



Tim Bryce

Tim's SENIOR
MOMENTS

SAMPLER

Essays celebrating life as
we grow older.

SAMPLER

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TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

Essays celebrating life as we grow older.

by Tim Bryce

Author of THE BRYCE IS RIGHT!

"Software for the finest computer - the Mind"



Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

timbryce.com

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

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DEDICATION

To my wife Susan, my "D.F."

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Tim Bryce is a freelance writer and management consultant living in the Tampa Bay area of Florida. He has written several books and numerous articles on management, technology, politics, and the ever changing world around us.

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TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

"Some say that as we grow up, we become different people at different ages, but I don't believe this. I think we remain the same throughout, merely passing in these years from one room to another, but always in the same house. If we unlock the rooms of the far past, we can look in and see ourselves beginning to become you and me." - 'Peter Pan' by James M. Barrie

INTRODUCTION

It's cool to be a senior. You really do not appreciate it until you reach your sixties when your offspring are grown up and in the work force. People look at you differently, thinking you are past your prime and should be retired. It's kind of like, "Okay Old Man, sit in the corner, eat your cookie, and we'll take it from here."

I have a problem with this as I still have a few dances left on my card.

Young people do not believe you can keep up with the pace of today, that you possess knowledge from a bygone era that is no longer applicable. It disturbs them greatly when you demonstrate you know how to use their technology, not just as well but better than they do. The young people also think you dress funny, especially when you wear a suit and tie, and that you cannot comprehend the jargon, entertainment, or customs of today. The fact you have no tattoos, body piercings, facial hair and groom yourself carefully drives them bananas. They are particularly mystified when you say or do something politically incorrect and it doesn't seem to bother you.

What oldsters lack in the customs, vernacular and technology of the day, they make up for in chutzpah, guile, and bravado. Their values may be different than the youngsters, but their experiences make them resourceful and a fountain of information. Even better, they have developed a sense of humor laced with wisdom.

We also tend to believe as we grow older, and our children start their adult lives, that everything will settle down and we can begin

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

to enjoy life. Hardly. We have done nothing more than traded one set of problems for another. Instead of worrying about our kids, we start to worry about our parents and ourselves.

Thanks to technology, life has become more complicated, causing us to gravitate to simpler pleasures and we have become nostalgic for the past. You also come to the realization that common sense is no longer common, nor common courtesy, at least as it was taught to you years ago. You hate to see young people make the same mistakes you made earlier in life and even though you try to warn them, they are doomed to repeat them.

As such, I believe seniors will enjoy this book immensely as it is a celebration of being a senior with all the foibles included.

About this Book

I have been writing essays, books and technical manuals for the last forty years. By profession, I am a consultant specializing in the area of Information Resource Management (IRM) which many people have a hard time grasping, even those in the industry. For simplicity, let's just call it the computer industry instead.

Over time, I branched out from management and technology topics to such things as politics, religion, morality, history, and our changing world, and have been published in newspapers and magazines around the world. More recently, I am frequently asked to be interviewed on the radio. I write and talk about the things we tend to overlook or take for granted. I am cursed to always ask, "Why?", and look for the humorous side of life in the process.

In the past, I have written books and articles aimed at young people, managers, technicians, and parents, but I recently noticed I have developed a set of followers who were seniors. So much so, I decided to publish something specifically tailored to their interests. I'm not here to pick a political fight or speak harshly of others. There has been plenty of that already. I just wanted to put something together seniors will find humorous, thought provoking and something they can relate to. If you chuckle and say,

"Oh yea, I remember doing that," or "Wow, isn't that true," then I have accomplished my mission.

What follows is a compilation of essays I have written from 2006-2019 regarding the human condition, particularly as it applies to seniors.

There are seven sections in the book:

1. AGING - An introduction to the nuances of growing old.
2. A LITTLE SILLY - Some humorous observations about being a senior.
3. HISTORY LESSONS - Why we must study the past.
4. NOSTALGIA - Taking a ride in the way-back machine.
5. THE NUANCES OF LIFE - Time to stop and smell the roses.
6. ATHLETICS - Observations on sports and the great outdoors.
7. CLOSING THOUGHTS

A big tip of the hat goes out to my old friend C.F. Payne for the wonderful cover illustration. I have known C.F. for over 50 years now. We have waded many streams together while fly-fishing.

And for those of you interested, Yes, I am available for lectures and to conduct interviews. Just contact me through my web page at: timbryce.com

One final note; The date each column was first published is shown below the title. You'll also notice I close each column with the expression "Keep the Faith!" which is an expression I have used for a number of years. Basically, I'm admonishing the reader that regardless of what is happening in this incomprehensible world of ours, to just "Hang in there," or simply, "Keep the Faith!"

- Tim Bryce
Palm Harbor, Florida

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

AGING - The nuances of growing old.

"You know you are getting older when you begin having arguments with inanimate objects, and you lose."

- Bryce's Law

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

BECOMING A "SENIOR"

February 1, 2016

Quite often, we do not see it coming.

A rite of passage we must all experience is becoming a "senior." It can be used to denote the final year of high school or college, or graduation from some other institution, such as a tour of duty in the military. It denotes we are growing older which we commonly overlook.

When I was a senior in high school, age 18, I was in the downtown area of my hometown of Wyoming, Ohio wearing my WHS school letter jacket. I was waiting for a ride and just minding my own business. Nearby were two kids, about age 10, who were talking. I overheard one of them say, "Let's ask that man over there what time it is. Hey Mister..." I was surprised by the comment, and at first didn't realize they were talking to me. To be recognized as an adult for the first time was an epiphany for me, something I was unprepared for. Only then did it occur to me I was growing up.

More recently, I was recognized as the 2015-16 Outstanding School Volunteer for Palm Harbor University High School (PHUHS) for my work with CABAM (Center of Academics for Business Administration and Management), a special program within the school designed to provide for the education of business related skills. Personally, I believe it to be an important program and something I wish I had when I was in high school. I appreciated the honor, but noticed I was selected for the "Senior" category. Just as when I was 18, I was surprised by the designation as I still consider myself a regular adult who continues to work. While others my age are scrambling to retire, I cannot see myself doing so. There is too much to do yet, and I do not play golf or shuffle board.

To me, becoming a senior means you possess certain experiences and people rely on your expertise to advise them on various matters, such as in business, education, a particular craft or

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skill, politics, and life in general. To do so, you must be willing to give back to your community or industry and offer wise counsel.

Not everyone feels this way though. I have met too many people check out when they retire, becoming apathetic, and dropping out of sight.

What I find interesting about the "senior" designation, it is something we all yearn for as we grow up; to be recognized as some sort of experienced expert. I was disappointed when I became a senior both in high school and college. After all of the expectations, I found it wasn't a big deal. "Is that all there is?" I would lament. I believe we are in too much of a hurry to grow up and do not spend enough time enjoying the moment. However, there are instances where we do not see it coming, such as when I was 18.

Yes, I was surprised by the "Senior" classification on my volunteer award. I certainly do not feel like one.

And stop asking me when I'm going to retire. I still have plenty of dances left on my card.

Keep the Faith!

ANALOG VS. DIGITAL GENERATIONS

December 3, 2007

Which one are you?

We've all heard about "The Greatest Generation," "the Baby Boomers," and Generations X, Y, and Z. These are all labels used to describe and contrast the characteristics of the various age groups of people. I've used it myself in my writings to describe the behavior of different classes of workers, but recently I had someone in an Internet Discussion group tell me there was a easier way of differentiating people, namely Analog versus

YOU KNOW YOU ARE GETTING OLDER WHEN...

May 29, 2018

The subtle and not so subtle signs of aging.

As we grow older, we begin to observe signs of aging. Such signs are usually small and subtle, so we only become cognizant of such changes slowly, usually just before it is too late to do anything about it. Perhaps the most noticeable involves how our bodies are physically changing. This goes well beyond losing strength and speed, which we expect, nor is it the obvious signs of a receding hairline, or how our hair grays. Even our weight is anticipated, such as too much or too little. These are all to be expected. What I'm talking about are the little things we tend to overlook, such as hair growing where it should not, such as in our ears, nose, or out of a forehead or shoulder. Maybe worse is the realization your body hair has disappeared and your skin is now as soft as a newborn babe.

Such changes also include our mental acuity, our power of observation, and even our sense of humor. To illustrate....

Our taste of food changes with time. Whereas we used to consume considerable portions, that might be highly seasoned, we find ourselves reducing our intake, either because a doctor has ordered us to do so to minimize sodium, sugar and fat levels, or our priorities change and we no longer enjoy gorging ourselves. In other words, the portions become smaller and more bland. In turn, this affects our gastro-digestive system thereby reducing our "health habits" to something looking like dog kibble. Further, any change in the quantity of food, or type, turns our bowels into a musical theater, sounding like the wood wind section at a greasy spoon.

In terms of libations, instead of milk and colas, we now consume diet soft drinks, coffee and iced tea, something we abhorred in our youth. For alcohol, we have either given it up completely or only allow ourselves an occasional drink at the end of the day to help us relax, usually a strong belt of whiskey as beer and wine

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now gives us a touch of the wind.

Food and drink affects our ability to sleep through the night. Eventually, there comes a time when we no longer can sleep through the evening and typically wake-up at least three times to pee. We try sleeping aids, such as Ambien or an aspirin "PM" drug, to help us sleep, but this only makes you pee even more.

Arthritis starts to slip into your body, and you begin to regularly feel pain in your skeleton or muscles, particularly in your lower back. This is the result of a lifetime of sprains, strains, broken bones and bone spurs which come back to haunt you with a vengeance. At first, you try to take the pain in stride, but you inevitably succumb to Advil or Aleve and devour them like after-dinner mints. Backs, necks, shoulders, legs, fingers, feet and hips continue to ache, so you begin wearing back braces, and Ace bandages for knees and elbows, not to mention athletic tape to hold you together, and special shoes to walk. Now, with all of the paraphernalia you wear, you start to look something like Robocop.

You are not as nimble as you remember in your youth. The fluidity of motion is simply gone. Whereas you marveled at your prowess on the playing fields years ago, now you walk more carefully, preferably with a shopping cart in front of you to maintain your balance. Bending over is avoided at all costs and squatting is simply out of the question.

Then there is the matter of snot. You never had allergies in your youth, but your head is now swimming in nasal mucus, making you very attractive to the opposite sex. There is so much of it, you wonder why you never invested heavily in Kimberly-Clark or Kleenex years ago. Colds lasted but a day or two when we were in grade school, sometimes allowing us to stay home and be pampered by Mom. Now colds last weeks, if not months, and the only thing to truly comfort us is Jack Daniels.

When you now get together with friends, you notice the conversation has turned from such things as family, work, jokes, religion, news and politics, to sciatica, shingles, strokes, goiters,

COPD, cancer and heart disease. You complain about your sagging skin and debate what dermatologist offers the best procedure to correct the problem. After a night of talking about such ailments, you become a Hypochondriac and try to self-diagnose your problems, which the pharmaceutical companies count on. The best word of advice here is to turn the conversation back to family, work, jokes, religion, news and politics.

For some strange reason, the packaging of products is strengthened as you get older. Whereas tearing open a plastic bag, opening a tin can or plastic prescription bottle was once considered child's play, the wrapping mysteriously gets harder to open. It is also at this time you discover your repertoire of vulgar expletives has expanded. Coincidence?

Because you fear the possibility of suffering a stroke, you take aspirin regularly or some kind of blood thinner. The only problem is, you now bruise more easily, and your skin color changes from a healthy glow to a pasty white with purple blotches. Not surprising, you begin to wear long sleeve shirts even on the hottest days.

Sex becomes less frequent than when you were younger. Instead of three or four times a week, you are lucky to get it every three or four years. It's kind of like dancing; you remember how much you enjoyed it, but are no longer sure you remember all the proper moves. Television ads now have men convinced they cannot perform without a pill to act as a sexual picker-up. I still don't quite understand why the ads show couples in separate bath tubs and not in the bedroom where they belong.

You find you are no longer taking a couple of vitamins a day, but a couple of handfuls of pills instead. In addition to vitamins and pain relievers, you are now taking pills to clear your head, dry out your sinuses, make you sleep, and get you horny. The doctor prescribes dozens more, all with Latin names impossible to pronounce, for a variety of medical woes, and you take supplements for calcium, fish oil, glucosimine, condroitum, diet pills, testosterone, stool softeners, antacids, anti-gas, etc. To manage all of this, you buy plastic boxes with dividers listed by day to sort the number of pills you have to consume, which is now in the hun-

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dreds. The boxes remind you of your fishing tackle box, and if you are not careful, you might find yourself fishing with a hook baited with Viagra rather than a worm.

Your eyesight weakens, but you realize this was slowly developing over the years. What you didn't expect was to hear terms such as "macular degeneration," "cataracts," and "glaucoma." You then start to ask yourself why you ate all of those rotten carrots over the years. More troublesome though is the loss of hearing which you didn't anticipate. Now you start to wonder if the heavy-metal rock songs you listened to over your headphones in college had anything to do with it. You become perturbed with people who suggest you get a hearing-aid as you feel it is an affront to your age. The truth is y__ better g__ off y___ a__ and g__ o__ ASAP.

So far, I have concentrated on the physical aspects of aging, but there are other nuances we begin to notice as well:

In your youth, you may have been the spelling bee champion of your school, but now you can no longer remember the names of friends, places, or your school. Your math still works fine, but names elude you. Thank God for crossword puzzles to jog your memory.

Your memory also starts to elude you. Whereas you can vividly recount the day when Kennedy was shot years ago, you cannot seem to remember what you had for lunch today, or the beginning of this article.

You have difficulty adapting to the latest technology, be it a smart phone, tablets, streaming media players, or something on the Internet. This hinders our ability to drive a car as it is now dependent on the latest technology. Between XM radio, GPS maps, voice activation, and music players, we start to forget how to put the car in Drive or Park. We also develop a dependency on our grandchildren who are now charged with the responsibility of programming all of the electronics in the house. Without them, we are lost.

At family get-togethers, you are expected to pick up the check. This denotes seniority in the family tree.

You find yourself arguing with inanimate objects - and losing. Your temper flares when you stumble at what seems to be the simplest of tasks. In reality, it is not the fault of a tool or piece of equipment, it is you. Because you have performed a task a million times before, you become easily irritated when something goes awry on the millionth and first try.

You find yourself attending more funerals than weddings, baby showers or graduations. Whereas you danced and drank at many such parties years ago, now you find yourself living a more sedate existence, and miss the fun and friendships of the early days, particularly the revelry.

You discover the morals of the newest generation no longer match your own. This is projected in the fashions, food, and entertainment of the day, which you simply do not comprehend, nor the news. In response, you find yourself spending more time with your pets as opposed to people who do not understand you. In fact, you actually like your dogs and cats better than people as they do not argue with you. As such, you treat them better than a grandchild who lacks manners. At least, with a pet you can train them, but not somebody else's child.

The biggest change of all is the fact you have gotten smarter over the years, not just because of experience, but because you recognize your limitations, and conduct yourself accordingly. Instead of impulsively jumping up to perform a difficult task, you stop and say, "Wait a minute. Let me think about that first."

Interestingly, women generally believe men age better and more gracefully, and men feel likewise about women. The truth is none of us really like it and we're all embarrassed by our looks, no matter the superficiality of our perceived imperfections. We need to get over this. Just pour yourself a drink with a friend and enjoy the moment. We are simply not kids anymore.

Keep the Faith!

A LITTLE SILLY - Time to lighten up.

*"Being called a 'thoroughbred' doesn't change the fact
that a jackass is a jackass."*

- Bryce's Law

CAN YOU SPEAK "DOG"?

August 5, 2016

Who is better trained, the pet or the master?

Recently I discovered "Sergeant Preston of the Yukon" in the wee hours of the morning on one of the retro television stations. This was a favorite of mine back in the 50's which I watched with my father on CBS, one of the few shows shot in color at the time. It was the story of an RCMP Mountie patrolling the Yukon territory back during the days of the Gold Rush. My father loved the outdoor settings. As for me, I adored the sergeant's dog, "Yukon King," a brilliant animal who served as Preston's partner.

As a little kid, I was amazed how well the dog could understand his master's commands. Preston would say "guard" and King wouldn't allow the prisoners to move. Better yet, the sergeant would say, "King, you go around to the back of the cabin and come in the back window," and by God the dog would do exactly as instructed, capturing the bad guys in the process. The dog appeared to be so smart, you wouldn't want to play him in a game of chess. I naturally assumed all dogs were as smart as King. Boy was I wrong.

Over the years, my family has owned a Cocker Spaniel, two German Shepherds, a Boston Bull Terrier, and a couple of miniature Dachshunds. They were all nice dogs, but they certainly weren't intellectuals. At most, the dogs only knew seven commands: "sit," "speak," "cookie" (a favorite of theirs), "out" (meaning, "Do you want to go out?"), "heel" (when walking them on a leash), "shake" (to extend their paw), and "no" (which only works depending on the strength of your voice). Other than that, forget it. They weren't stupid animals, but unlike Yukon King I think I could easily lick them in a game of checkers.

I think cartoonist Gary Larson of "The Far Side" fame had the best take on dog communications. In one of his cartoons, "What Dogs Understand," he shows a human speaking to his pet, something to the effect of, "Okay Rex, let's go out and have some fun.

When we get back, I'll give you a cookie."

Unfortunately, the dog only understood, "Blah Rex, blah, blah, out, blah, blah, blah, blah. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, cookie."

In another cartoon, Larson shows a scientist who has invented an elaborate helmet which can translate into English what dogs were trying to say when barking. Despite the sophistication of his translator, he discovered dogs were only saying, "Hey!"

Actually, I think dogs have their owners better trained than the other way around. They let us know when strangers are around, when they want to go out, and particularly when they are hungry. Owners promptly act on the dog's command.

Maybe it was Yukon King who devised this sophisticated plot to turn the tables on the owners. Think about it, whenever you give a command other than the typical seven listed above, they know what you are saying but give you a blank stare of befuddlement instead.

As Sergeant Preston would conclude each episode, "Well King, this closes this case."

"Right King? er ah, King?..."

Keep the Faith!

DRUG WARNINGS

May 6, 2011

What in the world do they say?

Whenever I want to find out the latest in the world of medicine I just tune into the evening news. I think there is now an FCC ruling whereby only drug ads can be shown by the news media. Everything else has to wait until prime time. I suppose the reason for this is because only people over 40 years of age watch the news anymore, and this is the market the drug manufacturers are after.

The drug ads are aimed at treating everything from heartburn, to cancer, to cholesterol, to erectile disorders, and everything in-between. We probably have a pill for just about everything which we inevitably see during the evening news. Interestingly, all of the drug ads seem to be the same (and I suspect only one ad agency produces them). The first half is spent painting a rosy picture of how their product can solve our problems, but the last half is spent with warnings required by the FDA of the possible side effects. Unlike the first half where the narrator cheerfully articulates the product, the warnings are reviewed at a fast clip, kind of like a car salesman on the radio. The dialog by the announcer goes so fast that we only grasp a couple of words clearly, such as "possible side effects include..." and "consult your doctor before taking..."

It bothers me that I cannot fully grasp all of the warnings, so, as a public service, I've done some research and compiled the warnings into a single statement for your use:

"Do not take while awake or asleep. Should be taken one hour before or after either eating or vomiting. Possible side effects include a six hour erection, dizziness, memory loss, acute depression, shortness of pants, lack of appetite, a compulsion to shop at WalMart, nausea, er, ah...did I mention memory loss? Consult your doctor before taking. He isn't doing anything right now and doesn't mind innocuous telephone calls in the middle of

the night. His number is 800-325-3535. Go ahead, call and wake him up right now; it's only 3:00am. If you cannot sleep, why should he?"

Now play that warning back at twice the speed and you get an idea what we, the consumers, comprehend. Here's a better idea; why not just tell the public to read the instructions before using the drug? And write the instructions in terms John Q. Public can understand, and not just the attorneys for the drug companies?

Keep the Faith!

FUN WITH HAIR BLOWERS

September 22, 2017

How to kill a few birds with one stone.

During this time of the year, when tourists are flocking to Florida, traffic can be quite congested on our highways, not to mention fast. Although the posted speed limit is 45mph for the highway in front of our office, motorists frequently exceed the limit (loudly I might add). Like any local government these days, our county has to tighten its belts, particularly the sheriff's office which has been experiencing budget cuts. Not surprising, they tend to overlook speeding in certain areas, such as in front of my office. So I took it upon myself to devise a cost effective way to slow traffic.

I tried an interesting experiment whereby I wondered if I could get cars to slow down simply by holding an old broken hair blower which people might confuse for a radar gun. To make myself look somewhat official, I wore a light blue Columbia fishing shirt and navy blue trousers. I then went out to the side of the road, and pointed the hair blower to on-coming traffic. Lo and behold, cars began to slow down as soon as they saw me. So far, so good, but I wanted to make sure it was the hair blower and not my clothing that caused the motorists to slow down. I next tried it wearing a red shirt and experienced the same success. I then tried it dressed in shorts; then in a loud tee shirt; with a baseball

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

cap on; wearing sandals; and many other combinations. Again and again, the motorists slowed down the moment they saw the hair blower. Finally, I tried it with a stuffed dummy sitting in a lawn chair with the hair blower prominently displayed. I tilted the head down so the motorists couldn't see the dummy's face. Remarkably, despite the hair blower in plain sight, people paid no attention to the dummy and sped along unabated. From this, I concluded it was necessary to have a human being present in order to sell the deception.

As I was disassembling the dummy, a homeless man happened to approach me walking down the side of the road and solicited a handout. I asked if he would rather earn a few bucks instead of accepting charity. He replied he would be delighted to do so. I then asked him to sit by the road with the hair blower for which, in turn I would give him some money. He was a little scruffy looking but I thought it would be an interesting test. To his credit, he sat near the highway for approximately three hours and during that time I observed traffic did, indeed, slow down as I suspected it would. I paid the man who then went cheerfully on his way.

It occurred to me there were several such people like the homeless man who would be glad to render such a service, but instead of canvassing for such people, why not ask those who are receiving unemployment benefits or food stamps to perform such a service. Surely, that is the least they could do for all the benefits they are receiving. Imagine this; people sitting along the side of every road in the county holding broken hair blowers. What could be more cost effective to slow traffic? Now and then, the sheriff's office could even randomly assign a real radar gun in the field to keep motorists honest.

Imagine -

Price of a broken hair blower: \$0

Cost of unemployed person to slow down traffic: \$0

Slowing down speeding traffic by welfare/food stamp recipients:

Priceless

Wow, talk about killing a few birds with a single stone. All that is needed are a few broken hair blowers and a little common sense.

EPILOG

Since this article was first produced in 2012, the concept has been picked up and used elsewhere around the globe. One specific instance was in Scotland where it proved highly effective in slowing traffic in a village.

Keep the Faith!

HAVING A BAD DAY

January 17, 2011

Thank heaven it doesn't occur often.

When I come home at night after work, my wife and I typically talk about what we did that day. My wife gives me a journal description of her day from the time she got up until we finally meet at night. She's quite articulate in her adventures of the day which may explain why she looks puzzled at me when she asks me how my day went and I respond by saying simply "Fine" or "Good." Actually, I have a "Bad" day now and then, but not too often. I usually have but one a year, and I don't mean a type of day where you run into some problems at work or a key decision doesn't go your way. I'm talking about a day where everything consistently unravels before your eyes and you are powerless to do anything about it. Maybe a better adjective would be a "Rotten" day. I had one a couple of weeks ago.

It began on a cold Wednesday here in Florida, which may sound like an oxymoron, but on this particular occasion a cold Arctic blast came down from Canada. We may have not gotten the snow or frigid temperatures that the Midwest received, but getting into the 30's is still cold by my estimate. As I was leaving for lunch I noticed my car had a flat tire on the left-rear side. "Oh, great," I lamented to myself.

PRESS 1 FOR ENGLISH

October 10, 2010

Or Press 0 to speak with an agent.

Welcome to (any company using voice mail). Your call is very important to us. Listen to your options carefully:

PRESS 1 - for English.

PRESS 2 - por Espanol.

PRESS 3 - for any other language except French, Greek, Dutch, Italian, German, Chinese, Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, and Ebonics.

PRESS 4 - if you detest Voice Mail.

Thank you. While we're processing your request we'll now play some incredibly boring music repetitively that has been proven to drive away most adults.

PRESS 1 - if you are a glutton for punishment and want to continue waiting.

PRESS 2 - if you would like to call back and be bored to death another time.

PRESS 3 - if you would like to change language options.

PRESS 4 - if you detest Voice Mail.

Please note, for Quality Assurance purposes some of our calls may be monitored. In reality though, we couldn't care less.

PRESS 1 - to enter your nine digit social security number.

PRESS 2 - to enter your account number which we will lose after you have entered it.

PRESS 3 - to enter the winning Lotto number for tonight's drawing.

PRESS 4 - to enter the number of angels that can dance on the head of a pin.

For a Customer Service agent:

PRESS 1 - to speak to "Bob" in India.

PRESS 2 - to speak to "Bob" in Baghdad.

PRESS 3 - to speak to "Bob" in Pakistan.

PRESS 4 - to speak to "Bob" in the United States. Sorry, just kidding.

Thank you for your patience. All of our agents are currently busy with other customers at this time. Please stay on the line and the next available agent will take your call in the order it was received, which happens to be backwards. While you're waiting, take your telephone outside to your front yard, jump up and down, wave your arms madly, and scream like a chicken as it will be a better use of your time than waiting for us to do anything on the phone.

Keep the Faith!

HISTORY LESSONS - Why we must study the past.

*"History is written to describe our checkered past,
not its purity."*

- Bryce's Law

HEATED POLITICAL DEBATES

July 12, 2013

*If you think political fighting is bad now,
you don't know your history.*

As members of the 21st century, we tend to believe the political discourse of this country has reached new heights. The sad reality though is we pale in comparison to our predecessors. For example, the parallels between the Obama era and that of Jefferson is actually quite remarkable. To illustrate, I recently completed Jon Meachum's book, "Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power" (2012) and read about the presidential election of 1800 pitting Jefferson against his old friend, John Adams (the second President). Like Washington before him, Adams had been a Federalist. Jefferson, on the other hand was a Democrat-Republican (the origin of the Democratic Party as we know it today).

By 1800 there were already sharp ideological differences between the parties. Whereas the Federalists sought a strong federal government patterned after the British monarchy, Jeffersonian Democrats were more in favor of states rights and upholding the rights of the common man. The Federalists controlled New England, while the Democrats controlled the South. The disparity between the two parties is essentially no different than the Democrats and Republicans of today. Interestingly, Jefferson won New York which ultimately broke the log-jam (and edging out Aaron Burr).

Both parties controlled different newspapers, thereby providing a vehicle to attack each other and communicate their positions to the public. This was long an accepted form of communication until 1798; as the country approached the election of 1800 where it became apparent the Democrat-Republicans were gaining momentum, the Alien & Sedition Acts were passed by the Federalist controlled Congress, and signed into law by Federalist John Adams. The Sedition Act prohibited criticisms of the government and was viewed as a serious threat to the First Amend-

ment by Jefferson and Madison who fought to overturn it.

The Federalists also tried to pack the courts. There is no clearer example of this than Adams picking his Secretary of State, John Marshall, to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Interestingly, even though Marshall didn't share Jefferson's views, he was a cousin and administered the oath of office to Jefferson. The Federalists also passed the Midnight Judges Act which made sweeping changes to the judiciary before the Democrat-Republicans took control of both the executive and legislative branches.

The discourse in Congress was much louder and violent than what we are familiar with today. To illustrate, in a Congressional debate in 1798, Democratic-Republican Congressman Matthew Lyon implied that Connecticut Federalists, including Roger Griswold, were corrupt. Hearing this, Griswold called Lyon a coward on the Senate floor. Lyon responded by spitting in Griswold's face. Following this, a motion to expel Lyon from the Senate failed. Two weeks later, Griswold charged across the Senate floor and began striking Lyon with a heavy wooden cane about his head. Lyon retrieved hot tongs from a nearby fire pit and defended himself. However, Griswold was able to disarm him. The two exchanged blows briefly until they were finally broken up. This was not the first or last time, Congressmen would physically fight on the floor of the Capitol, but it gives you an idea of the heated passion of the day. Despite today's political hyperbole, I am not aware of an incident in recent memory involving fisticuffs on the floor of the House or Senate.

Such incendiary oratory has actually been with us for a long time. For example, consider the debates over issues such as the Missouri Compromise, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Jackson's dismantling of the National Bank, and just about every other argument leading up to the Civil War. All were just as inflammatory as the discourse of today, maybe more so.

I just wonder what effect television has had on Congressional arguments. I cannot help but believe it has somehow calmed the passions of the speakers. Without it, I can well imagine some rather loud and visceral arguments, with maybe some canes

and tongs thrown in for good measure. Hmm...sounds like a good angle for reality TV doesn't it?

Keep the Faith!

THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE PARALLEL

June 18, 2010

The past may very well forecast our future.

Some time ago, I happened to make a comparison between the period leading up to the American Civil War (1820-1860) and the discourse of today. I wish to take this a bit further so people can better understand the parallel.

Back in the early 1800's, the country was still divided over the question of slavery, primarily along sectional lines, north versus south. As the young country began to expand in a westerly direction, both sides grew concerned over losing power in Congress through the annexation of new states on either side of the slavery issue. If one side gained more votes than the other, it was conceivable they could implement policies and laws detrimental to the other side. Although there was initially balance between the states, a flash point erupted when the citizens of Missouri applied for statehood as a slave state. This led to an impasse in both houses of Congress as the discourse heated up. The debates were so passionate they began to draw large audiences in the galleries. Both sides were adamant in their position and settlement of the issue seemed impossible.

After several attempts, the Missouri Compromise was finally drafted whereby Missouri would be allowed to join the country as a slave state, and Maine, which had been a part of northeastern Massachusetts, was admitted as a free state, thereby maintaining parity over Congress. Further, an amendment was added whereby slavery would be excluded in all territories and future states north of the parallel 36°30' north (the southern boundary of Missouri).

FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

August 25, 2006

What we can learn from Lincoln's bid for election.

"The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise -- with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew."

- Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln can offer some valuable lessons of importance regarding politics from well beyond the grave. Doris Kearns Goodwin's book, "Team of Rivals - The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln" published by Simon & Schuster (October 2005), provides some rare insight into his thinking. It is an excellent book which I heartily recommend to those interested in history and politics. There have been numerous books written on Lincoln and the Civil War, but what makes this book interesting is the political maneuvering to make Lincoln president.

It would be incorrect to assume Lincoln was highly successful in his early political career. In reality, he suffered several setbacks; he lost an incumbent election for Congress and two runs for the Senate. Each stung Lincoln sorely, but to his credit, he learned from his mistakes. As the election of 1860 approached, he got his political house in order and devised a successful campaign.

Going into the 1860 Republican convention in Chicago, Lincoln knew he would have to contend with others that were better known and respected than himself; including:

William Edward Seward - former Governor and Senator from New York.

Salmon Chase - former Governor of Ohio.

Edward Bates - former judge from Missouri.

The front-runner going into the campaign was Seward who was well known, had impeccable credentials (as did the others) and

a successful track record in politics. Although Lincoln's intellect and integrity were beyond question, he was considered a political loser. Knowing this, Lincoln carefully crafted a "Dark Horse" campaign. He knew he wouldn't garner the votes to receive the nomination on the first ballot, but felt he could position himself ahead of the others and capture the nomination should Seward stumble. To do so, Lincoln carefully assembled his own political machine. Not only were all of the Illinois delegates behind Lincoln, but he recruited political handlers who had run against him in past campaigns (and won). This is perhaps the key reason why Chicago was selected as the convention site over eastern venues as well as St. Louis (home for Bates). It is this political machine that ultimately won Lincoln the nomination and, of course, the election.

To assemble his machine, Lincoln networked and cultivated relationships. He was well known for his storytelling abilities which endeared him to the public. Beyond this, he was gracious in defeat and magnanimous in victory. After losing his first Senate race, he shocked everyone by appearing at the victory party of his opponent and offered a genuine hand of friendship and support. This did not go unnoticed and was well remembered by his opponent who fought for his candidacy years later.

Lincoln's ability to turn opponents into proponents is at the heart of the book. During the campaign and knowing he would be a "Dark Horse" candidate, Lincoln did not find it necessary to speak ill of his opponents in his party's race. Instead, he talked in terms of shaping the ideologue of his young party. Although he was a respected attorney, he orchestrated a speaking campaign to add legitimacy to his candidacy. This took him on a journey through the northern states where he had been a relative unknown. By speaking from the heart, he weaved together some eloquent oratories that captivated his audiences. His arguments were well formed and rehearsed. This, coupled, with his down-home humor, endeared him as a man of the people. More importantly, Lincoln spoke not just about antislavery, but a broader platform that included how to develop the country's infrastructure and the need for a national bank. In other words, he didn't focus on a single issue, but presented a broader platform, thus adding to

his credibility.

Lincoln's political machine worked wonders in Chicago and the nomination became his. Although the machine made some clever maneuvers, Lincoln did not have to beg, borrow or steal to win the necessary votes. In fact, he carried into the convention hall a slip of paper reminding him, "Make no contracts that will bind me."

Following his win at the convention, Lincoln's attention turned to cultivating his image ("Honest Abe") and targeting battleground states. He also found it necessary to perform rumor control in order to squelch any misconceptions or misinformation being presented to the public. It was important to him that his policies be carefully articulated and accurately reported to the public.

Lincoln went on to win the election and, knowing the country was approaching a flash point in the country's unity, went about the process of selecting key people for his cabinet. Here, Lincoln reached out to his recently defeated opponents in the Republican race and appointed Seward as Secretary of State, Chase as Secretary of the Treasury, and Bates as Attorney General. These people, particularly Seward, became his close confidants and trusted advisers. All were somewhat surprised to be asked to serve, but Lincoln's magnanimity encouraged them to put the interests of the country's ahead of their own.

During his term in office, on more than one occasion Lincoln accepted responsibility for errors committed by his subordinates, thereby deflecting criticism of his people and allowing them to save face. This endeared him to his former opponents and earned their respect.

CONCLUSION

Lincoln's rise in presidential politics could not have been accomplished without the support of the political machine he created. He may have viewed such machines as ugly and unsavory, but he recognized them as a fact of life. The same is true in politics today. Too often political machines subjugate the election of lead-

ers. As Lincoln has shown us, the only way to fight fire is with fire.

As a footnote, "Team of Rivals" was the book used as the basis for Steven Spielberg's 2012 movie, "Lincoln," starring Daniel Day-Lewis in the title role. Interestingly, the movie concentrated on the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment used to abolish slavery. This represented a paltry twelve pages from the 944 page book. The real story was about how Lincoln's ability to forge relationships. Unfortunately, Hollywood decided to overlook it. Sad. Very sad.

Keep the Faith!

SEEKING THE TRUTH

January 26, 2015

How Lincoln handled the slavery issue.

Seeking the truth can be a delicate matter fraught with pitfalls. It may interfere with another's political agenda or personal gains. Besides, people do not necessarily want to know the truth. Most are quite comfortable hiding within their shell minding their own business, and not wanting to get involved with the outside world. Today, it is more important to be politically correct than seek the truth, something which may lead to a person being ostracized for possessing an inquisitive mind. I have run afoul of this on more than one occasion, not just in my consulting practice but in nonprofits as well. When I dare ask a question or point out an indiscretion, I am often accused of being a troublemaker. Such is the price you will likely pay. The questions though must be asked, and only a handful of people are willing to risk injury to their integrity, but they are desperate for finding the answer. One such person was Abraham Lincoln who wrestled with the question of slavery.

In the book, "The Impending Crisis," author David M. Potter, Ph.D. discusses the events leading up to the Civil War from 1848-1861.

NOSTALGIA - Taking a ride in the way-back machine.

*"In every person's life, you must eat at least
one spoonful of dirt."*

- Bryce's Law"

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

60+ YEARS OF JAMES BOND (007)

August 8, 2014

The characters have evolved and adapted to the times, making it just as relevant today, as when it first debuted.

My fascination with James Bond, code named 007 of British Intelligence, began 50 years ago with the movie "Goldfinger." Although author Ian Fleming introduced the character and story line in 1953 in a 12 volume set of books, it was "Goldfinger" that made the franchise. "Dr. No" and "From Russia with Love" preceded "Goldfinger," but it was the third movie in the series which caught the public's imagination. Maybe it was the Aston Martin DB5 with its bag of tricks that caught our attention, or the girl murdered in gold paint, the henchman "Oddjob" with his steel rimmed bowler, or Pussy Galore and her flying circus. Actually, it was the whole package we found very avant-garde and provocative, thereby making "Goldfinger" a smash hit. So much so, the producers rushed "Dr. No" and "From Russia with Love" back into theaters as reruns to capitalize on the Bond hysteria.

James Bond appealed to both men and women. Sean Connery was the perfect candidate to launch the character. Ian Fleming had wanted Roger Moore, but it was Connery who got the nod. For men, Connery had a coolness about him, he had a way with the ladies, knew his way around a casino, got to play with clever tools and weapons ("toys"), and was very resourceful when he had to be, even in how he fought. For women, Connery was great looking, exuded confidence, and as I said, had a way about him which caused women to gravitate towards him, even to this day.

The Bond character invented by Fleming was based on several agents he knew during his tenure in British Intelligence during WW2. However, there really was a James Bond, but he was nothing like Fleming's character. It is explained in the book, "A Man Called Intrepid."

There has always been a debate about which actor played the

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

best Bond. For my money, it was Sean Connery. Sure he could deliver a clever line, but it was his coolness under pressure that made him credible in my eyes. His fight scene on the train with actor Robert Shaw in "From Russia with Love" showed his resourcefulness. Bond may have been trained in martial arts, but he broke the rules in defeating his opponent. This was repeated in "Goldfinger" when he fought Oddjob.

Of the six actors who played Bond (not counting the early "Casino Royale" starring David Niven), here is how I rank them:

- 1-Sean Connery - appealed to both sexes. Established the character and made him believable.
- 2-Daniel Craig - I wasn't sold on Craig at first, but I think Fleming would have been proud of his portrayal in "Casino Royale."
- 3-Timothy Dalton - a tie. Both Dalton and Brosnan were competent and didn't overplay the role.
- 3-Pierce Brosnan
- 4-Roger Moore - was Ian Fleming's choice, not mine. Too pretty to be Bond.
- 5-George Lazenby - succeeding Connery was a hard act to follow, but where did they dig this guy up?

Bond was surrounded by some interesting supporting characters. First, Bond reported to "M" as head of "MI6," the Secret Intelligent Service. Actor Bernard Lee was the first to play the role capably, as did Judy Dench. Miss Money Penny was the personal secretary to M and often flirted with Bond. Lois Maxwell owned the character for years. The character of "Q" (for Quartermaster) was concerned with issuing Bond his "toys" for his various assignments. There was always a playful rivalry between the two. Desmond Llewelyn played the character for over 30 years. Someone decided to use Monty Python's John Cleese in the role, but that flopped (thank God).

As to Bond's "toys," I had two favorites; first, the Aston Martin DB5 with ejector seat, twin machine guns, spinning axle blades, oil and nail ejectors, rear window bullet deflector, and smoke screen. I cannot think of too many men who wouldn't want to take this for a spin. My second favorite toy was "Little Nellie," the

Wallis WA-116 Agile mini-helicopter made famous in the 1967 film, "You Only Live Twice." Sheer genius. Bond also had a personal fondness for the Walther PPK as his handgun of choice. And let us not forget Bond's Vodka Martini, "shaken, not stirred."

As to the best Bond movie, my vote goes to "Goldfinger." Prior to this, Bond was fighting the evil SPECTRE empire (SPecial Executive for Counter-intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge and Extortion). This was all phoney-baloney for my taste. Instead Auric Goldfinger (played by Gert Fröbe) devises a very sophisticated scheme to enhance the value of his gold, while creating an economic panic for the Communists to capitalize on. Even though it meant capturing Fort Knox, Goldfinger's scheme was truly diabolical as opposed to the plots by the other Bond villains.

James Bond spawned a wave of espionage movies and television shows, such as "Matt Helm," "Our Man Flint," "The Man from U.N.C.L.E.," "I Spy," "The Wild, Wild West," "Get Smart," and many more. Bond outlived them all and still influences our perception of the world of the secret service.

Fleming died at age 56 in 1964, the same year "Goldfinger" debuted. Although he enjoyed some success, he never realized how his character turned into a cultural institution. After his twelve books had been made into movies, other authors stepped up to fill the void Fleming left behind. By then, it was a formula.

Bond has been described as predictable and iconic. Yet, we still come back for more. Actually, it is the formula that makes Bond work: a rugged and confident operative who is sent to solve a cockamamie plot to conquer the world, and enjoy the perks of life along the way.

Due to age, the actors have had to be replaced more than once, the toys have changed, as had the type of music used in the opening credits, but it will be interesting to see how long the James Bond formula for movie magic will endure. Who knows, maybe 100 years, which is something I do not believe Fleming would have imagined.

The masterminds behind the Bond movies were, of course, Harry Saltzman and Albert R. Broccoli who formed Eon Productions (Everything Or Nothing). Through their careful planning, Bond has evolved and remained relevant. Both partners passed away some time ago, but Eon remains under the tight control of the family, most notably Barbara Broccoli.

I have debated this subject on more than one occasion. Some people think Roger Moore was the best Bond; young people prefer Daniel Craig. Some like the newer movies, others prefer the classics from the 1960's. Actually it really doesn't matter. We all find something of personal interest in the Bond movies we can relate to, be it a toy, a character, or the plot.

And, Yes, I thought the song "Goldfinger" by Shirley Bassey was the best.

Keep the Faith!

A FONDNESS FOR GARAGES

November 16, 2016

A glimpse inside the men's clubhouse.

I think most men enjoy their garages; I know I do. Many see it as a "Fortress of Solitude" where a guy can store his tools and equipment, not to mention his automobiles. There is usually some form of work bench, a radio tuned to his favorite station, and a few signs or license plates posted on the wall to give it that "homey" feeling. Some people keep their garages immaculately clean which is often a reflection of how they keep their cars. Others even go so far as to add heating and air conditioning, not to mention a television set. There are even those who turn the garage into an office, a rec room, a fitness center, or possibly a kennel, but these are the exceptions as opposed to the rule. Most use it as was designed to be, a place to store your cars and any other paraphernalia your wife won't let you bring into the house.

GAMES WE PLAYED AS KIDS

October 6, 2017

Anybody remember "Red Rover"?

It's interesting what you can learn just sitting on a park bench. Not long ago, I was down at Crystal Beach, a local park and pier on the Gulf of Mexico where I was enjoying some Florida sunshine and waiting for the sunset when I happened to overhear some kids who were bored and looking for something to do. In the course of the conversation they talked about their favorite games; they mentioned: "Call of Duty," "Batman: Arkham City," and "Portal 2." Only then did I realize they were talking about computer video games and got me thinking about the games I played as a child growing up in Connecticut.

Back then, the emphasis was to get out of the house and get some fresh air. We were fortunate to live in a wooded countryside with a stream running through our backyards in the community. We spent a lot of time swimming and fishing in the stream, where we mostly caught brook trout. The only organized sport we played back then was Little League baseball, but it seemed we were always playing a pickup game regardless where we were.

We drove our bicycles everywhere; to school, to the baseball fields, and to the store. One of our favorite endeavors was to canvas the neighborhood to collect used soft drink bottles and take them to the grocery store where we turned them in for the deposit (two cents for a regular bottle, three cents or a nickle for a quart bottle). We would then take the money and play a round of putt-putt golf at a nearby range, and stop off at a country store to buy penny candy; e.g., root beer barrels, paper strips of dots, rock candy, jaw breakers, pixie straws, wax candy, licorice sticks, and a myriad of other delicacies.

Living in a wooded setting, one of our favorite games was Hide and Seek, and we all learned some rather devious places to hide. So much so, it would take a couple of hours to play just a handful

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of games. We would also play Tag, Red Rover, and Red Light/Green Light. Our fathers tried to teach us "Buck Buck" (aka "Johnny on the Pony") but this never really caught on with us.

One time, the neighborhood was planning a Clam Bake party and the adults were all charged with various responsibilities, be it preparations, cooking, dessert, entertainment, cleanup or whatever. The father next door was charged with keeping the kids out of everyone's hair so the adults could do their jobs. To do so, he devised a scavenger hunt whereby he placed clues all over the neighborhood, at certain landmarks in the woods, and at our school. He broke us up into teams to make it competitive. The hunt began in the morning from a massive boulder in his backyard. After he explained the rules, he turned us loose where we had to find the carefully hidden clues and decipher them which was rather devilish as I recall. This went on for several hours until late in the afternoon where the hunt finally led us back to his boulder in the backyard where he sat enjoying the day by reading a book. We all thought it rather ironic that the hunt ended at the same place it started. He just laughed.

Afterwards, we had dinner and were now too tired to do anything but go to bed, which the parents had hoped for as their Clam Bake was about to begin. Afterwards we realized it was a brilliant bit of strategy by the parents.

There were many other things occupying our time in those days: we whittled, we caught fireflies in mason jars, built forts in the woods, picked apples in a nearby orchard, and played a lot of Dodge Ball (we called it "German Dodge" for some unknown reason). When it rained, a group of us would get together and play marathon sessions of Monopoly. In the winter, we slowed down a bit, but still found time to ride our sleds down hills, ice skating, build snow forts, and of course engage in several snowball fights.

So, as I thought about the young men talking about their video games, I kind of felt sorry for them. Here we were sitting on the Gulf of Mexico on a beautiful day and they were bored. It never occurred to them to drop a fishing line off the pier or even a simple

game of catch or "pickle" (running bases). They just wanted to go home and play their favorite video game. I was tempted to teach them how to play Red Rover, but like our fathers who tried to teach us "Buck Buck," I knew this wouldn't really catch on with them. Pity.

Whenever I hear a youngster lament, "There's nothing to do," I just role my eyes and think back to my youth. There is much more to being a child than just playing with electronic gadgets. Maybe the parents just need to throw the kids outside and force them to discover the world around them.

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bought it on the spot. Frankly, I think the sales clerk was puzzled why I wanted the fossil, but I didn't care.

When I got it home I cleaned out my old briefcase and transferred the contents to the new one. Finally, I closed the lid on my old briefcase for the last time and bid it adieu. It was all rather sad.

I am very pleased with my new briefcase, but I think this will be my last one as they have become an endangered species. Consequently, I think I'll take better care of this one. To safeguard it, I have added a special security feature to it, a hidden dagger. James Bond would certainly understand.

Keep the Faith!

SEX EDUCATION, THEN AND NOW

August 10, 2012

Are we truly any smarter today?

I wonder how much of sex education is learned through television, the Internet, and movies these days? Probably more than we know. As a result, I suspect parents spend considerably less time discussing it with their children than my generation. Back in my day, sex was a subject few people openly discussed, but I'm sure they were just as preoccupied with it. Even though "Playboy" was coming into vogue, nobody discussed such things as erectile dysfunction, social diseases, or openly joked about human sexual anatomy as they do today on prime time. Bawdy jokes were told privately or in Las Vegas. Even tampon ads in magazines were considered risqué. The movie "Goldfinger" broke a lot of ground in raising sexual awareness though. Everyone knew what "Pussy Galore" meant, and still chuckle about it to this day.

My father gave me "The Talk" about the birds and the bees some-

where around fifth grade and he treated it rather seriously and matter-of-factly. Prior to this, I hadn't given it much thought and was thereby surprised about the facts of life, particularly with the opposite sex.

This was all reinforced a couple of years later when I was in Junior High School in Chicago. We were bused to the school on a Saturday morning, where the boys and girls were separated and listened to lectures on sex and watched an educational film. Interestingly, before the movie, the boys and girls joked around on the bus and sat together. However, on the trip home, the boys sat on one side of the bus, and the girls on the other; not a word was spoken by anyone. I presume the session had the desired effect the school administrators were looking for.

Following the class, our P.E. teachers would also provide some talks and film strips on sex education. I suspect the films were shown to the GI's in WW2 as they looked rather old and warned of the dangers of Syphilis and Gonorrhea. Afterwards, we all started to watch our scalps to make sure clumps of hair wouldn't fall out. It was also at this age when young men start wearing jock straps in gym class. There was an instance where a new kid came to our school and joined our class. In addition to the jock strap, his mother insisted he wear a condom. This really puzzled us. We all knew what the condom was for but were at a loss as to why she insisted on him wearing it in gym. Nobody sat next to him while we were changing.

During high school I played football and would naturally get quite dirty and sweaty. We all took showers afterwards and nobody thought twice about it. One of my teammates eventually became the Athletic Director at the school. When I went back to visit him years later, he gave me a tour of the old locker room where I noticed the shower room was shrunk in half. When I asked him about it, he told me nobody takes showers after a game or practice anymore as the kids have become rather "Homophobic." I just rolled my eyes and said, "Idiots."

Despite the absence of the active sexual climate in the media back then, we all got the message, be it from our parents, our

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school, or amongst ourselves, but I'm not sure it is like that anymore. I know of companies today where managers have to counsel young employees about their sex lives. The biggest danger seems to be they are misinformed about what they are doing, and are incredibly naive about birth control and social diseases. It seems odd a manager has to discuss such affairs with a worker but it is inevitable as many moms and dads have abdicated their parental duties in this regard. I suspect the same is true in the military where sergeants have to give advice, such as, "If you don't know what you're doing, keep it zipped."

Today we may be more sexually active in the media, but our young people appear to be ignorant of the basics when it comes to sex education, just the antithesis of my day. Now there are more sexually transmitted diseases, and we all want to be at the top of our game in sexual performance, at least that is what television tells us. I'm not sure which generation is more correctly "adjusted" to sex, but I sure loved that "Pussy Galore" gag.

Keep the Faith!

SOMETIMES THE OLD MEDICINES ARE THE BEST

March 29, 2013

Why won't they just go away?

Now and then I am reminded of an old medicine I haven't heard about in a long time. I'm usually surprised they're still around as I thought they were made obsolete. Then again, such medicines still work and are used by loyal consumers with strong allegiances. For example, one of my neighbors confided in me she takes a tablespoon of Castor Oil on a daily basis. I was surprised by the admission as I hadn't heard of it since my youth, which I remember as some nasty tonic that doesn't go down too easily. My neighbor said the taste wasn't too bad after you get used to it. Actually, Castor Oil has several uses, one of which is medicinal in nature, primarily as a laxative "to keep you regular."

THE NUANCES OF LIFE
- Time to stop and smell the roses.

*"In a contest of stubbornness,
man will beat the jackass every time."*

- Bryce's Law

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A SIMPLER TIME

September 23, 2013

Were the good old days really better?

As we grow older, we tend to get aggravated by the complexities of the world and yearn for simpler times. You suddenly recognize the complications caused by technology, overcrowding, government bureaucracy, and changes in moral values, thereby causing you to fondly think back to less stressful times, particularly in childhood. I happened to mention this to some of my older friends recently who began to reminisce about the simpler times they experienced growing up. Their descriptions make for an interesting tapestry of images:

At home it was not uncommon to have two newspapers delivered daily, a morning paper and another for the evening. Yes, back then people would read habitually as they wanted to know what was going on in the world and, believe it or not, actually trusted the press. You would also listen to the radio routinely and use your imagination. When television came along, there would be just three channels representing the major networks and possibly a fourth channel for a local independent which featured classic monster movies on Saturday nights hosted by such people as the "Cool Ghoul." Somehow the programming seemed better as we enjoyed the golden age of television which included comedies, dramas (particularly Westerns and detective series), talk shows, soap operas, and variety shows. Only the cream of the crop made it to the television screen, and, No, there were no reality shows. Remote controls were a rarity. If you wanted to change the channel, you had to get out of your chair to do so. Not surprising, you became a devotee of a single network. Instead of cable we strapped bizarre looking antennas to chimneys and grounded them in fear of lightning strikes.

Party phones were common in many households whereby two or more parties shared a line, thereby saving costs. It wasn't uncommon to pick up the phone and hear your neighbor talking with someone else. If this happened, common courtesy dictated

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you hang up quietly as opposed to listening in.

Only the very rich had remote controls to open garage doors. Most people had to get out of their car to open the door, or dispatch their children to do so.

If your neighbor needed help, you didn't think twice to lend a helping hand, be it to shovel snow, cut their grass, run an errand for them, lend your car, deliver a meal, or help any way you could. Everyone instinctively watched out for each other and you could keep the front door unlocked.

Kids kept busy by cutting grass, raking, sweeping, and other chores around the house. For entertainment they would play baseball, fishing, swimming or outdoor games like tag, hide and seek, Red Rover, Dodge Ball, Johnny on the Pony (aka Buck Buck), etc. You also built a lot of forts to hide in and plot skullduggery. In the winter you would skate, sled, make snow forts, and a snowball fight was always imminent. You would also collect and trade baseball cards, shoot marbles, and play with yo-yos, tops, Super Balls, even Hula Hoops. Only if it rained, were you allowed to stay inside. If you were really lucky, you went to a double feature on a Saturday afternoon.

Sundays were used to bring the family together. After church you would go to either the home of your grandparents or that of an aunt or uncle, where you enjoyed a large dinner. You might also go to a nearby park where you could barbecue. Such festivities would be concluded late in the afternoon so people could get home to watch Disney, Lassie, Gunsmoke, Bonanza, or Ed Sullivan.

As to humor, it seemed everyone knew how to tell a joke and, No, they were not always politically correct. Kids told knock-knock jokes and puns. Parents gravitated to burlesque or vaudeville type of jokes. Groucho Marx would make you think, Jack Benny's "cheap" persona was always good for a laugh, and "Uncle Miltie" and the "Great One" ruled the airwaves in the early days of television.

The focal point of the neighborhood was the corner store where you would purchase items for the household, be it food or sundries. If they didn't have it, they could order it for you. They were the precursors of today's convenience stores, only better. Proprietors were well known and respected in the neighborhood. It wasn't uncommon for customers to stop in simply to chat and gossip about what was going on in the community. Before air conditioning, such stores had ceiling fans to circulate the air, wooden floors, and the front door was screened with a retracting spring to keep it closed. When it swung shut it made a distinctive snapping sound. Old cash registers were behind the counter, built of brass and had brilliant designs etched into them. When a sale was made, a small bell would ring and the cash drawer would pop open. Items purchased at the corner store were often done so "on credit." The proprietor would keep tab of everything and at the end of the month you were expected to "settle up." The store smelled heavenly of fresh ground coffee, bread, and there was a pickle barrel with a delicious brine.

For kids, stores offered "penny candy" which was an array of sweets consisting of such delicacies as rock candy, paper strips with dots, root beer barrels, fireballs, licorice, gum drops, pixie sticks, etc. For a mere dime you would have more than enough sweets to satisfy you. Soft drink machines came as horizontal chests, not "uprights", where you would slide a glass bottle by its neck across an inside track and into the dispenser where you deposited your coins. I never saw a fat kid, probably because we either ran everywhere or rode bicycles which represented freedom. We would drive our bikes for miles, either to school, the store, a fishing spot, a camp site, a baseball field, or wherever. As kids, we would camp out, cook over a camp fire, and cleaned up afterwards. We also carried swimming suits with us in case we found an inviting pond or stream to jump into. A rope swing into the water was heavenly. Occasionally we would experience an accident, but you learned to take your medicine. Crying was natural but if you did so too long, you were a "spazz."

Many items were delivered to your home. The milk man would deliver glass bottles to galvanized metal boxes by the kitchen door. If they sat there for awhile, you could watch the cream rise

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to the top. Bread was delivered, as were eggs, butter and cheese. The ice man would deliver large chunks to keep your "ice box" cold (not refrigerator). Coal was delivered through chutes going into the furnace room of your basement. It was normally the responsibility of the children to keep the furnace stoked during winter time. A popcorn man would make the rounds, selling bags for pennies. Ice cream was sold likewise. The fish man would also visit regularly, usually announcing his presence with a cowbell or some other audio attraction. There was also a person to sharpen knives and cutlery. The Fuller Brush man visited your home with a wide variety of brushes for sale, and Avon called frequently. Peddlers also went door-to-door selling medicines, salves, spices, concentrated flavors for cooking, and just about anything else. In other words, the vendors came to the customer, just the antithesis of today. And before trucks, there were pushcarts and horse drawn wagons.

Libraries played an important role in society where reading was stressed. They too traveled to the public in mobile libraries. Children were encouraged by parents to read. Before bedtime parents would read classics to their offspring like "Peter Pan," "Alice in Wonderland," "Moby Dick," and the Dr. Seuss classics. Kids have a natural attraction to story telling, and it was a great way to wind up the day.

To get to school, you either walked, rode a bike, took a bus, or went in a carpool. Walking offered you freedom to take your time, talk to your friend, and investigate every shortcut. Yes, it seemed like we walked for miles, but it wasn't really that bad. If you took the bus, you could make last minute adjustments to your homework or prep for a test. Taking your bike was the most fun as you were proud to show off your bike and, No, you didn't have to lock your bike with a chain. In Connecticut, we participated in a carpool where the mothers took turns driving the kids to school and pick them up afterwards.

Most kids took a brown bag to school for lunch which included sandwiches wrapped in wax paper, and some fruit. Lunch boxes were a luxury. During my time, you longed for a lunch box featuring Davy Crockett, the Lone Ranger, or Superman. Inside would

be a thermos filled with either hot soup or a cold drink. You paid pennies for milk. Cafeteria lunches were also available, which were both delicious and inexpensive (as cheap as a dime). Personally, I loved the meatloaf the Polish women made at my Chicago Junior High School.

Kids would go to school equipped with a pencil box which included fresh pencils, erasers, a ruler and a sharpener. Before ball point pens there were fountain pens. At your desk was a bottle where you would draw the ink into the pen. This was later replaced by pens with ink cartridges. No matter what you did though, you would somehow find a way to get ink on your shirt pocket. And just about everyone had a box of Crayola crayons.

You would go to school well dressed and properly groomed. Boys wore collared shirts, slacks and street shoes were the norm. T-shirts, blue jeans, shorts, and sneakers were verboten. Girls wore dresses or skirts with blouses. You were sent home if the dress was too short or looked inappropriate. Likewise, hair had to be cut to specific lengths (off the collar), and facial hair was not allowed.

The school day would begin with the pledge of allegiance to the flag and a patriotic song. Some schools also followed this with a nondenominational prayer. To be selected to the school's Safety Patrol was considered an honor, as well as to raise the flag in the morning and strike the colors at the end of the day.

Classes included reading, writing, and arithmetic, with a lot of penmanship thrown in for good measure. You had to memorize the preambles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, if not more. Both American and World history were stressed, as well as civics. We also took speech classes, Earth Science, and learned the various branches of mathematics, not to mention typing.

In High School you were offered the opportunity to learn new skills in Wood Shop, Metal Shop or Mechanical Drawing. In such shops you built a variety of things, particularly a wide array of bookshelves and bird houses. In the drawing class, you learned to

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master t-squares, compasses, and my personal favorite, the French curve.

Everyone knew not to fight in school as you could expect corporal punishment with a paddle. Instead, if somebody had a beef with another, you arranged to meet off campus and duke it out. At the end of the fight, when both boys were exhausted, they shook hands and consoled each other. Whatever they had been fighting over had been forgotten.

Teachers and parents were allowed to bring home-baked goods to school, such as donuts, pies, and cakes. Nothing was brought in from the store. During Halloween you would receive regular sized candy bars, popcorn balls, and candied apples. There was no such thing as "fun size." I still remember Mrs. Derdarian's fabulous caramel apples on a stick.

Time seemed to crawl along at a snail's pace. You couldn't wait for the bell to ring to go back outside. Today it seems time moves at a much faster pace and we are required to multitask everything. I wonder if we have forgotten to relax.

There was a genuine respect for the law. When a police officer asked you to move along, you did so as you trusted his judgment. There was no thought of talking back to him. He was your friend and you knew him by name, as he knew yours as well as your parents. He knew who the good kids were, as well as the trouble makers.

In business, you were expected to work hard regardless of your job, and put forth your best effort to produce quality work products, and take on a professional attitude. Instead of working at odds with your co-workers and boss, you tried to get along and work together. As in school, you dressed neatly and bathed regularly. You were charged to use your head and find a way to get the job done. And the customer was always right.

This is not so much about nostalgia as it is about how society seems to have made life more complicated than it needs to be. The world depicted herein is how many of us like to remember

yesteryear. As a kid, you learned to innovate, adapt, and be resourceful. You also learned life was full of consequences, for every action there was a reaction. The emphasis back then was to work and play outdoors, be it summer or winter, but the kids today stay indoors hooked to their technology and now possess a sense of entitlement. They cannot possibly relate to the world of yesteryear where you were adventurous and took responsibility for your actions. Government at all levels has evolved into an incredible bureaucracy with a mind-boggling number of laws, rules and regulations aimed at stifling business and frustrating ambition. And our morality has shifted to the point where a person's word is no longer their bond and we are suspicious of the motives of others.

So, were things really simpler in the good old days? Our predecessors probably asked the same question years ago. With every new technology comes another level of complexity which youth can more readily adapt to than their elders. Although technology may simplify some things, it complicates others. While today's computers and smart phones have enhanced communications and expedited administrative tasks, people have developed an addiction which seems to have altered their personalities, interpersonal relationships and priorities. There is even a lack of concern regarding current events, and our youth has no interest in news.

As we grow older the differences between then and now becomes more apparent, but it is too late to change it back, you must go forward. I have also learned you do not truly appreciate the simplicity of the past until you've survived into the future. If you have no knowledge of the past, you have nothing to compare the present to and no appreciation of simpler times. To today's youth, these are the good old days. Anything before is lost on them. They may be proficient in social media and computer games, but they will never appreciate the sheer joy of capturing a firefly, whittling, building a campfire, reading a book, or running a "pickle."

It's the little things that make life enjoyable, not its complexities. The older generation may not be as proficient in the use of technology, but they didn't suffer from all of today's anxieties, aller-

gies, obsessions and disorders either. Back then, there was no such thing as OCD, PTSD, BDD, bulimia, Prozac or Cialis. Instead, we had such things as Scouting, 4H, dime stores, Tarzan, J.C. Higgins, Louisville Sluggers, the YMCA, and God.

Keep the Faith!

CATCHING A COLD

March 22, 2013

You can run, but you cannot hide from the beast.

I hate colds. I can usually sense when they are coming on, be it in my throat, nose, eyes, ears, or even lips. I immediately take some preventative medicine. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. If the cold really wants to bloom, I find there is no stopping it. I believe it has a mind of its own. I can go a long time between colds, but when I finally get one, it's usually a real beaut.

When it comes, I tend to slow down, get some rest, and try to be a good patient. I do not like to take a lot of medicine but I'll do as my wife prescribes. She can also make a mean "Hot Tottie" which includes lemon, honey, whiskey, and hot tea. It usually knocks me out and, if I'm lucky, I can sweat the cold out of me. My latest cold converged on my head and throat. Luckily, it avoided my chest. I took various remedies to clear my sinuses, and they worked rather well, but they wouldn't knock the sniffles completely out. I loathe having to blow my nose every five minutes which, of course, becomes rather irritated and sore.

I attend quite a few meetings during the week and in doing so I have to meet and greet a lot of people. As is customary, I offer a handshake to people, but when I have a cold I don't want to pass it on to others, so I awkwardly do not extend my hand and inform them I'm suffering with a cold. People are glad you tell them so, but the expression on their face gives me the uneasy feeling that I have somehow contracted the plague. I find it rather amusing

how people automatically take a step backwards when you inform them you have the slightest suggestion of a cold. It's like a reflex action, sometimes followed by a handkerchief or hand sanitizer (just to be safe).

The Japanese seem to be more sensitive to the transmission of a cold. Since most people over there make use of mass transit and are in close quarters with many others, a person experiencing a cold will typically cover his mouth with a surgical mask. Others wear it simply not to contract a disease from others. Whereas Americans seem to relish in sharing their misfortune, the Japanese try to minimize the effect of a cold. I tend to believe the Japanese are more considerate in this regard.

If my cold goes on too long, I find I have to take matters into my own hands. Since the beast won't take the hint to leave, it's time I show him the exit. This is when I finally introduce it to the smoke and fire of a good cigar, and strong drink, such as Scotch whiskey. I've done this on more than one occasion and believe it or not, my cold starts to run and hide, eventually succumbing to the smoke and alcohol. In a way, it acts like a farewell party, which is perhaps what the cold had been waiting for before it departs.

Actually, I believe we always have a cold within us, but I think it waits for the right combination of elements before it raises its ugly head. Perhaps it is a drafty room, exhaustion, or some food combination. Whatever the magical recipe is, the cold emerges from its den in an ugly mood and searches for a weak body part to attack, and the cycle starts all over again.

The only good part of a cold, at least to me, is knowing that I have a date in the offing with a fine cigar and a glass of Scotch. It has the added nuance of making me feel like a lion tamer.

Keep the Faith!

HOW TO SPOT A GOOD FRIEND

October 11, 2013

It could be as simple as their name.

A close friend is someone you feel comfortable with, someone who has proven to be trustworthy, and you treat like family, maybe better. There are no pretenses, just openness where you freely exchange ideas, humor, and personal thoughts. Because my family moved several times while I was growing up, I have had several close friends over the years and I recently started to enumerate them on paper. Interestingly, all of them had monosyllable names. For example, as I grew up I knew two "Toms", two "Johns", two "Richs", as well as a "Mark", "Steve," "Chris", "Rick," "Rob", "Frank", "Mike", and a few others. All had short simple names. In adulthood I also gravitated towards people with single syllable names for some reason.

Obviously, all of these names are longer if spoken properly, such as "Thomas", "Jonathan", "Richard", "Christopher", etc. but nobody is interested in stretching them out, just simplifying them. There may also be nicknames we give each other out of affection. In my case, I've known guys I've openly referred to as "The Hub", "The Mann", "Ralph" (as derived from "The Honeymooners"), "Chatter", "Paisan" and "The Great One." Allowing ourselves to be called by a short name or nickname means we are opening ourselves up to selected people. It is unlikely we afford everyone else such informality, just our close friends, e.g., in business settings we may elect to use the "Mister/Ms" moniker to denote our authority. By allowing ourselves to be called by a short name, we are inviting familiarity.

I tend to believe the use of simple names or nicknames is indicative of our fondness for others. The names may be simple, but the people certainly are not. I have found them all to be hard and conscientious workers who are down to earth and possess a sense of humor. Outwardly they do not appear to take themselves seriously and seem to have a playfulness about them; inwardly though, they possess an interesting introspective of

themselves complete with all the fears and foibles we all share. In our talks, I have found them to be candid, social, honest, and inquisitive about life. Hopefully, they view me as possessing the same qualities.

So, next time you wonder about the nature of your friendship with another, consider the names or nicknames you address each other as. Just be careful of those with more than one syllable.

Keep the Faith!

THE INNER BEAUTY OF WOMEN

November 30, 2012

Which can be more alluring than just physical beauty.

I want to speak for a moment on the beauty of women. No, I'm not a cosmetologist, dermatologist, hair dresser, or fashion coordinator, just an ordinary heterosexual with a fondness for the opposite sex. I always knew there were differences between boys and girls, but this didn't become obvious to me until I entered junior high school whereupon I noticed the girls were beginning to apply cosmetics, change their hair, and wear more fashionable clothes. I guess this marked the beginning of our mating rituals as the boys began to sit up and take notice.

It has been my observation over the years that women depend mostly on physical attractiveness to lure a mate. This is why millions, if not billions of dollars, are spent on beauty products for hair, skin, nails, eyes, lips, legs, even the scent of a women. Let us also not forget the enormity of the fashion industry which includes not just clothes, but shoes and hats as well. It is obviously a gigantic business. Some women are naturally beautiful, and know it. Others have to work at it.

I wonder though if women are too dependent on physical appearance and overlook the allure of a personality. Over the years I have met many women who may have lacked looks, but are in-

credibly sensual just from their personality alone. They may have a good sense of humor, an ease about them, a confidence, or something simply feminine. I guess they just feel comfortable in their own skin and know how to make others feel likewise. Perhaps this is the "feminine mystique" I've been hearing about all these years. I have seen women who know how to light up a room with nothing more than a smile and a gentle wave of their hand, yet are considered frumpy otherwise. Men gravitate to such women naturally as they are more approachable as opposed to a beauty with an incredible figure, simply because they know how to carry a conversation and make the people around them feel at ease.

Some people think such things as sex and cooking are part of the allure of women, and I suspect there are many men who think this way. As for me, such things are nothing more than the icing on the cake. Any relationship based on this alone is doomed from the outset.

Instead of spending tons of money on the physical aspects, I wish they would spend a little on cultivating a personality, something that can put men at ease, even be disarmingly flirtatious. Most men can be intimidated by a ravishing beauty, thereby considering them untouchable. After they have summoned up the courage to talk to such a woman, they are crestfallen when they find there is nothing behind the facade. Instead, they would rather be able to enjoy the woman's company, but if the lights are on and nobody is home, the encounter will be brief. I'm certainly not suggesting the woman be submissive to the male. In fact, I find that rather unappealing. The woman who possesses a wit, a warm heart, an openness about them, a sense of humor, and confidence about themselves in spite of some physical defect can be much more interesting and stimulating than a glamour queen.

I guess what I'm describing is the "inner beauty" of a woman, which can be incredibly alluring, and I presume it is essentially no different for how women consider men. However, for those people who lack both an outer and inner beauty, I pray they're good in the kitchen or bedroom. Either that, or they begin to

frequent a salon, gym or a voice coach. Otherwise they are going to remain rather lonely for a long time.

Keep the Faith!

KEEPING MEN GUESSING

August 25, 2009

Guys have a hard time guessing what women like.

I've been married now for over 35 years and you would think that after such a period of time I would have a good idea what my wife likes and dislikes. Frankly, I haven't a clue, and I don't think I'm any different than a lot of other guys out there who still have trouble understanding the feminine mystique. Let me give you some examples...

In preparing to go out for a major social function, my wife typically comes out to model an outfit she is considering to wear and asks what I think about it. Usually she gives me a couple of choices, either this, this, or that. They all look nice, but regardless what I choose, she always settles for something else. After the outfit is selected, then it's a matter of what shoes to wear; again, this, this or that. Whatever I pick, she picks the opposite. Then of course comes the accompanying purse to complete the ensemble where I, of course, swing and miss again. Strike three. Frankly, I believe I'm a broken barometer when it comes to predicting what a woman wants to wear.

My daughter picked up this same modeling habit as she was growing up and would ask my son and I what we thought she should wear. Again, whatever we picked, she picked the opposite. Although she trusted my wife's judgment, my son and I always struck out. However, I got a little comfort out of this as I realized I wasn't alone in picking the wrong fashion.

This phenomenon isn't restricted to clothing either. I run across it whenever I want to order her food, or shop for presents. Whatever I pick, it's never quite right.

ATHLETICS - Observations on sports and the great outdoors.

"Traffic lights are green only when you do not have an appointment to make."

- Bryce's Law

BASEBALL: THE LOVE OF THE GAME

April 16, 2010

It is a great game.

I have always had a fondness for the game of baseball. As a kid, I played Little League but also carried my glove and bat with me just about everywhere for a quick pickup game whether it was before or after school, or during recess. Growing up in Connecticut, I followed the early 1960's Yankees and vividly remember when the Mets were introduced. As we moved around the country I became a fan of the Los Angeles Dodgers, the Chicago Cubs, and finally watched the emergence of the Big Red Machine in Cincinnati. Frankly, I do not believe we will ever see another team as good as the 1976 Reds. They were very special.

I played in coed softball leagues as I got older. When I became a parent, I coached boys baseball, girls softball, served on the local Little League board of directors, and umpired to boot. My signature as a coach was to line my kids up on the infield foul line before a game and pledged allegiance to the flag. After all, it is America's game. Curiously, there were some coaches who adamantly opposed me doing this, but I see citizenship as an inherent part of the game.

I suffered under no illusion my kids were going to be superstars and, as such, I concentrated on teaching the basics (hitting, fielding, and pitching), teamwork, and hopefully, the love of the game. There is something magical about the game of baseball; the smell of the grass, the heat of the sun on your back, the taste of the leather string on your cowhide mitt, the crack of the bat, and the excitement of the play. You relish the camaraderie of your teammates, the precision of a perfect bunt, the tenacity of a runner stealing a base, and the grace of an infielder flawlessly throwing out a runner or executing a double play.

Baseball is a game of nuances and you really cannot appreciate it if you have never played it. As you approach home plate to bat,

you see how the fielders are setting up to play you, either deep, in close, or to a particular field. You take your sign from the third base coach, check the eyes of the pitcher, hear the cheering of the parents, and all along your mind is constantly calculating all of the variables involved. Your hands grip the bat as you position yourself in the batter's box. Your body language tells the other team whether or not you can be intimidated. Finally, just before the pitcher makes his wind-up, you spit. Translation, "Bring it on!"

There is also a lot of communications in a baseball game, both vocal and silent. The vocal is rather obvious, the silent communications is a lot more interesting. We're all aware of the third base coach making strange gyrations with his hands in order to call the play, but there are also a lot of subliminal signs not so apparent, such as a manager turning up his collar or crossing his legs. The communications between pitcher and catcher is also well known. The great Willie Mays was notorious for his ability to study and steal the signs of the opposing team. It just takes a little concentration and attention to detail.

When I coached Little League, and my kids were batting with one or more runners on base, I would suddenly yell from the dugout, "Red-22, Red-22." Actually, it was nothing more than a smoke screen as it meant absolutely nothing, but it put the other team on edge as they thought some trick play was about to be executed. My kids thought it was a riot.

As a Little League coach, you realize you are having an impact on your young players when they start asking you more questions about the game, such as the meaning of the infield fly rule, how to keep a scorecard, how a batting average is calculated or ERA, the number of ways a runner can advance to first base (eight) or the number of ways to make an out (14), etc. It's no small wonder baseball is a great game for trivia buffs as there are so many facets to it. Casual spectators do not truly appreciate baseball as much as students of the game.

You know you have a love of the game when you collect baseball cards, not as a commodity, but simply to have them; that you

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keep a prized baseball signed by your teammates many years ago; that you cannot bring yourself to throw away an old baseball bat or glove years after you have stopped using them, or; you completely understood what Pete Rose meant when he said, "I'd walk through hell in a gasoline suit to play baseball."

It is a great game.

Keep the Faith!

BASEBALL CARDS

February 3, 2017

Are they a commodity or a memento of our youth?

Something near and dear to a young man's heart is his collection of baseball cards. Although cards today are bought and sold as a commodity, years ago we collected them simply because of the love of the game. My friends and I would trade them, discuss the stats of each player, and chew the lousy gum accompanying each pack of five cards. We would also attach them to our bicycles using clothespins so they would flicker between the spokes of the wheel thereby making a rather impressive sound as you were riding, something like a motorcycle, at least so we thought. In my day, you weren't cool unless you had a Stan "The Man" Musial baseball card powering your bicycle. In hindsight I wish I had kept that card as opposed to ruining it on my bicycle, but such is life.

The nirvana of baseball cards in my day was to get Mickey Mantle's (see accompanying photo). As a kid growing up in the New York area in the early 1960's, Mantle was a god to us. Sure, we watched other teams and other players, but there was something special about the Mick. So much so, obtaining his baseball card meant a step up in your social stature. Fortunately, I got mine in a regular pack of cards and I was the envy of my friends. I was offered stacks of cards for the Mantle card but I stubbornly

held on to it, and I'm glad I did. I was even offered a Willie Mays, Roger Marris, and Whitey Ford. If he had thrown in a Yogi Berra I would have been tempted, but such was not to be. Besides, I had a couple of Willie Mays cards already.

Most of my card collection ended up in a shoe box where I kept them neatly organized. For my really good cards I've got a special binder with plastic sleeves which keeps them neat and clean. As the cards were important to me, I kept them hidden in my bedroom. As I grew up and moved away to college, the card collection remained hidden in my room. It's a good thing I hid them too as my room was purged and cleaned by my mother after I moved out. As is common for moms to do, she disposed of my old comic book collection and "Mad" magazine collection, both of which dated back to the early 1960's. I'm not sure why mothers do this, perhaps as a form of revenge for leaving the nest, but I know a lot of guys who lost such collections, not to mention coin and stamp collections. Moms view such things as nothing more than dust-catchers, guys cherish them as mementos of their past.

Today, baseball cards are bought and sold at hefty prices, a lot more than the nickel we used to pay for a pack and probably without the bubble gum. In my day, "Topps" was the only manufacturer of baseball cards. Today, there are many others, but I can't say the quality is any better. Some now have special stamps emblazoned on them, some come packaged in air tight plastic containers, and some are real works of art. Whereas baseball originally had a monopoly on such cards, today there are cards for football, hockey, basketball, soccer, even wrestling, entertainment and politics. I still don't think I would trade my Mickey Mantle for a Barack Obama, no way, no how. I would be much more interested in a Jackie Robinson or Satchel Page, but I think I would still hold on to the Mick.

I still appreciate the simplicity of the cards from years ago. In preparing for this article, I brought out my baseball card binder so I could scan the Mickey Mantle card. Afterwards I stopped by a friend's house and showed him the binder. He enjoyed it immensely and as he flipped through it we would discuss the

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varierately fouled the area. Even then, they still might proceed, regardless of the sweat or mucous involved.

As for me, I just quietly go about my business and try to keep to myself. I am not there for social interaction, but rather to try and work the kinks out after 45 years of lack of rigorous exercise. My entertainment at the gym doesn't come from one of the many televisions there or from ear buds. Instead I prefer watching the idiosyncrasies of the other patrons.

In the end, my friends ask me, "So, do you feel better?" Physically, I guess so, but I haven't felt any grand changes yet, but I do love watching the people. It makes my day.

Keep the Faith!

TAKING THE SPORT OUT OF ATHLETICS

January 13, 2017

Is the scientific approach dehumanizing sports?

As charges of doping were brought against members of the US Bicycle Team, the investigation discovered the problem was much larger in scope than originally thought, not just here in America, but internationally as well. Americans should be familiar with the drug problem by now as just about every professional sport has had more than its share of incidents and scandal. Actually, we shouldn't be surprised by the rise of doping today as athletics are less about sports and more about business, big business.

Gone are the days when athletes would play just for the love of the game, who would endure bus rides and uncomfortable hotel rooms. Gone are the days of the amateur status, even the Olympics is no longer a haven. Athletes now take a professional and highly scientific approach to sports. We measure every shot, stroke, basket, and swing, in terms of speed, distance, height and trajectory. The athletes themselves are carefully monitored

in terms of age, calories consumed, pounds, inches, breath, heartbeats, and grams of fat. Nothing is overlooked. Everything is precisely scrutinized by packs of high-priced sports consultants. Got a hangnail? Stop the game and have it fixed by people specializing in sports medicine. Need a better bat, ball, or iron for your game? An army of vendors are at your disposal representing billions of dollars in merchandise. It's not about the sport of the game anymore, it's about business, and the precision by which we develop and market it is overwhelming. It's no small wonder doping is the next inevitable stage in the evolution of athletics. Frankly, I'm surprised by all the hubbub surrounding drugs. Since we have radically altered what the athlete wears and the tools of his/her game, tampering with human physiology seems only natural.

All of this has changed the face and character of athletics. Today's World Series champion would surely whip the "Murderer's Row" of the 1920's, the "Gas House Gang" of the 1930's, and the "Big Red Machine" of the 1970's, but they were certainly more interesting to watch as they had more character than science. The antics of people like Babe Ruth, Dizzy Dean, Mickey Mantle and many others were legendary. Fortunately, they were natural athletes who could overcome their hijinks with some rather brilliant play. "It ain't braggin' if ya can back it up," said Dean to answer his critics and reflected the philosophy of such players.

Throughout the 20th century fans relished the colorful characters who became icons for the teams they played on. In baseball, you had players like Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Johnny Bench, Brooks Robinson, Harmon Killebrew, Sandy Koufax, Stan Musial, Ted Williams, and Cal Ripken; inspirational "Iron Men" who played with quiet dignity and grace. Then there were the fierce competitors like Ty Cobb, "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, Jackie Robinson, Willie Mays, and Pete Rose who played with seemingly reckless abandon. There were others who butchered the English language, causing sports writers to scratch their heads in bewilderment, like Yogi Berra, Satchel Page, Bob Uecker, Sparky Anderson, and Casey Stengle who said such things as, "Most ball games are lost, not won." Their logic may have seemed convoluted, but they told you only what they wanted you to know, which quite

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often was a smokescreen to conceal what they were really thinking.

Players were often given friendly nicknames like "Pee Wee," "Slick," and "Charlie Hustle," and were considered intricate parts of our community. They were our neighbors, our friends, our heroes, and possessed the same human frailties we all shared thereby making it easy to identify with them. At one point, baseball was 50% character and 50% skill. Today, it's all about skill, and in the process the charm of the game is diminishing. Instead of being viewed as an average Joe with an uncanny ability to play their game, today our athletes are viewed as Supermen and Superwomen with Godlike abilities.

Baseball was not alone in terms of colorful characters. Football had players like Daryle "The Mad Bomber" Lamonica, "Slingin" Sammy Baugh, Norm Van Brocklin, Bart Starr, Kenny "The Snake" Stabler, Len Dawson, George "The Grand Old Man" Blanda, and of course, "Broadway" Joe Willie Namath. Aside from quarterbacks, there was Dick Butkus (whose last name alone would strike fear into his opponents), Alex Karras, Jim Brown, Bob Lilly, Merlin Olson, Chuck Howley, Ben Davidson, Ray Nitschke, Forrest Greg, Lou "The Toe" Groza, Anthony Munoz, Paul "The Golden Boy" Hornung, and Ted "The Mad Stork" Hendricks, players who made a name for themselves on and off the field.

Basketball had Bill Russell, Bob Cousy, John Havlicek, Larry Bird, Jerry West, Oscar "The Big O" Robertson, Willis Reed, "Pistol Pete" Maravich, Magic Johnson, Wilt "The Stilt" Chamberlain, Walt "Clyde" Frazier, Bill Bradley, and Dave DeBusschere (who also pitched for the Chicago White Sox). Hockey had such luminaries as Wayne "The Great One" Gretzky, Bobby "The Golden Jet" Hull, Bobby Orr, Gordie Howe, Mario Lemieux, Stan Makita, as well as Phil and Tony Esposito who were affectionately referred to as "Mr. Go" and "Mr. No."

All of these men were not only talented, but possessed a character that people naturally gravitated towards. To them, it was about the love of the game which they played fiercely and competitively, and the fans loved them for it. Regardless of their achieve-

ments though, all of these heroes of yesteryear would probably be defeated by today's scientific approach to sports which is sad by my estimation.

Has the scientific approach taken the fun and excitement out of the game? Maybe, but you cannot argue with such things as attendance and revenues, which is what it is all about today.

As much as we might like to see doping disappear from sports, it will undoubtedly continue. Beyond this, the next stage will be the genetic engineering of athletes of the future. As long as we remain obsessed with the economics of the game, athletics will lose its heart and soul. Frankly, I don't think we will be satisfied until we've driven the human element completely from the game and create Robo-players. Then it will be nothing more than a race for the best technology which, in essence, it is already.

I for one, will miss the human character of players like Bob Uecker who said, "When I came up to bat with three men on and two outs in the ninth, I looked in the other team's dugout and they were already in street clothes."

Keep the Faith!

CLOSING THOUGHTS

"That light at the end of the tunnel is not necessarily the end, but perhaps an express train coming straight at you."

- Bryce's Law

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

September 19, 2014

Do not despair, try writing a list of the positive things in life instead.

I was having a cigar with a good friend recently where we were lamenting about the state of affairs in our government, business, and the country in general. It's easy to be negative when events do not turn out as you expect them. However, I made the observation people tend to overlook the blessings in their lives, those events, however large or trifle, somehow had a profound effect on our lives. I then started to enumerate mine:

FAMILY - I was fortunate to know both sets of my grandparents, and one set of great-grandparents. I listened and learned from them. My parents were go-getters in business and in life generally; they were a hard act to follow. I was incredibly fortunate to find a wonderful woman who has put up with me for over 30 years. I quickly discovered when you take a wife, you also take her family and I've enjoyed getting to know her side. More importantly, I was present for the birth of my children, which was a life altering experience for me. To watch them grow up to become fine people, and graduate from school, that is hard to top. Both my wife and I made an effort to become an important part of their lives. It may have been hard work, but it was certainly rewarding.

ENTERTAINMENT - I was lucky to see the Beatles on Ed Sullivan in 1964 and watch their "Mania" turn into a phenomenon. Although I saw many rockers over the years, in 1968, I had the rare privilege of seeing Jimi Hendrix in Cincinnati and Rock and Roll was never the same for me. I also enjoyed different tastes in music and was lucky to have seen Frank Sinatra in person near the end of his career. I visited Las Vegas before it grew into a family environment and saw some great acts, including Don Rickles and the Smothers Brothers in their prime.

SPORTS - As a youth I watched hockey, basketball, football, baseball, and the Olympics. In football, two players left an indelible

impression on me, Joe Namath of the Jets (offense), and Dick Butkus of the Bears (defense), both revolutionized the game. I also have fond memories of our High School football team, not just winning games but the camaraderie involved with teamwork. To this day, I occasionally have dreams of "suing up" for a game. As to baseball, I was a Yankee fan as a kid (early 1960's), but more importantly, I was privileged to witness the rise of the Big Red Machine in Cincinnati, culminating in World Series championships in 1975 and 1976. They had four MVPs on the team, a multitude of Golden Gloves and Silver Bats, many All-Stars, and four Hall of Famers (including Rose). I do not believe the world will ever see another team like this again, which is why my interest in baseball is waning. I was also privileged to coach Little League over the years, both boys and girls, and watch my kids grow into fine adults. One last thing, I was lucky to see the great racehorse, Secretariat, in the Kentucky Derby.

FISHING - I fished a lot in the streams of Connecticut as a kid, and did my share of salt water fishing, but it all pales in comparison to fly-fishing in a fresh water stream. I have had the rare opportunity to fly-fish in various parts of the country. North Carolina is where I currently fish, but I have a special place in my heart for Montana.

SPACE - I grew up watching NASA's Mercury program and knew the names of all of the astronauts. This was followed by the Gemini and Apollo programs, culminating with landing on the moon by the crew of Apollo 11 in July 1969. The world was transfixed on the landing, including our household where we watched it on a black and white television set.

SIMPLE JOYS - Simple things have always taken precedence with me over opulent toys and technology. I've always been one to enjoy good conversation, a good hand-rolled Maduro cigar, and single malt whiskey which I discovered in 1978 in the Hotel Melbourne in Australia. Thanks Paul.

BUSINESS - Due to the nature of our business, I have been fortunate to meet with some of the true pioneers of systems and computing, including Les Matthies (the "Dean of Systems"), Tom

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Richley (the developer of the TOTAL DBMS), Michael Jackson (structured programming), and Robert W. Bemer (the inventor of ASCII code). Since our company worked with everything from mainframes to PC's, people ask me what was my favorite computer. Some might be surprised to learn it was the DEC VAX/VMS mini which was way ahead of its time.

Beyond this, I was fortunate to have met a lot of people around the world through our consulting practice. Everyone from the executives in the boardroom to the people working in the trenches. I have met my fair share of charlatans, crooks, and just plain despicable people, but I've also met a lot of good stand-up people who wanted to make a difference. Although I've visited a lot of places, I have a fondness for Japan. Besides, they play great baseball there.

Our "PRIDE" product line revolutionized the systems world and opened the door to hundreds of competitors. I was fortunate to have been actively involved in the development of our Enterprise Engineering Methodology, Computer Aided Planning tool, and Automated Systems Engineering tool. Such inventions, along with my other consulting activities, gave me a rewarding sense of accomplishment.

POLITICS - Our High School class met Richard Nixon in 1971 in Washington, DC where he provided a tour of the White House for us. One year later I would be campaigning for him on my college campus. It was 1972 when the voting age was lowered to 18, and my class was proud of this designation. Since then, I haven't missed an election.

MASONS - I was pleased to be raised a Master Mason several years ago, following in the footsteps of my father and grandfather. Although the fraternity is fraught with petty politics, as most organizations are, I have been pleased to meet some upstanding men of character along the way.

FRIENDS - When I was growing up, we moved around a lot. Along the way, I learned to cultivate a set of friends. Thanks to social media, I am still in touch with many of them even though

they live far away. Most seem to enjoy a good cigar as I do. Even though I haven't seen them in quite some time, I know I can lift up the phone and call them, and it would be like old times. Having a good friend you can trust and level with is priceless.

Some people measure their existence by the accolades and awards they receive or the expensive toys they wear or drive. I think it is a lot simpler than this. Instead, we should relish the special events we witness and the people in our lives. To be able to see the Big Red Machine or Neil Armstrong standing on the lunar surface is priceless, as is the birth of your children. These are epochal events affecting our character, priorities, and perspective on life. They do not come along often which is why we should savor them when they do.

Next time you get disillusioned with life, try writing a list of your blessings. As Clarence said, "You see George, you really had a wonderful life."

Keep the Faith!

THE POWER OF PRAYER

May 18, 2015

Does it really work?

I have had many friends who have asked for prayers for a loved one, usually someone in sickness and distress, such as someone about to undergo surgery, a failing parent, or a young person fighting an addiction. My Christian and Jewish friends are quick to respond to offer their support, but I do not hear too much from agnostics. On more than one occasion I have heard from the people seeking support adamantly claim, "Prayer works!"

I have always marveled at the power of prayer. I see it as a sign of compassion, hope for the person in trouble as well as the family and friends who made the request. This says a lot about our humanity as a people.

I am not sure if praying for divine intervention actually works but it comforts us to put our faith in a Supreme Being when situations run out of our control. Back when I was about to graduate from college in Ohio, my mother and father visited Sydney, Australia on a business trip. Following one of my father's sales seminars there, the two of them got into the back seat of a taxi to return to their hotel. A storm was howling that evening, so much so, the cab driver had trouble seeing out the windshield. The streets were slippery and the cab, unfortunately, went out of control, aimed at a telephone poll. The driver leaped out of the cab moments before it crashed into the poll. My father jumped in front of my mother to cover her and drove the front seat under the engine. He was taken to a local hospital with all of his ribs broken and abrasions on his face from the broken windshield. A piece of glass settled next to his eye nearly blinding him.

My mother called my brother with the news who, in turn, called me at school. Here I was, thousands of miles from the hospital, and feeling helpless to do anything. All I could do was turn to prayer.

Fortunately, my father survived the crash. The glass was removed from his face and eye, and his ribs were bandaged. He was eventually sent home but experienced extreme discomfort for months afterwards due to his ribs. The scars slowly disappeared over time. The surgeons evidently did a good job as you could hardly tell he was ever in an accident. Interestingly, when he woke up in the hospital, the nurse tending to him wore an interesting name badge, "Bryce," and sure enough, she was a relative. Frankly, I looked upon her as his guardian angel, the coincidence was simply too remarkable. This led us to discover a branch of our relatives in Australia who we had lost touch with following the first World War. Nonetheless, I would like to believe my prayers had been answered.

One last footnote about my father's stay in the hospital; ever the consummate salesman, one of the prospective buyers of our product visited him. From his hospital bed and heavily bandaged, my father gave him a sales presentation. He must have been good since the man signed a contract that afternoon. "Who-da-thunk-it."

Prayer can be comforting to both the person praying, the victim in question, and the family and friends. However, I have learned we cannot rely on it solely, that we must go beyond prayer if possible, and help a fellow human-being. Sometimes a simple visit with the person can work wonders, or perhaps providing a meal, running an errand, taking them to an appointment, mowing the lawn, or whatever. We used to do this naturally, but I am not sure people remember to be kind to each other anymore.

I surely am not suggesting prayer should be confined to times of crisis. It is also a powerful way of expressing thanks, such as for health, well-being, and the bounties we enjoy. It can also be used as an expression of hope, such as for peace, and the safety of people and our country.

Those who do not believe in the power of prayer are typically quick to cite the "separation of church and state" (something which is NOT described in the U.S. Constitution). Personal prayer may be banned from the classroom, but it certainly can be invoked on

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our own, at any time and any place.

Prayers indeed have power, as many of my friends contend. It may not be foolproof, but I see nothing to suggest it is meaningless or subject to ridicule. Sometimes, it is all we've got.

Keep the Faith!

WORDS OF WISDOM
- Tim's favorite quotes for meditation.

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'Press On' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

- President Calvin Coolidge

"Genius, that power which dazzles mortal eyes, is oft but perseverance in disguise."

- Henry Austin

"A learned fool is one who has read everything and simply remembered it."

- Josh Billings

"The work an unknown man has done is like a vein of water flowing hidden underground, secretly making the ground green."

- Thomas Carlyle

"Any idiot can see something wrong. But can you see what is right?"

- Winston Churchill

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend... If you have one."

- George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

Churchill's response:

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second, if there is one."

BRYCE'S LAWS - Axioms on life.

For the complete list, visit: timbryce.com

TIM'S SENIOR MOMENTS

Technology alone will not solve our problems, only effective management will.

Remember, it's Ready, Aim, Fire; any other sequence is counterproductive.

An elegant solution to the wrong problem solves nothing.

If we built bridges the same way we build systems in this country, this would be a nation run by ferryboats.

The first on-line, real-time, interactive, data base system was double-entry bookkeeping which was developed by the merchants of Venice in 1200 A.D.

There is only one problem with common sense; it's not very common.

It is one thing to enact legislation, quite another to enforce it.

Manage from the bottom up; not just from the top down; this creates personal commitment and accountability.

Manage more, supervise less.

The only good business relationship is where both parties benefit.

The ethics of a business are whatever the top-dog says they are.

"We never have enough time to do things right."

Translation: "We have plenty of time to do things wrong."

Do not try to apply a band-aid when a tourniquet is required to stop the bleeding.

You cannot treat a patient if he doesn't know he is sick.

A man's trustworthiness is measured by the number of keys he holds.



A PAST MASTER OF THE ESSAY

"Our listeners depend on Tim's wit and wisdom and he always delivers from beautiful Palm Harbor Florida. Talk Radio listeners have many choices, none better than Tim Bryce."

-John Siggins, WJTN-AM, Jamestown, NY

"He writes in a way that just inspires. He slowly takes things apart and puts them back together right before your eyes."

- Wayne Brown, Author, Arlington, TX

ABOUT THIS BOOK: This is a celebration of the human spirit as we age. It is filled with observations of the foibles of life we must all experience, sooner or later. It addresses those items we tend to overlook or take for granted, such as dogs, drugs, doctors, and our perspective on life. There are both humorous and serious essays on history, nostalgia, athletics, and the nuances of life that make it worth living.

This book is a great reading companion for seniors. It will make them laugh, think, and bring back many memories. As such, it is a **GREAT GIFT IDEA**.

TIM BRYCE is a writer and management consultant living in the Tampa Bay area of Florida. He has written several books and numerous articles on management, technology, politics, and our ever changing world. His columns are read worldwide and his radio segments are played in the United States. As a management consultant, he has lectured and worked with companies of all sizes and shapes around the world. His blog, "The Bryce is Right!," can be found at: timbryce.com

"You are amazing! I looked over the first part of your book, introduction, etc. Loved it. As a senior, I immediately connected with your theme and your introduction describing Aging, the Nuances of Growing Old, e.g., the frustration factor, growing old and why oldsters are mean (I think I am at that point!). Great you followed up with A Little Silly. Like that part. Loved your list of your senior moments. Can relate to frustration with robocalls and waiting on doctors. Loved too that you include a chapter on History Lessons."

- H. Nunn, Tampa, Florida

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