The Coronavirus Spring

Your wooden arm you hold outstretched to shake with passers-by.

Existential Q&A. A novel situation, like a pandemic, raises novel questions. For one, is an impeccable university campus still beautiful if no one is around to see it? In search of an answer, Primus walked across Harvard Yard early on March 24, shortly before the Massachusetts order shutting nonessential businesses took effect. In the gray light, the bubbly yellow flowers of Corinna mas (cornelian cherry) showed to particular effect. The venerable cherry in front of Loeb House, where the governing boards govern, was full tilt (and knock-dead beautiful). Across Quincy Street, at Dana-Palmer House, one of the resident wild turkeys grazed, for once unphotographed and undisturbed. As occasional forays thereafter revealed, the apples at the Dean of Students Office made like cotton candy, and Radcliffe's shadbushes blossomed and ferns unfurled, as socially distanced from passersby as one can imagine. So, in a word: yes.

And can there be a graduation without Commencement? Also, yes—albeit with way less pomp and circumstance, and far fewer folding chairs: see page 16.

Paradigm shift. A deft explanation of the new order—at least for readers of this column—per this early-April letter from German Uribe '94, of Guaynabo, Puerto Rico:

Tuesday our youngest came to me and asked, "Papa, what is 'social distancing?' I hesitated. How to explain something so terrible. Something that keeps you from seeing your loved ones...Then, I put my arm around her. Looked her in the eye and said solemnly, "Sweetie, it's as if the whole world got...got Quadded!"

Email bounce. As the world slowed, some people kept busy. In response to the magazine's regular monthly email to the University list, this message returned:

From: Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID)
Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2020 11:04 AM
To: Harvard Magazine <harvard_magazine@harvard.edu>
Subject: RE: Here is Your May-June Issue

My work with the Coronavirus Task Force and the large volume of incoming emails precludes me or my staff from answering each individual message. I would encourage you to visit www.coronavirus.gov for the latest information and guidance related to COVID-19.

Thank you, and best regards.
Anthony S. Fauci, M.D.

Dr. Fauci, S.D. '09, was honored 11 years ago for his leadership in combating HIV/AIDS. His citation read: At the helm, on the Hill, in the lab, on the ward, a preeminent investigator of human immunology and a tireless leader in striving to conquer the world's most insidious ills. And how: When he becomes less busy, the good doctor is in line for a truckful of further honorary degrees; if Harvard wants to double up for this extraordinary second service, who would object?

Mr. University. Richard M. Hunt, a faculty member in social studies for more than four decades and University Marshal for two, died peacefully on April 10, at age 93. The Harvard Gazette appropriately remembered him as "a respected teacher, statesman, and keeper of [Harvard's] storied history." If there is one memory to cherish among thousands it is the image of the joyful Hunt celebrating, personally and officially, the conferral of an honorary degree on Nelson Mandela during the extraordinary ceremony in Tercentenary Theatre in September 1998. A sterling representative of Harvard, at one of its best moments.

Resonant number. The Harvard Alumni Association had to move its spring board meetings to Zoom. Participants could join the plenary session via an impenetrable link: https://harvard.zoom.us/j/99751098622?pwd=Z1c1ak9EbjZVFWnQzZIMXFwcDhvUT09.

But in a deft move by an HAA staff member, the password was much easier on the Crimson cerebrum: 1636. —PRIMUS VI