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March 17, 2020

I'm not ill or expecting to die in the next few days, or even weeks. However I am 80 years old and even without the current coronavirus crisis the odds are fairly high I will die in the next few years. The coronavirus may very well end my life. The articles say that the older you are the more likely you are to catch it and, if you catch it, the more likely you are to die. I've seen numbers for the mortality rate for those 80 or older around 15%.

So, while I'm still living a fairly normal life and virus has not yet made a dent locally (one case in nearby Sullivan County, Tennessee) I thought it might be good to write down a few thoughts of my current perspective on dying and being dead. My understanding is that it is highly likely that the virus will become common in this area, as it will in all areas of the earth.

Here is an excerpt from a recent NY Times article the got data from U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



By Sheri Fink

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Between 160 million and 214 million people in the United States could be infected over the course of the epidemic, according to a projection that encompasses the range of the four scenarios. That could last months or even over a year, with infections concentrated in shorter periods, staggered across time in different communities, experts said. As many as 200,000 to 1.7

I just plugged those numbers into an Excel spreadsheet and did some calculations. Here's what I found assuming the population of the U.S. is 327 Million.

The chances of the average person being infected is between 49% and 65%. (  $160/327$ ,  $214/327$ ). My odds are probably higher because of my age.

The chances of the average person dying from the disease is between a  $6/10,000$  and  $5/1,000$ .

If you are more math oriented the chances are between .06 % (  $6/100$ ths of 1%,  $.2/327$ ) and .52% (~1/2 of 1%,  $1.7/327$ ).

Let's guess that my odds are between 3 and 5 times worse than average because of my age. That would mean my chances of dying from coronavirus are between 1.8/1000 and 2.5/100

The lower number is computed as  $(.2/327)*3$

the higher number is computed as  $(1.7/327)*5$

All of these numbers, even the NY Times numbers, are just guesses. It could considerably worse. It also could be better because we might find some ways of lowering the infection and mortality rates.

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It occurred to me that the U.S. Government may not be a very good source for coronavirus statistics. I also realized that my estimate of my risk being five times the average was pure guesswork with no basis whatsoever. So I decided to look for other data. What I found was not good.

Here are some far worse mortality rates.

I revised my estimate to assume that 80% (another complete guess, no basis whatsoever) of those over 80 will be infected, with a 14.8% death rate. My estimate of my risk as being, at most 2.5/100 is now up to at 11.2/100.

The data below is from this web site, which, of course, could also be wrong:

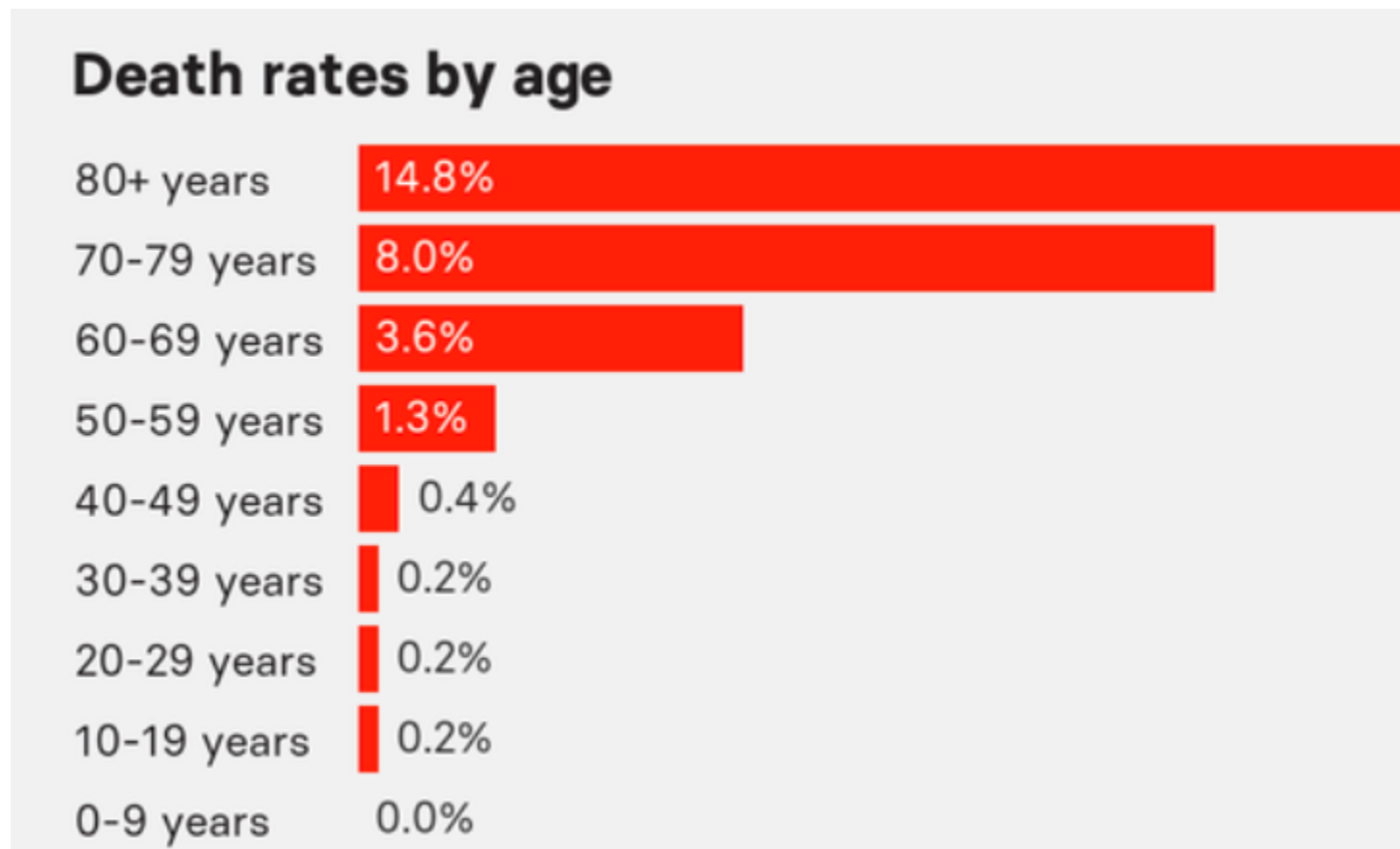
<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lamvo/coronavirus-death-rates-age-charts-us-china>

**I assume these are percentages are for those who are infected. Since not everyone will be infected, these numbers can be lowered. The data last night (good old U.S. Gov data) said that the highest estimate was that 65% of the U.S.**

**populations will be infected, but I am sure that number is higher for the elderly.**

This data is much scarier than my previous message.

I spent about 20 minutes Googling to see if I could find estimates of the percentage of the population by age likely to be infected but could find nothing directly focused on that statistic. I did see a statement that the most optimistic forecast (i.e. the lowest, least scary estimate) was that from 25% to 50% of the population would be infected.



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Ok, back to dying. Those numbers are better than I thought they would be, but given the range of possible error in the guesses I could still have a 10% chance of dying. If that happens, I will at least have left this behind because that prospect motivated me to write it.

I do hope to live a few more years. I've got some things I'd like to do, like get rid of about 95% of the junk I have accumulated – most of which is in the shed Phyllis bought to put it in. Other things too.

Anyway, the main statement I wanted to make is that as ticked as I may be of having to go through an unpleasant piece of life where I know I'm in the process of dying and having a very unpleasant, possibly truly terrible, experience in the process, it's been a good life.

As some of my memories should imply, I have had a full interesting life complete with great losses (my first marriage and family being the worst one) and great joys ( starting with 3 very good marriages – or at least I thought they were for most of the years.

I may list some of the other joys of my life below. Though I have typed up between 50 and 100 pages of memories I was focused on communicating the facts (when, where and who) rather than the emotions. I hope to go back and try to convey what some of the highs were like (e.g. I loved getting the audience to sing with me at Pinewoods campers concerts, it was close to positive mystical experience ) and lows (my friends heard, and still sometimes hear, me complain about how awful the divorces were for me).

I got to live 80 years. 80 full years... and life is still interesting and challenging. For example, among my plans for tomorrow are (1) to place an add to offer to teach programming on line, targeted at people who are stuck at home due to the coronavirus business closures) and (2) Taking online tutorials to learn how to use my new iPad (latest generation, with a 100 iPad pencil) and how to create pictures (draw, paint, create) with an iPad app called Procreate. I would love to teach programming again and I hope to become skilled enough with Procreate to make greeting cards, cartoons, and maybe placemats.

I am currently learning the words and tunes to 6 songs, 5 of which are new to me. The one I knew before is "Lakes of Ponchartrain" which I think I sang at a Pinewoods campers concert maybe 35 years ago.

I've also just started reading a book "The Singing Neanderthals" which, to my delight, does, as I had hoped, support the idea that early human language and music evolved together. I have had that idea, and expressed, for many years and, up until now, I've never seen it expressed anywhere. This book takes the idea and does all the serious research and speculation that I never event started.

I won't even start to get into "Harry's Boppers", but I will put a link in to an absurdly long writeup I wrote over 27 years ago. [ [click here, you fool](#) ]

So there's just a few of what, for the moment, are my final words. After a few thankyou's ( I could never name all to whom I am grateful for their contribution to my life) I will paste in "God Made Mud" from Kurt Vonnegut's "Cat's Cradle" and call it a night – shortly before midnight on March 16, Saint Patrick's day, 2020.

If I say thanks to anyone I run the risk of offending, in my own mind, so many who deserve my thanks. So be it. Here's just a few key players in my karass (Read "Cat's Cradle").

My parents and all my aunts and uncles

Both my grandmothers, both of whom I knew fairly well

My sister Madge (who I finally realized was an important, and sometimes wonderfully good to me, person)

Phyllis Haile (my wife now who makes my life especially worth living at this ripe old age of 80)

Elaine Appleby – with whom I am still annoyed, but we had great years together

Bonne whatever her name is now – with whom I remain royally ticked, but at least I had at least 8 or more years where I had the experience of being in a family I loved, even if maybe I was a blind fool about what Bonnie felt.

Matt Baya – my oldest son, and soul mate

Paul Baya – who realized many of my dreams in his career and of whom I am very proud.

Owen Baya – the elder of my two grandsons. I love him dearly and wish that I could do more to help him through the challenges life has given him.

Marshall Baya - - the younger grandson. A delightful, talented, young man who I wish I knew better.

Where do I go from there? I will mention a few of the very many:

Andy Stokes – my best male friend, ever

Barbara Chirse- who I love. I appreciated her and have never quite understood why, though Fire Island allowed me appreciate her as much as anything.

My cousin, Jim White – who has been my main man through joy and sorrow in Abingdon

Liz Marsh – who I should have appreciated a lot more, and done something about it

I have to stop... I want to name people in Tampa, at Hofstra, in Columbus, Indiana, at MIT, in my family... and on and on. You know I love you and appreciate all you did for me and with me, but I just can't name all of you.

**From — Kurt Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle**

God made mud.

God got lonesome.

So God said to some of the mud, "Sit up!"

"See all I've made," said God, "the hills, the sea, the sky, the stars."

And I was some of the mud that got to sit up and look around.

Lucky me, lucky mud.

I, mud, sat up and saw what a nice job God had done.

Nice going, God.

Nobody but you could have done it, God! I certainly couldn't have.

I feel very unimportant compared to You.

The only way I can feel the least bit important

is to think of all the mud that didn't even get to sit up and look around.

I got so much, and most mud got so little.

Thank you for the honor!

Now mud lies down again and goes to sleep.

What memories for mud to have!

What interesting other kinds of sitting-up mud I met!

I loved everything I saw!

Good night.

I will go to heaven now.

I can hardly wait...

To find out for certain what my wampeter was...

And who was in my karass...

And all the good things our karass did for you.

Amen.

I thank the universe for giving me this wonderful life!

Harry

PS – March 28, 2020

Well I'm still here. I may add a note every few days...

I had a dizzy spell today – kind of scary – I am aware that every day of life is a gift – and we never know how many more there will be.

So, one little musing along these happy line realates to our indoor cat, Buckeye. He is about 14 or so. Phyllis got him and his brother, Chester, when they were kittens. Chester died about 5 years ago. I am quite attached to Buckeye. I have lived with him since I moved in here in 2012 – 8 years - surely the longest I have lived with any cat. (hmmm... if we brought cats from Columbus to Hastings..maybe.. well I don't remember). Anyway, for some time now, at least 6 months, Buckeye has been a bit of a nuisance in his demands for attention. Sometimes when I am sitting on the couch reading, or watching TV, he may come to get petted every 15 minutes or so. He can be a nuisance. And sometimes he get's upset when I don't give him enough attention and attacks me... not to brutally but sometimes a little blood.

Anyway, it occurred to me recently that perhaps Buckeye is not going to live to long and, sensing that, he wants as much pleasure as possible. This motivates me to be more attentive and more forgiving in these, his last days. But then it occurred to me that maybe Buckeye senses that I don't have that many more days and he is coming to give me attention. That's a little scary.