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HARLAN RICHARDS

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Pandemic? What Pandemic?

While the rest of the world struggles with COVID-19 and over 100,000 people have died in the U.S., here in Stanley it's like watching a movie about a pandemic. We have not been exposed to the virus and the part of the state where the prison is located has very few COVID-19 infections. Our greatest risk comes from the DOC's policy of transferring prisoners into Stanley from other prisons. In my opinion, their quarantine procedures are inadequate.

There is an R & O unit where prisoners are quarantined when they arrive. They are housed in double cells (the first mistake), come out for showers and the prisoners who work (and live) there have the run of the institution. If a prisoner comes in with COVID-19, the virus could easily spread to prisoner workers and from them to the rest of the prison.

We still have restrictions in place for the general population even though no one has COVID-19. The gyms are still closed (except for haircuts which began again on June 1st) and there are restrictions on how many prisoners can go to B-Building (where library, chapel, school, etc. are located). However, the limit has been raised from 10 to 20 in any area (social distancing is still in force).

The most ridiculous restriction of all is still in effect: we aren't allowed to push the buttons on the ice/hot water machine. We are still packed like sardines in our housing units where social distancing is impossible. Prisoners DO NOT practice social distancing. There are still handshakes, fist bumps, hugs, back slapping, sitting closely together, touching and horseplay. When guys try to have physical contact with me, I don't let them touch me and instead say "COVID-19" and mostly get shocked looks because I don't want to shake hands or fist bump with friends. Some of them then want to elbow bump and I say "get away from me, you might have COVID-19." A few guys have gotten angry or offended but mostly they just laugh at me because we all know there is no COVID-19 in Stanley.

All in all, I feel pretty safe from COVID-19. Surviving the first wave was the most dangerous because it was an unknown threat: no one knew where it was or who had it or how to defend against it. At least now, if it does come, we have a pretty good idea of what we are facing.

Speaking threat levels, when all this started, our Fearless Leader (yeah, the one who hid in a bunker because people were demonstrating in front of the White House) claimed that COVID-19 was just another flu virus and would not kill any more people than what usually died in a flu

season. He stated that "The flu, in our country, kills from 25,000 to 69,000 people a year." Unfortunately for Trump, it turns out that those numbers were based on algorithms and were estimates - not actual data. When flu deaths are counted in the same manner as COVID-19, the actual death count is from 3,448 to 15,260. Even for those relatively low numbers, millions of people get a flu shot. Better safe than sorry.

COVID-19 is a real and present danger and will continue to be for decades (mostly because so many people will refuse to get vaccinated when it becomes available due to delusional beliefs) but acting responsibly and taking a few precautions will protect most of us in the interim.