

ONE DAY

Tuesday, July 20, 2021 was an ordinary day. I hardly ventured out from my comfortable apartment, I read and wrote, Googled and e-mailed, did chores — totally uneventful. And yet.....

6:00 AM: Eyes open and TV on for The Launch of Blue Origin. The suspense is enormous, the few minutes as it approached the border of space thrilling, the dusty landing dramatic, but it was marred for me by the overly exuberant reception back on Earth by folks in cowboy hats spraying champagne like in a locker room after winning the World Series. Why am I such a grouch? Bezos may be a narcissist but aren't the stories of the 82 year old former female astronaut and the 18 year old paying passenger inspirational enough? Icarus had aimed for the sun but Bezos modestly set his sights only on the edge of space - no wax wings for him. And he'd flown 16 miles higher than the Englishman Richard Branson. Bezos and Branson, the battling billionaires. USA! USA! We're Number One — on to the Tokyo Olympics.

1:00 PM: CNN features a nasty brawl between Dr. Fauci and Rand Paul, each calling the other a Liar. What ever happened to Senatorial decorum? Next week's featured bout: Jim Jordan (former college wrestler) vs. Nancy Pelosi.

4:00 PM: But who am I to be cynical about technology? I revel in it every day. Indeed, like every Tuesday afternoon, I gather with like-minded virtual friends who zoom in from such far away places as Tel Aviv, Vienna, the Greek isles, Nepal, New England, Tennessee, Texas. Technology allows all of that — with a little assist from Covid.

7:00 PM: Again without leaving my apartment, I deliver a one hour talk to about two dozen fellow medical-historians. We're snug at home in our comfy clothes and my subject is frivolous: "Dancing through Rutgers Medical College in 1826-1828." I'm of the school that believes that history should be enjoyed, not endured, and my colleagues seem to agree.

9:00 PM: Virtual discussion completed, now it's game time. The NBA Finals: The Bucks vs The Suns. As is our custom, my grandson and I exchange text messages commenting on the game as With a sensational performance by "The Greek Freak," the Bucks win and 65,000 screaming fans jammed together outside the arena in "Deer Country" go crazy. They spew virus with nary a mask in sight. A super-mega-spreader event. Dr. Fauci? What does he know? After all, isn't he a Knick fan?

11:30 PM: A last check for e-mail before lights out. A question from a urologist in California — it's only 8:30 PM there. Apparently, he'd read my book *Abraham Flexner: A Flawed American Icon* that was published in 2010. He asks my opinion about a recent decision by the American Association of Medical Colleges to remove Flexner's name from their annual award for distinguished service to medical education.

The influential Flexner Report of 1910 had recommended changes in medical education, many of which still have positive impact today. But according to the AAMC, it also contained racist and sexist ideas, and contributed to the closure of five out of seven historically Black medical schools: "This has negatively affected the training of Black and African American physicians and adversely impacted the health of the Black and African American communities in the United States."

To be sure, I was no fan of Abraham Flexner — he was an elitist and a eugenicist and could have done much more to advocate for his fellow Jews, but more than a century later, what good is served by such empty gestures? It's complicated and I'm tired — and tomorrow is another day.

Black out.

Michael Nevins
7/21/21