? Have you traveled abroad recently? Have you been exposed to the coronavirus? Have you experienced congestion or coughing lately? We had the right answers, for if we did not we would have risked going through the door on the right for possible 14-day quarantine.

Interesting piece in the Times this a.m. re how various steps taken in Hong Kong, Singapore, and one other city, although less draconian than in China, have helped slow the spread.

A writer friend on FB posted this:

"I don't take responsibility at all."

--President Trump, March 13, 2020

May it be one of his most-remembered lines in the history books.

I commented: I thought every word out of his mouth was a lie. This statement proves me wrong.

On which note, I'll sign off for now. Stay well and prosper!

20.03.14. Email.

So far you are the only person I know under self-quarantine. I hope that remains the case, but I'll be surprised if it does. So read some books and watch some movies at home and try to pretend that this is the vacation after the vacation . . .

Love to the Caregiver as well, and all my best wishes for you both.

NOTE: That last was to a friend who had just got back to New York State from a pyramid-climbing trip in the Yucatan. At a scheduled appointment at the VA on Friday the 13th he too was asked the same four questions that G. and I had to answer. Yes, he had recently traveled abroad. Yes, he had a cough. He was immediately rushed to ER there, tested for everything possible at the time, and released for two weeks self-quarantine at home. (He is out of quarantine now and remains well.) His experience plus G.'s and mine at the Tuscaloosa VA sent me into stay-at-home mode. The VA was taking it seriousl. Maybe I shhould too.

G. and I were in two different medical facilities that week, and on both days we had eaten lunch in Tuscaloosa, once at a seafood restaurant and onec at a Chinese buffet. Four good oportunites for exposure. Especially the buffet. It was the buffet part that frightened me, not the Chinese. More reason to keep my distance from the world. I had no symptoms, but (unlike the governor of Georgia) I had already learned that people could be infectious before showoing any symptoms.

My sister and I had been brought up by a mother whose whole family, parents and five kids, had been seriously ill with the 1918 flu. She taught us to take any illness seriously and flu especially, and Don't Take Your Germs Out In Public! Smart woman, my mother.

20.03.16. Email.

Only 11 more to go [in your home quarantine]. I trust that you remain well with no fever. If such develops, are you to call 911 or is [spouse] to take you somewhere? Re your cough, I seem to recall that you have always had a bit of a cough, or at least at lot of the time. Just like I have year-round hay fever. If the authorities caught me with one of my sneezing fits they'd probably shoot me on sight!

Of course, I can understand the VA's desire to protect you and the public at this point. Overreaction? Maybe. But best to be on the safe side. A time to err on the side of caution.

[My sister] and I are cancelling our Wednesday appointment with our financial advisor at Morgan Stanley. We feel that that is not a necessary meeting at this point. I have written my retina doctor re my appointment 2 weeks from today and suggested that we skip this one: I will see regular eye dr. 3 months later and him 3 months after that. And, as I pointed out, his waiting room is always jam-packed.

I see that restaurants in NYC now are closed and can only deliver food. Movie houses here still open, but they are sell no more than half of the tickets for any showing, and even in larger houses never more than 500. This too may change. I will, of course, not be attending.

Made a run on the Demopolis Walmart yesterday during church hours for basic larder-replenishing. Got most of what I needed, although in some cases with fewer choices. No bleach or hand sanitizer in store. Need the former, the latter a luxury. I can actually make latter with rubbing alcohol and aloe gel, both of which I have.

[My cousin] is pretty much isolating himself. He has a compromised immune system because of some shots he takes for his brand of arthritis. I had supper with him and [wife] Friday night: oyster stew followed by boiled shrimp.

Spring rushing past. Most bulbs have done their thing, and the redbud is on the wane. Starting to hit 80 in daytime and low 60s at night.

Keep on keeping well!

NOTE: That seafood supper was the last social engagement I have had or will have for some time to come. My cousins have driven to my place several times since

with containers of leftovers from their evening meals that I could use the next day. The closest we would get would be the passing of container and the rest of the time we remained ten feet apart.

20.03.19. Email.

Perilous times we live in. Or at least are still living in. I made up my mind over the weekend to shelter in place as much as feasible. But then I did make a foraging expedition to Demopolis Walmart last Sunday morning (while the Good Christians were at church) for some necessities. And Monday, upon receipt of the last tax form (from Morgan Stanley) I needed did run my forms up my tax man in Tuscaloosa, and while there elected to tackle the Walmart there. I wandered down to the pharmacy area and asked a pleasant-looking black woman working there if she would laugh at me if I asked if there was any hand-sanitizer and where it might be. She said she would not laugh but there was none left. Nor, she volunteered, any alcohol or paregoric.

Nor bleach of any kind, as I had discovered in Demopolis.

Other items in short supply: Bread. Olive oil. Pop tarts. Standard-type cereal (although shelves remain stocked with the kinds of cereal boxes with cute cartoon figures on them and tend to include jelly-beans among the chocolate-covered corn flakes). Pasta. Rice.

Yesterday got call from tax man saying that my taxes were ready, and I went up about noon to get them, and this time I elected to try the other Walmart, the one out US 82 in the direction of MS. I thought maybe they'd restocked. No. Ever more empty than the other two. Did buy a few more staples, including big box of red wine and big box of white (I tend to buy the boxes because they last better than bottles). Also bought a squirt bottle in which I can make up my own sanitizer, for I do have some aloe gel and some rubbing alcohol in my bathroom pantry.

So, in spite of my attempt to hunker in, I have been out and about. But now, time to hunker in seriously.

Have cancelled all non-emergency March appointments (which means all appointments, for if you have an appointment that means it is probably not an emergency) including my March 30 retina doctor trip. My eyes seem stable, at least from the inside, and a) don't want to sit around Dr. Oltmanns's (sic) crowded

waiting room and b) even in surgery was deemed a good idea I think this is not the time for that. Cancellations include having Young [a new sousin, recently met] out for a movie-watching and visits with friends [two in Greensboro]. Will probably cancel my mid-April foot check-up with orthopedist, but will await early April to do that.

The Horseshoe Farm Fellows will be helping take care of [two friends in Greensboro] during this time (at least until and unless the 20-somethings themselves start getting sick). Each had been assigned a Fellow for the year, who takes blood pressure, checks on them, and during this time will shop for them if necessary. G.'s is a delightful young woman named [], petit and pretty as a picture. A young Jewish guy from Southern CA named [] has been assigned to B. who is under special instructions to self-isolate: he was in hospital for over 10 days some weeks back with pneumonia . . . G. told me that the Fellows would also be willing to help me out, but at least for now that I deem unnecessary.

I'm okay, at least for now, and I am not panic-stricken at the possibility that I might contract the virus. Should that happen, I plan to hunker in even more so. Rushing out to a doctor seems like a bad idea for any number of reasons. I guess what might trigger a call for emergency help would be if I could not breathe. There seems to be little else that a medical facility could do for me that I couldn't do for myself, so why bother. (This might change, but I'll be surprised if that happens in the next few weeks.)

Your brothering-law is not the only virus-denier out there. Last evening caught interview with kids on beaches in FL who think it is all over-blown and how dare they interfere with our Spring Break? Then this a.m. noted in the Times article indicating that a surprisingly large % of people in emergency care are in the 20-50 age range.

My next annual physical is late August, and there is time for the virus dust to settle (or for me to settle into the dust) before then. My next scheduled dental appointment is just the day before that, so ditto.

Of course I have been following the tale of the virus in NYC, and of course I am always thinking of you and [wife]. Both of you take what care you can. I am trying to do that. Noting is close to normal, you said, referring to the city. That can certainly be said about the nation, and for that matter the world. Yes, you've had practice in staying at home, and that is something that I am happy enough to do, more often than not. I have lots here to entertain myself with.

And although it might be nice for you to be upstate, being in a state of denial is not at all where you should be.

I'm not sure that words come easier these days, but, as you have noticed by now, they still do come.

p.s.: I ask myself, now many gallons of bleach does the normal household need, even in a time of plague?

p.p.s.: I note that the movie "Contagion" which I had put on my Amazon Wishlist waiting for the prices to drop more is now listed as "currently unavailable."

p.p.p.s.: Why are there long lines at gun stores?

20.03.21. Email.

Yes, we've [Alabama] jumped from 2 to 100+ in a week.

Judging from the diminish supplies in stores the state is taking the virus seriously. My part of the state seems to be a safer zone than most, so I guess rural isolation has its merits.

I am leaving home only for supplies. No social engagements other than internet and phone.

Now if only I could find bleach and hand sanitizer, but none of those have been on the shelves for at least 2 weeks.

Tuskaloos Internal Medicine (sic), my primary care physician's group, sent out email Monday urging people to stay at home as much as possible and if they get sick, call them, don't run to ER or to their office. It also said that if you showed up for an appointment, come in and register and then return in your car, and a nurse would come get you when it was time for your appointment. Makes sense.

Springtime. Hay fever. Actually I have upper respiratory allergies any time of the year, causing occasional bouts of uncontrollable sneezing, and sometimes sore throat from the post-nasal drip involved. And being 81 and climbing, I do have

those occasional days when I feel a bit more wobbly or otherwise lessened. Nowadays every time this happens I can't help but wonder Business as Usual or Beginning of the End. And on top of all that, yesterday a.m. picked embedded deer tick from just below my right knee, no doubt there since my tiny bit of spot-mowing the afternoon before. So if I get fever, there is another possibility . . . Not fair!

. . . [My cousin], incidentally, is even more in self-isolating mode than I am. He takes a medication for a form of arthritis that compromises the immune system. He and [wife] are much in stay-at-home mode and don't welcome guests. They have cancelled a 40th birthday celebration for his middle daughter. Wise, I think.

Old folks sure do ramble on re health matters! But in my defense I have to say there are lots of health matters to ramble on about these days.

. . . All this is to suggest that we, or at least many of us, here in Alabama are taking this situation seriously. I am concerned about all my New York friends, and I wish you and all the rest of them the best. Certainly this is the most life-changing thing we have faced since 9/11, and I strongly suspect even more so than that.

20.03.22. Email.

As if yo folks didn't have enough on your plate already! Well, it will encourage more people to stay in. Except, of course, those who want to play in the snow.

I still remain well. No social engagements or doctor visit. Venturing out only for necessities.

Thank goodness for movies! My latest viewings:

Watched (thanks to Netflix) wonderful French movie last eve called "By the Grace of God," an almost documentary approach to how one young-middle-aged Frenchman married with 5 children tries to confront the church and a priest re his being abused as a child, and in his frustration gradually involves others and other victims until a movement grows. The focus of the movie moves from the original central character along to 3 more as the movie progresses. All actors are wonderful. The central theme is that not so much that there is a conscious cover-up conspiracy but that society at all levels works together to hide unpleasantness. Directed by François Ozon, whom I tend to like.

Also watched "The Farewell," and while I found it pleasant enough, well acted by all, nice scenes here and there, I find it hard to understand how it got as much Oscar buzz as it did. What I'd call a "nice little movie." And I don't mean that as denigration. But I wish I had seen with diminished expectations. It seemed to go oddly slack at times.

Showtime free for a week on DirecTV, which is timely. I've caught some odd but moderately interesting horror and SciFi movies that I wasn't even aware of. Nice thing about a recorder: you can record on spec and if the first 5 minutes or so reveals a talentless mess, you can delete.

I just checked and our 16-plex in Tuscaloosa is "temporarily closed."

Friday ran into Greensboro to 1) cash a check (long lines at the 3 drive-throughs: bank has urged patrons to use that whenever possible), 2) gas up car and lawnmower-supply canister, 3) pick up chicken and a few other items at grocery, and 4) stop by ABC store (for the untutored that's Alabama Beverage Control store, for Alabama in its infinite wisdom many moons ago determined that hard liquor could not be sold by regular stores because they couldn't be trusted to handle the taxes accurately. A few years back they decided that wines could be sold in non-governmental stores. Go figure.). That last was closed due to the virus, and I was instructed that closest stores open were in Eutaw and Demopolis, sorry for any inconvenience.

I'm relatively equidistant between Gboro and Eutaw, so after unloading my foodstuffs I ran over to Eutaw: don't want to face the Viral Apocalypse sans plenty of liquor in the house, and it does have a long shelf-life. Store didn't open till noon (new hours because of virus). Only 5 customers allowed in store. I drove around and admired the town until noon. I was among the first 5, which I know because they shooed no. 6 out. Customer could not approach cordoned-off merchandise. You told clerk what you wanted and she got it for you. She could not give it to you but had to put it behind the checkout clerk. You couldn't put your hands on it until it was paid for and bagged. Excessive? Maybe. But if it can help keep us in a zone of lesser worry, fine. And, I think, it will catch the attention of a segment of the population not fully aware of the virus.

Life As We Know It is changing yet again.

20.03.23. Data.

157 confirmed cases in Alabama. And growing.

NOTE: My first data post on Facebook. So far no confirmed cases in Male County, but that will soon change.

20.03.24. Data.

196 confirmed cases in Alabama. Closest to Hale County: Tuscaloosa (9)

20.03.25. Data.

242 confirmed cases in Alabama. My county has none.

20.03.26. Data.

386 confirmed cases in Alabama. So far, none in Hale Co. Tuscaloosa Co. next door has 15.

20.03.27. Data.

480 cases in Alabama. None so far in Hale, but in adjoining counties there are 20 cases in Tuscaloosa and 1 in Marengo.

20.03.27. Email.

I think you might be more happy than not re [your wife] working from home. Was sorry to hear about cases at her synagogue, but I can't say that surprised me. I have been following the trials New York has been experiencing.

Which reminds me: my cousin [] works at the YWCA in Birmingham and she reported that the abused wives' hotline had doubled in traffic the week before, a result of husbands and wives being in close quarters and under stress all day. I found that horrible to contemplate.

. . . Finally found a gallon of bleach on the shelves of the only grocery store in Greensboro, where I managed to do a good and thorough shopping that will hold me a few days.

Tuscaloosa is starting a 24 hour curfew on Sunday until 4/11 (at least) for all businesses not deemed essential. You can still go to pharmacies and grocery stores and doctors, but not barbers and beauticians and cutesy what-not shops. Unclear

whether his includes Home Depot and Loew's. Closures include bars. Most restaurants had already shut their doors.

Our President and his cronies don't do any good and lots of bad. I see that gays are now to blame for the coronavirus, but I can't bring myself to read the details. Some things it is better not to know. But what I really have trouble getting my head around is that the President's approval ratings are rising!

But enough of that. Too much bad in the world to get started on him.

Re the statistics: do confirmed cases mean only those where there have been tests that turned out positive? Hale County is still zero, but I wonder. My . . . own somewhat atypical cold of last January: . . . COVID-19? I gather there is some thought now that the virus has been around a lot longer than January of this year, and many people may have had it and survived (if that is true, hope that included me).

And it looks like New Orleans is about to explode like NYC has, and there is a lot of traffic between this part of Alabama and New Orleans. Mardi Gras seems to be the big culprit. (Well, that would certainly involve gays.)

I hope that both you and [wife] are remaining well and will keep on doing so.

NOTE: The following list taken from the Executive Order clarifies the Tuscaloosa businesses that are to be closed.

- Entertainment;
 - o night clubs
 - o bowling alleys
 - o arcades
 - o racetracks
 - o indoor children's play places
 - o pool halls
 - o adult gaming and entertainment venues
- Recreation facilities and activities:
 - o gyms and fitness centers
 - o swimming pools and spas, excluding licensed physical therapy services
 - o yoga, barre and spin facilities
 - o spectator sports
 - o team sports involving personal contact closer than six feet;

- o shared sporting apparatus and equipment, and playground equipment
- Barber shops, hair salons, waxing salons, and threading salons
- Retail stores:
 - o Furniture & Home Furnishing Stores
 - o Clothing, Shoe & Clothing Accessories Stores
 - o Jewelry, Luggage, and Leather Goods Stores
 - o Department Stores
 - o Sporting Goods
 - o Hobby, Book, & Music Stores
 - o Florists
- Nail salons and spas
- Concert venues and auditoriums
- Theaters
- Tourist attractions (including museums, planetariums, parades)
- Body art facilities and tattoo services
- Tanning salons
- Massage therapy establishments and services
- Museums, Historical sites, and Galleries
- Performing Arts centers/events/rehearsals
- Social clubs
- Fraternity and Sorority meetings and events
- Proms, Formals and other similar events

20.03.28. Email.

Yes, I did know that about the 1918 flu [that it likely originated in military base in Kansas]. Its origins were discussed in an interesting documentary I caught on PBS a few years back. I had always been intrigued by that pandemic. It was still much in people's minds when I was a child, and all of my mother's family came down with it. One of my grandfather's sisters came into Greensboro to nurse the family. None died, although reputedly they were very sick. I think part of my sister's and my having always taken flu very seriously can be traced back to my mother's experience then. I don't recall hearing much about it from my father's side of the family, but maybe, living more isolated way out in the country, they had less of a problem with it.

The Spanish Flu. That reminds me that when Columbus returned from the New World with a highly contagious STD and it got spread around (all those horny

sailors!) it was known variously as the Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Greek, French, etc. Disease, depending on where you were on the outside looking in.

And that reminds me that what was called leprosy in the biblical accounts may well have been not that at all but something like syphilis. That would certainly go along with the poor folks wandering the streets calling out "Unclean! Unclean!"

Horton Foote wrote a good play about the 1918 flu, called, simply, "1918." I much enjoyed the movie that resulted.

Did you know that Foote was "a close friend" of Jerome Robbins during his NY years? Speculate away.

Glad that you and [wife] are making do. We are, actually, more fortunate than many. I really hadn't thought how much it would mean for your neighborhood to have Columbia and Barnard closed, and that early on, but of course that has been most personally positive for you.

Alabama, at least officially (and I'm not counting the governor here, but at least she has been more positive the DJT), does seem to be taking this seriously. And many individuals have been ahead of the curve on that. The rate of increase in the state has jumped from about 50 per day to about 100 per day.

You probably noticed recent postings of mine re the closing down of Tuscaloosa by the mayor. I understand that was prompted last Thursday by his learning of big parties the night before involving lots of college students (and probably high school as well) gathering in large groups and whooping it up. There was already a 10 p.m. till dawn curfew, but now it is 24/7 and involving practically anything that is not a grocery, pharmacy, or medical facility.

I still remain well. Thinking about mowing before it gets any hotter outside.

20.03.28. Data.

587 cases in Alabama. None in Hale Co., but 22 in Tuscaloosa to the north, 2 in Marengo to the south, 1 in Greene to the west.

20.03.29. Data.

696 cases in Alabama. 0 in Hale, but 23 in Tuscaloosa to the north, 3 in Marengo to the south, and 3 in Greene to the west.

20.03.30. Data.

827 cases in Alabama, with 0 in Hale Co., 23 in Tuscaloosa to the north, 5 in Marengo to the south, and 3 in Greene to the west.

20.03.30. Email.

Judge Crawford just posted this message on his FB page:

Subject: 3/30/20 COVID-19 IMPORTANT UPDATE

Hale County Hospital provided this release statement on the most recent update as to the COVID-19 status:

Hello all,

I wanted to send out a brief update that HCH has just received word of the first confirmed COVID-19 case in Hale County. That means that, as of this afternoon, we have tested 20 people and have 1 confirmed case. This should just reiterate the importance of taking proper precautions (social distancing, etc.) while not escalating unnecessary panic. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to any of our hotline numbers which are listed below.

20.03.31 Data.

947 cases in Alabama, 6 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co.: 28 Marengo: 5 Greene: 3 Hale: 1.

20.04.01. Data.

999 cases in Alabama with 13 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 29, Greene 3, Marengo 5, Hale 1.

20.04.01. Email.

I'm okay. Pretty much in self lockdown. No social visits other than FB and phone and email. I hope that you and yours are okay.

The only friends I know who have come down with it are [their names]. Well, they had flu-like symptoms but since they were getting better they weren't tested. Their daughter and son-in-law-to-be had symptoms, and were tested and found positive. There was to be a grand wedding mid-April at the Little Church Around the

Corner, but now that has been reduced to a party of 10, including the wedding pair and the priest.

[A cousin] in even more secure lockdown than I. He takes a medication for arthritis that lowers resistance to disease. At present he and [his wife] remain healthy.

999 cases in AL this a.m., with only 1 in Hale County. I'm sure there are more cases than that, just undiagnosed.

20.04.02 Data

1,106 cases in Alabama, 17 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 30, Marengo 5, Greene 4, Hale 1.

20.04.02. Blog. Itches and Scratches

You may recall Ogden Nash's young belle from old Natchez whose garments were always in patchez. When comments arose on the state of her clothes, she replied, "When Ah itchez, Ah scratchez."

I've been thinking of that young belle recently and wondering if she might be a version of Gaia writ small, or perchance Gaia is that young lady writ large.

Could our COVID-19 pandemic be a result of Gaia scratching where it itches? Has the human race become a virus on the skin on Gaia? Is She undergoing a spasm of irritation inciting Her to scratch?

I'm not saying that She consciously makes such a decision. We all sometimes find ourselves scratching where it itches even before we are consciously aware of the itch.

Have we become an infection? Have we killed off one too many of our fellow species, felled one too many forests, injected just too much poison into our atmosphere, practiced genocide once too often?

Are we at the tipping point for disaster, and is this present crisis the one that tips us over? Or is it a test to see whether we are worth saving? The Holy Scriptures of the world are filled with such tests. Perchance Gaia has Her own.

Is it possible that we might pass Her test?

20.04.02. Email.

M county still has officially only 1 case, but I know reality suggests more. Sadly, already I am getting a sense that "Blame the victim" is started in to play. "We need to know who that is and where they've been in the last weeks so we can know if we're at risk." Saner heads (me, for one) are trying to suggest that if you have been out of your home in the last couple of months to a restaurant, wedding, funeral, church service, club meeting, doctor's office, grocery store, pharmacy, and the like, you should assume you have bene exposed.

I follow with great dismay your situation in NYC.

I'm horrified that Fauci needs armed protection. Once again I despair at the human race.

But I keep on keeping on, for now.

20.04.03. Data.

1,270 cases in Alabama with 17 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 37, Marengo 5, Greene 4, Hale 1.

20.04.03 My Blog. Watching Again: An Open Letter to A.O. Scott and Manohla Dargis

I am enjoying the new series in the New York Times in which you invite the public to watch movies with you during a weekend and then provide your own and your viewers' thoughts about the movie the next week. Already you have persuaded me to take another look at "Top Gun" Lacking an email address to which I might send you condolence for the dearth of new movies to review during this time of plague as well as my own advice on what else you might do during this hiatus, I'll try to get your attention this way. Too, this might contain suggestions helpful to some of your Constant Readers.

Surely every critic, especially ones like you two who have recently been through the pre-Oscar release rush, needs some time away. Games with the children? That book you've been meaning to read? How's the new "Westworld"?

But after a while your thoughts return to movies. Herewith, a few of my own suggestions for things you might wish to revisit:

The Tree of Life. The new Criterion edition has a beautiful version of the original movie plus a 50-minute longer version that includes lots of extra footage. If you haven't seen that longer version, you really must. Terrence Malick says that the original release cut is the definitive one, and I totally agree. The longer version explicates somewhat more some of the mysteries of the original, but the mysteries are part of what make it great. That being said, the footage itself is breathtaking, and it is wonderful to have a chance to see it. You might wish to follow your viewing by "The Thin Red Line," which is a companion-piece of sorts. Ms. Dargis, I know you didn't like "The Tree of Life" all that much, and I tend to agree with Mr. Scott on this one. Would love to see your joint discussion of it now that the dust has settled.

War and Peace. No, not Hollywood's version but the 8-hour 1966 Russian version directed by Sergei Bondarchuk. I had seen the American release version in the movie house back then, with some of the worst dubbing I've ever experienced in a film and poor color. I was not impressed. On a whim I bought the recent Criterion edition, and I found that a revelation. A wonderful movie.

Lord of the Rings. I consider that one movie, not a trilogy. Mr. Scott, you liked it, but have you seen the extended version? Far superior, I believe, and I loved the theatrical cut. Somewhat more than an hour and a half of added material improves both character development and pace. And be sure to watch the commentary by the three writers that accompanies the first one. It really made me appreciate Fran Walsh.

The Hobbit. I recall you didn't like that, Mr. Scott. Again, the extended versions have much better pace and character development and come across less frenetic than the theatrical release. I have always enjoyed how Peter Jackson and his fellow writers re-thought Tolkien to make this prequel more congruent with the later work. Liberties are taken, but the novel, in my opinion, needs to have liberties taken.

David Fincher Film Festival. I watched them all in order last summer, beginning with “Alien 3.” I’ve always loved Fincher. This experience made me love him more. I know he disowns “Alien 3.” Watching it now, one is amazed at how much it foreshadows his later work. And you really should watch the longer cut of that one as well, which, I gather, is closer to what Fincher originally attended. By the way, every one of his movies grows in my esteem upon repeated viewings. This was particularly true with “Zodiac” and “Gone Girl”

Alien Quadrilogy. Sigourney Weaver’s performance throughout is brilliant, and it is fascinating to watch her age and her character grow throughout. For me the first and third are the greatest. The second is a thrilling placeholder, and the fourth a (dare I say) charming coda. And while we’re on the subject, Ridley Scott’s two more recent “Alien” adventures are well worth a second look (as is almost anything by Scott, for that matter: he is one of the greatest movie stylists since Hitchcock).

The Long Day Closes. Terence Davies’ finest. One of the finest movies ever about a boy and his mother. About family life. About the young years of someone destined to be gay. About the effects of erosion. And on top of that, for my taste the greatest movie musical ever made. I watch it at least once a year, more often than not during the Christmas season. Fun puzzle: does it take place during one day or a year? Or both? And once you’ve watched it again, re-watch the companion “Distant Voices, Still Lives.” Oh, and don’t forget “Of Time and the City.” Oh heck, just watch everything he has done. (If I taught a film course I’d assign “The Long Day Closes” and “The Tree of Life” to the class for a compare and contrast essay.)

Aleksandr Sokurov’s Family Movies: Mother and Son & Father and Son. Strange, moody, oddly erotic (especially the one dealing with the father). I don’t like everything by Sokurov, but these two haunt me. Their poetic distortion is breathtaking. I find that I must return to them from time to time.

Martin Scorsese’s Spiritual Trilogy: The Last Temptation of Christ, Kundun, & Silence. So many people consider these outside the mainstream of Scorsese, but for me they are central. In his own way Scorsese is as religious as, say, Malick, something apparent throughout his work. In my old age I have grown tired of gangsters: after the Godfather movies and “The Sopranos” and the collected works of Scorsese and all those Japanese gangster movies I feel I’ve had it with gangsters and find it hard to revisit them now. But these three I find it rewarding to revisit.

Actually you might add “Hugo” to that list, another later Scorsese that I love to revisit, but here he is bowing to a quite different god.

Some of these might be suitable for your children as well, depending on your children, but possibly not the Fincher and Sokurov movies. Of course, you may have come up with your own list of movies or directors to revisit, like the collected works of Christopher Nolan and Quentin Tarantino: what does a new visit do for your opinion? And there’s always Hitchcock. And Kubrick, of course.

For if you are like me, your opinions can change. And that is not necessarily a bad thing. Not at all. It enriches one.

20.04.04 Blog. The Hourglass

But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near . . .

Or so said Andrew Marvell back in the 17th century. Given my present age and the present pestilential crisis, I find the words just as pertinent for today. One wonders who is driving that chariot and one suspects it is someone one would rather not meet late at night in a dark alley.

Marvell is addressing a woman whom he wishes to seduce. He states that right up front:

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.

And then he continues courting her with beautiful words to stop all the dilly-dallying so that they may hop right to it. It is among the finest poems in the English language. That art can be made from something so seemingly mundane!

One of my favorite readings of the poem is this one by Tom O’Bedlam, nicely accompanied by the written text:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tr2YQqpYZqk>

Time. Could that be the central theme of all art? Closer to our own time Maxwell Anderson addressed it memorably accompanied by the great Kurt Weill music. The words that linger most with me:

And the days dwindle down
To a precious few
September, November . . .

Yes, they have certainly dwindled down for me. For many years now I have realized that I have fewer days in front of me than behind, and the number of those remaining days declines each day I live.

If diamonds were abundant they wouldn't be worth much. The fewer days I have left, the more precious each one is. I have reached that time in life when I am grateful each morning that I wake up and I go to bed each evening hoping that I will wake up yet again, even though I am increasingly resigned to and prepared for the possibility that I might not so awaken.

But I do want to do what I can to have a few more of those precious days in my future. I do what I can these days to maintain my health and the health of those with whom I make contact (for their days to come are precious too). It means sacrificing social life at present for life in the future. It means isolating myself to the degree possible, relying on the telephone and email and social media for what interaction I may have with friends and family. It means finding ways to make this day in its own way precious.

Will I ensure for myself and for others one more day? A month? Years of days?

Whatever the number, they will be worth the effort.

For, as Marvell says,

The grave's a fine and private place,
But none I think do there embrace.

I leave you with Willie Nelson:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmZWzVNb8lk>

20.04.04. Data.

1,535 cases in Alabama, with 21 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 41, Marengo 8, Greene 5, Hale 3.

20.04.04..Email.

A year ago, nay, 3 months ago, who would have thought we'd be having these discussions! If you're not depressed enough already, try reading Brett Staple's piece as if from 2025 in the Times today. (An alternative scenario: Trump and Pence, as a result of their carelessness concerning the virus, contracted the disease and perished. Pelosi was shorn in . . .)

. . . I fear your worries re . . . religious doings may be well-founded. Here in the South some churches seem to have an understanding of the dangers of getting together, even in the House of the Lord. I am particularly worried about black congregations. The black church has historically been the center of their fight for liberation, and I fear that now they might become major vectors for spreading the disease in rural areas like Sawyerville. Contrary to received belief. God and prayer do not protect.

By the way, I think my Spell-checker has been cursed. It seems to be hung up on "Delete repeated word" and "Paste."

I think I've mentioned my black Baptist preacher friend . . . He believes that Donald Trump is among the signifiers of the Apocalypse and studies Revelations diligently and finds justification. I'm sure that he finds this Pestilence just one more of the signifiers.

A thought: it's probably wise not to read Revelations these days.

I'm still coping, still well so far as I know. 3 cases in the county now. Diagnosed, that is. Yesterday a memory jarred. Maybe 15 years ago, possibly more, I bought a packet of facemasks to use while mowing. I hated them and never wore but the one. But, as I am wont to do, I stashed them away at the store. And sure enough I found them, 2 left. And yesterday evening [my cousin] rode out with a container of sweets (2 slices of pie and a couple of cookies) along with 2 more masks from their

supply. I'll be using those only for shopping expeditions, those, along with morning visit to the PO, being the only times I am off my property. I think I'll make another foraging run tomorrow during church times mainly for some perishables. Milk, pot roast, chicken tenders, salad if available.

Yes, knew about Prine. Facebook in particular keeps updating matters with him. Quite a number of the NYT obits are referring to complications from the virus.

Well, all we can do is hope. And be careful. For ourselves and those with whom we come into contact.

20.04.05. Data.

Alabama: 1,666 cases with 44 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 44, Marengo 8, Greene 5, Hale 3 (Perry 0?)

20.04.06 Data.

Alabama: 1,842 cases with 45 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 60. Marengo 13. Greene 5, Hale 3, Perry 1. Hale now surrounded!

20.04.06. Email.

I hope you and [your wife] are safe and secure from all alarm on your island retreat with larder nicely stocked including toilet paper and bleach. I remain well here in the Alabama Boondocks, in spite of early warning signs that Alabama just might end up with the worst COVTD-19 rate in the nation. That would come as no surprise to me, particularly after having discovered the Baptist, Methodist, and Bible Methodist churches in Greensboro open for services yesterday when I was in town for shopping.

The grocery store had a limit of 50 people inside at one time, and I was third in line to enter. Didn't take long. Also wore a facemask, which I hate doing. Hoped to pick up a big pack of chicken tenders to bake, but since they were out picked up 2 large chicken breasts which I cooked in my slow cooker yesterday with carrots and onions and celery and mushrooms and chicken stock, really nice with some leftover rice last evening. Have enough of that left for centerpiece of at least 3 more meals, the last of which just might be turned into a soup with okra, corn, and tomatoes. Also got a small pot roast, in the slow cooker now, to be ready about 5. I'll turn it down to warm then and have a cocktail before proceeding.

For the first time, no bananas. I expected that eventually. Also the bleach aisle was empty again (I was going to pick up a second Just In Case.)

I started a file this a.m. called "Plague Journal." In it I am stashing in date order excerpts from emails, my daily case data post on FB, and my so far only 3 blog posts. Before long I'll start accumulating it all into one Word document. It has been most revealing, particularly in how fast this thing has burst on our national consciousness and mine particularly. My earliest email included will be one from March 4, the last one in which there is no virus chatter. Of course earlier emails with [a friend] had mentioned what was happening in China and Hong Kong, since she has 2 brothers in HK, one a doctor. I am omitting them, for they seem outside my main story.

My first data post was March 23, with Alabama having 157 cases. This morning there were 1,842 cases. What a difference 2 weeks makes!

Still confining myself to house and yard, except for my daily trot across the highway to the PO and my occasional foraging expedition. For the latter, I sanitize my hands before leaving the car for the store and again as soon as I have got back in the car after putting my purchases in the trunk. Starting yesterday I will wear a facemask but I have only 4. Saturday I recalled that maybe 15 years or more ago I had bought some masks to use while mowing, tried that once and hated it, and I thought I recalled stashing the unused ones away at my store. I found them! And later in the afternoon Cousin [and wife] brought me a container pf sweets (2 pieces of pie and some cookies) accompanied by 2 more from their supply.

And other than passing the container, we remained a good 10 feet apart

Stay well! Read a good book! Watch a good movie!

20.04.07. Data.

2,006 cases in Alabama with 53 deaths. 74 in Tuscaloosa Co., 13 in Marengo, 8 in Greene, 5 in Hale, 1 in Perry.

NOTE: I am particularly suspicious of that low number from Perry County, to the east. Glitch in testing? Glitch in rreporting? Of course all of those numbers don't show the actual picture, just "confirmed" cases.

20.04.08. Data.

2,197 cases in Alabama with 64 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 77, Marengo 14, Greene 10, Hale 7, Perry 1.

20.04.08. My Blog. "Evolution."

In 2003 British science fiction author Stephen Baxter published his long (592 pages) novel "Evolution." It is named for its central character. In addition to the Prologue and Epilogue it consists of 19 novella-length chapters in three sections: Ancestors, Humans, and Descendants. The novel covers a period of some 165 million years. Each chapter deals with a different time period, the first one in the farthest reaches of the past, the last in the far distant future.

In the centerpoint of the novel, a few years from now, Life As We Know It is at its peak. Civilization is brought down by a perfect storm of pestilence and terrorism. Those few who survive retreat into the forest.

Until that point, the novel had celebrated the increasing complexity of the mind, the growth of intelligence, the creation of civilization. A success story.

After that point, each chapter deals with a later stage in the loss of civilization and the devolution of mind, until we end up as mindless creatures struggling blindly.

Nature, Evolution (for they are the same), had arrived at the conclusion that while intelligence up to a point was useful in transmitting mitochondria to the next generation, in the longer run it posed a danger. So intelligence gets selected out as no longer a benefit to survival of the mitochondria. And the mitochondria do survive. But we do not.

That long downward fall is one of the bleakest things I have ever encountered in a work of fiction.

20.04.09. Data.

2,499 cases in Alabama with 67 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 85. Marengo 14. Greene 12. Hale 7. Perry 1.

20.04.10. Data.

Alabama: 2,838 cases with 78 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 86, Marengo 14, Greene 13, Perry 2, Hale 7

20.04.10. Email.

So good to talk with you the other day. Good to have confirmation that you and yours were all getting better after our recent medical excitements. I had assumed that the progression was toward full recovery.

I remain well. I do think starting self-isolation as early as I did was great. Now I know that matters can suddenly change, but I think I am as well-prepared for that eventuality as I can be.

Big sneezing fit from which I'm just coming down. It's pollen season in Alabama. Yesterday morning's 15-minute downpour that left an inch and a half of water in my gauge helped settle the pollen, but all that wet has got the molds excited, and that too excites my delicate membranes. What convinces me that this sneezing is allergy-related is how my eyes suddenly swell up and start itching.

But maybe a running nose and sneezing are good things, helping get any Bad Motes out of my nostrils.

Something I haven't thought of in years: I went to school with a girl who was constantly dripping and sneezing. She always had a Kleenex in her hand. Then, late in high school, it was discovered that she was allergic to Kleenex. (I use the term generically.)

Let's see: since March 14 when I really buckled down in isolation, the only persons I have spoken with in person are the clerk at the PO when I check my mail each morning, a couple of telephone linemen working on the line along the highway downed by a tree from my property back in January, and my Cousin Billy, who has brought me a few meals from his and wife's cooking endeavors. Oh, I almost forgot: checkout clerks at grocery stores.

All doctor appointments now canceled for the spring. This coming Wednesday I was supposed to see orthopedist for follow-up on my plantar fasciitis after wearing prescription supports in shoes for 6 weeks. Cancelled that one yesterday. I'm doing so well that I think possible danger of visiting a doctor doesn't justify a visit. No more appointments until just before July 4 when I'm scheduled to see

ophthalmologist: closer in I'll decide whether I should cancel that one. I hated to cancel retina doctor at end of March, but I dared do so because my vision still seemed, at least from the inside looking out, to be stable.

I'm eating well. Last night had left-over chicken breast, rice, and stewed okra and tomatoes, preceded by a salad of sliced avocado with cherry tomatoes cut in half dressed with a squeeze of lemon and a dribble of olive oil and a bit of crumbled blue cheese. Tonight I'll have leftover pot-roast and a side of the okra/tomato dish and celery sticks and more cherry tomatoes to dip in a dressing. To be determined: leftover rice or bake that last potato. When I get down toward the end of my roast and chicken, I'll dump what's left in a Dutch oven with more chicken stock and okra, corn, and tomatoes and maybe a can of bean's rinses for a soup.

Well, I've just finished my last cup of coffee, so it's off to breakfast. This a.m. I think it will be oatmeal with plain yogurt, blueberries, walnuts, and a bit of no-sugar-added peach jelly for sweetener.

Keep on getting better! The fact that you are running again proves to me that you definitely are.

20.04.11. Data.

Alabama, 3,008 cases with 80 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 91, Marengo 15, Greene 13, Perry 3, Hale 7.

20.04.11. Email.

Bees! How fascinating! Keep me posted on developments.

I had assumed living on an island would be a plus for you and [wife]. There is presently some concern nationally re folks with second homes taking the virus to them from the hotspots they are fleeing from. I was talking about this issue with [a friend] this a.m. and we agreed that most folks able to afford second homes would likely be among the better-educated and -informed segment of the population and less likely to spread the virus unduly.

[Friends] remain well in their country house in Stone Ridge, NY. Better to be in self-isolation there than in Manhattan at the moment, although Morningside Heights is pretty empty now that Columbia and Barnard are closed.

Slow cooker: I bought mine a couple of years back when my oven quit working (was later able to replace a part but now have replaced whole stove because a) 2 eyes on top quit working, b) so costly to replace them, and c) age of the old stove). I really am enjoying it, especially for things like pot roasts. Can put on one about 7:30 and it tends to be ready by 5:30. Advice: get an inexpensive one with few bells and whistles, like timers. Mine has 4 settings: Off, Low, High, and Warm. Downside: that's plenty. The container is large and heavy and you have to be careful when washing it. Some folks have wondered why, living alone as I do, I need one. Well, I love to have a supply of leftovers.

Lots of available fresh seafood! Yes, eat a lot.

Here we are threatened with violent thunderstorms and big powerful tornadoes Sunday. Advice is that if you need to choose between shelter and Shelter-in-lace choose shelter. I'll choose the latter. If the house goes with all my toys, I'd just as soon I go with it.

Will be in touch soon (I hope). If the Good Lord's willin' and the creek don't rise. You folks stay safe and well.

20.04.12. Data.

Alabama 3,267 caaes, 93 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 100, Marengo 19, Greene 14, Perry 4, Hale 11.

20.04.12. Email.

I'm going to have to look up that Prine song one of these days. Probably not today, what with Dangerous Weather approaching even as I write. My best guess is that the first wave of same should arrive in Sawyerville shortly after noon. Then there is heightened possibility all afternoon with the next and most dangerous wave sometime after dark. Will send out a shout tomorrow if that is possible. I expect at the least nuisance interruption of various service.

So sorry re your cable receiver problem! Back in the day when DirecTV owned its own self and had not been taken over by AT&T, I could call them, get a knowledgeable technician, and more often than not be walked through steps to a)

identify the problem and b) probably fix it. And if fixing it was not an option, they'd place an order for new received that would be Fed-Exed to me. My sister (who is much more device-challenged than even I) and I concurred that they were marvelous.

I assume you've tried all that. Can you even get in touch with a live person? If they could mail you a new receiver, could you hook it up? I'd guess you could. I assume you started with the basic idea of unplugging and letting it rest.

I felt a deep sinking sensation when I heard that AT&T was buying DirecTV. And, as is so often the case in our Vale of Tears, matters ended up worse than I feared. You call. You get a menu. The menu makes little sense. Nothing ever matches what you need to talk about. It is almost impossible to reach a Live Person. And if you are fortunate enough to do so, that person has little knowledge and often can't seem to understand your basic question, and if she (usually she) does, she can't figure out how to answer it, and as she struggles to locate someone who can you get dropped and have to start all over again.

Woe is Us. But right now all my stuff continues to work. So more woe for you this time around.

Like you I intend not to rush out and resume "normal life" when DJT blows his Magic Whistle indicating AOK. Even if someone I respected blew the whistle, I'd be careful. I fear this thing may be the Gift that Keeps on Giving. It is risky out there now and I fear it will remain so for a while.

I remain well. [Two friends] remain well. [Another friend] and husband are fine again, as is their daughter, and the daughter's wedding is still on for next Saturday at the Little Church Around the Corner: party of 10 including the couple and the priest.

Spellchecker just alerted me that "thecouple" should be corrected to "decouple." Go figure. Maybe the Russians have hacked it!

Cases in Hale County now reach 11. Rumor has it that 2 of those are clerks at the only grocery store left in Greensboro and that seems to have panicked part of the population. Me, not so much. I had assumed that such infecting was likely.

I remain well, as far as I know. Now off to some breakfast and necessary preparation for the storm(s).

All best wishes including Let There Be Sound!

20.04.13 Data.

Alabama, 3,583 cases, 93 deaths. Tuscaloosa Co. 119. Marengo 21. Greene 17. Perry 6. Hale 15.

20.04.14. Data.

Alabama 3,803 cases (103 deaths). Tuscaloosa Co. 121. Marengo 24 (1). Greene 18. Perry 6. Hale 15.

20.04.15. Data.

Alabama 3,953 cases (114 death). Tuscaloosa 123. Marengo 23 (1). Greene 18. Perry 7. Hale 17.

20.04.15. My Blog. "Burying the Dead.

BURYING THE DEAD

I recently saw that the idea of using New York City parks for temporary mass burial of victims of COVID-19 was being floated. My first reaction: why temporary? My reaction upon deeper consideration: why temporary?

If I were still a resident of Manhattan and perished from the disease, nothing would please me more than to be interred (preferably just my ashes, but that could be left up to individual or family judgment) in a mass grave in Central Park. No marker at the site, please, but it would be nice to have my name listed alphabetically on a memorial stone at one of the entrances to the park or perhaps on the mall.

The ground above would be planted over with grass and trees and not be a place of mourning. It would be parkland, where children might play and lovers might meet. It should not be a place for accumulating plastic flowers and wreaths.

For me a cemetery is not a place for mourning the dead but for celebrating that they had lived. Their lives were more important than their deaths.

For me such a burial would be not unlike burial at sea: the whole sea, the whole park, becomes my final resting place, not just the spot where my body was dropped. And so I would wish my loved ones, or those who loved me, to view it.

Graveyards historically served the public the way parks do now. Places where you could picnic and play. Places where there might be a bit of green amid the stone cold surroundings. For a park to serve as a graveyard does not strike me as a bad thing at all.

My paternal grandfather, Jonathan Brooks May, was buried in Hollow Square Cemetery, near where I live today. When his wife died a couple of years later, she was buried in the cemetery in Greensboro, Alabama, and Grandpapa was dug up and interred beside her. I have regretted that action by my father's oldest brother. I wish she could have been buried beside her husband in the closest thing the Mays have to a family cemetery.

Perhaps that is why I am resistant to the idea of temporary burials. Yes, there might be the need to relocate a cemetery. I think of those relocated during the building of the Tennessee Valley Authority. But even there I wonder if the large lakes created might have served a purpose similar to the sea for burials there.

I wonder if using city parks for burials might be greeted with some approbation if presented in a calm and non-morbid manner. I wonder if there might be enough families who would approve of such disposition to make more room for those wishing to have more traditional burials for their loved ones at a later date. In other words, present a choice.

I know which I'd choose.

20.04.16. Data.

Alabama 4,241 (123 deaths). Tuscaloosa Co. 131. Marengo 24 (1). Greene 19. Perry 7. Hale 26.