

## **The Great Koschnick Flu Pandemic of 2007**

A flu pandemic is not a funny thing. Depending on the source, estimates indicate the Great Flu Pandemic of 1918 killed between 20 and 40 million people, or 1 to 2% of the world population of 1.8 billion. About 1 billion people world wide were infected.

All four members of one household being inflicted at one time does not constitute a pandemic.

So, while I describe the following as The Great 2007 Koschnick Flu Pandemic, I do so with tongue firmly planted in cheek, and I don't do so to make light of the suffering of the victims of a real flu pandemic.

In Albany, New York the winter of 2006-2007 started out abnormally warm and abnormally dry (as was true of many other places.) By mid January we had less than one inch of snow . . . total for the season, more than two feet below average. We had green grass in the yard in mid January. About the time it turned sharply colder, a bug that had been making the rounds sapped Anne Marie's already run down mother and resulted in a hospital stay with pneumonia. Anne Marie and I visited her mother in the hospital, and that's the most likely point of entry of the nasty little bug into Chez Koschnick.

A week before the Stupor Bowl - I mean Super Bowl, late in the evening Anne Marie confided to me that she felt like she might throw up. Of course, being a fan of George Carlin I immediately suggested that it would be wiser to throw down (that way it can't fall back in your face!) Shortly after we retired for the evening Anne Marie leapt from beneath the warm goose down comforter and raced to the bathroom and produced some of the most god awful sounds. She returned to bed shivering and was actually quite cold to the touch. This scene was repeated at regular intervals followed by a second pattern involving less noise and a temperature that soared a few degrees above normal. Monday we called the doctor for the next available appointment, which was Tuesday morning. Monday for Anne Marie was a delirious continuum punctuated by frequent dashes to the toilet.

Tuesday morning the doctor pronounced it, "Stomach Flu" and advised us to let it run its course and not to go to work before Thursday. Now if the story ended there - - I wouldn't be writing this.

Tuesday evening Chris prepared a dinner with marinated and baked chicken breasts (among other things). Anne Marie couldn't look at food at that point, so B, C, and D had dinner without A. Shortly after dinner things became decidedly more interesting. At the end of dinner the house held one very sick person and three, seemingly robust and in the fullness of health. Half an hour later four people were striping toilet paper off the roll faster than the fine folks at Charmin could put in on the roll. Years ago I remember reading, what I felt was a bizarre article, suggesting a "Coffee Enema" to cleanse the system. We didn't put any coffee in there, but it sure felt like espresso coming out. There it was in the bowl, all frothy and brown, and it left with enough heat to feel like steam. The paper work was hurried as chills had set in and I wanted to get under a warm blanket. By bed time Chez Koschnick had flushed our two toilets with enough frequency to lower the city water pressure throughout the neighborhood.

Some time after 11 PM your humble scribe had a most interesting experience, which I will relate forthwith, but first a short digression to provide some quasi-scientific background to better appreciate the experience. During all of the above mentioned

Septic System Espresso brewing, source of a liquid was required. I mean, it's not like I had a copper line from the hot water tank leading into the vast colo-rectal expanses of my body (Hey! I think I just call my self an [Expletive Deleted]). Yeah, our food contains a pretty fair amount of water - but our digestive system usually extracts a good part of the water leaving a pasty residue. Where the heck was the hot water coming from? I found out a little after 11. I got up to make something like my seventh trip to the altar of the porcelain gods. This time I felt a churning in the stomach. Normally when one throws down, it's a quick and fairly effortless event. So there I was salivating and feeling the inexorable rise of the gorge. It seemed like slow motion - in hind sight - it was slow motion and many muscles involuntarily contracted for long periods of time. I'm sure the noise I produced was at least equal to Anne Marie's fine effort on Sunday night. Finally a nearly solid mass found its way to the bowl. Hey I know I chewed that chicken finer than that. Apparently all that espresso brewing was stealing water from the upstairs neighbor. The normal stomach slurry was more like toothpaste! All that effort had me sweating as I went back to bed.

I've heard it said that Eskimos have many words for snow. Where we might string one or more adjectives together to describe the various forms that snow can take, Eskimos supposedly have a unique name for each type. George Carlin started with a list of seven dirty words that you couldn't say on TV. By the time that routine had run its course he had a poster with 43,560 impolite words and phrases. Combining the Eskimo language concept with the expansive listing by George Carlin, I wondered how many euphemisms we had for vomit and/or the act of vomiting. We have barf, puke, toss your cookies, upchuck, hurl, and my favorite "chum". Then there's the always popular "throw up" (or down if you prefer), regurgitate, and "chew the cud". I could go on ad-nauseam - but I'm afraid all I would do is add nauseam.

By Wednesday morning nobody was "Calling Ralph" but we all were still in the espresso business. Heading to the small room muttering about "Time to make the coffee" I passed three people with heated brow in inert piles scattered through the house - Anne Marie under a comforter on the bed, Chris under two or three afghans on the couch, Brian wrapped in fleece blankets on the floor.

Friday was the first time that any of us ventured out the door. Actually A, B, and D all went to work - but Chris was still brewing espresso. At work I was interrogated by a co-worker on my ordeal. I told him that by Thursday, having run through four rolls of toilet paper; I was wondering where to get Chapstick for assholes. He offered that he supposed, "An asshole could shop in the same stores as everybody else."