

We have all heard of the question, “Daddy, what did you do in the war?” It is a memorable line from World War II that reflects a time fixed by one purpose, one agenda, one horror that had to be defeated so that we all could continue to go on living. I am a child of World War II, as is my wife. Neither of our parents talked much about it though they lived it. My parents were also products of the Spanish Flu, which killed some 675,000 Americans. That was a longer burial list than that of any war we have ever fought, including World Wars I and II, as well as the total military deaths of the Civil War, including every Union death, as well as every Confederate death. My parents didn’t talk about the Spanish Flu either. I traveled internationally during SARS and H1N1. I remember HazMat-dressed officials entering our aircraft in Japan and aiming thermometers at each of us as we exited the plane or taking our temperatures before entering a country afflicted by one of the then-current pandemics. We haven’t talked much about those incidents either. Today, we are transfixed by COVID-19. We talk incessantly about it. After a doctor’s appointment in March, I discovered that my physician was COVID-19 positive. Cathy and I were required to quarantine for two weeks. Fortunately, we love each other’s company. We had just adopted a new dog from the pound. We tried to return to a happy normal. But couldn’t. Should we be tested or not? Should we take our temperatures or not? Do we wear face masks or not? Is social distancing 6 feet or 3 feet? The TV news kept reporting conflicting advice. The networks were also grim with news of the collapsing stock market. An unemployment rate that rivaled the Great Depression. Jobs that would never return. The ruin of cities large and small. Automobile companies that used to make automobiles now making medical face shields. Limitless lines of gleaming commercial jet aircraft unused and now baking in the early summer sun. Meat shortages. Food decay. Supply chain disruptions, revealing items indispensable to America’s survival are now made in

China. Welcome to the New World Order with China now racing to replace the United States as the most powerful economy on the globe. What to do? Don't repeat the mistakes of the past. Burn that playbook. Let every state reach to its maximum advantage and prepare for its worst nightmare. Oklahoma will reach for excellence in agriculture, energy and aviation and host roundtable discussions of the wisest response to tornados. Florida will be the resource for hurricane response and create a special retirement climate for lengthening lifespan Americans. And the list lengthens. The federal government must be the sole lead for national nightmares and it must warn the states and show the states how to survive. It failed us with COVID-19. It has failed us for years. The states can neither anticipate nor respond to global horror. They don't have knowledge of what's coming nor the training on how to respond. During my years in Washington, I participated in two national table top exercises. The first was a smallpox attack on a shopping center in Oklahoma City. In that scenario, the feds swooped in but had insufficient vaccines and little helpful advice about how to respond to a smallpox pandemic. The locals hadn't been warned so they had to pull up the medical books and start from scratch. Later, I participated in a Rand Corp. simulation of a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear event. The states had no clue how to respond to attacks of those unimaginable agonies, and the feds were educating us after the fact when everything had already gone up in smoke. By the way, there were no congressional hearings into any of this. The less said, the better. Ignorance was bliss. The federal government immediately needs to create a Rapid Threat and Analysis Team at the highest levels to sweep the horizon for threats and inform and train the states as to how to respond. To do less is the grossest form of negligent homicide. There is no time to waste. We cannot repeat the missed and mixed messages of COVID-19. Frank Keating was governor of Oklahoma 1995-2003. Featured video: [Subscribe to Daily Headlines Sign up!](#) * I understand and

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