

Notes from the

Pandemic of 2025

A Novel

Rhys

McCarney

Lulu Press

Copyright © 2022 by Rhys McCarney

All rights reserved.

Notes from the Pandemic of 2025 is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and details of any incidents portrayed in the book are products of the author's imagination, are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Trademarked names may appear in portions of this book. Rather than use a trademark symbol with every occurrence of a trademarked name, we use the names only in an editorial fashion and to the benefit of the trademark owner, with no intention of infringement of the trademark.

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-387-98421-3

To my loving wife Esmeralda

Chapter 1

March 2, 2025

Journal entry: I started a blog seven years ago. I did it for the benefit of the high school students in my American Government class. I posted things like brief news stories or editorials, or transcripts of stories reported by mainstream news media, for example World Wide Network News (WWNN) or the New York Herald (NYH), and/or posted on the websites of these same news outlets. I also pasted some things I found on social media that I thought were interesting, or at least indicative of the times. Sometimes I would include entries from my personal journal, which were typically an observation or my analysis of current events. I retired from teaching two years ago and decided to make the blog public. It's a way for my former students to keep in touch. They can continue to see my entries about the state of the country and the world, and sometimes they contact me with a message. I decided to begin the public blog from the time of my retirement. I've read through the entries and added some editorial commentary in places where context or historical perspective is required for clarity. Sometimes I paste passages of email correspondence that seems revealing of current events. Sometimes my former students send me passages of text that they've copied from media and I've included a few of these.

By way of introducing myself, I went to university in the Northeast. After spending a few years in a variety of unrewarding jobs, I pursued an advanced degree at an Ivy League school. I received my doctorate in American History in 1989. As I had been warned, that turns out to be a nearly useless degree. I started teaching at a small but respected college. There were no tenure track positions available and I fell into the adjunct faculty trap of teaching several courses per semester for low pay. This seemed like it would never end and I bailed out for a job as a high school history teacher. Generally, I liked this job. The pay is low but it provided health insurance and some limited retirement benefits. On a few occasions in class, one of my students would look up from his/her cell phone and we'd make a connection. Very briefly. Some of my students learned that I held a doctorate and started calling me Doc.

March 10, 2025

Journal entry: There are two seasons now, the Smokey season and the Other season. The drought west of the Mississippi has been national news for 6 or 7 years, but drought extends to many places in the world. Southern Europe suffers conditions nearly the same as the Western US. Spain and Greece have been hard hit. While drought is disastrous for agriculture, both crops and livestock grazing, it's also a calamity for wildfires in forested and other undeveloped areas. In the US West, these fires burn, out of control, from June through December (lately, through January). The skies west of the Mississippi river are choked with smoke for 5 or 6 months of the year. Visibility is a quarter of a mile on bad days, and may be 2 or 3 miles on good days. You can't see blue sky when you look up. Instead you see only a gray, smokey haze. The air smells of smoke on the worst days. There's little or no smell on the best days - or maybe we've just become used to it.

The SARS-3 pandemic is in its second year. Some call it SARS-CoV-3, but that has a false implication that the virus is similar to Covid19. The virus is much more closely related to the SARS virus that was responsible for the outbreak in 2003 and is now called SARS-1. The mortality rate of SARS-3 is

about 11% in the US, which makes it equally lethal as SARS-1. The SARS-3 mortality rate is about 7 times larger than was the mortality rate of Covid19. The world wide mortality rate of SARS-3 is about 12.5%. The difference might relate to the varying quality of medical care. And the virus is more contagious than the covid virus. The SARS-3 pandemic makes Covid19 look like a case of sniffles by comparison. It's been about a year and a half since the first case was reported in Wyoming. Scientists still don't know why it's so deadly and why it's so contagious.

America has responded to these twin crises in the ways that are uniquely American. Partisan divisions get wider and rancor becomes more toxic. There is no hint of national unity. There seems to be no common ground. Wealth inequality continues to grow. It's hard to say if that's related to the pandemic or if that happens all the time and just keeps on getting worse.

March 14, 2025

BREAKING NEWS: US SARS-3 CASES EXCEED 151 MILLION

(New York Herald - NYH): The CDC released the latest case counts of SARS-3 for the United States. The total number of cases is 151,393,081 and the number of deaths is 16,688,927. The number of deaths represents about 5% of the pre-pandemic population. About 46% of the population has suffered at least one infection. Studies have shown that, in a typical patient, SARS-3 antibodies diminish to low levels after about 6 months. Reinfection is common. This means it is harder to reach herd immunity. Ordinarily, victims who survive the disease would be removed from the population that is available to be infected and continue the spread of the disease. That's not really the case with SARS-3. Forty-one percent of the population has survived the infection, but many of those patients have re-entered the pool of potential victims. Some estimates suggest that about half of those survivors are again vulnerable to infection. The world case count is 2,867,173,570 (37% of pre-pandemic population) and the world death toll is 358,284,739 (about 4.6%). The US is the world hotspot for virus outbreaks and deaths, as well as the origin of the first known cases. The Chinese press has named the virus the "American Demon." European leaders refer to it as the "Cowboy flu."

March 22, 2025

Journal entry: Political discourse seems to be breaking down completely. One party seems always to be seeing red, and they have taken the nickname "Hattfield" party. The other party often feels blue, and they have the nickname "McKoy" party. Most people no longer belong to one party or the other. Rather, they are adherents of one or the other party line. The lines have become quite rigid and the distance between lines keeps growing. Not very long ago, the public was repulsed by the behavior of the two parties. Now, most people seem to be active spectators at a professional wrestling match. They scream and shout for their fighters. Logic and discourse have long been forgotten.

.....

April 7, 2025

BREAKING NEWS: HOSPITALS INUNDATED WITH SARS-3 CRITICAL CARE PATIENTS

Oklahoma (WWNN live report): The location is Belray, Oklahoma, a suburb of Tulsa, in a Walmart parking lot. The CDC has built a field hospital here for treating SARS-3 patients. The hospital is comprised of 4 large tents, connected with covered breezeways. Families can drop off loved ones at the entrance, on their way to do some shopping. At the far end, a line of Uber hearses - these are pickup trucks operated by Uber drivers - approaches a loading dock area. Every five minutes or so a truck departs with a black flag flying from the tailgate. There is no information about the destination of these trucks.

There is a severe shortage of mortuary services, as well as cemetery plots. Environmentalists are concerned that cremation of a single corpse results in the release of 550 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Local officials are considering multi-unit graves, sort of like a condominium cemetery. They would like to target ten to twelve corpses per standard burial plot.

April 12, 2025

NYH Real Estate Section / What You Can Buy for \$1.5 M in California:

Ventura, CA (NYH): This 3 BR 3BA ranch home occupies 1,350 square feet and is situated on a 1/4 acre lot near Tohunga Creek. The area was burned a year ago in the Tohunga Gulch wildfire. Most of the house was burned down to the slab foundation. An 8 foot section of one wall is charred, but standing. A lovely Eucalyptus grove on the property also was burned, but the charred trunks remain. The home site is ready for rebuilding. In the meantime, there is running water to some of the plumbing and tarps can be stretched to protect a sleeping area. List price: \$1.45 M. Shopping nearby. Good schools are scheduled to reopen.

.....

April 20, 2025

Faceplant Announces New Space Tourism Subsidiary Company

(WWNN): Faceplant founder Travis Bigelow has joined the space industry. His new company, Spaceface, LLC, will operate flights into near earth orbit for tourists. Spaceface will purchase six space capsules and twelve reusable rockets from NASA at a total cost of \$29 B. Each capsule can take five passengers and has one pilot. CEO Bigelow stated that “Space tourism is at the forefront of adventure travel, and there is a huge market among the Glitterati.” Spaceface also is planning to offer virtual space flights. Tickets for these meta-flights will be \$20,000 per flight for “cabin” seats, \$30,000 for business class, and \$45,000 for first class (no baggage fee for first class).

.....

June 3, 2025

BREAKING NEWS: HATTFIELDS AND MCKOYS FAIL TO PASS BILL

Washington, DC (WWNN): An omnibus bill that would include aid to family farms, extend unemployment benefits, and give loan guarantees to stressed hospitals failed to pass in the Senate. A possible agreement between the two parties was upset by a small provision added to the bill stating that Congress would declare that apple pie was an American dessert and was good. It was impossible for the two parties to reach an agreement on this controversial provision.

June 7, 2025

Fire Season in Full Swing

Red Bluff, CA (NYH): Fire season began last month with several wildfires burning areas of the Mendocino National Forest, west of Red Bluff. Two new fires have been reported to the east, in Lassen National Forest. Both are believed to have started by lightning strikes. Each has burned more than 20,000 acres and CAL Fire estimates they are 12% contained.

June 12, 2025

Wealthiest Person in US Passes Nine Figure Threshold

(WWNN Business): The founder and majority owner of Mammoth.com, Cashius Dotkom, has seen his personal wealth cross the threshold of nine digits and climb to reach a value slightly larger than \$1T (Cashius Dotkom owns WWNN). When asked for a comment, Actually, Mr. Dotkom could not be asked to comment. In fact, he can't be reached at all. There was no representative available for comment. Signs posted outside Mammoth headquarters state that all inquiries about Mr. Dotkom should be addressed to the Public Relations office of Mammoth.

June 23, 2025

Critical Shortage of Intensive Care Beds

Washington, DC (NYH): The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported on the continuing shortage of critical care facilities across the US. Across the country, hospitals report that Intensive Care Units (ICUs) are full and there are no beds available in other critical care wards. Several municipalities are setting up make-shift critical care facilities in local National Guard Armories.