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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.....The last three months have been like a Science Fiction or Sci Fi Script for a movie. After 9/11 who could put together a story like this Coronavirus? We are told not to go out of our homes. Not to touch or hug anyone. Walk at least six feet apart. Come on! That's Stupid! But we must do this to survive and get through this virus. On 9/11, we had our Hero FDNY Firefighters and our NYPD Hero's rushing into the blazing Twin Towers to rescue our friends, relatives & co-workers. Now, nineteen years later we have our Health Care Workers rushing into hospitals all over America to administer to all those infected with the deadly Coronavirus. President Trump has nobly referred to our Health Care Workers as Warriors!! Like true Warriors, they are also dying in their attempt to save others. Please Pray for Them.....God Bless Them.

CORONAVIRUS MESSAGES.....the following messages were received from our CBP family and with their permission, I am adding them to our Newsletter to share with our members.

Frank Russo – Port Director, JFK Airport

I want to thank the entire JFK Airport community for all the well wishes and support during this unprecedented moment in time. Our dedicated CBP employees continue to come to work every day, sacrificing their well-being while balancing all of their responsibilities at home. Their dedication is truly inspiring. With schools being closed, online instruction increasing, and the need to keep an eye on grocery store supplies, life has become more stressful. Gyms and some food establishments are closed and we've lost that guaranteed stress reducer as well. Passenger volume has dropped dramatically. On a normal day, we would be processing 40,000 passengers at JFK. This week, we are averaging 600 passengers a day. We have asked the stakeholders to consolidate operations so that we could operate at 1 or 2 Terminals to abide by the Governor's orders to limit our footprint at JFK and employ social distancing, but unfortunately the Airlines are not willing to accommodate us because of the loss of revenue and their competitive nature at JFK. On the cargo side of operations, we continue to process entries, with a priority given to personal protective equipment (PPE). The Cargo facilities have some absenteeism that is affecting their ability to move goods off the Airport, but they are doing their best under the circumstances. On April 1, we processed a Russian military flight carrying an entire aircraft filled with PPE. The operation included support from FEMA, FDA and the PAPD. It was a great display of collaboration at JFK during this crisis. We realize that we will not be any more fortunate than the rest of the population. Upwards of 60-70% of our workforce will probably contract the virus and as of April 3, more than 35 CBP employees have tested positive. We pray that no one will suffer any long term consequences, although some of our employees have lost loved ones to the virus. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. We worked with the New York Field Office to develop a plan that limits exposure for our employees, and it has been well received by the employees. Their safety remains our number one priority. We continue to monitor those who have tested positive and others who are at high-risk of exposure. We have established a Coronavirus Command Center (CCC) which is tracking all incidents related to COVID-19. Any questions about our operations can be addressed to the team by calling 718-244-2338. We are confident that we will get through this. This pandemic has resulted in many unexpected consequences, but one thing it has reminded us of is that we have an awesome shoulder to lean on in the community and with the support of groups like the Columbia Association, we sleep better at night. Stay well and be safe!

Camille Polimeni – Port Director (ret) JFK Airport

My thoughts have frequently gone to those CBP employees who are working at the airports and seaports, putting themselves at risk in the line of duty. During those pandemic tabletop exercises conducted while the Port Director at JFK, I could never imagine the horrible reality of living it. Thank you all for your courage. Thank you, Frank Russo for your dedication and leadership. I have been praying more than ever, not just for my family and friends, but for the CBP family, and the world. I have a helpless feeling, yet knowing that what I am doing (staying home, social distancing if I have to go out, and yes, praying) is doing everything I can. Please all of CBP, the Columbia Association members, the airport community - keep safe. The newsletter certainly helps keep us feeling that we are in touch and not alone. I am living in West Palm Beach with my husband, Kevin Fox. Almost everything is shut down here but we can still take safety-first walks with our dachshunds. It is not YET as bad as what my family and friends in the New York Area are facing.

Frank Festa – Chief (ret) JFK Airport

Anita and I are fine. Although we are confined to the house like most of the country, the weather is beautiful and we have the pool and hot tub and do some walking. We meet with some of our neighbors but we stay 8 feet apart. We go to the supermarket but take our precautions. It is tough adjusting to not going out to dinner, taking in some shows, enjoying meeting with our friends and doing the things we enjoy in Florida. Since the beginning of this crisis, our county (Lee) has had about 350 positive cases which is minimal as compared to the hot spots around the country. I wish all my friends at JFK, retired and working to stay safe and follow the required guidelines so we can end this crisis. Hopefully soon we can get back to the way it was. We were totally unprepared for this!! God Bless all and stay safe.

John Lava – Assistant Port Director (ret) Newark Airport

Hope all is well with you and your family. Crazy times! We are both well and are following the guidance as best we can. Thanks for thinking of us. All is quiet but we did have one unique yet unfortunate experience. A friend of our son had to cancel his marriage ceremony because of the virus. No social gatherings so the marriage ceremony was streamed online. That was a first for us! Times have changed! Stay well buddy. See you when this crisis settles down.

Joan Mazzola – NIS (ret) NYC

Greetings to you and sending my best wishes to all in the NY metro area and beyond. We government employees and retirees are so lucky to have salaries and pensions during this crisis. Even though our investments have taken a hit, we don't have to worry about losing our jobs or paying our bills. In Florida we are just beginning to feel the effects of the virus. My community shut down pools, gyms and group activities weeks ago, though I am lucky to have my own backyard pool to enjoy in this beautiful Florida weather. I am trying to make my time at home more productive by organizing my paperwork, practicing the piano and working on ceramics projects. My prayers are with all in our Customs family and our world community. Please take care of yourself.

Peter DiRocco – Deputy Chief (ret) JFK Airport

Aloha to all, I pray that you and your families are staying safe in this pandemic. You guys are among the real heroes of today. I really respect and admire the commitment to national security that you all embrace. God be with you all. Here in Hawaii, things are nowhere as bad as they are in NY. Sure, we wear masks and gloves when shopping. It is kind of odd going into the bank wearing a mask and gloves and knowing that this is an acceptable practice. I think of all my friends from Customs on a daily basis and pray that you all stay safe.

Wayne Biondi – Port Director (ret) Dulles Airport

It was good seeing you at Sam Stabile's Retirement Party gathering in Garden City. All is well here in Virginia, staying close to home and trying to stay safe! I was planning on attending last month's Breakfast before all the Covid-19 stuff! Hopefully there will be another one soon. Keep well and stay in touch. God Bless my CBP family!

Larry Raffaele – Supervisor CBP (ret) Newark

Everything is good here in Pa, staying home like everyone else, I still keep in touch with most of the Customs people I worked with through Facebook. I still ride my motorcycle with the Blue Knights, and I have A 1976 Cadillac Eldorado that me and the wife cruise around in. Retirement is great, I wish my Customs family good health through this Crisis. God Bless.

Pat Orender – Assistant Director Advanced Training Center, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

Thank you to all our Newark work friends, we are keeping you and your family in our Prayers. The National Capital Region (NCR) DC, VA, MD and even the Western Panhandle of WV are beginning to see a big spike in cases. Keep us in your prayers. Please remember take your time with what you are doing and practice the best practical personal protective measures you can use, this virus doesn't discriminate. I have been detailed to the CBP HQ Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This is a massive effort. HQ has been running the EOC now longer then any national weather event (Hurricane or tornado). Over 75 days to date. Please be safe. Thank you for your prayers and encouragement!

Gary Kijik – Supervisor CBP (ret) Boston

Nan and I are doing fine here. Things are not as bad here in NC as they are up by you. Staying in and following all CDC rules. Hope everyone is doing well by you. Can't wait till this is over. I never talk politics, but between you and me, thank God for and God bless Trump!!! Stay well and regards to all.

DEAR MEMBERS.....I will send another Newsletter out in May acknowledging those members & friends who have passed away in 2020. I felt there was not enough space in this Newsletter to give them proper acknowledgment but because of time constraint I felt it was very important to notify our members & friends of the Lifesaving Bone Marrow Transplant that **John Swift** (ret CBP Officer JFK) will be undergoing in FL for Leukemia on May 9, 2020. John tells me the procedure will entail one month in the Hospital and two months in Rehab. John is hoping and praying that the Bone Marrow Transplant is successful. I asked John (a Lifetime member of our Columbia Assn) if I could share his email address. I promised John that I would ask all our members to pray for him. I am also asking our Members to email John at (john.swift@earthlink.net) and give him your best wishes to try to cheer him up.

GOD BLESS YOU JOHN. PRAYERS ARE ON THE WAY!

Fraternally,

Phil

Philip Maddalena, President