

80,000 people died of flu last winter in US

BY MIKE STOBBE
AP MEDICAL WRITER

NEW YORK (AP) — An estimated 80,000 Americans died of flu and its complications last winter — the disease's highest death toll in at least four decades.

The director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Robert Redfield, revealed the total in an interview Tuesday night with The Associated Press.

Flu experts knew it was a very bad season, but at least one found the size of the estimate surprising.

"That's huge," said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University vaccine expert. The tally was nearly twice as much as what health officials previously considered a bad year, he said.

In recent years, flu-related deaths have ranged from about 12,000 to 56,000, according to the CDC.

Last fall and winter, the U.S. went through one of the most severe flu seasons in recent memory. It was driven by a kind of flu that tends to put more people in the hospital and cause more deaths, particularly among young children and the elderly.

The season peaked in early

February and it was mostly over by the end of March.

Making a bad year worse, the flu vaccine didn't work very well. Experts nevertheless say vaccination is still worth it because it makes illnesses less severe and save lives.

"I'd like to see more people get vaccinated," Redfield told the AP at an event in New York. "We lost 80,000 people last year to the flu."

CDC officials do not have exact counts of how many people die from flu each year. Flu is so common that not all flu cases are reported, and flu is not always listed on death certificates. So the CDC uses statistical models, which are periodically revised, to make estimates.

Fatal complications from the flu can include pneumonia, stroke and heart attack.

CDC officials called the 80,000 figure preliminary, and it may be slightly revised. But they said it is not expected to go down.

It eclipses the estimates for every flu season going back to the winter of 1976-1977. Estimates for many earlier seasons were not readily available.

Last winter was not the worst flu season on record, however. The 1918 flu pandemic, which lasted nearly two years, killed more than

500,000 Americans, historians estimate.

It's not easy to compare flu seasons through history, partly because the nation's population is changing. There are more Americans — and more elderly Americans — today than in decades past, noted Dr. Daniel Jernigan, a CDC flu expert.

U.S. health officials on Thursday are scheduled to hold a media event in Washington, D.C., to stress the importance of vaccinations to protect against whatever flu circulates this coming winter.

And how bad is it going to be? So far, the flu that's been detected is a milder strain, and early signs are that the vaccine is shaping up to be a good match, Jernigan said.

The makeup of the vaccine has been changed this year to try to better protect against expected strains.

"We don't know what's going to happen, but we're seeing more encouraging signs than we were early last year," Jernigan said.

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COURTESY PHOTO |



Lawyer, 99, will retire 'when they carry me out of here'

BY PAT EATON-ROBB
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Attorney Morton Katz, 99, recalls just one client assigned to him as a special public defender who made an issue of his age.

That man, charged with stealing a car while on probation, was unhappy about how long it was taking to resolve his case.

"He wrote me the most vicious letters," Katz said. "The mildest one began, you senile old son of a — well I won't quote all the language he used, but it got pretty violent."

Katz became a lawyer in 1951, after serving in World War II, and continues working on a contract basis with the state of Connecticut as a special public defender. He does almost all of his work in person and over the phone, rather than using computers, but he impresses far younger colleagues with his sharpness of mind and recall of detail. And he has no plans to retire.

"I like what I'm doing. I wouldn't know what to do if I weren't practicing law," he said. "There are frustrations to beat all hell, but I like what I'm doing. It's very satisfying."

Katz, of Avon, was born on May 15, 1919 — straw hat day, he explained. In those

days men would wear a straw hat from mid-May to mid-September. After that, someone would take it off your head and put their fist through it, he said.

He graduated from Connecticut State College, the school that became the University of Connecticut, and saw action in World War II in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany before attending law school at UConn.

Superior Court Judge Omar Williams said Katz is asked to handle very difficult cases with tough defendants, and is very good at what he does.

"Obviously, it's amazing that there is someone who is 99 years old who is still working in this field," Williams said. "But to be putting out that type of work product, to be every bit a persuasive advocate — it's absolutely incredible."

One recent day, Katz was trying to find a client in a burglary case. The man had appeared on similar charges a few days before in New Britain, and his lawyer in that appearance had not gotten back to Katz to tell him of its resolution. Despite being on the docket, the client had not been brought from prison to the courthouse.

"A typical St. Matthew 6:3 case," Katz lamented. "The left hand has no idea what the right is doing."

David Warner, the supervisory public defender in Hartford, said nobody that he knows of has ever questioned Katz's competence to practice law.

"He tells some amazing stories about his career, about the war," Warner said. "I thought he was joking when he first told me his

age. You'd never know it from talking to him."

As a special public defender, Katz is paid \$350 per case, no matter how much work he puts in, unless the case goes to trial, and then he gets an hourly wage. Katz also serves as a magistrate for small claims cases, does free legal work on civil cases for Statewide Legal Services and provides free legal assistance to veterans.

He dedicated himself to public service after an uncle, who put Katz through college, refused his offer to pay him back.

"He said, 'No, what you will do is find someone else who needs your help, and you will help them,'" Katz said. "It just hit me that that was the right thing to do."

The American Bar Association said it could not determine whether Katz is the oldest practicing lawyer in the United States, and the National Association of Public Defenders says it also does not keep those records.

"However, having been a public defender myself for 31 years and involved with public defense since that time, I know of no one remotely approaching that age who is still active as a public defender," said Ernie Lewis, the group's executive director.

Katz said he plans to end his legal career "when they carry me out of here."

In the meantime, he attends regular seminars to keep up to date on the law and wants to take a course to make him more computer literate.

"Here is someone who has served his country in ways that can never be repaid and continues to do so," Judge Williams said. "He's just such a fine example of the best that humankind has to offer."

Help your descendants stay well

"Every book is a quotation, every house is a quotation out of all forests, and mines, and stone quarries; and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

We all have a family history that extends beyond who we know and beyond who our grandparents or great-grandparents know. But do you know anything about them and where you have come from?

October 2018 is Family History Month. Each person has been put on this Earth for a reason and is part of history. It's really quite exciting if you sit down and think about it.

You may or may not feel legendary or worthy right now, but if you were to leave your story behind for those that come after you; I would bet they think you were. But what if we think about it as more than what we have done and think about how important it can be for reasons beyond tracking where your ancestry came from, for example for health reasons.

How wonderful would it be if you could help your descendants stay healthy? It has been discovered that many diseases are congenital or passed down from generation to generation. So while tracking your information and keeping the younger generations in the family informed you can help them prevent or slow down any diseases that may occur in their life so they can live with greater health.

It is never too late to celebrate Family History Month. You just have to start collecting all the things you know about your family ancestry and compile it together so they have easy access to it. With you starting the footwork it will be easy for your descendants to keep the train rolling for generations to come.

DESIREE PEARCE works in health and wellbeing for the Sheridan County YMCA.



DESIREE PEARCE

SENIOR HAPPENINGS |

• Overwhelmed with stuff? Learn tips on how to downsize and what to consider keeping or purging at a free community presentation "Downsizing Your Stuff," in The Hub café at 211 Smith St. on Oct. 2 from 5:30-7 p.m. The event is open to all ages.

• Veterans Wall of Honor interviews will take place throughout the month of October. Veterans who may be interested in being part of The Hub's Veterans Wall of Honor profiles should drop by the front desk to pick up a questionnaire. From there, you will make an appointment to discuss the questionnaire and have a photo taken that will be included on your profile. Call Jane Perkins

at (307) 672-2240, ext. 107 for the appointment time or for any other inquiries.

• The Hub has organized a hike at Rosebud Battlefield State Park in Big Horn County, Montana, for Oct. 4. The park preserves a large portion of the battlefield of the Battle of the Rosebud, fought on June 17, 1876. Park ranger Spencer Morris will guide the group. Following the hike, the trip will include a drive to Tongue River Reservoir Marina for lunch. Bring your own lunch. To attend, sign-up at the Wyoming Wilderness Association at (307) 672-2751 or The Hub. The trip will take place from approximately 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and the cost is \$6 per person.



ENTRÉE CHOICE* or SOUP/SALAD

Tue- Chef Salad
Wed- Koltiska Pumpkin Bolognese
Thurs-Pot Roast, vegetables & potatoes
Fri- Parmesan Encrusted Cod
Sat-Bratwurst on Bun
Sun -Baked Chicken
Mon- French Dip/ au jus

Tue- Watercolor Class
Wed- Koltiska Pumpkin Patch
Thurs- ROSEBUD STATE PARK
Sat-WOODCARVERS
Mon- Chair Massage

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dessert and drink.

Salad Bar Available
Mondays - Fridays

No Salad Bar on
Saturday or Sunday

*entrée only offered for Home Delivered Meals

Lunch Service Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., 365 days a year at 211 Smith Street
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Loan Closet, Outreach, and Administration Services, 672-2240. Mondays - Fridays.

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