



By Margaret Evans, Editor

Don't expect too much from this column. We're preparing to move our only child into her freshman dorm at Clemson this weekend, and I'm a little distracted.

I'm writing on Friday morning, before Amelia's Sunday move-in date. I hope by the time you read this she'll be happily ensconced, but at the moment, I'm not entirely convinced. It's the second move-in date we've been given in a month, and I keep expecting it'll be snatched away – again – any minute now.

Also, we're still awaiting the results of the Covid test she took Monday; without an official "negative," she can't move in. Turns out the "3-5 days" our testing site touted actually meant "3-5 *business* days" – and they don't start counting 'til the day after you take the test – so we may not make it. I received word from Clemson yesterday that she'll have to take *another* Covid test on her move-in day. The results could take 48 hours, but if she's got her first negative, they'll allow her to move in. Otherwise, we're SOL, as the kids say. It's all very confusing.

I'm not even sure why this "double negative" is so crucial, considering Clemson already has hundreds of Covid cases, thanks to all the off-campus students who moved into their apartments a month ago – despite classes being online only – and proceeded to socialize, as young folk will.

But what do I know? I'm just another beleaguered American mom trying to navigate this unfamiliar territory... trying to "listen to the experts" and "follow the science." It's an especially daunting task since there are so many "experts" and so much "science" and they don't always match up. Every little aspect of this pandemic has been politicized beyond a sane person's ability to see straight.

Yesterday morning, I stumbled across a sassy Facebook meme asking the rhetorical question: *"Why are mask wearers still complaining about non mask wearers 6 months later? Shouldn't the non mask wearers all be dead by now?"* The meme had been posted by a popular area fitness and wellness specialist. It was followed by a long thread of adoring comments, all from like-minded anti-maskers who seemed to find it the wittiest zinger they'd ever encountered. I tend to have an almost allergic reaction to group think, especially when it's based on faulty logic. So, reader, I did something very foolish. I responded.

"I'm not one to 'complain' about non mask-wearers," I wrote in a comment box, "but since the mask is mainly for protecting others – not yourself – your logic doesn't follow. Those of you who refuse to wear masks are being protected by the much larger number of us who are wearing them. There are now plenty of studies showing that mask wearing works to slow the spread. Here's one from our own neck of the woods."

I attached an article summarizing a recent DHEC analysis of South Carolina cities with (and without) mask mandates. From that article:

"When analysts compared areas with mask requirements with those that don't have an ordinance in the place, the jurisdictions with mask mandates have shown a 46.3% greater decrease in the total number of cases during the four weeks after the requirements were implemented. . . . During that same time frame, the numbers show that places without mask requirements have experienced a 30.4% increase in coronavirus cases."

Well, reader, this exchange did not turn out well for yours truly. As of this morning, the laughing emojis are still coming, along with the comments either mocking me or insulting me with creative names I've never heard before. ("F\*\*\* Wit" was a new one on me.) I was accused of posting "propaganda" (from DHEC), called a "fear monger," and assured – by the wellness guru, himself – that masks are "unhealthy in every way possible – mentally, emotionally,

physically, etc.” He also told me that “the whole Covid spread is a problem, reaction, solution. Create the problem (Covid), get the reaction, provide the solution. The ‘solution’ being the vaccine, which was already pre-planned. They force the masks and then say you can stop wearing the mask once you get the vaccine. This is all in line with the NWO, agenda 21.”

Let me remind you that this conversation took place on the FB page of a fitness/wellness professional – someone many consider an expert, a follower of science. From what I can tell, he’s just one of millions of Americans who no longer trust our established institutions – in particular, the government, the media, and the pharmaceutical industry – and have embraced what you might call “alternative narratives.”

This group I fell in with yesterday believes that the Covid 19 pandemic is merely a disguise for some nefarious, top-secret, global plot. The details are vague – nobody seems quite sure who’s behind the plot – but apparently Bill Gates is involved . . . and Big Pharma . . . and maybe a bunch of high-powered Hollywood pedophiles. Sounds crazy, right? An insane conspiracy theory?

But consider another meme I came across yesterday, which read: “The real ‘conspiracy theorists’ believe that the government cares about them and the media would never mislead or lie to them and the pharmaceutical industry that makes billions off sickness and disease wants to cure them.”

Dude has a point. As off-the-rails as some Americans are sounding these days, it’s certainly not hard to understand how they got there. Every day, it seems, comes a fresh revelation to chip away at our trust in authority.

Just last week, thanks to a new book by Bob Woodward, we learned that the president intentionally minimized the seriousness of the coronavirus threat from the get-go, leading many to speculate that tens of thousands of lives have been needlessly lost. A story that got far less attention, but by my lights is extremely significant, is the one about some recently released taped conversations from 2016 between former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen and CNN president Jeff Zucker.

Independent journalist Matt Taibbi writes: “The conversations between Zucker and Cohen go a long way toward explaining how Donald Trump became president. We see clearly how Zucker, famed now as a supposed stalwart force of anti-Trumpism, actually encouraged him during the 2016 campaign, to the point where he offered Trump help on how to succeed *in a*

*CNN-sponsored debate* . . .

CNN these days plays face to Trump's heel, and vice versa, because that's where the money is in this era of WWE politics and hate-for-profit media."

People sometimes ask me why I spend so many column inches venting about the media instead of Donald Trump. My answer isn't really that complicated. First, I believe there are more

than enough Trump critics out there. It's like shooting fish in a barrel and it just doesn't interest me. Second, as a member of the media, I feel a responsibility to police my own ranks. Last, but definitely not least, I strongly believe that fixating on Trump while ignoring media corruption – and media bias and flat-out media dishonesty – is like treating a symptom while ignoring the disease. This country has a disease, and I'm not talking about Covid 19. The corporate media are a big part of what ails us.

We may well be rid of Trump by 2021 – and God willing, maybe even Covid 19 – but this disease is not going away. Not anytime soon.