

## Covid-19 Musings, continued ...

*It is not given to human beings... happily for them,  
for otherwise life would be intolerable... to foresee  
or predict to any large extent, the unfolding course  
of events.*

*Winston Churchill  
November 12, 1940*

I'm reading Eric Larson's new World War II tome, *The Splendid and the Vile*. The above quote precedes the start of the book's recounting of the years 1940-41, years when London was attacked by German bombs and raids in what has come to be called "The Blitz." I picked up this book on one of the last "normal" days before social distancing, self quarantining, and isolation became a way of life. I chose this book because I am a fan of Eric Larson's page-turning, historical nonfiction. And I chose this book as I had a gut instinct that we just might begin to live out an unprecedented life-changing upending of our world as we have known it.

Very few World War II veterans survive and certainly my own parents have been dead for many years. Last summer my uncle Cal, trained to be a gunner in the belly of a B 29, passed at age 94, and his older brother Paul, who fought in the Battle of the Bulge, died some years earlier. I have few memories of that time and then mostly in pictures. I remember sitting on my screened-in porch in Evanston on summer days, no doubt resting each afternoon to resist catching a plague called polio, leafing through large and heavy volumes of brown hard-backed photo books. I think my parents must

have subscribed to these yearly, and I remember being fascinated by the war years—European villages still showing signs of their quaint beauty, now decimated, and villagers' haunted faces in doorways and in open windows. I remember the rubble and devastation of cities. I remember trenches and the residue of exploded bombs, and I remember death, bodies strewn. I remember knowing a bit of fear then, an underlying anxiety, though ten years had passed since the war ended. I knew my Aunt Tootie's brother Freddie had been killed in the South Pacific. I had seen her tears. I knew my Uncle Paul could rarely speak of what he had experienced in the European theater.

Now we are in the middle of a time we have only heard about in history books or from those now dead, who conveyed knowledge to us bit by bit of the Great Depression and what they knew of the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-20. I remember how my mother would chide me if I let the water run indiscriminately while cleaning vegetables. How lights would be turned off as one left a room. How wrapping paper was reused and folded carefully after each package was painstakingly dismantled. How she purchased clothing from resale shops when she could well afford not to. How Nanna, my maternal grandmother, always had money, when she, as a single mother of four, worked as a milliner and as a switch board operator. She never learned to drive a car but could negotiate any form of mass transportation with easy grace. I remember you could count on her for a stick of Dentine gum (often passed surreptitiously in church) and a birthday card

with a five dollar bill enclosed which meant the world.  
Frugality was embedded, no fanfare, lived out.

I read this book, and I think of what we are experiencing, a pandemic in an age when life and “progress” has exploded faster than any other known on earth up to this time. The first car? 1906. The first plane? 1903. And social media? The cell phone? The internet? Artificial intelligence? Still, with all this knowledge, the unknowns, the confusion, the human need, the discrepancies, the anxiety, the loneliness, the divisions, no clear path that portends resolution.

Today I pray for a wisdom I personally need very much.  
I pray for a global wisdom that transcends politics, self aggrandizement, and blame. My daughter-in-law sent me this verse from Proverbs, the Book of Wisdom, this morning.  
It resonates with me particularly.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and  
lean not on your own understanding;  
In all your ways acknowledge him, and  
he will make your paths straight.*

*Proverbs 3: 5-6*

