

There is a point where one surrenders to the concept of TOO OLD to care like reacquainting the present hard rock by pounding frying pans on the back of one's thick skull.

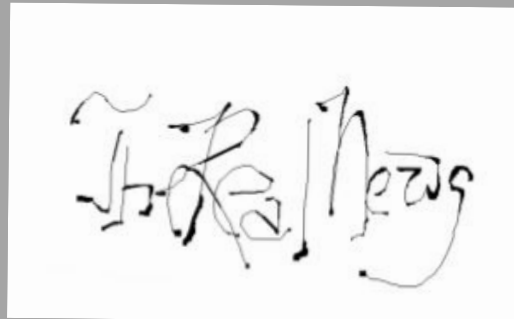
But for those simmering, simmering, cynical rebels, there is always room for personal growth tempered by the foolish public scandals that seem to surface almost weekly in America.

Age is merely a state of mind bombarded by mindless pharma adverts which have more side effects than a bloody Banana Republic election. Time is more circular or cyclical than most people realize; except for the ancient civilizations who learned the time table of the stars, the Earth and human beings in a repeating tri-cycle that recorded the past and the future while being in the present.

If each life is graded on a personal Bell Curve with its peak around 45 years old, the back side is not necessarily down hill if one thinks it as merely a reversion to childhood but with the collective wisdom of truths, triumphs and failures.

The next generation is too busy with their gadgets and their own hubris to care what the point men clearing the jungle ahead have to say about anything. So the followers are bound to commit the same mistakes since history and human behavior repeats itself in Time.

Time is not a stop watch or calendar, but merely mail box slots in which a person fills with memories, good and bad, the punched boarding pass of Life.



TOO OLD
TO
CARE

IT STILL REQUIRES COIN TO PAY FOR THE RIDE



It still is amazing that today's Youth does not have the historic knowledge of the recent past:

Train stations along the old Chicago & Northwestern Railroad had pay toilets; you had to pay for the pre-boarding ride on the porcelain rails.

To make a public phone call, you had to find a glass enclosed box and stuff coins to get a dial tone.

To listen to your favorite new song, you had to go to the local record store and buy a piece of vinyl to bring home to drop a needle on the grooves.

If you wanted to write a text, you had to sit down in front of a typewriter, press lettered keys, then fold it in an envelope, lick a stamp on it, then put it in another little box and wait a week or more for a response.

In order to write a research paper, one had to go to a library and scale large 8 foot tall sleeves filled with musty smelling information storage devices called books.

And if you had to copy information from one of those books, you needed a pen or pencil and blank piece of paper.

And the only Search function known was a police and fire call to find a kid attempting to run away to the exciting carney life of the circus.

Oh, this is not a old geezer rant against technology or the nostalgic dribble of Better Days.

But it is ironic that the highest educated populous retains less knowledge than their predecessors. The fear is that human beings on this planet have a tendency to go collectively stupid; fall in the wallows of Dark Ages. For example, man forgot how to make cement for 400 years, and another generation to find Roman marine concrete (which cures under water).

Schools do not teach the rote of memory learning as a basis of applied knowledge applications, but how to search the internet for answers. And we know the internet is nothing but truths (no bias or misinformation).

There are cracks forming on the ivy covered walls of academia. The high school graduate rate in Illinois has fallen to slightly less than 50% which means colleges have lost half of their potential applicants. Then, less than half of freshman graduate college. Retention rates are falling like stones in the campus pond.

Reasons are clear: students are not prepared for higher education and the cost is prohibited for the average student.

And there is a new cultural realization: a college degree does not equate to guaranteed career success. If a recent college graduate leaves school with a \$100,000 loan debt, but can only work at a fast food franchise - - - along side his high school friends, the college student is economi-

cally behind their non-college friends by at least \$160,000 (high schooler earnings for 4 years plus college debt obligations). In that light, teens are beginning to question the sheepskin.

There are always exceptions to the trending rules. Certain degrees, such as engineering, computer science and biochemical are in demand from major corporations, but more and more those jobs are going overseas.

Then, there is the taxpayer paradox of the social safety net. A young woman with a child and no father support can get various forms of welfare, food stamps, housing allowances, and in the Chicago area, those benefits equate to a private sector job income of \$54,000. This woman would need to get a job paying more than \$55,000 to recoup the value of her entitlements. There is no reason for her high school education is going to get her off that cycle of government dependence.

The idea that you can make more money NOT working is so Anti-innovative America that it will soon paralyze private sector, which pays for everything.

It still costs someone to provide something to someone else. It is a zero sum game. But a system juiced by fake money is bound to fail.

We still wake up each morning under the fiction that the Dollar still has value. So long as people believe it has value, society can crawl forward through another day. But value is merely a perception not a truth. Primitive people believed that sea shells were valuable currency in trade, but who can go into a 7-11 to purchase a slurpy with shells? One day a Dollar could be worth a sea shell.

Or third world hyperinflation from the government overprinting its currencies to prop up bad policies will come to roost, making paper money into toilet paper in a matter of minutes.

We are the fortunate ones. The vast majority of the people still believe in the Santa Claus of the U.S. Treasury. WE are apathetic followers in the greatest global pyramid scheme, but so long as the deck chairs on the fiscal Titanic don't stop shifting everyone is content with the status quo of having enough coin to stay on the Ride.



A LETTER FROM THE PUB

It would seem from my writings that I am a cynical satirist, but I am presently pretty positive about the future. It is not that I don't care, but it is a matter of what to care about.

Last year I would hear a song by a band called Seether, which for a split second my mis-wired brain would cross-reference to an old Chicago band, Veruca Salt's song by the same name, called "Same Damn Life." Who wants to run on the same hamster wheel each day? Not even crazed marathon runners know when to stop running and gorge on life (called "carbo loading").

Forty percent of people who make New Year's resolutions have kept them through July. That is a pretty good track record since most resolutions deal with self-improvement (lose weight, exercise, quit smoking, etc.) But introspection is always a healthy alternative to surrender to the unfulfillable daily grind.

In 2014, I decided to re-prioritize the basic elements of my life and found that you can change the way one values positive attributes, including having a better social life. And, in a continuation of that resolve, 2015 brings with it even more opportunities get Life in balance. Life is really a balancing act of good memories and bad memories, in the scorecard of happiness.

OUR CAR CULTURE IS DOOMED BY APATHY

It is True that you don't miss something you never had . . . for Gen Y that means abandoning the century plus American Car Culture.

What does the Automobile mean in history and culture?

Freedom.
Innovation.
Highly skilled employment.
Opportunity.
Mobility.
Security.
Sex Appeal.

A teen getting a driver's license was receiving a passport out of the structure of one's parents' house. It was a rite of passage. You finally got the responsibility to hurdle a ton and a half 250 horse power beast down the public streets; you were cool even it was the family station wagon.

From the humble beginnings of bicyclists attaching small motors on frames to run chains instead of pedals, to a trillion dollar multi-layered global economic exosphere. Fierce competition led to innovation and motoring improvements in engines, braking, lighting, safety, power assist steering, air conditioning and fuel efficiency. Even the smallest detail, like the humble cup holder, would be hair pulling if not invented by someone to fill the need of the long road trippers.

The automobile was the center of the industrial revolution, as Henry Ford developed the assembly line production method. It allowed for standardization of building complex machines by using man and machine in an orchestrated symphony of bent metal and welds. As a result, farmers were turned into highly skilled mechanics, machinists and technicians. Since there were so many parts to be installed in each vehicle, the growth of suppliers raised the national standard of living to where a consumer middle class took root.



And with the expansion of work, workers had more opportunities to find steady employment. Steel workers supplying sheet metal would find themselves with paid vacations, motor boats and summer homes. Inventors could develop new technologies or production methods and actually be rewarded with valuable patents manufacturers would license. The concept of research and development added to the national knowledge base to value education, including college degrees in such fields as engineering.

With education, opportunity and freedom, the American middle class was turned into a mobile society. No longer held captive by where a person was born, people could move to find better paying jobs to match their skill sets.

And once a person got a good manufacturing job or an ancillary service support career, those workers usually had the comfort of staying with their company their entire work life. And the build of industrial production based on a stable work force helped the U.S. quickly retool to fight two World Wars.

But the lasting appeal of the car culture was the early adoption of the "Sunday" drive which would leave young couples the privacy to put their relationships into high gear. More than a few children were conceived in the back seat. Generations had highly positive memories of their cars and automotive experiences, from dating, road trips, vacations to relocating a cross the country during weak economic times.

Millennials are defined as the generation of people born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s. Perhaps the most commonly used birth

range for this group is 1982-2000. The Millennial Generation is also known as Generation Y, because it comes after Generation X — those people between the early 1960s and the 1980s. It has also been called “the Peter Pan or Boomerang Generation” because of the propensity of some of them to move back in with their parents, perhaps due to economic constraints, and a growing tendency to delay some of the typical adulthood rites of passage like marriage or starting a career.

Millennials have been characterized in a number of different ways. On the negative side, they’ve been described as lazy, narcissistic and prone to jump from job to job. The 2008 book “Trophy Kids” by Ron Alsop discusses how many young people have been rewarded for minimal accomplishments (such as mere participation) in competitive sports, and have unrealistic expectations of working life.

Time Magazine said polls show that this group demands flexible, unrealistic work schedules and more ‘me time’ on the job, while needing nearly nonstop feedback and career advice from their managers. In the story, “The Me Me Me Generation,” it begins: “They’re narcissistic. They’re lazy. They’re coddled. They’re even a bit delusional. Those aren’t just unfounded negative stereotypes about 80 million Americans born roughly between 1980 and 2000. They’re backed up by a decade of sociological research.”

A 2012 study found Millennials to be “more civically and politically disengaged, more focused on materialistic values, and less concerned about helping the larger community than were GenX (born 1962-1981) and Baby Boomers (born 1946 to about 1961) at the same ages,” USA Today reported. “The trend is more of an emphasis on extrinsic values such as money, fame, and image, and less emphasis on intrinsic values such as self-acceptance, group affiliation and community.” The study was based on an analysis of two large databases of 9 million high school seniors or entering college students.

They have also been described in positive ways. They are generally regarded as being more



open-minded, and more supportive of gay rights and equal rights for minorities. Other positive adjectives to describe them include confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and receptive to new ideas and ways of living.

Millennials may be the least driver centric group in modern American history. The implications are great: less interest in cars means less heavy industry which means less high paying manufacturing jobs. If Millennials are going to push out the urban Hipsters, whose ironic, retro snobbishness is sickening, to rely upon Ubers, public transport and walking to places, then good luck living a high tech lifestyle while flipping burgers for a living. Of course, there will many exceptions to the prediction, such as recent college graduates frozen out of their academic degrees having to start small retail shops in order to survive post-graduation. Even these new forced entrepreneurs concede that they are expecting a lower standard of living than their parents, who as taxpayers, are supposed to support their social security benefits.

At least my adult nephew still cares when he stops by the office, to price out and find me a new pick up truck I can buy so he can borrow it for his domestic chores. But he balked at my requirement of manual transmission (as a means of keeping family members monopolizing it).