

## **Book II of Norman** by NormT (v 5/17/2025)

### Preface:

Book II of Norman, is a collection of articles, essays and opinion pieces I have written (since retiring from HP Hewlett Packard) for political club newsletters and sent to my e-mail contacts distribution list.

Many are associated with topical current events; I included the date written so they can be put in perspective. I excluded those that were primarily written for election related purposes. I included many personal essays and insights and a few relevant pictures as well.

Most are between 1 and 3 pages long (but some are longer); I tried to verify my data and facts with trusted sources but I am a political animal and most of the articles were based on my personal opinions and frame of reference. They cover a variety of subjects (politics, government, science, technology, business, economics, psychology, humanity and personal experiences).

I have lived and worked in large cities. Suburban areas and small villages on both coasts of the U.S. and in Europe and Asia. Have travelled extensively for both business and pleasure. Served in the military (3 years) and worked as a clerk in a grocery store, as a union organizer, a swing shift supervisor, an electronics technician, a R&D engineer, department manager in manufacturing, marketing, quality assurance and as a Plant Manager in both Southeast Asia and England.

I have included a table of contents including short titles and page numbers. There are 210 different pieces written between 2008 and 2025.

I hope you enjoy reading them and feel free to share them with anyone you care to. I believe they fairly represent my philosophy and approach to life.

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## 1) "Who is NormT?"

Why does he write these articles and why you may find them interesting  
*NormT*    5/10/2014

Born in 1938 in Brooklyn, New York to Jewish Russian immigrants who came to America to escape persecution and make a better life for themselves and their family. He grew up in Brooklyn and the Bronx and attended PS 193 (on Bedford Avenue, the Street that ran past Ebbets Field, the home of the Brooklyn Dodgers). His mother died when he was 13 and his father a year later; he then went to live with his older brother in Yonkers, New York and graduated from Roosevelt high school in 1955.

He attended New York University College of engineering for two years before enlisting in the U.S. Army (Ft. Dix, Ft. Monmouth, Redstone Arsenal) and was stationed in Wiesbaden, Germany with the 193rd. ordnance detachment for two years as a radar and computer technician working on the Nike Ajax and Hercules missiles.

After returning to the states he resumed his education and received his BS in engineering physics from NYU. He took a job in San Diego California as a research engineer working for General Dynamics/Astronautics working on the Atlas and Centaur missile systems in the area of electronic miniaturization.

Norm came to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1966 joining HP Associates (later becoming the components group of HP) where he worked on microwave semiconductors and the very first light emitting diodes – LEDs. He left HP to join Fairchild semiconductor first as a research scientist and then set up factories in Hong Kong and Ship rock, New Mexico before becoming the division manufacturing manager. During this time, he earned an MBA (Masters in business administration from Santa Clara University).

After 4 years he returned to Hewlett-Packard holding numerous high-level management positions until he retired in 2000; he managed organizations in all the major disciplines: R&D, manufacturing, quality, marketing and finally in human resources as the education manager focusing on management development for over 1000 people worldwide. He ran factories in Singapore, Malaysia and England and traveled extensively all over the world for both business and pleasure.

After retiring he moved to an active adult senior community in San Jose, CA. (a 2500 home, 4000 person community) and was involved in their long-range planning and spent three

years on the board of directors. He became active in politics as part of the Evergreen (now the villages) Democratic club one of the largest in the Bay Area with over 250 members and 1400 Associate members, the club is affiliated with the Santa Clara County Democratic Party (SCCDP) and meets monthly with guest speakers and a monthly newsletter. Norm was president of the club and started writing opinion pieces for the newsletter starting in 2008. Norm lost his vision about 5 years ago to wet macular degeneration but has continued writing his opinion articles for the past 6 years. He has been married for 49 years and has two daughters.

Norm's articles cover a wide variety of different subjects with the intent to get people to think about and see the bigger picture and to question and think about the hot issues of the day. The articles are short, because they had to fit on one page of the newsletter and often are partisan in nature, after all this was for a political clubs' newsletter.

His years in the high-tech business, managing large multi-cultural organizations and living and working in different parts of the world give him a broad perspective but perhaps the most important thing isn't what he says but what you think about the subjects after reading the articles.

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## **2)“Patriotism “**

*NormT 4/1/2008*

Patriotism is defined as the “love and loyal support of one’s country”

I would further expand it to include a belief in its core values and the willingness to personally sacrifice to defend these values, its citizens and our way of life. In reality it is our “Family”.

For Americans this means our Constitution, the Bill of Rights, our rational territorial borders and our history of defending the rights of mankind e.g. Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. Basically all the Freedoms granted to us by our Constitution.

Does it mean we cannot criticize our Government if we feel it is straying – NO

Does it mean we owe blind allegiance to our Government if it is pursuing goals that we feel are not in line with our values – NO

Does it make one person more patriotic if they wave the flag more vigorously or display it more often or salute it more frequently or wear a flag lapel pin – NO

One must be wary of the “Super-Patriots”; history has shown us time and again that extreme nationalism can lead to disastrous results (consider Nazi Germany with its slogan “Deutschland uber alles” or “Germany above all else”).

Our nation is based on fair and free elections with guaranteed freedoms and a government with checks and balances between the three co-equal branches and NOT a dictatorship, a theocracy or a monarchy. This has allowed us to survive and withstand major problems without resorting to extremism and to survive for these past 230 plus years.

I love my country (my parents came to America to escape persecution and tyranny) and I willingly served my country (3 years in the Army in Germany) and I defend my right to point out or to protest when I feel our government is straying from its ideals and the principals set out in the Constitution of the United States of America.

Our Government is NOT “omnipotent”, it is made up of people like you and me and must be willing to change if found lacking. This begins by being willing to

acknowledge when problems exist and be open to exploring various options for improvement.

Our Government is elected to defend and protect its citizens and is meant to be a representative democracy and to be constrained by our governing documents and the rules of law we hold so dear and have evolved over our 230 years of existence as a nation.

So my friends, you may wear or wave your flags and salute and sound your marching music but that does NOT make you any more (or less) Patriotic than the rest of us who vote, believe in our Constitution and Bill of Rights and are willing to sacrifice and defend our great nation in time of need.

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### 3) **“GREED and CIVILITY”**

*NormT 10/1/2009*

America, America I fear for your future. Once you were the shining example for the entire world to follow and now you may be fatally wounded! Of course there are many factors in the equation; I would like to highlight two significant changes in our culture over the past 25 years that have had a major influence in this decline.

The first is “excessive greed”; a little greed is a good thing to make one strive and make a better life for ourselves and our families but we have seen an explosion of materialism and worship at the temple of excess that allows the likes of Enron (Ken Lay) and Worldcom (to say nothing of the Bernie Maddoffs) and sports figures, movie stars, investment bankers and CEO’s pigging out at the trough of unregulated and uncontrolled Capitalism while the middle class is being decimated.

Today, the top 1-2 % of our population (about 5 million people) is now worth more than the bottom 95% (over 300 million). This disparity in wealth is similar to the days of the Medieval Kings and Queens and the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt.

There is plenty of blame to go around, we as consumers overspent our ability to pay for all the “goodies” our talented marketing people made us believe we had the “right” to have, without regard to whether we could afford it. The Corporations and business leaders bent, changed and ignored the rules to amass immense fortunes (more than anyone could spend in a thousand lifetimes).

Really, is a baseball star worth tens of millions a year, investment bankers made billions in undeserved bonuses and CEO’s got retirement packages in the hundreds of millions for essentially destroying their companies or industries? All this greed has caused us to lose sight of our humanity and sense of who we are and to focus on how much we have and let others fend for themselves. We are no longer Americans in the same boat but oligarchs in our own fiefdoms.

The second trend is the “loss of Civility” towards each other that we see in almost every aspect of life. Nowadays it appears that “RUDE and CRUDE” is the order of the day. This seems to apply to our everyday activities (it’s every person for themselves and screw everyone else), to the political system both in Washington and Sacramento, where elected officials act against the best interests of the people they represent for political gain on behalf of their own party.

In the past our representatives may have disagreed but somehow were able to reach an agreement that benefited their constituents (they agreed to disagree but worked out a compromise); the political arena is now so poisoned and polarized that compromise is almost impossible. It is difficult to reach a bi-partisan solution when one side refuses to move at all.

We now seem to be in a perpetual state of gridlock; this is encouraged by the T.V. we watch, the movies we see and the radio we listen to; each side has its own agenda and listening audience and the media is dominated by violence and gratuitous sex all aimed at a junior high school intelligence and maturity level.

These two fundamental traits; excessive greed and lack of civility make it extremely hard to solve the problems we face and may eventually lead to the decline of the American Dream. America, I fear for your future!

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#### **4) “The arrogance of Ignorance”**

*Opinion by NormT 5-4-17*

Ignorance is the absence of knowledge, information and facts in a given area; one can be knowledgeable in some areas but be ignorant in others. To be ignorant does not necessarily mean one is stupid, it means the lack of knowledge necessary to make reasoned and rational decisions is absent in that area.

Recently we have seen a glorification of ignorance, the new heroes and heroines, the “celebrities” become famous not for their skills or knowledge or having done something of value or special but merely “because” they appear in the spotlight. We no longer seem to value people for their contributions to society or heroic deeds but for their ability to market themselves, their ability to stay in the spotlight.

Our new heroes are often the bad guys who commit terrible deeds, who appear ignorant of the facts and issues and flaunt the conventions of society and norms and run amuck in thrashing and destroying everyone around them. The “good guys and the intelligentsia” are now the “losers”. We have created a topsy turvy world where ignorance, being cruel and despicable is rewarded and placed on a pedestal.

Stupidity is when someone has the information yet make decisions or takes action that are inconsistent with logic and rational reasoning; often taking actions inconsistent with their own best interests and needs. They had the right information but reached the wrong conclusion.

To make decisions without having the necessary facts and information is essentially like gambling, you might win or you might lose, it is basically a roll of the dice leaving things to chance.

Many voters now treat ignorance as a virtue, a sign of honor and reverence, regardless of facts and reasoning. To make critical decisions being ignorant of the information and facts is an act of stupidity; to hold ignorance in high esteem is an act of gross negligence and abrogation of duty. So beware Mr. President and you Congressmen, the American people are watching you carefully.

## **5) A day that will live in infamy”**

*1/21/2010*

What the Kaiser, Mussolini, Tojo, Hitler, Stalin and Osama Bin Laden were unable to do (i.e. destroy the basic fabric of American Democracy), on Jan 21<sup>st</sup> 2010 (another day that will live in infamy) the “activist” (republican) Supreme Court accomplished; it drove a nail through the heart of the American dream and our democracy!

It ignored precedent by overturned over a century of law and common sense practice and is allowing “Corporations” to spend unlimited and unconstrained amounts of money on Federal elections.

We all recognize the corrupting influence of money on politics and have been hoping to reduce the power of special interests on our Government by lobbyists and large well funded organizations on the legislative process. We need to get all money out of politics and they (the Supreme Court) just poured gasoline on the fire.

This court decision opens the flood gates of special interest money into the electoral process and will overwhelm and ultimately destroy the voice of the common citizen on the election of our representatives.

What we have to look forward to is the Senator from “Standard Oil” or the Congressman from “Wal-Mart”; being chosen and influenced by “big money” to further the interests of these large Multi-National Corporations; many are controlled or heavily influenced by foreign governments or nationals.

We may have to change our name from the “USA” to the “UCA” the United Corporations of America. I am astonished that the so called “Libertarians” and “Tea Baggers” have not taken to the streets to protest this abomination! I am appalled that the so-called conservatives on the Supreme Court would be so willing to throw away any shred of impartiality and destroy our great country and turn us into a nation controlled by big business.

The republican party’s agenda to denigrate, subvert and emasculate the Federal Government has finally been accomplished by this courts decision. Our Nation will be in the hands of organizations that have no interest in the common good but only the accumulation of wealth and profits for their shareholders and the elimination of competition.

With all the money available to throw into the electoral process by the oil and energy companies, the Insurance companies, the military industrial complex, the drug companies, the



banks and even the unions does anyone actually believe that the middle class stands any chance of survival?

I see our Nation being torn apart by petty local issues and greedy elf interests and becoming a “Banana Republic” ultimately ruled by large corporations with a small very wealthy “Royalty” and a huge barely surviving lower class.

Kind of sounds like we are going back to the middle ages or more recently with “National Socialism” also known as the NAZI party in Germany during the 1930’s; where large Corporations joined with right wing ideological leaders and brought the world to the edge of disaster.

These same forces are loose in today’s America, using the same techniques of the big lie and brute force town hall meetings. The current “republican party” and their supporters would make Hitler and Goering very proud.

We are heading towards a “defacto” dictatorship but not as the “ditto heads” and the lunatic fringe right wing tea baggers try to paint Obama and the Congress but with the tactics and ideology of the republican party and their media arm (FOX and talk radio) and now with their judicial ally (the Supreme court).

Democrats, Libertarians and anyone who wants to preserve the real America and our way of life; take to the streets and let the government and the media know we won’t be fooled and bullied by the Racists, Bigots, Religious Fanatics and big business stooges that pretend to be republicans.

Set up boycott organizations to attack any corporation trying to buy or influence elections and let the truth be heard above the ignorance and blatant lies of the fascists who masquerade as patriots. We can have massive marches and petition drives and e-mail campaigns to show Congress, the Supreme Court and the rest of America that this attack on our Democracy is unacceptable and must be reversed.

I also recommend Congress and the President take the following actions (immediately):

- 1) Since nowhere in the Constitution are corporations or corporate “personhood” mentioned no less giving them the same first amendment rights as individual citizens we should immediately pass a law to remove the right of personhood for corporations. Why should they enjoy all the benefits, rights and privileges of the individual without any of the responsibilities, accountability or liability?
- 2) If this is not possible; then let’s expand this corporate personhood to include these responsibilities and liabilities. This means that should any corporation be found guilty of a crime (say tax evasion, fraud, or providing a product or service that injures a

customer) then every officer and member of the board of the corporation should be liable and serve prison time if convicted or suffer personal liability if a fine or financial penalty is awarded.

- 3) Since the U.S. Constitution is meant for U.S. citizens only then for a corporation to be able to take advantage of its first amendment rights that corporation must be 100% owned and managed by U.S. citizens. This means that U.S. corporations should have every Corporate Officer, every member of the Board of Directors and every shareholder be a U.S. Citizen! We shouldn't allow foreign entities (non-U.S. citizens to participate in our electoral process.). Corporations can still exist but unless they are 100% owned and run by American citizens they may not participate in our elections.

If we make these changes then maybe we can get our country back from the greedy corporate **interests** that are out to usurp the ability of its citizens to fairly choose who will represent them in the legislative and executive branches of our government.

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## 6) “Extreme and Mean”

*Opinion by Normt 5/1/2011*

“**Extreme and Mean**” is how I would characterize the “Tea Party” led and controlled republican efforts and approach to budgets and deficit reduction.

It is a thinly disguised effort to eliminate and discard most (if not all) of the “New Deal” and “Fair Deal” social programs enacted to support seniors, women, people of color, workers and the middle class put in place by Franklin Roosevelt (FDR), John Kennedy (JFK) and Lyndon Johnson (LBJ).

They are using their usual scare tactics to dismember Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, Workers and woman’s rights, environmental regulation and using the deficit as an excuse and the budget as a tool.

Yes, it is important to control and reduce the deficit in the long term by a combination of spending cuts, controls and increased revenues (Tax increases – there I said it). However, in the short term we need to focus on rebuilding our fragile economy and the middle class by focusing on job creation, focused infrastructure investments and fixing the broken education system (the key to long term survival) and our energy and immigration problems.

Their (the GOP’s) simple minded approach of draconian spending cuts that places the entire burden on the poor and middle class and not asking the wealthy and the large corporations to contribute shows a lack of understanding of economics and a complete disregard for their fellow Americans.

They claim that by giving huge tax breaks to the wealthiest among us that somehow this will “trickle down” and create jobs. What a crock of H\*\*\*\* S\*\*\*. This was tried under Reagan and it didn’t work and most recently under George Bush and we lost close to 20 million jobs and the only thing that happened is that the rich just got much richer.

They claim that reducing taxes on Corporations will encourage them to invest and build more factories and create jobs. Hogwash!; our corporations have shown the highest profit in decades; they are sitting on trillions of dollars in cash and the only factories and jobs they seem to want to create are overseas where they can exploit foreign workers and amass even greater profits.

Yes, we need to better control spending and costs; fix the entitlement programs so they both protect our citizens in a cost effective manner and address the problems we will face in the future but it must be done in an intelligent and thoughtful way and not with meaningless and impractical slogan.

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## **7) “The most difficult and demanding job in the world”**

*9/1/2008*

The most difficult and demanding job in the world is to be President of the United States of America. It is one that requires great intelligence, vision, organization skills and unlimited energy. Unfortunately, these talents have not always existed in some of our previous office holders.

The next President will be facing some of the greatest challenges in our Nation's history: our economy is in shambles, the middle class is shrinking rapidly and the “American Dream” is slipping away. We are faced with a broken Healthcare System; huge debts to China and the Middle East and two wars that are draining our resources. We are starting to lag behind in technology and are decades behind in any real Energy policy and addressing “Global Warming”.

We have gone from being the “most admired” Country to one that's often held in contempt and rapidly losing our moral “high Ground”. All of these issues and challenges require a President with exceptional skills and abilities.

I will be blunt because the time for subtleties is past and we cannot afford another disastrous Presidency like the one we are currently living through.

We need someone with superior intellectual capabilities, McCain is barely above average. He graduated in the bottom 1% of his class at the Naval Academy (even though his father and grandfather were Admirals) and is most noted for his temper and not his “smarts”.

As someone who recently passed his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday I realize I am nowhere as capable as I was 20 years ago (old people just aren't as sharp as they were) and McCain wasn't that sharp to begin with. McCain will be 72 next week; that scares the hell out of me!! McCain is old, he thinks old and he views the world through old eyes and ways of thinking.

We need a smart, energetic President who can take us into the future and understand the world as it is and not as it was.

Barack Obama has the right skills and capabilities; he understands our challenges and is our best hope for getting America back on track and going in the right direction again.

We cannot afford to continue on our current path and McCain is nothing more than George Bush with a couple of medals and the Republican Party does NOT deserve to continue in power. Their policies are destroying our great nation, they don't work and we cannot allow them to steal another election with fear mongering and personal smears and blatant lies.

If you care for Americas future and the future of our children and grandchildren there is no choice but to VOTE DEMOCRATIC and for OBAMA as President.

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## 8) Crocodile tears from the Elephant”

*2009 July – “ 7/1/2009*

I am amazed at how many republicans have recently become staunch fiscal conservatives; their screams of anguish and pain over deficit spending and trade imbalance causes one to wonder whether there is a slight bit of hypocrisy going around. In my mind being a hypocrite is a worse sin than say, getting a B.J. from a consenting adult intern, but maybe that’s just me.

Where were these people when Reagan spent untold Billions on weapon systems that the military neither wanted nor asked for (and in many cases didn’t work either); these programs only seemed to benefit the large defense contractors and lobbyists and I don’t remember any outcry?

Where were the screams of anguish when we went to war against a country that hadn’t attacked us nor posed any serious threat to us and has cost dearly in human misery (over 4000 American dead; 25,000 injured, over 100,000 Iraqis dead) and has taken longer than WWII all at a cost of over a trillion dollars wasted, this could have been much better spent on fixing Healthcare or improving Education.

Why didn’t I hear cries of foul when the Republican Congress passed a bill to extend Medicare prescription drug benefits and then prohibited the government from getting reduced prices by leveraging its purchasing power; seems like a big sweet gift to the drug companies to me.

Why is it that the republicans only want to restrict spending when it seems to benefit the bulk of the American people but are more than willing to squander our money when it benefits the rich and wealthy?

I guess when they look like, talk like and act like hypocrites they are “HYPOCRITES”! So please spare me those giant crocodile tears.

## 9) “Obama the new President”

4/2/2009

After just 8 weeks in office President Obama has shown he has a deep understanding of the problems we face and has begun to put in place a series of well thought out solutions. The problems are both severe and complex and there are no quick or easy solutions to fix them. It took many years of unmitigated greed, unregulated industries and government neglect to get us where we are now.

The administration has correctly chosen to address the issues by fighting on many fronts at once (we just don't have the luxury of going after them one at a time) and they are so interconnected that it would be impossible to solve one without also solving the other.

So we are faced with simultaneous programs to address the Banking crisis, Job Creation (rebuilding the middle class), Healthcare, Housing (mortgages and bankruptcies), Infrastructure repair and upgrades, Energy and global warming and Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. These are expensive and won't be solved overnight but honestly what choice do we have?

What we need to be wary of is both the “right wing” fighting to keep the status quo and their failed policies and practices and special interest groups who won't recognize that times have changed and some of the old ways are no longer the best solutions.

Organizations like Unions, Teachers and Public Service Employees need to review their policies regarding tenure and retirement benefits that if not addressed will bankrupt many companies and municipalities. We must all realize that in these times there are no “sacred cows” and if there is a better way of doing things we should be open to change.

## 10) “Calif Budget”

3/1/2009

The California budget voting fiasco is finally resolved (at least for another year) but the systemic problems that caused the bitter dispute are still in place. The sad part is that this could have been resolved last summer with almost the same bill that was just passed.

In my view these are the major problems that need to be addressed:

- 1) The requirement that a 2/3 majority is needed to pass a tax increase. Only 3 States have this requirement that allows a small minority to block legislation and hold the State hostage as was done by the Republican Legislators who played political gamesmanship to the detriment of our citizens. This requirement is totally undemocratic and in this case made each Republican vote worth 2 Democratic votes; this is unfair, illogical and makes a mockery of the voting process itself and **MUST** be changed!
- 2) The use of the Proposition Process to mandate spending in specific areas has created a situation that provides almost no discretionary spending on the part of the administration or legislature and basically ties their hands and prevents the moving around of funds based on immediate needs and priority. We elected the legislature and then don't allow them to govern. We need to change the Proposition process to prevent this abuse,
- 3) Prop 13 needs to be reviewed and updated. Since its inception our Education system has gone from being one of the best in the nation to one of the worst. We need a way to protect seniors from losing their homes due to exorbitant property taxes but also be able to generate funding to support local needs.

Nobody is happy with the budget that just passed with \$ 15B in spending cuts, \$ 13B in increased taxes and \$ 11B in new borrowing. In reality we have let our spending grow significantly faster than our income and therefore need the increased revenue (taxes) to balance the budget.



## **11)“Half a loaf”**

1/1/2010

Whoever said “politics is an ugly business” knew what they were talking about. Supposedly the Democrats control both houses of congress and the Presidency and can do whatever they want as far as legislation is concerned.

Whoa, not so fast, because in the Senate before a bill can be brought up for a vote it must have 60 votes (in order to break a filibuster by the other side); since the Republicans vote as a block (meaning 40 NO votes, for just about anything the Democrats try to do) the Democrats need every one of the 58 Democratic Senators and both Independents to vote together to bring the bill up for a vote.

It doesn't make a difference that the 60 Democrats represent 65% of the nations population (about 195 million people) and the Republicans only 109 million (a difference of 86 million) the rules require a filibuster proof majority to continue.

In actuality it means that any one of those 60 Senators has the power to modify any bill to suit their own desires and basically hold hostage any legislation and mold it to their own desires. It's ugly and it's sad but that's the way it is.

One could ask why the leadership doesn't just sideline the current “Healthcare Reform bill” to some later date and go for a better (single payer) more consumer friendly (including a more competitive non-profit public option) bill?

The answer is quite simple; the mid-term elections are coming in 2010 and the party in power invariably loses seats in both the House and Senate and if we lose even one senate seat we will not be able to get any legislation passed without getting approval from the Republican Party.

Imagine what kind of healthcare reform bill we would get if the party of unconstrained and greedy big business, idiot science and religious zealots got to incorporate their amendments into the final package.

As bad as we may feel this current legislation is, it is better than what we have now or what the republicans would come up with (if anything); so perhaps we need to start with half a loaf and work towards improving it in the future than no loaf at all.

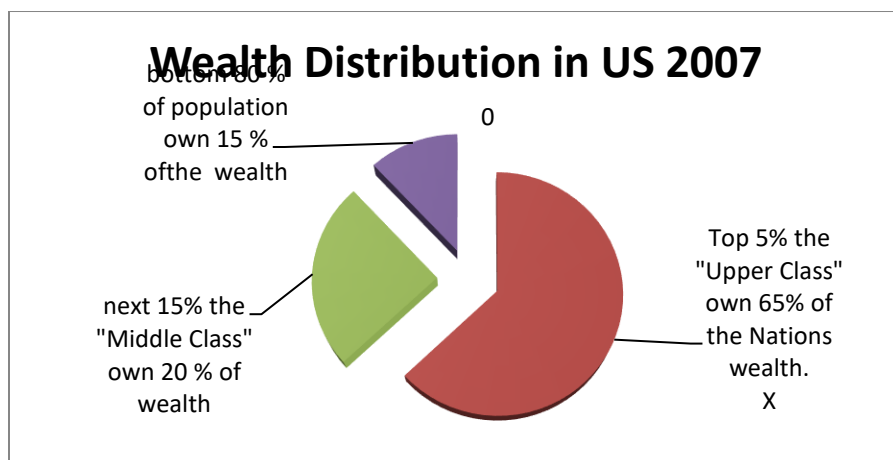
## 12) “A very skewed distribution of wealth”

By NormT 1/2/2012

In the past if you asked most Americans how wealth was distributed; the answer you would probably get was: about a third to the wealthy, about 20% to the poor and the remainder to a strong and robust middle class. Although this probably was never really true we chose to believe that this was where America was and where we wanted it to be.

Over the last 30 years there has been a very major shifts in the distribution of wealth in America; we have seen a tremendous growth in the wealth of the top 1% of the population (their wealth has grown by over 50% during this period), the middle class significantly shrunk and the working poor have grown dramatically poorer (it is now estimated that 25% of the population is living at or below the poverty level).

A good way to describe how this current distribution looks is if a group of 20 people (each person represents about 5% of the population) go into a pizza parlor, order a pizza and ask for it to be cut into eight slices. One person (representing the upper class) takes five slices; three people (representing the shrinking middle class) get to share two slices. The remaining 16 people (representing the bottom 80% of the population or about 240 million Americans) will have to be satisfied with sharing the remaining slice of pizza.



To put this in percentage terms the top 5% of Americans representing the upper class (millionaires and billionaires) have about 65% of the wealth of the nation. The next 15% (what's left of the shrinking middle class) have about 20% of the wealth and the bottom 80% of Americans have about 15%. These numbers are from 2007 and would be even more distorted if we take into account the tremendous downturn in real estate values (where a major portion of the wealth of the middle and lower classes exist); I am afraid that the numbers will be even more skewed towards the wealthy.

This vast disparity of wealth is close to that which existed just before the Great Depression of 1929 and resembles what we used to think of as existing in Third World countries where a very few at the top own almost everything and everyone else was left out: One doesn't have to look far to see that it is this disparity of wealth that is responsible for much of what we now see in the "occupy Wall Street" movement. Most Americans although they realize distribution of wealth will never be truly equal don't believe it's fair that a very very small minority of people have both the wealth and the associated power that goes with it. In the past few elections the determining factor of who wins and who loses is almost entirely based on who has the most money to spend on their campaign (there are a few exceptions but believe me they are less than 5%).

It doesn't seem fair that in a group of 20 people that one person gets to have five slices of the pie, while 16 get to share one slice. Some additional facts to consider are: the top 1% of the population has about 42% of the nation's wealth and the top 400 richest families (around 10,000 people) have more wealth than the bottom 50% of the people, this means that 10,000 people have the same wealth as 150,000,000 Americans. This great disparity in wealth distribution cannot be good for our country and for our future!

### **13) “House passes Affordable Care Act”**

*4/1/2010*

On Sunday, March 21, 2010 the House of Representatives (at least the Democrats) passed a Healthcare Reform Bill.; a companion bill will be sent to the Senate to fix some of the problems and will go through the reconciliation process. On Tuesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> President Obama signed this historic bill and contrary to what most republicans forecast; the world as we know it did NOT come to an end!

Do I think this is a “good” bill? The answer is NO. Does it go far enough to really be considered “Universal Healthcare”? Again the answer is NO. Would a “single Payer” system be better? YES. Is this the biggest step forward since the Civil Rights and Medicare Bills of the 1960’s and a major breakthrough? Absolutely, YES!

After all is said it is a good “start” and clearly shows the dramatic differences between the political parties. If you listened to the arguments before the vote it was clear that the Democrats goal was to include as many people as possible and to rectify many of the worst practices of the Insurance companies (pre-existing conditions, dropping of policies , caps on coverage and putting employees at the mercy of their employers out of fear of losing healthcare).

On the other side (the republicans and turncoat democrats) all that was heard was vindictiveness, personal attacks, scare tactics and the use of distortions, fear mongering, lies and more lies. In America we have the right to our opinions and beliefs but we do not have the right to make up facts and re-write history to support these beliefs.

The battle is far from over and the republicans will do everything in their power to reverse this historic step and expect more fear, smear and lies but for now we should enjoy this win and step forward for the American people!

## 14) “The American Dream”

*Opinion by NormT 4/1/2011*

Is the “American Dream” dead? What is this dream and who decides? These are not easy questions to answer and in fact there is not just one “dream” but I submit there are four major and different definitions that describe this dream:

- 1) That anyone (you don’t have to come from wealth, or be famous or have royal blood can through ingenuity, imagination, hard work and entrepreneurship (and a little luck) become fabulously wealthy ! One needs only to see the likes of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs to see this aspect of the dream is still alive and well. Unfortunately this represents a miniscule portion of our population.
- 2) For minorities, America is still the best place to live (we have the Constitution and a robust legal system) to protect against persecution and discrimination because of race, religion, ethnicity, language and gender. Minorities are still better off in America than in most parts of the world. Although this has been eroded recently by the growth of the conservative movement; we are still the shining example.
- 3) For over half a century we (Americans) felt that if we worked hard, were flexible in where we lived and played by the rules we would have a reasonable standard of living. We might need to have two income families but we could afford to have a house, a car and send our children to school; our employers provided health care insurance as part of the job and if we lost our job, we could find new employment in about 6 months. We had social Security, Medicare and company retirement plans for when we got older. Today this is no longer the case; few companies provide reasonable healthcare, most retirement plans (if they even exist) are at the mercy of a fickle and unpredictable stock market and it is taking 2 years or longer to find new employment (often at half the old salary). We now live in constant fear that we are just one illness or layoff away from losing everything we have . This part of our dream is considerably tarnished and the strength of our nation (the middle class) is in serious trouble.

4) Finally we as a nation almost universally felt that even if we ourselves may not have “made it”; our children (if they were educated and worked hard) would have a better life than their parents! This is again NOT the case. Today most Americans believe their children will be worse off than they are. We see a bleak future ahead and the partisan politics appears to be getting in the way of meaningful long term solutions.

**In Conclusion I believe that what most of us thought of as the “American Dream” is ( if not dead) on life support and we don’t have much time before it may be to late!**

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## 15) “How foolish can we be?”

*Opinium by NormT 2/1/2010*

We Democrats are a foolish lot; we actually have been trying to put the needs of the American people first, ahead of the Party. What ever possessed us to think that the health of our citizens was more important than getting elected?

The republicans have shown us the way; we just need to follow their example but we may need to change some practices. First we need to learn to blatantly lie (in a very loud and simplistic but sincere tone, of course) then we need to propose failed policies (like trickle down economics) and pretend that they actually worked.

We could follow the republican policy of eliminating controls and regulations on businesses and lowering taxes for the wealthy; after all the richest 5% only own 80% of the Country's wealth, we need to give them a chance at the remaining 20%.

Rather than trying to save the country's financial system we needed to do nothing (kind of like Bush) and allow another great depression; the jobless rate would soar to 30-40% but think of all the jobs created to staff the soup kitchens.

We have been in power for almost a year and we have not invaded another country or started an unnecessary war. How can we possibly claim to be patriotic and support the military without a new war? I would suggest something closer (reduces our travel costs) and with fewer mountains, how about Grenada (it worked for Reagan)?

We have also replaced the incompetent appointees and political hacks with people who have the necessary skills and expertise in their respective fields; how can we expect to pay off political debts and the lobbyists if we do this? After all, we have become accustomed to inaction, incompetence and political interference so why bother to change it.

In foreign policy and international relations whatever possessed us to listen to what other nations have to say, after all we are Americans and we know better than everyone else so no need to do this or bother to do any planning (shoot from the hip and worry about it later I say, after all we have “God” on our side).

The past few elections in Massachusetts and New Jersey indicate that the American people prefer to keep their heads in the sand, avoiding complexity and truth and vote for someone who tells them what they want to hear and makes them feel

good. Yes, we have a lot to learn from the republicans and we better start soon, the elections are coming and if we don't adopt their policies and practices we may lose the next election.

Then again, will it all be worth winning?

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## 16) “**Democracy at risk**”

*Opinion by NormT 10/1/2009*

In order to have a vibrant and flourishing “Democracy” we need the following:

- 1) An engaged, knowledgeable and educated electorate
- 2) A free and open press and communications media
- 3) Fair and equitable representation
- 4) An election process that is uncorrupt able and quick
- 5) Elimination of external influences

So how are we doing?

- 1) Our election turnouts are miserable (20-40% of eligible voters for non-Presidential elections and 50-60% for major elections). Our schools have in most part stopped teaching “Civics” classes, any real understanding of our nation’s history and how our government works is being lost. This along with the current “sound byte” and “instant gratification” mentality means any substantive discussion of complex issues is almost non-existent.
- 2) The newspapers are rapidly disappearing, the broadcast media (T.V., Cable and radio) has been consolidated into the hands of a few very powerful organizations, most consider themselves “entertainers” not news people and become advocates of partisan political opinions with little attempt to delve into the details or the truth. The internet is even worse as blatant lies are promulgated as truth and a gullible public doesn’t bother to check.
- 3) The current representative system unfairly favors sparsely populated (rural) regions over the more densely populated urban areas. For example; in the Senate, this allows States like Alaska, Montana and Nevada (each with barely the population of San Jose) to have equal voting power as California, New York and Texas with around

30 times the number of people. In the House of Representatives one of our Congressmen represents more than twice the number of people than in states like North and South Dakota. This disparity also shows up in the “Electoral College” and plays a significant roll in the outcome of Presidential elections and the ability to pass legislation in Congress.

4) It seems like our elections never end, as soon as one election is finished the politicians are preparing for the next election. We are in a never ending election campaign complete with fund raising and partisan posturing rather than focusing on doing the “people’s work”. We are left wondering if our vote was counted or even counts. This lack of confidence in the voting process lends itself to the questioning of the legitimacy of the elected officials and the demoralization of the electorate. Why can’t we limit the campaigning to a 3 month window, maybe then people might actually pay attention?

5) The old sayings “money is the root of all evil” and “power corrupts” are absolutely true and valid when it comes to our Government; someone once said “we have the best government money can buy” and sadly it may be true. The need to continuously raise funds for the next election means either the super-rich (who can fund their own campaigns) or candidates beholden to special interest groups (who then have powerful leverage over our elected officials) are the only choices. Once the elections are over the lobbyists take over and completely overwhelm the system. The average person has no way to have their voices heard against these forces with very deep pockets.

Unless we address these issues soon we will no longer have a “real” Democracy in our Country but some hollow slogan we will use to fool ourselves and this “grand experiment” of the people have a voice in how they are governed will end.

These are very difficult problems to address and the solutions are equally complex and will take time to implement; but I feel our Democracy is worth saving and we can start by taking the corrupting influence of campaign money out of our elections and lobbyists out of our government.

## 17) “We are in deep “Doo-Doo”

*Opinion by NormT 4/2/2020*

There is no need to tell everyone that we, as a Nation are facing a number of monumental problems. We are living it, worrying about it and scared to death (literally) about our futures.

First there is a worldwide virus pandemic that we have no medical cures or preventative vaccines yet and we are bombarded with 24/7 news about the number of cases, deaths and lack of resources to face the problems.

Our only protection (social spacing) to minimize the impact is causing another problem; essentially shutting down our economy and creating massive unemployment and jeopardizing many businesses. The question we face is it a recession or a depression and for how long.

All this is occurring as we face an upcoming election that will undoubtedly set our future direction and we question the process, the fairness and possible manipulation by outside forces and unscrupulous political actions to suppress voter participation or relevance (gerrymandering).

So, we have 3 major issues facing us and I for one have lost faith that this current administration and the President have the capability, capacity or desire to solve the problems in an impartial, non-partisan and people centric way. They may say the right things (at times) but they don't do the right things. They lie, deflect, distort, mis-direct and stonewall and blame others for their lack of results and action. They cannot be trusted to solve the problems we face!

Here is what I believe needs to happen:

1) Appoint a pandemic Czar (NOT POLITICAL), perhaps a general who understands logistics and planning and have them work with the Medical specialists and local governments to produce, co-ordinate and deliver the products the medical professionals need to minimize the impacts of the virus. Keep the deaths to the hundreds of thousands not millions.

2) Appoint an economic Czar (like Bill Gates or Warren Buffet) to smoothly re-start businesses and industries in an orderly (Geographically) in conjunction with the Medical community and local business leaders. To restart everything at once would be a disaster and likely rekindle the epidemic.

3) We need to believe our elections are fair and honest. Holding an election requiring people to be in crowded places and close proximity is wrong and will depress and put in question the election results. Each State must move to a vote by mail (traceable ballot) and all machines protected from outside interference. Every citizen over the age of 18 should be registered and provided with a free mail in paper ballot. We can worry about exceptions later.

We need actions we can “trust” now, if you agree pass this on to your elected officials. Our lives are at risk!

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## 18) “Judgment and Role of Governments”

*Opinion by NormT 2/1/2011*

I believe our society, (and Nations in general), will ultimately be judged NOT by the power of its weapons or the size of its armies but rather by how it treats its citizens. Does it nourish and educate its young, does it honor and support its elderly and infirm, does it protect the rights of its minorities and the disenfranchised while advancing the common good of all its citizens?

The question boils down to “what kind of country” do you want to live in? What is more important to you? There are always tradeoffs and compromises but on balance do you want a “Nation” that governs with compassion and believes every citizen (not just the rich and powerful) deserves to be educated, healthy and protected!

Do we want our “Constitution” to apply to all our citizens equally? Do we believe “Healthcare” is a right or a privilege? Do we want a secular or religious government and whose “GOD” will prevail? Do we want the government to look into our private lives (peeking into our bedrooms) and deciding how we should behave? Are we willing to give up some of our “rights” for the common good and safety and if so which ones?

These are all questions that need to be answered before we ask our government to act on our behalf. I believe the “Role” of Government is to do for its citizens what they cannot reasonably be expected to do for themselves as individuals! Once we answer these questions we can begin to figure out “How” to go forward and better define the “role of government”

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## 19) “role of government - response”

*3/1/2011*

I have received numerous responses to the Feb opinion article re: the “role of Government”. If you remember I posed some questions that needed to be answered before we can decide on “how” to go forward.

Many of the responses fell into two main categories’:

- 1) We can’t afford “it” !
- 2) A list of some of the things people who cheat the system (welfare fraud, the unemployed malingerers , unwed mothers etc. you get the idea) do to defraud taxpayers.

Regarding the first issue (affordability of “it”) they missed the point. We can’t decide on what programs to go forward with until we both decide on what’s important to us and set some priorities to determine exactly what “IT” is. They want to hide behind the affordability issue without having to answer the tough moral questions on what kind of society we want to live in. Of course we don’t have unlimited funds to do everything and we need to set our priorities taking into account our short and long term objectives and our ability to pay for them.

On the second item; yes, there are people who are cheating and taking advantage of the system. I believe we should eliminate as much of this as possible ; we need to be careful not to spend more on fixing the problem than it costs in the first place. I also feel the magnitude is overblown by unsubstantiated (hearsay) evidence with perhaps some racial bias undertones sneaking in. Yes it’s a problem and we need to address it BUT it has nothing to do with the programs themselves (unemployment benefits, Medicare etc.) it isn’t the program it’s the people who defraud it and they need to be treated as criminals.

Many of the arguments or responses I get from the right wing usually is in the form of a bumper sticker slogan rather than a meaningful attempt to identify and address the real issues we face.

## 20) "Liars, fools, hypocrites and idiots"

*Opinion by NormT 12/1/2011*

Liars make statements that they know are false, they are not based on facts or they use false logic to make a point. This is usually done for their own advantage and promotes their own political agenda. Some examples are:

- 1) A common statement often made is that the stimulus package of 2009 "created no jobs and did nothing to help the economy". This is a blatant lie, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and most nonpartisan economists have stated that the stimulus plan actually created or saved somewhere between 2.5 and 3.5 million jobs during this period and helped the economy recover from a near depression.
- 2) Another often repeated statement one hears is that if we were to "lower taxes for the wealthiest Americans that they would create jobs". This too is a blatant lie, there is absolutely no evidence or facts that back up this statement, in fact if we look at the past 50 years of tax rates for the wealthy and the unemployment rate we would find that there is no correlation whatsoever between the two.

Statements like these are often made for political advantage and used to mislead the public; most of the people making these statements know them to be false, yet they continue to use them as talking points to further their own political agenda.

A **fool** is someone who believes this political rhetoric without questioning whether they are based on facts, evidence or rational logical thinking. These people are either too lazy or ignorant to try to find out what the real truth is and are willing to let others do the thinking for them, even if what they are saying is a blatant lie. There's an old saying that a fool and his money are soon parted. Often these people are willing to believe statements that they hear because they sound good or seem to meet their own prejudices and opinions without trying to understand whether they make sense or not.

A **hypocrite** is someone who says one thing and does another, often the opposite of what they are saying (do what I say, not what I do). Hypocrites very often are the leaders we look to for guidance and place our trust in them. Some examples of this were evident in the last two Republican debates when most of the candidates profess to be pro-life but are more than happy to put people to death or support wars that kill tens of thousands of innocent people and promote the NRA agenda and the gun lobby by allowing people to have automatic (people killing) weapons and cop killer bullets. These people profess to be patriots and support our

military, but in fact what they're supporting is the defense industry and not the troops who put their lives on the line every day.

**Idiots** are people who vote against their own best interests. The tea party is a good example of this, most are angry, bitter, white middle-aged lower middle class men), the policies that their leaders are promoting would be very detrimental to their own best interests and lives, these are the people who are the most in need of things like a secure Social Security system, affordable healthcare and Medicare as well as government agencies that protect our air, water and food supplies and protect us from the greedy big banking interests.

So what we seem to have today with the tea party controlled Republican Party is a situation where we have a bunch of "**foolish idiots led by a group of hypocritical liars**"! Now this may sound harsh but let's look at the facts; this is exactly what is going on in our country and politics today.

This is the antithesis of what a Democracy should be and if those fools would stop waving their flags and pretending this is the 1850s they would realize that they are actually working against their own best interests.

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## 21) “Ready – Aim – Fire vs Fire-Fire-Fire”

Opiniom by NormT 12/1/2010

Some 50 plus years ago (thanks to the U.S. Army) I learned a very valuable lesson. While going through basic training at Ft. Dix and preparing to qualify on the firing range we were given a simple yet powerful set of instructions. Simply put it said “READY, AIM, FIRE”. What it meant was to get into the appropriate position for balance and cover and have your weapon and ammunition in place; then carefully identify your target and make any adjustments for distance and wind and finally take action by squeezing the trigger and firing off the shot. It was simple and direct and effective (At one time I was able to put 9 of 10 shots into a 12 inch target at 300 yards).

After I left the service and joined industry we used something very similar in our product development and operations ; this was “AIM-READY-FIRE”. AIM meant to have a vision, goal, target, direction and market. READY meant to have the right organization, people, facilities, equipment and supply channels. FIRE means to act, to implement the plans and check to see if we are meeting our objectives; and if not to take corrective action. In my over forty years in the high-tech industry this worked extremely well .

In today’s environment of instantaneous communication, and the apparent insatiable need for instant gratification along with the attention span of a gnat on the part of the general public; this coupled with the modern corporations driving agenda of pure “greed” has left us very vulnerable.

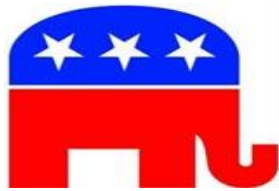
I use these examples to contrast what I see happening now in both “Politics” and the world of mega corporations. They are using “FIRE-FIRE-FIRE” as their Modus Operandi (MO). No real long range plans, no apparent direction and plenty of collateral damage (the destruction of the middle class for example)

Unfortunately the far right is taking advantage of this for their own (and their corporate sponsors) benefit without considering what’s best for America. Their disregard for the truth and modern science is fanaticism (bordering on Fascism) and ultimately will lead our Country into mediocrity at best and third world status at worst.

## 22) “The new symbol for the republican party”

11/1/2011

The old symbol, the elephant is just not representative of the party’s current thinking and approach and like most things they do and say are the antitheses of what the elephant is i.e. a highly intelligent and social animal that cares for its family and herd and has a remarkable memory.



The **new symbol** for the republican party should be the HYDRA; a multi-headed evil and venomous serpent! The new republican party is made up of a loose association of the following groups (unfortunately they all vote together as a block to prevent any real progress in solving our country’s problems):

### The new GOP symbol “the HYDRA”



- 1) The NRA head; funded and supported by weapons manufacturers; munitions suppliers and ultra right wing militia groups and their super wealthy benefactors. They believe everyone should own and carry any and all weapons (assault rifles, machine guns, rocket and grenade launchers, etc.) as well as Teflon coated “cop killer” bullets; anywhere and anytime they want (schools, churches, restaurants and bars). Just what this Country needs; a bunch of simple minded, hot headed drunken rednecks armed to the “tooth” wandering around our streets!
- 2) The Confederacy head; The old “Southern States” that believed in State’s rights (not the United States of America) and all forms of discrimination and racism. You don’t need to search very hard to see the vestiges of the KKK and anti-immigration sentiments.
- 3) The Religious fundamentalism head; The belief that “their” religion has the only true answers and the literal interpretation of the bible that takes precedence over science and rational thought and reason. This focus on anti-gay and anti-abortion issues as well as ultra conservative dogma prevents them from addressing greater and more critical issues and problems.
- 4) The “tea party” anti central government head. This libertarianism on steroids assumes government is bad and incapable of making and carrying out anything other than war actions. They believe it’s every person for himself and borders on paranoia and anarchism.
- 5) The so called fiscal conservative head; They believe without a shred of evidence or proof that cutting taxes will create jobs and economic growth. This didn’t work before and most real economists don’t believe it will work now. They also believe that reducing the deficit is the holy grail and if we need to have another great depression “oh well”. They also believe eliminating controls and regulations will foster growth; they seem to have completely forgotten the “Enrons” and the banking/ financial crisis we are just recovering from. Actually the only thing these policies do is to make the rich richer and further destroy the middle class.

## 23) “Simplicity, Complexity and Stupidity”

*Opinion 7/1/2010*

We live in a very complex world with instantaneous and continuous communications; , the problems we face are enormous and multi-faceted and can’t be understood or even comprehended without considerable effort and depth of probing.

It would be wonderful if everything was simple and had “black or white” solutions; however that is NOT what we face as a society and as a Nation in today’s world.

One must be able to understand the problems we face (i.e. immigration, water and energy availability, global warming, loss of the middle class, healthcare and a myriad of other vexing issues) in all their complexity and create appropriate solutions that really fix the problems and NOT just “sound bytes” or meaningless political slogans that fire up the base but have no true relevance. In todays complex world we need thoughtful and complex solutions!

I define “stupidity” as having reached a conclusion based on false facts (also known as lies and distortions) and /or the use of illogical and often irrational thought processes.

In America today the Republican party (taken over by the far right tea baggers) is guilty of both being simple minded and stupid! They are fed false information by right wing hate radio, Fox propaganda TV and right wing blogs. What is worse is that their leadership bought into the lies and distortions and the followers and believers (Limbaugh, Beck, O’Rielly, Hannity, etc) don’t appear to be smart enough to know they are being lied to and misled.

The only conclusion I can reach is that these people are just simple minded and stupid and unfortunately there are a lot of them and even worse many are our neighbors and relatives.

Below are some examples of why I reached this conclusion:

- If you believe President Obama was NOT born in the United States - you’re stupid

- If you believe giving huge tax breaks to the super rich creates jobs and improves the economy (so called trickle down economy) - you're stupid
- If you believe large Corporations will self regulate to protect consumers or the general public (remember Enron. Insurance companies and investment banking) - you're stupid
- If you think global warming is a fraud - you're stupid
- If you think controlling the borders(without comprehensive reform) will solve the illegal immigration problem - you're stupid
- If you believe it's a right to own automatic weapons and carry them in public - you're stupid
- If you believe we can drill our way to energy independence -you're stupid
- If you think insurance companies have your best interests at heart - you're stupid
- If you voted for George W Bush twice- you're stupid
- If you think Sarah Palin is competent to be President - you're stupid
- If you listen to and believe FOX talking heads (Limbaugh, O'Reilly, Beck etc.) - you're stupid
- If you believe all or most of the above - you're really stupid

Remember what that great philosopher (Forest Gump) said; "stupid is as stupid does"!

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## 24) "Necessary but not sufficient"

*11/1/2011*

One of the most important lessons that I learned in the high-tech industry is that when you have a complex problem to solve it is critically important to define the problem thoroughly. One must understand the causes and to very carefully determine which of the causes has the most impact and which are minor and will not significantly impact the problem even if they were completely resolved.

In recent discussions with some of my conservative friends I believe I detected a common thread in their arguments on some of the key issues that we face; things like immigration, education, healthcare costs and job creation. In all of these areas it appears that their strategy was to choose a relatively minor cause and rabidly promote partisan solutions.

Let me give you some examples:

- 1) in the case of immigration their solution was focused on building a 3000 mile 100 foot high electrified fence to keep illegal immigrants out of our country. In reality this is an unrealistic and extremely expensive solution and it really doesn't address what most people believe is the illegal immigration problem because we already have somewhere between 10 and 15 million illegal immigrants and they are on this side of the wall, So even if we build this fence we still are left with the problem on our side.
- 2) In the area of education, their solution appears to be based on eliminating "tenure" for teachers; while I actually agree that we should eliminate tenure and create a merit-based system, it is estimated that even if this were to occur it would represent less than 5% of the problem. So once again they have chosen an area that would have a minor impact on what we are trying to accomplish
- 3) To address the healthcare cost problem their major thrust is to do "tort reform" or eliminate lawsuits; while I agree that frivolous lawsuits must be eliminated even if this issue were completely gone it would once again represent less than 5% of the problem with respect to health healthcare costs.
- 4) When we speak about job creation their only solution appears to be tax cuts for the wealthy even though historically this approach has done very little to impact job creation.

In all of these cases the conservative approach seems to be to choose an area that needs attention but would have a relatively minor impact on truly solving the problem. These complex problems must be thoroughly analyzed and the causes prioritized so that we can spend our time, energy and money on the areas that will give us the greatest return. So although I agree that

many of the issues they bring up are necessary, none of them are sufficient to truly address the problems we're facing.

The next time you are in a discussion with your conservative friends and they bring up these issues I believe the best approach would be to say yes I agree they need to be resolved but they won't solve the problem; so what other solutions do you have that might get at the heart of the matter, or you just might say yes those are necessary to be fixed but are not sufficient to get the job done.

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## 25) “Some fundamental truths”

*Opinion by NormT 1/1/2011*

There are some statements we should all be able to agree with; almost everyone understands them to be true and the vast majority of the people with the expertise have agreed upon:

- 1) The “Earth” is about 4.5 billion years old” (the universe as we understand it is about 13 billion years old). Some people choose to think 6 or 7 thousand years is the correct number; they are absolutely wrong and shouldn’t be teaching their children this erroneous information. I question whether they should be allowed to sit on juries since they seem to be unable to accept scientific evidence and reach a logical conclusion.
- 2) Darwin’s theory of evolution and natural selection is almost universally accepted and those who don’t want to believe our ancestors looked like apes are just fooling themselves and they should not be allowed to write textbooks that says otherwise or teach their own version in schools that have academic accreditation.
- 3) Global warming is real. The worldwide melting of the glaciers in Greenland, Tibet and the polar icecaps is happening. Yes, there are natural weather cycles between ice ages and hot periods but almost all scientists believe the emissions from combustion of fossil fuels have accelerated and exacerbated the problem, the studies funded by the oil and gas industry are very suspect and the far right is playing politics when it discredits this to the detriment of future generations.
- 4) President Obama was born in Hawaii . The last time I checked Hawaii was still part of the United States of America and therefore Obama is a valid American citizen. The “birther” fanatics are basically bigots and racists and shouldn’t be allowed to serve in Congress.
- 5) Greed is the driving force in Industry. Corporations and Companies left to their own volition (driven by shareholders and top management) will place short term profits above the good of the Nation, their employees or the long term objectives. Greed will win out and the lack of regulation, control and enforcement will allow this to occur. People should realize that Corporations will do what is in their own best interests and what they are able to get away with.



- 6) Knowledge and the ability to access this information has expanded so rapidly that Governments, Industry and Humanity may not be able to absorb or respond to these changes. Latest estimates indicate knowledge is now doubling every year (if not quicker).
- 7) Over the past 25 years in the United States there has been a dramatic shifting of wealth from the middle class to the ultra rich (top 1-2 % of the population) which now has about 25% of the nation's wealth. This transfer of wealth combined with outsourcing and efficiency advancements (due to automation, computerization and the internet) has created unemployment, underemployment and lower incomes and has essentially destroyed the American middle class itself.
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## 26) “Religion, Science and the Constitution”

*NormT 3/1/2012*

The latest debate about religious freedom versus birth control made me think about the differences between religion, science and our constitution. In fact, there are many things that are similar between these three things. They are founded on a set of beliefs; codified in a set of principles like the Bible or the Constitution or the laws of physics. These fundamental beliefs are controlled by a small powerful group of individuals who oversee the structure and control the guiding documents and expect their followers to act according to these belief systems.

### **So where do they differ?**

In the religious system it is very difficult to make changes even when new and relevant information becomes available. The basic tenants require that you believe what is written in the book and generally are not allowed to question these fundamental beliefs.

Science is structured to change the “laws of nature” when significant new information becomes available and the old laws are no longer considered valid, then a new set of laws becomes the guiding principles. A good example of this is Darwin's theory of evolution which overturned thousands of years of thinking but is now almost universally accepted by the scientific community. So science has built into it the ability to make changes when new evidence becomes available.

Our founding fathers (who wrote the Constitution) were brilliant in that they created governing documents that has built-in checks and balances and also allows (through the amendment process) changes in the original document when significant new information becomes available.

The world we live in is very complex and should be viewed in shades of gray and not in black and white. While it is true that there is religious freedom as well as freedom of speech our government has essentially been operating with the overall concept of separation of church and state and the protection of minority rights.

I feel in today's world of exploding knowledge and instant communications it is critical that we have a system that is capable of being changed when the need arises.

## **27) "They just don't care"**

*4/1/2012*

In communications with many of my Republican friends I realized that after pointing out that their leaders have been telling them lies; the response I received was that they just don't seem to care. The facts appear to be unimportant or irrelevant and they are more interested in preserving their talking points than the truth. I can only assume that they must like being lied to!

This attitude of "they just don't care" seems to carry over into other areas as well. In America today we have a great deal of poverty and hunger, (about 20% of our population is living below the poverty level, many people are barely above the subsistence level, a goodly portion have no health coverage and many are homeless or facing foreclosures. When asked what should we do about these things they just seemed to shrug their shoulders, throw up their hands, roll their eyes, and say "let them get a job"! What this means is that they just don't care about the plight of their fellow Americans; in many cases they feel that they are just malingerers and don't want to work, they just want to live off the government.

I believed that in the United States we took care of our sick, our poor, our elderly, and those who have great needs but it looks like this new Republican Party just doesn't care about anybody but themselves and their wealthy political contributors.

Recently they were willing to have the United States default on its debt which would have put our country and the rest of the world into economic chaos and turmoil and could easily have created another great depression; but they didn't seem to care.

Our infrastructure is crumbling, our school systems are not up to the challenges of the future, our economy is limping along and the unemployment rate is around 8% and people are hurting but rather than compromise with the Democrats to help solve the problems, their response is to repeat their mantra of cut taxes and spending . They Just don't seem to care about anything else.

Over the past three years they have followed a pattern of obstructionism; they have perfected the art of just saying "NO" to anything the President suggests and doing everything in their power to defeat President Obama in 2012 and they just don't care about what happens to the rest of the country and our future. It is sad that a once proud party and its followers seems to have lost their "heart" and is now praying at the altar of selfishness, bigotry and greed. They just don't care!

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## 28) “Capitalism has many faces”

6/1/2012

`Capitalism is neither good nor bad, it is merely an economic system that proposes that the private sector can more effectively produce goods and services than a bureaucratically controlled public sector.

`This is not a discussion of which system is most effective (I believe they both have good and bad points); what I would like to point out is that capitalism is not one unique entity but has many faces.

`The face that most of us are familiar with is one where the founder/entrepreneur/owner has created a company that produces goods and services, has been successful and has created many jobs for its employees and the local communities around it. Names like Ford, Hewlett/ Packard, Microsoft and many others come to mind. The people that founded these companies had a hand in the long term planning as well as the growth and success of their companies, they were in it for the long term and were part of the communities where their companies do business.

`The next face is when companies are run by experienced CEOs who once again are part of the long-term success of these companies; they have a vested interest in the long-term health and success of their companies (IBM, GE and many other Fortune 500 companies come to mind)

`Another face is one that we call venture capital; we in Silicon Valley are very familiar with these people who fund new companies with the expectation that they will grow into large and successful organizations with the idea that a successful start up will be financially rewarding both to themselves, the founders and the employees (companies like Google and Facebook come to mind).

`Then there is the face that we call “**Vulture Capitalism**”, organizations like Bain capital run by people like Mitt Romney; their goal is primarily to make money for themselves and their shareholders. They are not in the business of creating long-term companies that create jobs but to get the most money out of the organizations they manage. This often means selling off assets, closing plants and laying off employees (destroying their pension plans and health care programs). They have no interest in the communities where these companies exist or for the welfare of the people that worked in these companies.

`Romney and the tea party controlled republican party would like you to believe that they represent the first three faces that were discussed but we know better; they really represent the worst face, the one we know as “Vulture Capitalism”.

## 29) “Gun “control”, the who, what and where

*NormT 1/1/2013*

The horrific event that occurred in Newtown, Connecticut where 20 six and seven year-olds were slaughtered by a crazed person using a semiautomatic assault rifle and bullet magazines that held hundreds of rounds may finally get us to address the dramatic increase in violence caused by these weapons.

The operative word is “control”; we are not calling for the abolishment of the Second Amendment nor the elimination of the right to bear arms such as hunting and target shooting weapons used by sporting enthusiasts or handguns by people who feel they need to defend their homes.

The questions that need to be answered are:

- 1) "who" has the right to bear arms and who may be restricted from buying, owning and possessing weapons.
- 2) "which" weapons should be restricted.
- 3) "where" can weapons be carried in our society.

As far as "who" may be restricted from having weapons; I propose the following list: terrorists, people with violent felony convictions, people with a history of mental illness, people who have restraining orders keeping them from others and people with a history of abuse and violent acts (such as battering) should not have access to weapons.

As to which weapons need to be excluded I feel we all can agree with the following list: nuclear weapons, biological and chemical weapons, anti-aircraft and vehicle weapons such as RPG's and missiles, flamethrowers, tanks and all forms of automatic firearms.

Most people will accept the fact that we have the right to own rifles, shotguns and handguns for self protection and sports; what we are now faced with is a whole range of semiautomatic weapons such as assault rifles and pistols with very large cartridge carriers that hold in excess of 10 bullets; these weapons are meant primarily to kill people in large numbers very rapidly. These weapons need to be restricted from use by anyone except the military and public safety officers.

The next thing that needs to be considered is where can legal weapons be carried in our society, most people will agree that places like airports, courthouses and schools should definitely be off limits. I also believe that we should expand this list to include areas where large numbers of people congregate such as shopping centers, bars, restaurants and areas where people would feel threatened by the carrying of weapons. Many states have enacted free and

open carry laws which allow weapons to be taken into places like bars and schools and other areas where large numbers of people congregate. This is just asking for trouble! Congress will probably work to enact more restrictions on the use of semiautomatic assault weapons and large magazine cartridge clips.

What amazes me is that the people who really defend the use of these weapons of mass destruction are unabashedly doing so because they feel they need to be protected from their own government. They want to have these weapons available to overthrow our government (these militia groups look like terrorists to me) and make up a very small percentage of our population and even a small percentage of the NRA. They should not be allowed to create the laws that put the rest of us at risk.

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### 30) “Is Democracy the right answer for everyone?”

Opinion by NormT 3/1/2013

With all the turmoil going on in the world especially in the Middle East and Africa one could question whether democracy is the right answer for these countries to solve their complex problems.

For Democracy to be successful it requires the following:

- 1) a population that believes that their government can and should solve problems to make a better life for its citizens.
- 2) An educated population that understands that problems can be complex and that solutions may require time and effort to be effective.
- 3) A culture that believes in the rule of law and the protection of the rights of minorities (especially women's rights).
- 4) A belief that each citizen has a vote and that all votes should be counted and are equal.

For democracy to flourish there needs to be a tradition in the above items; in most places in the Middle East and Africa almost none of the above exist today or had existed in the past.

Why should we expect that our system of government is the best one for other countries, nations and peoples to follow? While most people look to the United States as an example of economic success they do not have the 225 years of growing pains that we went through. Just because we believe the way we operate is superior there are other models that exist that also provide their citizens with good economic conditions and more freedoms.

Over the past 20 years we have seen a large segment of our population question the legitimacy of our government, the legitimacy of scientific reasoning and facts and it appears they don't believe in equal rights for all. In fact a large segment of our population not only is not educated in civics and government but pride themselves in their lack of knowledge and understanding of our history and the true meaning of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

If one were to listen exclusively to Fox Cable (news?) and the lunatics on talk (hate) radio (like Rush Limbaugh) one might think that we are no different than these floundering countries in the Middle East and Africa. In fact I believe the “Tea Party” elements of the republican Party are no different than the Taliban in these regions.

I guess democracy is not for the “weak of heart” and that there are always challenges and threats to our system; as imperfect as it might be, I believe it is still the best alternative.

### 31) “Is extreme concentration of wealth good for Democracy?”

*NormT 5/1/2014*

Recent articles and books have concluded that the distribution of wealth in the United States is reaching a critical situation; this concentration of wealth in the top few percent of our population is now worse than it was during the period just prior to the great depression and rivals that of countries in the 19th century that had royalty at the top.

Before I get into the numbers, it probably makes sense to get a few facts and definitions on the table. The United States population is now around 305 million people; the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) the value of all goods and services in our economy in a year; is in the neighborhood of \$17 trillion. I will be discussing wealth (not income); by that I mean total assets including cash, stocks, bonds, real estate and any other assets that have a monetary value. The total net worth of all individuals (not counting any government assets) in the United States is around \$60 trillion.

The numbers become so large that I feel they need some explanation; \$1 trillion is a one followed by 12 zeros (\$1, 000, 000, 000, 000) that number is so large that it is incomprehensible to most of us. To put it in some perspective, if you spent one hundred dollars every second of every hour of every day (that's \$8,640,000 per day) it would take you 317 years (you would have to start in AD 1697) to reach \$1 trillion; or if you placed \$100 dollar bills end-to-end around the equator it would circle the earth over 40 times (a distance of over 1 million miles) or go to the moon and back twice . It truly is hard for us to comprehend just how much 1 trillion of anything is. So now let me give you the most recent data for 2013. The data that I used came from the Forbes 400 richest Americans and other financial journals.

- The top 1% (approximately 3 million people) have a net worth of about \$24 trillion (1.4 times the US GDP) and is 41% of the total wealth of the country.
- The top 5% have a net worth of about 42 trillion dollars or 71% of the total.
- The next 95% (all the rest of us, about 290 million people) have a net worth of about \$18 trillion or 29% of the total.

These numbers are astounding and it tells us that the top 5% of our people control over 70% of wealth of the nation. But that's not the most astonishing finding; within the top 1% there is an even more interesting number.



- The 50 wealthiest individuals have a combined net worth of \$1 trillion which is 1.7% of the nation's wealth.
- The next 350 richest people have a net worth of \$1 trillion which is also 1.7% of the total
- The next 1600 individuals (all billionaires) have a net worth of \$2 trillion or about 3.3% of the country's wealth.

This means that the **2000** wealthiest people have a combined net worth of **\$4 trillion** or about **7% of the total wealth** of the nation and they represent 0 .0007% of the population. Within this group are individuals who are *willing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to sway elections* to help them achieve their own political interests. For example the Koch brothers and Sheldon Adelson (with combined fortunes of over \$100 billion) can significantly impact elections at all levels of our government especially now with the recent Supreme Court decisions that have taken away most restrictions on political donations by individuals, corporations and 501(c4s). This enormous and extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of **so few** people **cannot** be good for Democracy or for America.

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### 32) “Immigration, it’s personal”

by NormT 8/1/2014

As I look at the frightened faces of those young children from Latin America who are fleeing extreme crime, violence and abject poverty my heart goes out to them. However in the same images I saw crowds of people wrapped in American flags blocking those buses and screaming at the youngsters to get out of our country. What is happening to our Nation?

Are we to believe that we no longer will accept the poor, the hungry, the huddled masses that came into our nation from all over the world and made it the greatest place on earth? Our history is filled with waves of immigrants who came to America because it represented a safe place that protected human rights and offered opportunity to those willing to work hard.

A number of years ago a woman with two young girls aged 11 and 15 made a similar journey; fleeing persecution fearing for their safety and leaving abject poverty, to what was known as the Golden land (America). They spoke no English (Russian and Yiddish) and made the perilous journey from the city called Minsk across Russia, Poland, Germany and boarded a ship to come to America to join relatives who came earlier and scrimped and saved to send them the money for this journey. There was not enough money for the rest of the family who remained behind. As it turned out almost the entire Jewish community in Minsk was slaughtered by the Nazis in World War II (they were not fortunate enough to have made the journey to America).

That 11-year-old girl was my mother; she married my father (who had come earlier that year from a small town near Minsk) they had two sons. My older brother served in the Army Air Corps in W.W. II and a decade later I enlisted and served for three years in Germany. We were the lucky ones because our parents along with millions of others were allowed to come to this great country (our country).

To those people who shout and swear and scream at those poor children I say “shame on you”; you don't deserve to carry the stars and stripes and claim it for yourselves; you are like the ones who put on the brown shirts and shouted “Sieg Heil” to the Fuehrer and were willing to put millions of people in gas chambers and then claim “you didn’t know” what was happening!

You claim that you are doing it because you want to take care of problems here at home; I don't believe that because I don't think you are willing to spend a dime to help anyone but yourselves, you are nothing but a bunch of racist bigots who only care about yourselves and yes, you do have freedom of speech because our great country allows you to; unfortunately it can’t provide you with a heart to go along with it.

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### 33) “Life is a gift, don’t waste it”!

*NormT 8/24/2014*

Life is a gift, it matters not if by accident or by design. We have the ability to sense and comprehend the world around us.

We can see the glorious colors of the rainbow, the blues of the sky and the oceans, the reds of the sunset and the greens of the forests and meadows.

We can hear the rumble of distant thunder and the songs of the birds in the trees and the whisper of the winds through the leaves; we can hear the magnificence of symphony orchestras playing Beethoven or Brahms or the breathtaking song of the violin or the haunting melodies of the guitar or the heart wrenching arias of Puchini.

We can smell and taste the aromas of freshly baked bread and pastries and the damp earth after a rainstorm or the scent of the roses in the spring air.

We can touch and feel the silky coat of a loving puppy or the rough texture of a burlap bag and all these things bring back a flood of memories of our past and images of those we traveled through life with.

We have the ability to comprehend the complex world around us and try to make sense of how to make the most of our precious time here on earth because we also understand just how fragile and tenuous life can be.

We travel through time with surrounded by family and friends who in some way share our memories and become part of us and who we are.

Yes, life is a gift and we can make the most of it in the short time we have left and hope in some way those we have traveled together with can remember us with fondness and a smile because we touched their lives.

### 34) “Have we changed over the past 150 years?”

*Opinion by NormT 6/11/16*

I can't be the only one who sees a great similarity between the red state/blue state electoral map today and the slave state/free state map at the beginning of the civil war (in fact they are almost identical) about 150 years ago. To be sure not all southerners supported slavery and not all northerners were abolitionists but we fought the bloodiest war in our nation's history over this issue.

There must be something in the culture or thinking process that seems to divide our nation along these geographic boundaries. The Trump candidacy and his support by many Republicans and the use of racism, xenophobia, native-ism (fear of anyone or anything different) is a common thread in their narrative.

Why are “individual rights” viewed so differently by both groups? Why is the right to own a gun seen as more important than the right of free expression and choice? There is a great divide in this country and it appears to be getting more partisan and bitter and unless there are steps taken to heal the wounds (reduce the rhetoric that demonizes) we may be faced with another split that breaks our union apart.

I am an unabashed liberal (almost libertarian) when it comes to social issues and fiscally moderate (from my many years running businesses) so I miss the checks and balances we used to have when the Republican party was center-right and the Democratic party was center-left and Congress would pass bills that were a compromise and we could make progress for the common good. This has all but disappeared and we are stalled in a quagmire of self righteous finger pointing and recriminations.

I hope the voters come to their senses; denounce and reject the forces of bigotry and separation and vote in people who put Country before party, are willing to compromise for the benefit of “we the people” or we will surely separate into two nations (as natural enemies) and eventually have another “Civil War”.

### 35) “Fear and Hate, a potent combination”

*Opinion by NormT 6/30/2016*

Demagogues use fear and hate to achieve their objectives (to gain political power and control); one just needs to look back at what Hitler did in Germany in the early 1930s to see just how effective this combination has been in the past. There are of course more recent examples of people effectively using this technique in today's world of instantaneous and ubiquitous communications (using social media).

Fear is a very natural response to a threat. We, (as are all species) are programmed to respond to threats with self preservation responses such as “fight or flight” and the adrenalin flows into our system making us more alert and responsive and the emotional side of our brain takes over from the analytical side.

When we are bombarded with perceived threats on an ongoing basis the tendency is to view everything and everyone as an enemy and react on a visceral level rather than analyze them rationally to determine reality or proportionality.

When all we see or are told identifies some groups (Blacks, Mexicans, Jews, Muslims, Gays etc.) as evil (almost sub-human), who are trying to harm us and change everything we hold dear and with our emotional instincts kicking in, we “fear” them.

They become the enemy and must be destroyed to save ourselves and our families from these “outsiders”; they are “criminals, rapists, drug dealers, terrorists who want to kill us and cut off our heads” (you get the idea). During this hysteria it becomes very difficult to truly evaluate the threat for reality or magnitude. This appeal to fear anything different or unknown creates a real divide in society and a “them versus us” attitude.

Once fear is established and internalized on a visceral level the demagogue can then put hate into play; it is a short step from irrational fear to hating that which we fear; especially if there are already tendencies in that direction.

This emotional appeal to “hate” has been used over the years because unfortunately there is within us a tendency to feel comfortable with people who are like us and be uncomfortable with people who are in some way “different”; and the more different, the higher the degree of discomfort.

The leap from discomfort to hate requires a cultural or learned predisposition combined with a high degree of fear. If there already is a predisposition to dislike others (Blacks, Mexicans etc.) it becomes easier to hate that group and if figures of power and prestige (like Presidential candidates or elected officials) give credence and acceptance to these feelings it legitimizes it and gives them permission to be bigots, racists, homophobes, sexists as it is now seen as just being politically incorrect rather than being what they really are “American NAZI’s”!

Hitler used this same approach and Trump is using it now; spread irrational fear and promote hatred of anything and anyone different. Hopefully the American people will not fall into this trap; if not I feel our Democracy and country will not survive.

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### **36) “Shared memories create strong bonds”**

Musings by NormT 2/22/17

Humans are basically social animals and as such we generally choose to live together in groups. The bonds between people (how strongly they feel linked) has many causes, for example: blood or family ties, a common religion or belief systems, a common language, a common race or ethnicity, even membership in common interest clubs and groups.

The strength of the bonds varies greatly depending on one's personal experiences. However I feel there is one area that often has a strong influence on how we feel about each other and how much of a link we feel toward each other.

I feel it is shared memories that form the strongest bonds; we may feel kinship with others in the same group but if we haven't lived through experiences together, see and heard and felt the same things at the same time we may feel somewhat connected but not bonded.

Of course our close family members generally have the most chance of having common memories with us especially if siblings are close in age; if we share experiences together and can recall these memories (even if we remember them slightly differently) we feel a warmth, a closeness that binds us together.

In terms of non-family members we have: best friends, schoolmates, people we work with, neighbors, people we have served with in the military or in groups. The more we have shared memories the more likely we feel a closeness with them or conversely if it was a very bad experience or common memory the greater the alienation from them.

I have friends who I served with in the Army some 60 years ago, we may differ politically, with different backgrounds and in my case I haven't seen them since we spent 3 years of our lives having many shared memories and I still have a strong bond with them.

If we share travel, or entertainment (concerts, operas, etc.), restaurant experiences (good and bad), worked closely together at work or in clubs we have shared many common memories and we feel a closeness to these people that we don't with others.

We are after all is said and done are a collection of our memories and we feel attached to those who share them with us. We consider those with the most shared memories our close friends and often the conversations include reminiscing about the past and things we have done together.

Sharing a sunset, a stormy and restless ocean, adventures together to faraway places, our children's first words and steps; magnificent meals and Operas. These things and more are why my strongest bonds and ties are to my wife who has been at my side for over 50 years and shared so many memories together.

Think about those who you share memories with and the bonds you have developed, I contend shared memories are stronger than blood and define who we are.

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### 37) “The old man and the park bench”

*A short story by NormT 6/4/18*

The park was an oasis of green in an otherwise grey and steel city; all around the park tall buildings blocked the sun and cars, taxis and buses belching diesel smoke, honking their horns and an occasional squealing of brakes could be heard. The park had been built to provide a respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Once one walked down the 5 steps leading into the park the sounds seem to disappear; the many serpentine paths wove in and out of grassy knolls (where you could spread a blanket and have a picnic), through stands of trees that provided shade and homes for the various birds that lived there, and a playground at one end and a small lake at the other where ducks mingled with remote controlled boats.

All along the path spaced about 40 feet apart were old fashioned wooden park benches, placed far enough apart to provide privacy of sorts but close enough to feel connected. The 5<sup>th</sup> bench in from the entrance, near the playground area was called old “193” because at one time in the past someone carved the numbers on the back of the bench; no one knows what it symbolized or who put it there but for the past quarter century it has been called “old 193”.

It was a glorious spring day, the sun was shining, but it was not too hot and a gentle breeze cooled the air and overhead wispy white clouds inched across a bright blue sky. The flower beds were ablaze with bright spring colors and humming with bees flitting from flower to flower.

The old man made his way down the steps and along the path and sat down on old 193 and pulled a crumpled brown paper bag out of his pocket. He settled in, closed his eyes and enjoyed the warmth of the sun on his face and the breeze blowing through his sparse white hair. Every once in a while the old man reached into the bag and spread crumbs all around and watched the pigeons scramble to get their share and an occasional chipmunk make an appearance to see what all the fuss was about.

A policeman casually walked down the path and mumbled “morning Mike”, the old man responded with an “morning, Pat”; neither noting that it was well past noon but this was their ritual perhaps repeated a thousand times over the past years.

The kids were playing in the area behind old 193 and you could hear shouting, shrieks of joy and an occasional cry when someone fell off one of the pieces of equipment. The mothers or caretakers were in small benches around the playground to keep an eye on their charges. Everything seemed in order and Mike seemed to be dozing on his bench.

A small boy came running from near the swing set and climbed onto the bench near Mike; he looked over and smiled. The boy (maybe 4 or 5) said “hi mister, watcha doing”. Mike replied “I’m thinking”. From the playground a voice was heard shouting to the boy “Jason, leave the old gentleman alone”. Mike wasn’t sure if he should take umbridge at the word “old” but thought the use of “gentleman” made it OK.

Jason looked up at the old man and said “my name is Jason, what’s yours?”. Mike replied “my name is Mukhail but everyone calls me Mike”. Jason looked at Mike and said “you smell like my grandpa”, Mike replied “it’s called Ben-Gay” and “by the way, you don’t smell so great either” at which Jason said “OK” and climbed off the bench and ran back to the playground to resume his activities and Mike went back to his snoozing and thinking about “things”.

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### 38) “Civility and political correctness

*Opinion by NormT*      7716

Maybe I'm getting old, but I really miss the days when civility, decorum and rationality were part of our lives. I pine for the days when we could have disagreements and carry-on civil conversations about the issues using logic and reasoning and not try to destroy the character and sincerity of the person on the other side of the argument.

We used to promote our positions with “real” facts (not stuff we made up) and reasonable and substantiated arguments, now it appears that we have reached new lows in how we treat our competitors and even our compatriots.

The coarseness, the crudeness is now such a part of what we see all around us that it is becoming the new norm. What used to only be a part of cable TV, the barracks and the back rooms (the animal house scenario) is now everywhere and especially disturbing, it has taken over our politics.

What Newt Gingrich started in the 90's (vicious personal attacks) has been taken over by Trump and taken to new vile and outrageous lows. Donald has combined grade school bullying and name calling with made up lies and distortions reaching irrational and illogical conclusions that only a third grader might find appealing (my apologies to intelligent third graders).

This debasing of civility and rationality will weaken our nation, marginalize our Democracy and set a terrible example to all who follow. This is NOT the way for our politicians, our leaders, our elected officials to act; it has nothing to do with political correctness and everything to do with shallow intellect and ignorance!

We would not and should not allow our children to behave in this manner why do we allow our politicians to do so?

### 39) “False equivalency”

*Opinion by NormT 7/11/2016*

Equivalency means things are essentially the same or equal in most aspects; we often use this in making comparisons between events, ideas, situations and even people.

The media (TV, newspapers and talk radio) likes to use this (the equivalency argument) when trying to compare news stories but very often they don't do their homework in seeing if the items are really the same.

A false equivalency is when there is some commonality but most other aspects are not the same. I think this is sloppy or lazy journalism and can lead to distorted or erroneous conclusions by the reader or listener. Apples and Oranges are both fruit but they sure taste very different.

In the past week there were two major news stories that I believe were examples of “false equivalencies”.

The first is the killing of 5 white Dallas police officers being equated to the killing of black men by white police officers in Baton Rouge and Minneapolis. What they have in common was that people were shot and died. If they had used the Dallas story and the one in South Carolina when a deranged person racially targeted a group of people and committed a mass murder, it would be equivalent.

Comparing the Dallas shooting to numerous police shootings of black men is a false equivalency. In one case we have a deranged shooter who targeted a specific group (white cops), in the other we have a systemic problem of excessive force being used by police departments in many areas against black citizens. I don't believe those policemen woke up in the morning thinking I want to go out and kill some blacks today.

The results are both tragic but the background and history is very different and what might be done to prevent future tragedies will likely be different as well.

The second story tries to equate high unfavorable poll ratings of Trump and Clinton. While the poll results show both are viewed negatively I don't believe they are equivalent because of how they came about.

Trump's negatives came about by what he has said and done during the primaries; his name calling, racial comments and irrational statements. Clinton's negatives are a culmination of

25 years of political attacks, bogus investigations with some sexist overtones. She has a long record of public service and every aspect of her public life has been scrutinized in detail.

Trump on the other hand has no public service; is a flawed businessman and a reality TV celebrity. To say they are equal would miss the causes of the unfavorable ratings and lead to a false comparison.

I don't know why this bothers me, I guess I am a stickler for accuracy and believe in logical reasoning (developed in Athens about 500 BC) and false equivalencies are an anathema to physicists, mathematicians and "nit pickers" like me.

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## **40) “Iran, nuclear proliferation and the Republican response”**

*An opinion by Norm T 11/26/2013*

The recently announced deal (at least the beginnings of a diplomatic solution to control nuclear proliferation in the Middle East) seems to have unleashed an array of negativism from the far right. Even though this arrangement is just the beginning of negotiations and perhaps even the path to the normalization of relations with Iran it appears that the opposition (the Republicans allied with militarists) are trying to do everything in their power to torpedo the agreement ironed out by the major powers and brokered by the United States.

Whether a final deal can be worked out with Iran is still in question, but at least we have started the wheels in motion to try to find a diplomatic solution and prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power. One wonders why there has been such vocal opposition to something which obviously would be in the best interests of the United States and the world?

I can only assume two possible reasons for this opposition: the first is that the Republicans are continuing their obstructionist activities and are against anything that Pres. Obama has been involved in and might reflect positively on him even if it means going against things that are the best interests of our nation and its people. If this is the case then what they are doing is either gross negligence (or stupidity) or by all accounts treasonous.

The other possibility is that these people honestly believe that any war no matter how devastating is what they want to get us into (as long as it is other people's sons and daughters that are killed or maimed). I find it hard to believe that people who were elected to Congress to serve and protect the people are acting so blatantly in disregard of their responsibilities and blindly follow their political ideology and hatred of the president.

I believe there is a role in government for a loyal opposition and a discussion of all positions and a compromise to do what's in the best interests of the people; but what they are doing now is far from what they were elected to do and one would only hope that the voters see through this hypocrisy and get rid of these obstructionist representatives who are not acting in the best interests of America!

## 41) “Key Problems we face”

11/26/2013

Some fundamental truths (what I believe)

There are some things we should all be able to agree with; almost everyone understands them to be true and the vast majority of the people with the proper expertise have agreed upon:

- 1) The “Earth” is about 4.5 billion years old” (the universe as we understand it is about 18 billion years old). Some people choose to think 6 or 7 thousand years is the correct number; they are absolutely wrong and shouldn’t be teaching their children this erroneous information. I question whether they should be allowed to sit on juries since they seem to be unable to accept scientific evidence and reach a logical conclusion.
- 2) Darwin’s theory of evolution and natural selection is almost universally accepted and those who don’t want to believe our ancestors looked like apes are just fooling themselves and they should not be allowed to write textbooks that says otherwise or teach their own version in schools that have academic accreditation.
- 3) Global warming is real. The worldwide melting of the glaciers in Greenland, Tibet and the Polar icecaps is happening. Yes, there are natural weather cycles between ice ages and hot periods but almost all scientists believe the emissions from combustion of fossil fuels have accelerated and exacerbated the problem, the studies funded by the oil and gas industry are very suspect and the far right is playing politics when it discredits man's influence on global warming to the detriment of future generations.
- 4) President Obama was born in Hawaii . The last time I checked Hawaii was still part of the United States of America and therefore Obama is a valid American citizen. The “birther” fanatics are basically bigots and racists and shouldn’t be allowed to serve in Congress. President Obama is not a socialist, a Muslim nor radical; he is a slightly left of center person who believes that everyone should have the right to live the American dream.
- 5) Greed is the driving force in Industry. Corporations and Companies left to their own volition (driven by shareholders and top management) will place short term profits above the good of the Nation, their employees or their own long term objectives. Greed will win out and the lack of regulation, control and enforcement will allow this to occur. People should realize that Corporations will do what is in their own best interests and what they

are able to get away with. Corporations are NOT people and should NOT be accorded Constitutional rights as individuals.

- 6) Knowledge and the ability to access this information has expanded so rapidly that Governments, Industry and Humanity may not be able to absorb or respond to these changes. Latest estimates indicate knowledge is now doubling every year (if not quicker).
- 7) Over the past 25 years in the United States there has been a dramatic shifting of wealth from the middle class to the ultra rich (top 1-2 % of the population)which now has about 50% of the nation's wealth. This transfer of wealth combined with outsourcing and efficiency improvements (due to automation, computerization and the internet) has created unemployment, underemployment and lower incomes and has essentially destroyed the American middle class itself.
- 8) Fundamentally I believe that scientific processes, logic and reasoning will provide better solutions to our problems than blind acceptance of ideology and partisan thinking. There are so many areas that need to be addressed in this 21st century that it is important that we clearly understand the problems that we face and come up with solutions that would be in the best interests of the vast majority of the people.
- 9) I believe the vast majority of people on earth are good, decent people who only want the best for their selves and their families do not want to inflict harm on others. Realistically we will always be a small minority who act in their own self interests and do not feel they are straight white normal social conventions.
- 10) There are a number of problems (energy independence, global warming, immigration, gun control and many others) that we face that I believe we can come up with meaningful solutions that will address most of our concerns.
- 11) There are two areas however that I feel we must address if we are ever going to make the changes necessary to face the future. I believe it is critical that we as a nation work to correct these two problems; they are:A) the American people seem to have lost confidence and faith that their elected officials represent their best interests andB) we seem to have lost hope that the American dream will be available for all ; what I mean by that is the expectation that our children will have a better life than their parents.



## **42) “90% is not 50% is not 10%”**

*NormT 5/17/2014*

Many people were rightfully upset at the last Senate vote about background checks for gun purchases. The actual vote was 54 FOR and 46 against and would normally have meant the bill would pass; however because of Senate rules and the Republicans demand for a supermajority it required 60 votes to pass.

Many on the left were very upset that five Democrats voted against the bill and blame the Democratic Party for its defeat. While it is frustrating that such a common sense piece of legislation did not pass (even though it got more than 50% of the vote) one must remember that 90% of the Democrats voted in favor. This is in contrast to 90% of the Republicans who voted against.

While some like to say that both parties are the same and "they all do it" this just isn't the case, it wasn't as if half of all Democrats and half of all Republicans voted against the bill, what happened was 90% Democrats voted for it and 10% of the Democrats voted against while 90% of Republicans voted against this and only 10% voted for.

So if one wants to place the blame on why the bill was defeated I would suggest that overwhelmingly it was the Republicans who voted against what the vast majority of Americans felt was the right thing to do.

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### 43) “Black -White – Gray and Syria”

*NormT 11/2/2013*

There are many people in the world who choose to see everything in absolute terms, they feel more comfortable when presented with extremes such as black or white, good or evil, war or peace, now or never; this applies to both the far right and far left. They want clear-cut solutions and because they are absolutists it is very difficult for them to compromise.

However, the real world is very complex and doesn't lend itself to these absolute solutions or decisions in fact the problems are often stated in these absolute terms and tend to skew any discussions or arguments that try to bring in the complexity of the situation.

I believe that the vast majority of problems and solutions need to be looked at as shades of gray; somewhere between the extreme ends that we often see portrayed in the news media.

Let's look at Syria; almost everybody agrees that there is no good or easy solution and that there is almost nothing that can be done that will satisfy everybody. We all agree that Assad is a brutal dictator who slaughters his own people but fighting against him are factions that might be even worse (al- Qaeda fighters seem to be the strongest of the opposition elements and would be a disaster for the United States and the West if they were to replace Assad) the so-called moderates are also an unknown factor.

So the situation is: we have a Civil War with multiple factions fighting each other; we have a dictator who used banned chemical weapons against his own people; on the other side we have Islamist militants aligned with terrorist organizations who might replace Assad and the third factor is a more moderate group who appears to be very fractured and most likely cannot win in this battle.

So what can we do? Should we allow the use of weapons of mass destruction such as Sarin gas and would this encourage proliferation of these weapons around the world and would this encourage Iran to build a nuclear bomb?

President Obama suggests limited military action (not a war) directed at preventing further use of chemical weapons, this would mean both airstrikes and missile strikes against specific targets (without the use of ground forces or boots on the ground) his main objective is to prevent the use of banned biological/chemical weapons with an eye towards future use of nuclear weapons in the region. Recent efforts to find a political solution by the United States

and Russia with the goal of eliminating all of the Sarin gas stockpiles held by the Assad regime may be the ideal solution to prevent the need for military action.

This proposal by Pres. Obama appears to be a solution that addresses a major problem but doesn't get us into the Civil War; the arguments against this limited use appear to be 1) it takes us to war (which is highly unlikely) or 2) we should do nothing (going into an isolationist position and bury our heads in the sand) or 3) we should get deeply involved with the more moderate insurgents which may eventually require us to fight both Assad and the Al Qaeda elements.

As far as I'm concerned either the political solution which eventually eliminates the chemical stockpiles or a limited military strike (which would make their further use unlikely) is the best option.

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#### 44) “What to do about North Korea, the Ukraine and Syria”

OpinionNormT 3/1/2014

These three countries have been in the news lately and although they represent dramatically different situations and parts of the world the question comes up "what should the US do about it?. I believe that we **should** also ask "what **can** we do" taking into account political realities and finally "what **will** we do?" That is in our own best interests.

I believe that we (the United States) have a moral obligation to do what is in our power to help alleviate situations where we see genocides being perpetrated: this of course would include what Nazi Germany did to the Jews, what was going on in Bosnia against the Muslims, the tribal slaughtering in Africa and what the Turks did to the Armenians. In some of these cases action was taken (although not necessarily to combat genocides) and in some cases we stood idly by and watched the slaughter go on.

In the case of North Korea we have an absolute dictator who has complete control over the military and all communications, there is no opposition to his power (all who were opposed have been killed or sent to concentration camps) and to make matters worse he has nuclear weapons that he might use against his neighbor (South Korea) if any action is taken against him. The latest United Nations report describing what is going on in his prison camps is horrific but short of trying to overthrow this despot by assassination or a massive invasion (which nobody has the stomach for) I believe there is nothing we can do or should do except to put pressure on China to help alleviate the situation.

In the case of Syria we have a full-blown civil war with over 100,000 deaths and millions of refugees. The opposition to Assad is divided between extreme fundamentalists (Al Qaeda affiliates) and insurgents who are opposed to his minority regime (but they don't seem to have the ability to overthrow his regime without our help). It would be foolhardy for us to get involved in the middle of the Civil War and if we were to take sides we must be careful that the side that prevails would be in our own best interests, this means that we probably will take no action except trying to provide humanitarian aid and put leverage on Russia and Iran to create a political settlement.

In the Ukraine it is a different situation; they have had democratic elections and although the populace is almost evenly divided they seem to believe in a rule of law and there are hopeful signs of a nonviolent outcome, it still remains to be seen what Russia (Putin) will do, so once again our best course of action is to do nothing.

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**Sometimes doing nothing is better than doing the wrong thing!**

## 45) “Oh, what short memories we have!”

*NormT 2/1/2014*

We Americans seem to have very short memories, it's worth looking at history to get a perspective on how things have changed. Let's go way back (maybe five years) to 2008. What was the situation at that time?

- We (the US and the rest of the world) were on the edge of going into a great depression. The banks were frozen, there was essentially no lending, their balance sheets were filled with phony and overvalued assets and many of the banks were on the verge of collapse.
- The stock market had lost about half of its value and those with IRAs and 401(k)s saw their nest-eggs shrink considerably; the Dow Jones was about 6000 and the economy was losing between 600,000 to 700,000 jobs a month. The housing market had collapsed and almost no new homes were being built and foreclosures were running wild; about 20% of the homes were under water and there was no end in sight.
- The American auto industry was in shambles and on the verge of collapse; they were making cars that were not competitive and their sales had plummeted.
- We had about 200,000 combat troops fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan and the toll of dead and wounded was hanging heavy on the American psyche; these wars were being paid for on our national credit card and the debts were piling up.
- We had very little support from the rest of the world's nations who felt that our actions were arrogant and imperialistic and felt that our inclination was to send in troops without regard to the situation on the ground and without a long term plan as we did in Iraq.
- We were importing over 30% of our energy needs from areas of the world that were unstable and in many cases unfriendly, to make matters worse much of the energy used was dirty and added massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere accelerating global warming.
- Our healthcare system was broken and with decades of double digit annual inflation the cost of healthcare was a major factor contributing to our long-term

debt and economic instability. To make matters worse, the insurance process was such that about 30 to 50 million Americans had no insurance, if you had a pre-existing condition you couldn't get insurance, if you had insurance and you got sick there were lifetime caps on your benefits and in many cases your insurance would be canceled if you placed a claim. Basically, our healthcare system was broken and needed major fixing.

So what did we do back in 2008 (and 2012)? We elected an "African born, socialist Muslim (worst President ever" or at least that's what the "Tea party" leaders would have you believe). So now let's fast-forward five years to December 2013 and see where we are today:

- we did not have a Great Depression although it's been a long slow process of recovering from a deep recession; the banks did not fail, lending is back to normal and Congress passed a bill (Dodd- Frank) that hopefully will prevent the possibility of going into a depression. It appears that the US has made a stronger recovery than the rest of the world and the dollar is still the strongest and most wanted currency around.
- The stock market is at an all-time high (over 16,000) and more than doubled during this period. Most IRAs and 401(k)s are now above where they were before the decline and people are feeling better about their long-term retirement plans. We have had more than 48 months of private sector job creation with over 7 million jobs created. The housing market is in a strong recovery and new homes are being built and housing prices in many areas are almost back to where they were before (foreclosures have dramatically declined) and the construction industry has created many new jobs.
- The American auto industry led by General Motors is now leading the world, making cars that people want and recently paid back almost all of the loans they received. Contrary to popular belief we did not nationalize or have a government takeover of the industry and we saved many millions of potential job losses by this action.
- Our combat troops are out of Iraq and we are no longer leading the combat in Afghanistan turning over most of the fighting to the Afghan army and are on target to reduce our troop strength to a very small number by the end of 2014. By the way all of the military costs are now captured in the budgetary process. During this time we have avoided sending new combat troops into places like Libya, Syria and Egypt and our foreign policy is now focused more on diplomacy rather than force. There is a real possibility that we may have better relations with Iran and perhaps have them stop their

nuclear processing without having to fight a war and by the way, we took out Osama Bin Laden along the way.

- With the expansion of our energy policy the United States is now a net exporter of energy and we are no longer vulnerable to the vagaries of Middle Eastern politics. With the expansion of natural gas production and more environmental controls of dirty fuels and upgrades to auto mileage standards we are making great steps towards reducing our carbon footprint.
- The cost of healthcare has seen the lowest increase in the past two decades. With the passage of the affordable care act (Obama care) we are now addressing the problems of the previous healthcare system such as : allowing people with pre-existing conditions to get insurance, insurance companies no longer have lifetime caps and they cannot drop you if you make a claim, children can stay on their parents insurance up to the age of 26 and affordable insurance policies are being made available by the insurance exchanges (private insurance not government run healthcare) which ultimately will make affordable insurance available to many millions of Americans who did not have insurance before.

Although I do not agree with all the things President Obama has done (and without the help of Congressional Republicans I might add) and there are still many problems that need to be addressed, when looking at the results of the past five years, one can only say that his presidency has been very productive and successful for America and the American people.

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## 46) “The last letter to my brother”

6/15/2015

Dear Harv

You were always there for me, my hero, my big brother, the one I always looked up to and the standard I tried to emulate. You took me into your home when Mom and Dad died and became a surrogate father as well; I don't know what I would have done or become if it wasn't for you and Renee.

Now as we near the end I realize that there is no-one left who can share our memories, of Mom & Dad, Of Woodridge and the Castons' and when a snake chased me down the road in front of their house and you ran down with a shovel and cut off it's head, of the time you went to my grade school and threatened to punch out my teacher because he was picking on me, of sharing our one bedroom apartment with you and me, Mom & Dad and Bubbie (our grandmother) who used to scream and howl in her nightmares about her life in Russia and scare the hell out of us.

Of the times you took me along to the Polo Grounds to watch the Giants play and I got to sit in the press box while you manned the TV camera; you taught me to play chess (and beat me the first 250 games), and to play bridge. You taught me to ride a bike and I inherited your old bike. You taught me to play baseball and to follow the rules and play fair.

I never heard you curse or use foul language or even get mad. You were always the gold standard I tried to follow (in how to do things) but I never was able to meet those standards. I grew up in your house and watched your kids grow up and felt more like an older brother than an uncle to them.

Our family is slowly disappearing, all the Aunts and Uncles are gone, most of the cousins have passed away and there are a precious few of us left who share our memories. I will always remember when you came home from the Army (you were transporting a prisoner)



and had this huge cannon of a pistol strapped to your hip ( a 45 I believe) and you seemed 10 foot tall (well I was only 6 at the time).

For the past 55 years we have kept in touch through many visits and phone calls; being 3000 miles apart and on the other side of the continent kept us apart physically but never in our thoughts. I wish we could have been closer so we could have visited more often.

Time will pass and soon there will be no one left who can remember the things only you and I have in our shared memories. I love you my big brother and thank you for everything you have done for me!

Norm

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## **47) “Fear and Hate, a potent combination”**

*Opinion by NormT 6/30/2016*

Demagogues use fear and hate to achieve their objectives (to gain political power and control); one just needs to look back at what Hitler did in Germany in the early 1930s to see just how effective this combination has been in the past. There are of course more recent examples of people effectively using this technique in today's world of instantaneous and ubiquitous communications (using social media).

Fear is a very natural response to a threat. We, (as are all species) are programmed to respond to threats with self preservation responses such as “fight or flight” and the adrenalin flows into our system making us more alert and responsive and the emotional side of our brain takes over from the analytical side.

When we are bombarded with perceived threats on an ongoing basis the tendency is to view everything and everyone as an enemy and react on a visceral level rather than analyze them rationally to determine reality or proportionality.

When all we see or are told identifies some groups (Blacks, Mexicans, Jews, Muslims, Gays etc.) as evil (almost sub-human), who are trying to harm us and change everything we hold dear and with our emotional instincts kicking in, we “fear” them.

They become the enemy and must be destroyed to save ourselves and our families from these “outsiders”; they are “criminals, rapists, drug dealers, terrorists who want to kill us and cut off our heads” (you get the idea). During this hysteria it becomes very difficult to truly evaluate the threat for reality or magnitude. This appeal to fear anything different or unknown creates a real divide in society and a “them versus us” attitude.

Once fear is established and internalized on a visceral level the demagogue can then put hate into play; it is a short step from irrational fear to hating that which we fear; especially if there are already tendencies in that direction.

This emotional appeal to “hate” has been used over the years because unfortunately there is within us a tendency to feel comfortable with people who are like us and be uncomfortable with people who are in some way “different”; and the more different, the higher the degree of discomfort.

The leap from discomfort to hate requires a cultural or learned predisposition combined with a high degree of fear. If there already is a predisposition to dislike others (Blacks, Mexicans etc.) it becomes easier to hate that group and if figures of power and prestige (like Presidential candidates or elected officials) give credence and acceptance to these feelings it legitimizes it and gives them permission to be bigots, racists, homophobes, sexists as it is now seen as just being politically incorrect rather than being what they really are “American NAZI’s”!

Hitler used this same approach and Trump is using it now; spread irrational fear and promote hatred of anything and anyone different. Hopefully the American people will not fall into this trap; if not I feel our Democracy and country will not survive.

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## **48) “Shared memories create strong bonds”**

Musings by NormT 2/22/17

Humans are basically social animals and as such we generally choose to live together in groups. The bonds between people (how strongly they feel linked) has many causes, for example: blood or family ties, a common religion or belief systems, a common language, a common race or ethnicity, even membership in common interest clubs and groups.

The strength of the bonds varies greatly depending on one's personal experiences. However I feel there is one area that often has a strong influence on how we feel about each other and how much of a link we feel toward each other.

I feel it is shared memories that form the strongest bonds; we may feel kinship with others in the same group but if we haven't lived through experiences together, see and heard and felt the same things at the same time we may feel somewhat connected but not bonded.

Of course our close family members generally have the most chance of having common memories with us especially if siblings are close in age; if we share experiences together and can recall these memories (even if we remember them slightly differently) we feel a warmth, a closeness that binds us together.

In terms of non-family members we have: best friends, schoolmates, people we work with, neighbors, people we have served with in the military or in groups. The more we have shared memories the more likely we feel a closeness with them or conversely if it was a very bad experience or common memory the greater the alienation from them.

I have friends who I served with in the Army some 60 years ago, we may differ politically, with different backgrounds and in my case I haven't seen them since we spent 3 years of our lives having many shared memories and I still have a strong bond with them.

If we share travel, or entertainment (concerts, operas, etc.), restaurant experiences (good and bad), worked closely together at work or in clubs we have shared many common memories and we feel a closeness to these people that we don't with others.

We are after all is said and done are a collection of our memories and we feel attached to those who share them with us. We consider those with the most shared memories our close friends and often the conversations include reminiscing about the past and things we have done together.

Sharing a sunset, a stormy and restless ocean, adventures together to faraway places, our children's first words and steps; magnificent meals and Operas. These things and more are why my strongest bonds and ties are to my wife who has been at my side for over 50 years and shared so many memories together.

Think about those who you share memories with and the bonds you have developed, I contend shared memories are stronger than blood and define who we are.

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## 49) “Looking at the world through the haze of mental illness”

*Opinion by NormT 8/6/16*

Recently a number of respected Psychologists and Psychiatrists after observing Donald Trump’s statements and actions over the past year have come to some disturbing conclusions; that Trump suffers from a severe mental problem called “narcissistic personality disorder” along with a degree of “paranoia”\*.

We require our servicemen and women who have anything to do with our nuclear arsenal to undergo extensive psychological evaluation before being allowed to work with “Nukes”; shouldn’t we also insist on at least the same level of testing for the Presidential candidates who would be the ultimate decision maker in the nuclear chain?

I urge you to read the material below; beginning with information from the Mayo Clinic and followed by excerpts from an article “Why Narcissists Are So Dangerous”.

See if you can see any similarities with Donald Trump’s behavior and this mental disorder.

### **(\*) Paranoia):**

A mental condition characterized by delusions of persecution, unwarranted jealousy, or exaggerated self-importance. It may be an aspect of chronic personality disorder, of drug abuse, or of a serious condition such as schizophrenia in which the person loses touch with reality.

The major conclusion is that people with this mental disorder live in their own reality world, disconnected from the real world, from facts and logical reasoning and with no empathy towards others and cannot be allowed to be President of the most powerful nation on earth.

### **Narcissistic personality disorder - (the Mayo Clinic)**

Is a mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance, a deep need for admiration and a lack of empathy for others. But behind this mask of ultra-confidence lies a fragile self-esteem that's vulnerable to the slightest criticism.

Symptoms:

You may come across as conceited, boastful or pretentious. You often monopolize conversations. You may belittle or look down on people you perceive as inferior. You may feel a sense of entitlement — and when you don't receive special treatment, you may become impatient or angry. You may insist on having "the best" of everything.

At the same time, you have trouble handling anything that may be perceived as criticism. To feel better, you may react with rage or contempt and try to belittle the other person to make you appear superior.

Many experts use the criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), published by the American Psychiatric Association, to diagnose mental conditions. The DSM-5 criteria for narcissistic personality disorder include these features:

- Having an exaggerated sense of self-importance
- Expecting to be recognized as superior even without achievements that warrant it
- Exaggerating your achievements and talents
- Being preoccupied with fantasies about success, power, brilliance, beauty or the perfect mate
- Believing that you are superior and can only be understood by or associate with equally special people
- Requiring constant admiration
- Having a sense of entitlement
- Expecting special favors and unquestioning compliance with your expectations
- Taking advantage of others to get what you want
- Having an inability or unwillingness to recognize the needs and feelings of others
- Being envious of others and believing others envy you
- Behaving in an arrogant or haughty manner

Although some features of narcissistic personality disorder may seem like having confidence, it's not the same. Narcissistic personality disorder crosses the border of healthy confidence into thinking so highly of yourself that you put yourself on a pedestal and value yourself more than you value others.

## Why Narcissists Are So Dangerous!

Is because they are in complete denial of reality. “They live in a world of delusional reality”.

Delusion of Grandeur – grossly exaggerated beliefs of ones own: Self-worth, power, knowledge, identity, exceptional relationship to a divinity or famous person.

Entitlement – Others exist to serve them –They view others in an inhumane way which allows them to act out on us with no empathy This complete and utter disregard for the rights of others, stems from their delusional thoughts that only ONE person benefits (wins) and that is the narcissist themselves.

Boundaries don’t exist – Not being aware of the boundaries that exist between two people is a denial of reality.they are more driven by their desire for power

Non-Identity = Non-Accountability – a narcissist has a flexible, chameleon like identity, they have no solid foundation of self other than being that of a manipulator,. Their modus operandi is “whatever works”. Since they hold no code of ethics.

Narcissists are in charge of reality – Power mongers, Control freaks who can’t recognize boundaries, they believe that what they think is the reality for EVERYONE. It becomes very apparent that a narcissist believes themselves to be all knowing. Their entitlement and lack of boundaries allows them to play God; they’re the writers of the script, the great puppeteers, the all knowing Wizard of Oz.

Rapists, child molesters, robbers and murderers have the same inhumane view of people, viewing them as objects to exploit at will and have no concept that it is wrong to violate or cross the demarcation lines of another’s property, being or identity. We KNOW that these types of people are dangerous

They LACK EMPATHY - One of the key presenting traits of narcissists is their utter incapability to empathize. They exhibit behaviors like: lying, cheating, name calling, criticizing,



belittling, mean “jokes”, jabs and put downs (various forms of verbal abuse). They just “don’t care”; they lack EMPATHY!

I hope by now you will have seen that Donald Trump exhibits most if not all the traits of someone with the mental disease called “narcissistic personality disorder”; and is not fit emotionally or mentally to be Commander in Chief!

Words used to describe people with narcissistic personality disorder:

- 1) Unrealistic sense of entitlement, very high ego, superficial and vain, no conscience, no empathy, no sense of boundaries, no guilt no remorse. Starts smears campaigns and spreads lies and half truths about all those who stand in the way.
- 2) They have the ability to appear to others as the epitome of charm, love, and compassion, and only their victims see the real side to them.
- 3) They will do whatever it takes to get what they want. If they don’t achieve it, they will destroy everything in their path.
- 4) Cunning, insidious, remorseless, selfish, abusive, liar, phony, taker, manipulator, entitled, deranged, attention seeking, Shallow.
- 5) totally self-absorbed with his own gratification, clueless and dismissive as to the after-effects on others.
- 6) lack of remorse, lack of responsibility, pathological liar, manipulative and controlling.
- 7) They believe their own lies. That makes them very believable to others.
- 8) Their charm hides their true self.
- 9) They have NO compunction....there is NOTHING they won’t say....NOTHING they won’t do to GET what they crave.
- 10) Selfish, egotistical, evil, cruel, lying, abusive, tyrant!

## **50) “False and Fake news and lies are not new, but they have taken an ugly and dangerous turn”**

*Opinion by NormT 12/9/16*

People have been telling tall tales since they learned that they could take advantage of a situation by doing so. We often embellish our stories, exaggerate and leave out facts that don't corroborate our position. We have grown accustomed and accept “white lies” because we believe they may cause less harm than the truth would. Everyone “knows” that politicians lie; but don't take into account the magnitude or frequency of the lies. Someone who lies once in a while is very different from a pathological liar who lies most of the time.

Media involvement is also not new and is probably the driving force in the creation of libel laws. Many newspapers became scandal rags and tabloids; in fact the National Enquirer (founded in 1926) and during the 30's and 40's pushed “isolationism” and “fascist propaganda” then moved to supermarket check-out stands peddling sensationalism, gossip, rumors and felt little or no responsibility to check for facts or reason. After all it was entertainment and sold papers and increased advertising revenue. People would glance at the headlines (the more improbable or salacious the better) and bought the paper knowing the three headed Martian baby was a hoax but in general didn't give much credence because although titillating and entertaining it really had very little impact on our lives.

Fast forward to the new age of cable news networks and social media and we are seeing a major change in how news, false news and facts and lies, innuendoes, distortions and conspiracy theories are instantly available and pushed into our space and so totally ubiquitous; we can't get away from it if we tried.

FOX cable NEWS is the largest purveyor of distorted information (they are now admitting they are not newsmen but opinion pushers and entertainers; facts and truth are irrelevant in their eyes. FOX and the “talk/hate radio” spews out right-wing agendas and propaganda specifically to support their pocket books and attract likeminded audiences who believe what they say without any effort to evaluate it for reason or veracity.

The new phenomenon of social media “fake News” reaches into the smart phone generation with twitter/face-book (etc) apps and is gaining on the other media platforms. The problem is “There is absolutely no control over what is posted” and there is a real monetary incentive to get the most “clicks” and a bonanza if it goes viral. So the most sensational and outlandish information gets passed on and on and on until millions of people become exposed to things

that are FALSE, MADE UP, FAKE news that has a real impact on how people think, what they believe and often how they vote.

In the past if a major figure is caught lying over and over again there would have been repercussions and they would be tainted, shunned and lose all credibility and support. However, in today's environment that doesn't seem to be happening. It appears the new reality is just like a "reality" show, scripted, phony and the more outrageous the better.

PPP a respected polling organization, did a post-election survey with Clinton, Trump, Johnson and Stein voters and asked them to respond to a number of questions about things that happened during President Obama's administration. Two questions stand out for me. Both are easily checked and verified.

The first was regarding the performance of the Dow Jones Industrial average between 2009 and 2016 the Obama years and the second was the Unemployment rate during the same period. Basically they were asked "did the indices go up, stay the same or go down".

The Republicans (Trump voters) overwhelmingly (by over 30 points) said the DOW went down and the unemployment rate went up. While the Clinton, Johnson and Stein voters overwhelmingly said the Dow went up and the unemployment rate went down almost the complete opposite of the Trump people. These two questions are critical in evaluating investment wealth and job growth both vitally important issues.

The actual results were:

- 1) The DOW rose from around 7,500 to 19,000; an increase or improvement of over 250%.
- 2) The Unemployment rate went down from 7.8 % to 4.8 % a decline of about 40 %.

The Trump voters were completely wrong about the facts!

What this shows is that the Republicans are getting their information from very unreliable sources, being given a lot of false and distorted news and sharing it with each other and believing it.

How can one make meaningful decisions about truly critical issues when the starting point (the base knowledge) is false, distorted and invalid? The conclusion reached will be worthless and often make matters worse not better. We need to do something about false news, fake or made-up facts, false equivalencies and illogical and false logic.

Let me share a personal example of false logic:

- 1) Isaac Stern and Itzhak Perlman are considered the best violinists in the world.

- 2) They are both Jewish and male.
- 3) Therefore, all Jewish males are great violinists.
- 4) I am Jewish and male.
- 5) Therefore, I must be a great violinist.

Although I love violin music, I do not know how to play any musical instruments and when trying to sing have been told I was “tone deaf”; a real handicap when playing music. Believe me you do not want me in your band or orchestra.

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## **51) “I have a bone to pick with the 4th estate (the press)”**

Opinion by NormT 8/1/16

We (the public) need a strong, competent, unbiased and free 4th estate (the press)! It is imperative during these times of discord and divisiveness and the consolidation of the media that we can get the truth, unfettered by political bias and corporate pressure and greed.

The internet has been a blessing and a curse with respect to our ability to get instantaneous and overwhelming amounts of information, dis-information and opinions (from social media like twitter and Face book). Most of us don't have the time, skill or capability to sort out the massive amounts of data; determine validity and importance and make sense of all this and put it in proper context. We look to the 4th estate to help us sort through all this and make sense of it all.

We expect the cable TV shows to be primarily entertainment, driven by ratings and profits and in mortal fear of silence or dead time. We expect certain magazines and bloggers and radio talk show hosts to be driven by ideology and greed but we desperately need a 4th estate that has as its objective to communicate stories of importance, that are unbiased and truthful (like good old Walter Cronkite). I look to newspapers; the Public Broadcasting networks, respected magazines and the national TV networks (with real journalists) to provide this service.

Having said all this, I have a bone to pick regarding how the media handles tweets and covers Congress using blanket one size fits all commentary.

Regarding tweets:

- 1) Not all tweets are newsworthy (we don't need to publish everything an insomniac or crank has to say); some are of no importance, it's OK to ignore them.
- 2) If the subject is of importance; the tweet may contain false or very distorted or misleading information. You should fact check the information contained and when publishing the tweet also present your findings. I know this is extra work but it's your job; after all you wouldn't want to pass on false information (or do you?).

3) If the tweet is primarily opinion or politically motivated, the sender should be required to pay advertising fees to your company, they all desperately need the income, and you are giving away free advertising.

Regarding blanket statements:

1) To say a bill that was passed with essentially all of one party and one or two members from the other party is Bi-partisan is not telling the truth, call it what it is; a bill pushed through by one party with a few rogue members of the other party.

2) To say Congress is dysfunctional and hasn't passed any legislation may be technically true but doesn't tell the whole story. The cause of the dysfunction is when one party intentionally blocks almost all legislation (and refuses to allow their members to compromise) is the problem. The people need to know the whole story not just the punch line.

3) To say Congress rejected a sensible "gun control" bill doesn't let us (the public), know that 95% of the Republicans voted against it and 95% of the Democrats voted for it.

I know it takes longer to give the background and pertinent information than a short banner headline but your readers need that information to better understand what is going on and make better and more informed decisions.

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## **52) The Time Machine by Norm Tarowsky (Sept 2015)**

9/1/2015

The e-mail I sent last week about "the train" received a lot of positive responses; this metaphor for life is simple, understandable and something almost everyone can identify with. It struck a chord with a number of people especially those of us who have been on the train for a long time.

But being the kind of person I am (not leaving well enough alone); I looked more closely at the analogy and decided that it needed some tweaking. The train itself is really a time machine; it carries us from birth and our earliest memories until death. It is our own personal train on its journey through time.

Every person has their own train, just as they have their own thoughts, feelings and memories. What happens as we go through life is that at times our trains coincide (on the same track, at the same time going in the same direction) but is always seen from the perspective of our own thoughts; we can only perceive others on the train through our own senses.

At times other trains pull up and merge with ours; our paths cross and we grow fond of many of our co-passengers and many stay with us through most of our journey. Others cross our paths for only short periods, never to be seen again and sometimes (with our new technology and ability to communicate over great distances) we get to reconnect with those travel companions and it's as if they never left.

On this time machine, we begin as a helpless child protected and cared for by our immediate family; as time passes our world opens up and we join with other groups (extended family, school, clubs and groups of common interest, coworkers, old Army buddies, neighbors, etc.). We become members of these groups and as our lives intertwine can form very close and meaningful relationships. All along our trip people leave and new ones join; but remember it is our train and we view everything through our own filters and perspectives.

When I was very young, I actually believed that when I went to sleep the rest of the world disappeared and only came back to life when I awoke. From the perspective of a small child that seemed logical. We may get more sophisticated in our thinking as we get older or then again maybe not; as we often believe we are the only important ones around.

I am amazed that when getting together with my family and talking about some of the events and places we had visited, each of us saw, heard and experienced them very differently; even though we were in the same place at the same time.

In our journey we often make deep connections with others and create strong lifelong bonds; we may have only known them for only a brief period or the entire journey, these thoughts and memories are to be nurtured, cherished and sustained. We hope that a little bit of us becomes part of their memories as they travel on their train as we carry them with us on our train until it comes to the final station.

### **The Train of Life (anonymous)**

At birth we boarded the train and met our parents, and we believe they will always travel on our side. However, at some station our parents will step down from the train, leaving us on this journey alone.

As time goes by, other people will board the train; and they will be significant i.e. our siblings, friends, children, and even the love of your life. Many will step down and leave a permanent vacuum. Others will go so unnoticed that we don't realize they vacated their seats.

This train ride will be full of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes, and farewells. Success consists of having a good relationship with all passengers requiring that we give the best of ourselves.

The mystery to everyone is: We do not know at which station we ourselves will step down. So, we must live in the best way, love, forgive, and offer the best of who we are. It is important to do this because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty, we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.

I wish you a joyful journey on the train of life. Reap success and give lots of love. More importantly, thank God for the journey. Lastly, I thank you for being one of the passengers on my train



## 53) “Suspension of reality”

*Opinion by NormT 11/2/20616*

Imagine if you would, being inside a psychiatric ward or old style insane asylum and being both sane and in touch with reality. Everyone around you is living in their own world seeing and hearing things only they perceive and creating a world only they comprehend. After a while you may begin to question yourself and your own version of what is real and what is imagined.

Throughout history mankind has counted on those they consider knowledgeable and trustworthy to define what is real and truthful; the powerful, the elite with broad knowledge of history, science and logical reasoning. These “facts” were compiled in encyclopedias, text books and trusted journals and framed the boundary of what is true and what is fiction. We placed our trust in these works and counted on them to separate fact from fiction and truth from speculation or whimsy.

In the past there had been times when we were misled by people in power (the earth is flat, the earth is the center of the universe) when beliefs were considered the highest level of truth and knowledge and logic were discounted; but eventually reality set in and most of us had a framework of facts and truth.

What has really bothered me in this most recent election period has nothing to do with policies, liberal or conservative agendas or even individual capabilities and skills but what I consider the suspension of reality. This mixture of rhetoric, bombast and outright lies appears to have been accepted by nearly half of the voters.

They just don’t seem to care that what they are being told is an outright lie and bears no semblance to truth, logic or reasoning. It seems to make no difference to them that what is being said is illogical, irrational and false. They want to believe what they think is true and real no matter the facts and seem to be willing to suffer the consequences. They have created their own “reality” and unfortunately their own “false logic” like some magic cloth that will take them into a world of their own desires and like the inmates of the old asylums live in a reality only they can see.

Unfortunately the rest of us are now forced to suffer the consequences of their choices and world view. I feel like we are being sent back to the middle ages and myths and dragons will now be our companions. I want my sane world back again!

## 54) “Friends are very special”

8/31/2019

8/31/2019 About 7 months ago I woke up in a hospital bed, flat on my back; I had a spinal infection and a compound fracture of my back; after months and months of rehab wearing a back brace and loving care from my family, I am almost back to being my old self.

Why do I mention this? Because during a major portion of this time I was not able to watch TV, use my computer or even able to get up and walk around and except for visits by my wife and daughter and the nursing staff I was alone with my own thoughts for long periods of time.

As I lay there on my back I would reach back in time and try to remember and visualize as much as possible (after all I had 80 years to work with) and reviewed my past; my family, the places I lived and visited and the people I knew who were part of my life.

It became easier when I broke it up into stages like early childhood, the schools I attended, my time in the Army, my various jobs and my retirement activities; overlaying all that of course was my family and friends. What I learned was that it was not the things I had done or worked on or where I lived, it was the people that were the most memorable and important.

That brings me to the next topic, “friends”. We meet and interface with lots of people as we go through life. Many are brief, inconsequential interfaces and barely remembered. Some are people who for one reason or another we just don’t like or trust and tried not to be involved with.

Then there are some we feel a bond, a connection and comfortable being with and I call them friends. Often these connections cross over many time periods and carry over to different stages of our lives. Some who we may not have been in contact with for decades or even longer and when we reconnect it is as if there was never a separation. We feel comfortable letting them back into our lives. We share common memories of events and places with these special people from every period of our lives.

My dear friends you may not have known it but I have been thinking of you.

## 55) “Open-Mindedness”

*Opinion by NormT 12/16/19*

When we first start communicating, we learn that crying brings attention and often satisfaction of our needs (like food and care); as we grow older, we learn some very key words after the basic family names like mama and papa.

The first key word is “NO” and represents the beginning of our identity and individuality and especially independence. This is the “go to” word for a number of years (especially the terrible two’s) and represents a major part of the child’s vocabulary.

The next and perhaps most powerful word is “WHY” and replaces NO as the basis for communication. It may be the most important concept we ever learn; this search for understanding what is going on around us. This inquisitiveness and probing for reasons and how things work, is the bridge to how we behave in the future.

The answers of “because” or “because I say so” often used out of frustration or expediency does not satisfy this thirst for knowledge and understanding and can quash that desire to know how things work and the reasons or logic of how to figure things out.

Now, why do I bring this up? IBecause this era of ubiquitous and instantaneous communications, we are surrounded by so much false or misleading inputs, the ability to sort through the data and facts is critical to be able to make rational decisions is impaired. The old saying “garbage in leads to garbage out” is very true.

For society to function effectively we need to have the ability to sort through all this data and pick out what is real and what is fake, what is true and what is false and have the proper tools to make the best decisions. Reality is not who shouts the loudest or puts on the best “show” or who says what we want to hear or supports our pre-conceived notions but as we say “facts are facts” and there is no such thing as alternative facts.

It is too easy to accept something if it fits our pre-conceived notions and inclinations. Most people have opinions based on their own knowledge, background and preferred sources of information; it may be Social media, TV, Newspapers, magazines and radio as well as friends and social groups (including religious groups).

Many people tend to go along “with the group” or default to some orthodoxy or may even want to be told how to think. As a scientist and someone (even after 80

years) still asks “why” and tries to understand the world around us, I believe that keeping an open mind, looking at the facts and being willing to change pre-conceived notions is critical for our society.

Open mindedness means being able to change one’s opinions if the facts and logic point to a better and more correct solution to the problems we face. In Physics, if we get new facts that contradict what we had thought was a “law of physics” we modify, change or discard that law as it is no longer valid.

We must be able to keep an open mind and if we find the facts no longer support our position, to be able to “CHANGE” our conclusions and opinions to embrace this new information BUT we must not be fooled by false reality, false equivalencies, debunked conspiracy theories or pompous claims of infallibility.

The search for the answer to “WHY” should never end, once we stop asking, we stop growing and close our minds to the world around us. I don’t know if you saw that Clint Eastwood movie that had the song “don’t let the old man in” but that should be our motto and to keep our minds open and be willing to change if required.

## 56) *“A note to an old and great friend”*

“Dear Bob (& Robbie) Picha”      12/22/2019

As we travel through our lives we meet and get to know hundreds and hundreds of people (maybe even thousands). Most are brief encounters performing daily transactions and others are acquaintances who we interface with at work, casual neighbors and people who briefly come in and out without much impact.

Then there are others, who we meet and like and get to do things together; they may share some common activities and beliefs and we call them “friends”. We try to stay in touch and feel we belong to a “group” that enjoys the same things and have the same basic values. We like to keep track of them; after all, that is what friends do.

Then there are some (a very select few) that are not only friends but have a deeper sense of belonging. Like the special few we knew in the Army (we depended on them for our lives) or at college (when we were inseparable) or we meet in our journey through life that we admire, trust and feel that special bond between each other. I call them “buddies”

In the more than a half century I have known you; I have never heard you utter something bad about anyone we knew. I don’t believe you have a “mean bone” in your body and you are always a gentleman and most of all a “nice guy”; traits that I admire and appreciate.

We have worked together, were business partners, played golf and I believe have great mutual respect for each other. I consider you more than a friend; you are my “buddy”. I don’t know how much more time each of us have left in this world but sometimes we only get to say things like this at funerals or sadly not at all.

While we are still alive and our minds are mostly working, I wanted to tell you and Robbie how I feel; that I feel you are both a good friend and my “buddy” and it is people like you that make this world a better place to live. We may not have made the impact that H & P did but to the people around us we did the best we could and it was a pleasure to be able to do it together.

Your pal & Buddy,

Norm

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## 57) “Fairness and Equity”

*Opinion by NormT 12/1/2019*

Our Nation was founded as a “Representative Democracy” and a Constitutional Republic, a union of disparate states bound together by a Constitution, a Bill of Rights and defined by the Rule of Law. A government elected by “we the people” to form a “more perfect union” with Liberty and Justice” and fairness and equality for all.

As a Representative Democracy It is the people who choose representatives to “represent” them in Congress and to choose electors (decided by each State) to elect the President and vice President.

We had fought a war to separate ourselves from a Monarchy and were creating a new form of Government. We knew it was not perfect and would need to be updated as the times required.

we created Congressional Districts in each State (of essentially equal population size) and there are currently 435 members of the House. This seems fair and equitable; but issues of gerrymandering and voter suppression have been identified and still need to be addressed.

After a great deal of compromise and negotiation, each State was to have 2 Senators and today we have 100 senators to represent our 50 States (up from 13 at the beginning). To elect the President an “Electoral College” was created giving each State votes based on the sum of their House and Senate seats. This unfairly gives disproportionate power to the smaller States and disenfranchises large numbers of voters in the more populous States.

Below are examples of population and Voting numbers (based on 2019 estimates \*) that show the inequity and unfairness that exists. Currently the Total U.S. Population is around 327 million with 435 House seats and 100 in the senate and 535 Electoral votes (requiring at least 268 needed to win the Presidency).

1) The California population is ~ 40 million; with 53 House seats, 2 Senate seats and 55 Electoral votes while Wyoming (the smallest state in population) has ~530 thousand people with 1 house seat, 2 senate seats and 3 Electoral College votes.

a. So, each Wyoming voter has the same power in the senate as 75 California voters. THIS IS NOT FAIR

2) The smallest 22 States have a combined population of 40 million (the same as CA.) and have 55 House members, 44 Senators and 99 Electoral votes.

a. They have 42 more Senate votes and 44 more Electoral votes with the exact same population!!! THIS IS NOT EQUITABLE !!!

3) The 4 largest states (CA, TX, FL & NY) have a combined population of ~ 110 Million, 34% of the U.S. population

a. They have ONLY 8% of the Senate votes with 34% of the population.

4) The 9 largest states have the same population as the remaining 41 States but only have 240 electoral votes (45%) and 28 less than required to elect a President.

a. With the same population the smaller States outvote the 9 largest by 55% to 45% in the Electoral college

b. This is NOT FAIR or EQUITABLE to the 50% of the U.S. population that live in those 9 /states.

My point is that the system used to select the Senate is grossly unfair and inequitable for the people who live in the more populous States and needs to be revised. When the smallest 22 States elect 44 Senators and California with the exact number of people gets only two; that is absurd and needs to change.

The Electoral College system also unduly punishes the larger States in the selection of the President. We claim to be a Democracy and every vote counts and the majority wins (As in every State Gubernatorial election). This current system is unfair and needs to be changed.

Proposal to fix the problem:

1) The easiest and simplest way to correct the Electoral College system is to eliminate 2 votes per state (for a total of 435) and having the same number of Electoral votes as their Congressional Districts and requires 218 Electoral Votes to elect a President.

2) To fix the inequities in the Senate I propose that the number of senators per state be based on their relative populations. To do this I would create 3 groups of States with approximately equal populations of around 110 million each:

- a. Group (1) will have the 4 largest states (CA, TX, FL, NY) with a population of 110 million and will have 8 Senators each for a total of 32 Senators.
- b. Group (2) will have 11 states (Rank 5-15) and a population of 107 million and have 3 senators each for a total of 33 Senators.
- c. Group (3) will have 35 States (rank 16-50) with a population of 110 million and have 1 Senator each for a total of 35 Senators.

There would still be 100 Senators and they would represent equal numbers of voters. Recognize that the House and Senate play different roles within the government and have different responsibilities; these changes would more fairly allow them to represent their constituents.

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## 58) “Trumps M.O is Mob-Boss 101”

*Opinion by NormT 12/7/2019*

I hate to admit it but my initial feelings that Trump was just a Con-man (a PT Barnum showman, a charlatan, a snake oil salesman) fighting mental demons (malignant Narcissistic disorder and a sociopathic personality) was only partially right. Since taking over as President we have been able to see him in action and as his ex-Lawyer and Fixer told us in his testimony he is also operating as a Crime Boss running his family syndicate.

What is the crime Boss M.O. (modus operandum) or operating style? It has the following characteristics:

- 1) The Boss requires (no demands) absolute loyalty and fealty; it is above all else; family, country, religious beliefs and self. Anything else makes one a traitor, the enemy and must be denounced and destroyed.
- 2) The only thing important to the boss is himself and his immediate family and of course the satisfaction of his ego and accumulation of more wealth and power.
- 3) The Boss is to be treated as royalty and publicly praised, fawned over and with pure sycophantic groveling and obedience. This chain of command is rigid and must be followed.
- 4) The Boss makes the decisions (all of them) and the organization exists to carry them out, to free-lance is very dangerous and seen as insubordination and will be dealt with.
- 5) The Boss must be protected at all costs; like the secret service underlings are expected to take a bullet to save him.
- 6) The boss never gives traceable direct orders (that may implicate him in a crime) but hints, implies, indicates and suggests that certain events would be viewed or considered favorably.
- 7) These characteristics also fit most political Autocrats and Dictators.

I didn't realize that Trump had developed these skills in the years he was in the real estate business and now with the help and guidance of people like Putin he has become masterful at corrupting all those around him and dismantling organizations and agencies that may limit his power.

He has weakened and hollowed out, and put his lieutenants in charge of the Justice Department, The Department of state, Energy, Education, Homeland Security and now working on the last agency that can prevent his takeover (Defense). He owns the Republican Party (lock, stock and barrel) and Republican Senators are nothing more than a bunch of feckless and spineless cowards.

This evil and corrupt abomination must be removed from power either through Impeachment, the 2020 election or the 25th Amendment (he certainly qualifies as being unqualified and incapable of rational decision making)!

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## 59) “A two-fer”

*Opinion by NormT 12/5/19*

I was watching TV the other day and saw huge tent cities in Seattle and L.A., (in fact the increase in homelessness is close to being an epidemic) and in a Country with record low unemployment numbers; I thought “what the hell is going on”.

I then saw an interview that said the problem was caused by large increases in rental prices (i.e. lack of affordable housing) driving many people who had jobs but couldn’t afford the increases onto the streets. Actually, the problem is more complex and also has a large drug and mental health component as well.

As Thanksgiving was ending and we went through Black Friday and Cyber Monday and all the usual on-line sales, the numbers were amazing. Cyber business is growing so rapidly that it is effecting the local brick and mortar businesses and many are downsizing or going out of business (or converting to on-line sales to compete). The impact is that many of these stores that once filled our malls are leaving and we will soon see the “malls” closing as well.

Just as automation and outsourcing had done to factories these retail businesses are in transition. At some point many of these malls will have to shut down and leave large, ugly, empty cement structures dotted around the cities. This will effect both large malls and smaller “strip malls” as well.

A “two-fer” is like the old saying “killing two birds with one stone”, I know everyone under 50 is saying “?”, but us old farts know that it means “a two for one”. So, I thought to myself (who else could I thought to) we have people who need a place to live (with dignity) and we will be having a lot of places that will be empty. Why don’t we solve two problems at the same time?

The malls not only have space, they have water, bathrooms, air conditioning, heating, shelter, large areas for services like cooking and sleeping. There is space to install showers, washing machines, locker areas to safeguard property and for Governments and non-profits (NDA’s) to provide mental health and drug support facilities. This could also include child care and pre-schooling for those that need it. It would allow those who have jobs the ability to save enough to move out and those with drug and mental problems to get the help to rebuild their lives.

Repurposing these areas would be less expensive than building new ones and these malls could be turned into centers for those who desperately need a place to stay; a haven for those who are temporarily homeless and a place where we can begin to address the more difficult issues of drug addiction and mental illness. It may only be a pipe dream and a lot more thought needs to go into seeing if this is aviable.

## **60) “I think our cat died”**

By NormT 2019

Actually, it wasn't really our cat, he just kind of adopted us. When we moved into our new home in Roseville (CA) about a year ago there was this mangy street cat hanging around. At first, we thought it belonged to the people we bought the house from and they just left him. After some investigation we found out he belonged to the people two houses down, was about 17 years old and has been an “outside” cat for a long, long time.

He lived in the bushes around the front of the house and looked skinny and acted hungry so we assumed he wasn't getting fed regularly and he seemed very friendly so we started to feed him. I am very allergic to cat dander so he definitely wasn't going to come in the house and beside we had a dog who wouldn't like the idea of sharing with a cat.

We later found out the little rascal was named “Norman”, my name and was really friendly, gentle and loving. In fact, everyone in the neighborhood knew him; some brought him treats and the neighborhood kids would come and play with him in the driveway. He loved people and would “lean into” the petting.

So my Daughter and I would feed him mornings and evening, he would come when called and anxiously wait for the food to be put in his dish; he was a gentle little guy; and loved to have his face cupped in my hands and rub against my pant legs and meow to let me know he was coming for his food and you could hear him purr as he ate. He would bask in the sun and stretch and groom himself so he would be presentable to his people.

But he was the neighborhood cat and had a mind of his own and would sleep wherever he wanted and roam around his territory to make sure it was safe for those of

us he let inhabit his domain. Lately we noticed he wasn't eating all his food and was having trouble climbing the steps and generally walking slower and slower.

For the past few days he would hardly eat and seemed to just want human company and touching. He was a gentle little thing and I (a dog person) really became attached to him (and it wasn't just the name) and looked forward to his company; he didn't demand much; just a little loving and touching and then he was off to his realm.

We haven't seen him for a few days and I think he just found a place in the bushes somewhere and died of old age. Everyone in the neighborhood will miss him especially me, we kind of bonded that old mangy cat and an old man who shared the same name.



Norman The CAT

## 61) “Perspective, a frame of reference”

*Opinion by NormT 1/15/2020*

We sense things (see, hear, feel, smell, taste) from our own personal frame of reference; we massage these inputs through our own particular experiences, memories, education, relationships and history and add them to our being, who we are and how we feel about things.

Since we are all unique and have had varied backgrounds and experiences it is easy to see how we may reach differing conclusions after being given basically the same sets of events and facts; we basically “see” them from our own perspective.

So, it is easy to see why we tend to associate with others who have essentially the same “frame of reference” or point of view and would draw the same conclusions as we do, given the same SET OF FACTS. We tend to agree with each other and view those who disagree as wrong thinking or something “less” and try not to associate with them. We tend to group ourselves and bond with those who have similar backgrounds and experiences.

We are now at a societal crossroad and can no longer agree on what is true or false, what is real or fake, what is factual or phony, what are the facts or conspiracies, who is believable and who to trust. A society this divided is bound to fail and collapse. I also believe it is virtually impossible to really “see” things through someone else’s eyes and “feel” what they might be feeling. But there must be some universal truths or meanings we can agree on.

So, I went back to the good old dictionary to define what the following words mean (I hope we can agree) and have discussions using a common understanding of the following:

1. **Perspective:** a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something, a “point of view”. In painting, it is a way of giving the viewer a 3-dimensional view or frame of reference in a 2-dimensional space.
2. **Ignorance:** a lack of knowledge or information
3. **Stupidity:** behavior that shows a lack of good sense or judgment

4. **Intelligence:** the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills
5. **Corruption:** dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power
6. **Logic:** reasoning conducted or assessed according to principles of validity
7. **Validity:** the quality of being logically or factually sound
8. **Reason:** to form conclusions, judgments, or inferences from facts or premises.
9. **Facts:** something that has actual existence, an actual occurrence, a piece of information having objective reality, the quality of being actual not imaginary
10. **Truth:** in accord with fact or reality
11. **Lie:** a false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive; an intentional untruth; a falsehood. something intended or serving to convey a false impression
12. **Trust:** a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something, to have confidence, faith or hope in someone or something.
13. **Sociopath:** is a term used to describe someone who has antisocial personality disorder (ASPD). People with ASPD can't understand others' feelings. They'll often break rules or make impulsive decisions without feeling guilty for the harm they cause.

So, when I say “from my perspective; Trump is not stupid but he is ignorant, totally corrupt, a compulsive liar, uses no logic or reasoning and is a sociopath and cannot be trusted”; you know what I mean! However, those Trump supporters (cult members) at his rallies chanting “lock her up” are, by definition, just plain “stupid”.

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## 62) “Has the Senate outlived its usefulness?”

*Opinion by NormT 1/21/2020*

What do the “buggy whip”, the “slide rule”, the “telegraph”, the “House of Lords” and the “U.S. Senate” have in common? The answer my friends is they have become obsolete relics of the past and no longer have any significance in today’s world.

The Senate is no longer the deliberative body that stood between the House and the Administrative branch to insure wise decisions and compromise between the large and small States. Providing wisdom and guidance to the President in foreign affairs and the selection of key Department heads in the Executive Branch and appointing qualified and competent people to the Bench in the Judicial Branch.

As a “Representative Democracy” we should expect to be represented on a basis that is proportional to our share of the population and the Senate does not do this. In fact, the 26 smallest States who have 52 votes (a majority) actually have a smaller population than the two largest States (CA & TX) who have only 4 votes. Just doesn’t seem “FAIR” does it?

The Senate Majority Leader has the ability to block any votes on Bills he or she doesn’t like (even if those bills would have passed with clear bi-partisan support) and pushes through unqualified Judges on a purely political basis. The Senate has become the graveyard of legislation and blocked any progress to address our nation’s problems. One person, elected by a tiny portion of the population should not have that much power.

The senate no longer even tries to pretend it is nothing more than a branch of the Political party in charge and can stifle any attempts to represent “all” Americans. At least the House has proportional representation (although flawed by gerrymandering) while the Senate appears to be bought by the big money interests it seems to cater to.

A good rule of thumb would be to ask: “would we be better off without the Senate than with it?”; if the answer is” it adds nothing to our Democracy and Government”; why not just get rid of it? It is not fair; it doesn’t work and adds nothing; why keep it?

In fact this might be a good time to eliminate both the “Senate” and the “Electoral College” as anachronisms who have outlived their usefulness and we would be better off without them than with them.

If the Senate acts as I expect it will;( with respect to the Impeachment trial) and votes to exonerate a clearly guilty and corrupt President; then it has completely abandoned its responsibility and should be eliminated and I say “good riddance”.



### 63) I feel so Sleepy



## 64) “Things have sure changed since 1780”

*Opinion by NormT 1/24/2020*

In some recent articles I proposed changes to the structure and make up of both the Senate and the Electoral College \*. A number of people replied pointing out that they were created by the Founding Fathers and were part of the Constitution and had been debated and approved in a compromise agreement to mollify the smaller States who were worried about being overwhelmed by the larger states.

My point was not that the founders were wrong and shouldn't have done what they did but that the Constitution is a “living” document and to be relevant and even more powerful it needs to be modified to take into account the changing world around us in these past 240 years.

What was life like back in 1780 when these documents were being debated and formulated? The population of the 13 Colonies that became the United States was ~ 2.7 million (including 600 thousand slaves \*\*, 90% in the South) and our Western border was the Appalachian Mountains. It is interesting to note that the entire U.S. population in 1780 is almost the same as the city of Chicago is today,

Most people lived near the coastline and navigable rivers and had immigrated from Northern Europe to escape persecution or create better lives for their families. English was the most common language but French and German were also common along with Some African languages.

The vast majority were involved in agriculture/farming (the cash crops were tobacco and cotton) and muscle power (human and animal) provided the energy to make and move things. Heating and cooking were primarily by wood fires (fireplaces) and wood burning stoves. Lighting at night was provided by candles and lard burning lanterns (whale oil was still a quarter century away).

Transportation was by foot, horseback and horse drawn wagons or for longer trips by sailing ships. It would take anywhere from 2 to 3 months to travel to Europe (one way) and communication was by letter and newspapers and magazines that were passed around it was often months to years old by the time they were read. Primarily the wealthy were educated and books and the knowledge therein not widely available. Land ownership was highly prized (and even considered as a requirement for voting).

The weapons available were the club, the knife, the Axe and flint lock muskets that took about a minute to reload. Cannons were primarily used by the warships and had limited use on land. The American army was weak by European standards and America was considered a small, insignificant backwater.

We had just become a Country with a new and untested government ruled not by all powerful Monarchs backed by powerful clergy but elected by and for the people, a “Representative Democracy”. Life then was not easy and our future success was fragile and yet to be determined.

Today by contrast things are very, very, very different. The population is close to 330 million (100 times that in 1780). At our fingertips we have access to all the power and energy we need (heat, light); we can communicate instantly anywhere in the world, we have all the world’s knowledge available in our hand-held devices.

We can get on a plane and fly across oceans faster than our founders could travel from State to state. We can view news from all over the world as it’s happening. We have travelled to the moon and back, have tamed the atom and decoded the human genome. We have the ability to know where we are anywhere on this earth (within a few feet) and have sent space probes to explore all the planets and then leave our solar system.

Our 13 states are now 50 and stretch well into the Pacific and the Arctic Oceans. Our Military is considered the finest in the World and together with China are the two most powerful Nations on earth.

We have come a long way baby in these past 240 years but so much has changed and I believe it is time to update our governing rules to allow more and fairer participation in how our government is run and structured. To keep our Democracy vibrant, we need to have our citizens more involved in the decision-making process and believe the government is working for and by them.

My proposals to modify the Senate and Electoral College would make them more fair, equitable and acceptable to our 2020 electorate in this modern world.

## 65) “Purposeful Ignorance is unconscionable”

*Opinion by Normt 1/26/2020*

While ignorance is the lack of knowledge and stupidity is the inability to reach logical or rational conclusions based on knowledge; there is another situation that may be even more egregious. In my mind it is the conscious disregard of the facts and choosing to ignore pertinent knowledge needed to draw a rational conclusion.

The indigenous people of the Amazon and Borneo are neither ignorant nor stupid; they know with intimate knowledge the world around them. They know and understand every aspect of what is safe to eat, where the dangers are, which snakes are poisonous and which plants to avoid. They make plans and decisions based on their knowledge of the world around them.

But they know practically nothing about the world outside their jungle environment. They have no way of learning about these things we take for granted and have access to, with the swipe of our fingers or the click of a mouse. That is, they have a very narrow knowledge base to use for anything outside their world and are ignorant of the rest of the world.

We also have created narrow “bubbles” of knowledge catered to our preconceived views and live in an environment where we receive information from sources that provide mostly one-sided sets of facts. It might be FOX Cable news or MSNBC or Twitter or Facebook, the sources are suspect and must be checked for bias and validity. I suggest NPR, PBS, N.Y. Times and on-line news outlets.

The problem then becomes; where do we go to check and who to trust. The problem becomes greater because those who want to spread false or slanted information are casting doubt and denigrating the alternatives. We now (thank you

DJT) can no longer trust what the government says and therefore it becomes “the facts and truth are in the eyes of the beholder”, no matter the reality.

We must do the best we can to ferret out the truth and not be distracted by glitz, shiny objects and sleight of hand. By degrading truth and reality, I believe Trump and Fox have muddied the water so much that nobody trusts anything and that is prime ground for Authoritarians and despots to thrive.

When the free press is called the “enemy of the people” and the Justice Department acts as an extension of the president’s political desires and everything is suspect, we have become a dictatorship and congress and the Courts might as well pack up and go home.

This is all happening because a large section of America is consciously choosing to select which facts or knowledge they choose to let in and ignore all the others and thereby becoming unconscionably ignorant but perhaps even worse are the elected representatives who know the truth and facts and choose to ignore them. If you attest to an oath, you are obligated to honor it!

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## 66) “The art of the scam”

*Opinion by NormT 2/7/2020*

An Illusion is defined as a thing that is or is likely to be wrongly perceived or interpreted by the senses, a deceptive appearance or impression or a false idea or belief. An illusionist is a person who performs tricks that deceive the eye; a magician.

A “charlatan” is a person falsely claiming to have a special knowledge or skill; a fraud. A “Con-man” is someone who cheats or tricks you by gaining your trust and persuading you to believe something that is not true.

The goal of an illusion is to suspend reason and replace it with a new “false reality”. It takes us into a world where anything seems possible and seems to break all the rules we have lived by and believed in. It takes us away from our everyday life of logic and rules and regulations and allows us to be part of a fairyland of make believe.

To do this the Con-artist must create an environment that permits us to suspend belief and replace it with a “new” view of the world around us. Remember they are usually strangers, not part of our group and there is something they want to sell us or have us do and we are generally suspicious of people we don’t already trust.

There is also something they want that we have (money, acceptance, adoration or your vote) and their objective is to sell us something in exchange.

so how do they do this:

- 1) They start by making us “comfortable” with their presence, ingratiating themselves with us; disarming our natural instincts of suspicion and wariness so they are not perceived as a threat.
- 2) Next, they try to get “acceptance”, by using our “language” or phrasing, saying things we believe. Repeating commonly accepted truths, to get heads nodding. We begin to believe they are “one of us”.
- 3) Then they start “injecting or inserting” ideas and concepts that will move us from our current “reality” to make us more open to accept what they are trying to sell. They are leading us to accept a new reality. A business deal that will make us wealthy (of course it will require some seed money) or “how” a vote for them will solve our problems or encourage you to be willing to (or open to) accept things that don’t really seem logical but may become a new reality.

- 4) Then they “expose” the product or scheme or concept with great glitz, fanfare, showmanship (the greatest thing since sliced bread) and distracting your attention away from any doubts, reservations or concerns you may have. They use loud noises, bright flashes, pointing, smoke and mirrors. They want to keep you from seeing anything except what they want you to see. Your support, your money, your adulation or your vote is now theirs for the taking.
- 5) This is your “new reality”, you have bought into the illusion, the magic, the miracle and it now belongs to you. You accepted it, it is yours and now you will have to defend this new reality or admit you have been scammed and accepted something that no longer makes sense in the light of day. And when, the music stops playing and (surprise) the flimflam artist leaves town with your money or your dignity.

This sales gimmick is an old tried and true trick since before the days of the snake oil salesman or the carnival barkers and fortune tellers. Their tools are used to disarm your defenses and suspend your sense of reality.

So, my friends, beware of the false prophet, the liars, the cheats and those who pretend to be something they are not. If someone tells you they have all the answers, they don't know enough to ask the right questions. You need to ask “what is in it for them” and “what is it going to cost you”. finally, at what price are you willing to sell your soul? I would like to ask some Senators that question.

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## 67) “Thoughtlings”

By NormT 2/13/2020

- The only way to be “the smartest person in the room” is to be the only person in the room; then again, you are also “the dumbest” and it gets awful lonely being alone in the room.
- If everyone pulls in the same direction, you will get there faster; even if it’s over a cliff or into a brick wall.
- Shouting at a deaf person or waving at a blind person won’t get their attention any more than stating facts or using reason or logic will change an ideologues mind.
- Why is it that problems tend to be fairly complicated and complex but the best solutions are the simplest and most direct?
- If you have no place to go, how do you know when you get there and why are you going in the first place?
- Just how many times does it take for someone to be fooled before they realize they are a “fool” and why should they be allowed to vote?
- Why does it seem that the biggest “bullies” whine the loudest and claim they are “victims” while continuing to bully anyone and everything around them?
- When we know something isn’t working; why do we keep trying the same thing over and over again; do we think it fixed itself when we weren’t looking?
- Why is it that we don’t appreciate the value or importance of something until we lose it or it is taken away?
- Just because we don’t know the facts, that doesn’t make something right or wrong, or true or false. It means that if it is important you better learn the facts or admit you don’t care because someone else made up your mind for you.



## **68) "How much is something worth, what is its value"?**

*Opinion by Norm T    2/11/2020*

Like most things, this is both very simple and very complicated. In its simplest form it's a transaction between a buyer and a seller with a buyer agrees to pay the price and the seller agrees to provide the goods or services; is a compromise between two parties that allows the transaction to take place.

The complexity comes in when we take into account both the supply and demand for those goods and services. When the supply is low and demand is high value increases and when the supply is high and the demand is low its value decreases (or that's the way it's supposed to work). But things are never that simple, so let's look at some possibilities.

On the supply side it is relatively easy to determine how much of whatever is being sold is available also we know this also can be manipulated by business practices that restrict the availability to try to maintain a higher price. This has been done by monopolies or groups that collude together to either fix prices or restrict availability.

On the other side the demand is created by what people believe they need and their available resources to pay for that. So now we have to look at, just exactly what is a "need". As Maslow postulated that there is a hierarchy of needs. He broken down into basic needs (food, shelter, safety/security) and the higher-level that he called "wants", those things that are not necessary to survive but satisfied our minds and our souls, like freedom, acceptance, love, music and all those of other things that release the endorphins and make life pleasurable and meaningful.

So basically, the value or worth of something is a balance between what the buyer is willing to pay and what the seller is willing to take for the item. When we are

dealing with goods and services is a relatively simplistic model on how to value the product. If the product is in great supply and its worth is driven by the lowest price the buyer is willing to pay for and if the product is in short supply its value is determined by the highest bidder.

But what happens when the product or service falls into the category that is very hard to establish a price. How much are you willing to pay for a beautiful sunset? How much are you willing to pay to discuss and influence subjects with good friends? How much is it worth to be able to speak freely? How important is it to be valued as a human being with equal rights then for the color of your skin, your ancestral homeland, the religion you profess, or your ability to speak freely,

We generally understand the value of things on an economic basis but in less you have lived this situation where these higher-level needs are denied it is difficult to place a value on them. Those who have lived under tyrannical governments, with no Free Press, no free speech, no freedom of religion, understand just how important and valuable these items are to the soul.

Many of these people (whether parents or grandparents or great grandparents) fled to America because it offered the hope of not only achieving material wealth but offered comfort and safety to those who were oppressed. They know the value of freedom, they understand the hardships and indignity of slavery, they know that the knock on the door in the middle of the night may be the last time you'll see loved ones.

Lately it seems we have been worshiping at the Idol of greed, we have only valued those material things; those items that the marketers have created an unreasonable demand for. Our economy is driven by the need for more, and more and bigger and bigger.

Have we learned nothing from the past? Are we living in a modern day Roman Colosseum watching people slaughter each other, killing animals, a spectacle of blood and gore to keep from seeing our freedoms, our democracy, our integrity and our humanity fall by the wayside?

Are we willing to throw away 240 years as a nation (although not perfect) created so that we the people need the decisions (not the monarchy were dictators), where we were all equal under the law and no one was above the law. Great minds created the Constitution, patriots spill their blood so we would have our freedoms and re-created the greatest nation on earth; where others clamored to be part of and join us.

What will they say about us and future? That we were the last generation to defend our democracy? That we sold our souls for a few pieces of silver engaging to our basist instincts and were willing to throw all of this away and for what? What value do you place on the freedoms? The book is open and we had yet to write the final chapters; I hope history will say that we pulled back from the abyss, throughout the false idols and corrected our past and returned to the ideals of the founders.

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## 69) “Trump is Obscene, Insane and Dangerous”

*Opinion by NormT 2/20/2020*

**Obscene:** Something that has no redeemable social value

Trump is offensive and disgusting by all accepted standards of morality and decency. He basically has no moral principles and exemplifies (is the personification of) the 7 cardinal sins (pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth) and believes them to be his commandments. He has No integrity, no empathy, no compassion, no humanity; he is totally and completely obscene.

**Insane:** A state of mind which prevents normal perception, behavior, or social interaction; seriously mentally ill. A mental illness of such a severe nature that a person cannot distinguish fantasy from reality, the inability to determine right from wrong. Is subject to uncontrollable impulsive behavior.

### **Sociopath:**

A person with a personality disorder manifesting itself in extreme antisocial attitudes and behavior and a lack of conscience. someone who has antisocial personality disorder (ASPD). People with ASPD can't understand others' feelings. They'll often break rules or make impulsive decisions without feeling guilty for the harm they cause. Doesn't respect social norms or laws. They consistently break laws or overstep social boundaries.

### **Sociopathic Traits:**

1. Lies, deceives others, uses false identities or nicknames, and uses others for personal gain.
2. Doesn't make any long-term plans. They also often behave without thinking of consequences.
3. Shows aggressive or aggravated behavior. They consistently get into fights .
4. Doesn't consider their own safety or the safety of others.
5. Doesn't follow up on personal or professional responsibilities. This can include repeatedly being late to work or not paying bills on time.
6. Doesn't feel guilt or remorse for having harmed or mistreated others.

**Malignant Narcissist:** A narcissistic personality disorder (NPD): Shows antisocial behaviors, paranoid traits and ego syntonetic aggression. Other symptoms may include an absence

of conscience, a psychological need for power and an overwhelming sense of self-importance (grandiosity).

NPD traits:

1. A grandiose sense of self-importance.
2. A preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.
3. A belief that he or she is “special” and unique and can only be understood by or should associate with similar high-status people and organizations.
4. A need for excessive admiration.
5. A sense of entitlement or unreasonable expectation of special treatment or extreme loyalty.
6. A tendency to use others for their own needs or wants.
7. A lack of empathy, or unwillingness to recognize and honor the needs and feelings of others.
8. A sense of arrogance shown in behaviors and/or attitudes.

**Trump is clearly unhinged, seriously disturbed and based on the behaviors listed above a Sociopathic Malignant Narcissist. He is incapable of making rational decisions; he is clearly INSANE.**

**Dangerous:**

He is a clear and present danger to our Nation, our Democracy, the “Rule of Law”, Our Constitution and our Safety and Security. He believes himself to be a “King”, above the law and cannot be checked by Congress or the Courts. He has alienated all our Allies, broken international agreements and cozies up to Dictators. He is the most corrupt President in history and has replaced capable and knowledgeable Department heads with loyalists, cronies and incompetent sycophants.

He has corrupted the Justice Department, Treasury, State, Defense, in fact every area where he can use favors (pay to play) he does. He believes the Justice department is his own private police force to be used to control dissent and go after his rivals and perceived enemies (i.e. anyone who doesn’t agree with or give him fealty and obedience). Yes, it does remind me of the Gestapo. He is turning our Democracy into a Banana Republic. Even worse he has divided this Nation and unleashed Racism and Bigotry, destroyed Truth and Honesty and belief in science and facts. He has taken us back to the early 1700’s where he can be a Monarch and Democracy and people’s rights didn’t exist. Is this what we really want?

## 70) “Who are you?”

*NormT 2/28/2020*

When people ask “who are you?”, they get a variety of answers. Often it is just a name, but after a slight pause, they might add their occupation, or where they are from, or what organizations they belong to or are a member of.

We live in a complex world filled with vast amounts of data and it is not easy to make sense of all these inputs. When faced with infinite variables and overwhelming bits of information (all vying for our attention), we get confused and disoriented.

What often is done to address this issue is to try to “simplify things” by categorizing items that we feel are similar, into groups and giving them names. This reduces the complexity and allows us to handle things using generalizations to identify these groups.

It is putting somewhat similar items into a box and labeling that box with a name that allows us to know approximately what is in it. In fact, the items may be quite different but we feel they belong together.

I believe people fall into the following categories or groups. They may move between groups or be part of multiple groups as the situation or environment changes. These groupings capture their natural tendencies, inclinations and styles and allow them to do what they “like to do” or “feel comfortable” doing. It becomes a good fit with their personality and capability.

There is no value judgement, right or wrong or better or worse; it is where you see yourself fitting into our complex world of interpersonal interactions.

The groups:

- 1) Makers (builders): People who just like to make things, put things together, construct things.
- 2) Doers: If something needs to be done, they just do it (whatever it is), they see a need and fulfill it.
- 3) Creators: They see a need that isn’t being fulfilled (or not done well) and they find a new way to make it happen.

- 4) Seekers: They want to know “why” and “how” of everything, they are always searching for answers, solve problems, probe deeper.
- 5) Observers (watchers): They are looking at “what” is happening and “who” is doing it, they are the scribes, the eyes and ears of our times.
- 6) Leaders: If it requires a group to make something happen, they “take charge”, they organize, direct and point the way, they jump out to the front to lead the charge.
- 7) Followers: They are busy living their lives and willing to accept someone else to show the way but will join in to reach the destination.
- 8) Visionaries: They recognize disparate trends, see future environments and various possibilities to make improvements, the “futurists”.
- 9) Evaluators (Judge/critic): They review and evaluate, judge the world and events around them. Identify the rights and wrongs as they see them.

*I include these next two groups but guess few will care to publicly identify with them.*

- 10) Naysayer: Believes everything is bad, wrong, won't work, not necessary.
- 11) Withdrawers / Indifferents : They don't want to be a part of anything, want to be left alone, doesn't seem to care about anything or anyone.

As we go through life, we use varied approaches to address the challenges we face. We are all different, yet alike. So, the next time someone asks “who are you?”, consider including one or more of these groups to your answer; it may better describe who you really are.

## 71) “What would I do in this pandemic?”

Opinion 3/21/2020

Nobody asked but I will tell you anyway. We are in a multiple crisis: a pandemic, An economic disaster and a political crisis. Each area must be addressed simultaneously as they are closely linked and inter-related.

### A) Covid-19 pandemic:

- a. Appoint a competent Pandemic “Czar” (we have a number of retired or active generals/admirals who know how to handle a multi-pronged problem, understand logistics, planning and execution.
- b. Use wartime powers to demand industries/Companies to immediately produce and ship to our medical facilities (at no cost to the public):
  - i. All needed PPE (personal protective equipment).
  - ii. Breathing equipment (ventilators) and hospital supplies

profiteering guidelines during the emergency on all items sold to the public.

- c. Keep politics out of the crisis, updates from Crisis managers only. The public needs to believe they are being told the truth from people who understand the problem.

### B) Economic disaster:

- a. Institute a 3-month moratorium (delay payments) on everything related to housing, like mortgages and rents (utilities and out of pocket real expenses excluded)
- b. All financial obligation (principal and interest) payments (school debts, etc. to be delayed.
- c. The same for medical insurance premiums (except c co-pays except for Covid-19)
- d. Any bills related to the “shelter in place guidelines also delayed.



- e. Everyday items required to live (Food, white goods, clothes) to be paid by customer and controlled by non-profiteering guidelines (prices fixed)
- f. Government to immediately provide unemployment insurance to anyone who lost their job due to the pandemic.
- g. All other workers (not part of “F” above receiving Social Security benefits or making over \$ 5,000 a month) to receive a \$ 1,000 a month for the next 3 months.

### C) Political Crisis:

- a. All states to immediately switch to mail in ballots with a paper trail before the election in Nov 2020
- b. All Citizens over the age of 18 to be automatically registered and entitled to vote.
- c. The Department of Justice (and the Attorney General) to be made an independent agency reporting to both Congress and the Supreme Court.
- d. All Presidential Candidates must disclose the last 10 years of tax returns as soon as they are nominated by their party conventions.
- e. All Presidential candidates must undergo a non-partisan psychological exam (similar to those who work on nuclear missile sites) for suitability and every 2 years after elected.
- f. All Presidents (and any family members involved in the administration) must divest themselves from any business organizations or a binding blind trust arrangement.

We need to restore our Nation, protect our people and save our Democracy.

Remember. When you **“Elect a clown, expect a circus!”**

## 72) My special 7 wonderful gastronomical experiences

NormT 4/1/2020

The seven favorite gastronomic experiences based on the criteria of any or all of the following: Quality of food, Ambience, pleasure of the moment, or just one I'd like to repeat.

1) Jewish Deli (My uncle Harry's "Katz" or my Fathers Deli (in Brooklyn or the Bronx) or any of the thousands that used to exist in N.Y.

Corned beef and pastrami on Rye, and a hot dog off the grill with mustard and sauerkraut, potato knishes washed down with Dr. Browns celery tonic or cream soda and sour tomatoes and pickles on the side and maybe a little kishka (stuffed derma), too.

2) My Grandmothers potato-nick or my Aunt Goldies potato latka's or Uncle Joes cheese blintzes and "real" bagels (that you had to chew) with lox and cream cheese and a carrot tsimas with a knadle and sweet and sour brisket and a pickled herring appetizer with a garlic rubbed pumpernickel and gribanes hot off the frying pan. Oy vey the heartburn.

3) My first time in Rome (on leave with my Army buddy Roy from Florida), we stayed in a pensionne near the Piazza Navona and had real Italian pasta along with many bottles of chianti, Best spaghetti ever.

4) My very first paella sitting at a table on the Ramblas in Barcelona and watching the world strolling by; Families, young children and especially the statuesque Catalonian women in their fine dresses and jaunty carriage. The food was good too.

5) A luncheon with my wife and best friends (the Pighini's, our Opera pals) sitting on the balcony overlooking the vineyards in Yountville, Napa Valley at the "French Laundry Restaurant. The warm sun. a gentle breeze and absolutely magnificent food.

6) A Chicago tie, either Charly Trotters (now deceased) or Rick Bayless's "topolobampo". This is weird; a top-rated Continental against a top-rated Mexican. The food was fantastic in both places but the Margaritas in Rick's tipped the scales.

7) A “Riz Tafel” in a hole in the wall restaurant in Den Haag, Netherlands. There is a story that goes with this choice:

- a. In 1959, I was a private in the army making \$32 a month and as an occupying force we were paid in script (like monopoly money, not U.S. dollars) so we basically had little cash and when we left base used cigarettes and gasoline to supplement our income (since we could buy this stuff very cheaply at the PX and use it for barter in town) .
  - b. So, when my buddy and I went to Paris we had two suitcases filled with cigarettes to pay for our rooms and meals. So, for a week we ate very cheaply, Salami, cheese, baguettes and very cheap wine (didn't have a hot meal for a week)
  - c. We left Paris and caught a military flight to the Hague (Den Haag) and asked the crew where we could get a good hot meal. They answered go to any Indonesian restaurant and ask for a Riz Tafel (Rice Table).
  - d. We were famished when we finally got into town and found a small Indonesian Restaurant and saw “Riz Tafel” on the menu for 2 and 4 guilders; no one spoke English so we decided that the 2 guilder one was a small dinner and 4 guilders was a large dinner. So, we both insisted on ordering the 4-guilder dinner (they tried to dissuade us but we knew what we wanted).
  - e. As it turns out we had both ordered a dinner for two, A dinner for one consists of 17 small courses (each a dish with a different meat or vegetable in a delicious sauce) so we ended up with 68 plates spread over 3 tables and the best 4-hour dinner ever.
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### **73) “Is the sky really falling?”**

*Opinion by NormT 5/2/2020*

It sure feels like it is. These are very scary and unsettling times; the entire world is facing a pandemic and the associated financial fallout that is wreaking havoc on the economy. All this while we are struggling to keep our liberal democracy from falling prey to an incompetent and corrupt President and administration. A potential double whammy of a medical and political calamity on the horizon.

Not since the darkest days of the great depression and the early days of WW II, have we faced such dark clouds hanging over our future and creating such fear, anxiety and uncertainty. Now as then, the final outcome is unknown and will depend on how we address these problems as a Nation.

Both issues have a solution and are within our capacity and capability to control and solve. Yes, there will be casualties, deaths and emotional and financial distress and we will not emerge unscathed; but we will emerge and overcome these plagues if we stand together as a nation and do what needs to be done.

We know what to do to solve the political issue (getting rid of an inept, corrupt and incompetent President) and in November the American voters will return us to sanity and remove the orange plague from office and restore our Democracy.

We will listen to the scientific experts to minimize the effects of the virus and will eventually have a vaccine and medications to reduce the harshest effects of the virus. We will slowly be able to get back to work and restore our economy. It may not be exactly the same, but it will come back. We will have quick and easy testing and tracking ability and see a return to normalcy.

We need to have hope that the American people will do the right things and do what we have always done; learn from our mistakes, pick ourselves up and come back stronger than ever.

The sky isn't falling and tomorrow will come and we will get through this but only if we do the right things and do it together.

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## 74) “Transition”

*By NormT 12/31/2020*

The definition of transition is: “the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another”. So, on the stroke of mid-night on December 31st 2020 we will transition into January 1. 2021, Good riddance 2020 you were a horrible, awful, terrible soul wrenching year so, “begone”.

But this transition is merely an artifact of the calendar, depending on which one you use and we are always in the process of transitioning and the calendar is just an arbitrary tool we use to separate one day, week, month or year from previous ones.

Will we be any different tomorrow morning than we are this morning? The sun will rise as it always does and later on it will set and the night will take over and so on, as long as the Earth spins on its axis and revolves around our Sun.

Will we be any different? Will the situation we find ourselves living through be any different? Will we see the world change? I hope so! There are a lot of things we can look forward to:

- 1) Being vaccinated against the covid-19 virus and the ultimate control of the pandemic.
- 2) An economic recovery that eases the pain of hunger, homelessness and hopelessness and brings back reasonable paying jobs and restores the health of our small businesses.
- 3) A return to “truth, reality, competence and decency” in our government.
- 4) A reduction in the “Chaos” and a return to “normalcy”.
- 5) The re-establishment of “the rule of law” and “fairness and equality” in our Justice System.
- 6) A return of “Normalcy” and trust in science and reason.
- 7) Make America great again by having compassion for our fellow human beings wherever they are and whatever they look like or believe in.
- 8) See and treat others “not as the enemy” but as compatriots and fellow citizens of “mother earth” our home planet.

Wouldn't it be nice if we can TRANSITION ourselves, those around us and our nation to make this a better place to live for everyone!

## 75) “I know a very fortunate man, me”

*By NormT 12/24/2020*

I was trying to decide whether to use the word "lucky" or "fortunate"; there is a subtle difference between the two; lucky seems to intimate a purely random set of events that worked in one's favor, while fortunate means that some decisions that were made turned out to have positive consequences.

2020 has been an awful year, the pandemic has devastated the world and caused great havoc and suffering. The economic impact of the virus has been immense and people are going hungry, lost their incomes, can't pay the rent or mortgage and some many have died or become very ill.

I consider myself a pragmatic optimist; not some wild eyed “everything is going to work out kind of person” but one with a hopeful attitude who recognizes the world around him and realizes that “sometimes bad things happen even to good people”.

My old boss and good friend (Bob Zettler) used to tell a story about a father who wanted to teach his young son a lesson, he thought the son was too optimistic, naïve and unrealistic. So, the day before Christmas he went to the local stable and purchased a load of manure to be delivered to his home on Christmas morning, to teach his son a lesson.

That morning the stable dropped off the manure and the father called his young son down and said “I have a present for you”, he opened the door and pointed to the load of manure. The young boy shouted with glee, ran to the barn, picked up a shovel ran back to the pile and started digging. His father was dismayed and asked his son “do you know what you're doing”.

The young boy said "with all this “horseshit” around, there must be a pony under there somewhere”. I guess it all depends on your point of view or as Tevye (from fiddler on the roof) always says "on the other hand" meaning here is always another side or point of view to consider.

Yes, 2020 was a terrible year but I don't need to look around very far to realize how fortunate I am, that I have food on the table, a roof over my head, good friends and neighbors (when this is all over, can get together with again) and most importantly a family that is loving, caring, considerate and compassionate.

I truly have been very fortunate in my life; had my family not come to America when they did; I certainly would have suffered the consequences that my Aunts and Uncles and Cousins did

during the Holocaust. My mother and father came to America as teenagers to make a new and better life and I benefitted from their actions.

My family encouraged education, open mindedness, individuality and kindness to others and I was fortunate to have lived in the “best of times and in the best of places”. Most fortunately I found a “soul mate” in my wife Dorothy who has been a partner in everything we did. We did them together “for better or worse”, and we really did them together.

We raised two Daughters who are decent, caring, individuals with minds of their own and strong women and honorable humans who care about others.

Life offers many choices and paths, some successful, some not so but in total I feel so fortunate to be surrounded and supported by those I love and appreciate them for what they do and who they are. I truly know a fortunate man and it is me.

Happy Holidays to everyone and may 2021 bring health, peace and relief to those who suffer and remember “there may be a pony under all that stuff”.

## **76) “She fought for all of us”**

### **Our Ruth Bader Ginsberg is gone.**

Opinion by NormT 9/19/2020

There are some people that just “know” what is right, that needs to be done and then does it. They become our Icons; our role models, our moral guides and leaders. They show us the way with intellect, courage, fortitude and example.

Each generation has their own set of leaders who (against all odds) are able to show us the way, fight for what is right and make our world a better place because of who they were and what they were able to do.

The notorious RBG was one of those people, she stood up for everyone; their rights and equality. She epitomized what our Nation and its Constitution stands for and what it means to all the generations of immigrants and minorities who came to America for freedom and a better life.

She towered above us mere mortals, her intellect, drive and courage made her the champion of women’s rights, civil rights and human rights. She was a great person, woman, wife, mother, lawyer, Judge and a Supreme Court Justice. Her “voice” will be missed by all of us; for her brilliance in how she represented us, our hopes and our dreams.

Lady Liberty, is weeping for our loss and now the scales of justice are tilting in favor of the few over the many. Dear Justice Ginsberg; the World mourns our loss; you were our champion holding the torch of liberty high for all to see.

I did not know you, (even though our families attended the same temple in Brooklyn) but you represented what all of us hope our Country can be. For all the women and little girls who you opened the door a little wider for and made their futures a little brighter.

Thank You for everything you have done and for showing us all what it means to be good, strong and a champion of our better angels. We are a better Nation and a better people because of you. What more could one want in life!



## 77) “Losers and Suckers”

*Opinion by NormT 9/10/2020*

Like almost everyone else who has served and been willing to put their lives on the line to protect our Nation, its’ people and our Democracy I felt trumps comments that we were just a bunch of losers and suckers was beyond despicable and in my mind the words of a “traitor”!

Someone born of privilege (with a silver spoon up his you know where), who has not spent a day of honest labor or done anything but feed his own ego his entire life can even pretend he cares about anyone but himself is beyond belief.

He is a draft dodging coward, a Con-man. a cheat and a blatant LIAR. Every one of his flaws and faults he projects on everyone else; he accepts no responsibility or blame for his incompetence, corruption and lack of leadership, honesty, decency, civility, empathy or humanity.

I will tell you who the “fools and suckers” are:

- Anyone who ever had a business dealing with him.
- Those who invested in his fraudulent and bankrupted businesses.
- Anyone who loaned him money and expected to be repaid.
- People who did work for him and expected to be paid in full.
- Everyone who believes a word of what he tweets or says.

It is the MAGA hat cult members at his rallies, believing in his false reality and race baiting and ranting and raving and sadly those who voted for him believing he cared anything about their lives and safety or well-being.

Far worse are those who will vote for him in 2020 knowing exactly who he is and what he stands for. If anyone is a loser or a sucker it will be those fools.

## 78) “An unlikely pair”

A 55 year(now 60) love story From Norm to Dorothy 9/11/2020

57 years ago, in a land far away, two young independent minded young adventurers, one a beautiful Catholic girl from Wisconsin and the other a Jewish guy from New York met at a party in San Diego.

If this was an opera or a fairy tale, their eyes locked, the chorus sang and sparks flew and they flew into each-others arms madly in love. But this is a real story. No music or sparks or claps of thunder because you see, they were a very unlikely couple.

She from a very small town and he from a very big city. Their families and childhood friends thousands of miles away and they had hardly anything in common except a love of adventure and an attitude that they could handle anything that life placed before them.

They dated a few times, probably more out of curiosity than anything else and soon the differences didn't seem so vast and gradually he fell in love, she was everything he wanted in a life's partner; a strong independent woman, beautiful, open minded, loved music, would be a wonderful wife and mother and partner in life.

Then she moved away, far away, back to Wisconsin (a place on a map thousands of miles away from sunny San Diego). What was he to do? His love left him and all those adventures he imagined they would have together seemed to be fading away.

The story could have ended, just another memory, someone one dated and they went on their own ways. But fate had another plan. He thought to himself, she is everything I want and I can't lose her. So, 55 years ago he asked her to marry him and she said YES.

The last 55 years have been full of highs and lows, two independent minded Daughters, living and traveling all over the world, good friends, hundreds of Operas, thousands of great meals in exotic locations and always side by side. Sharing whatever came at them, together.

I knew you were the one, the day (evening) you said you would go see the “grunions run” at that beach north of san Diego. I think I fell in love with you that day and have loved you even more as we faced life together these past 55 years.

Everything wasn't always perfect, we are after all “our own person”, but I wouldn't change a thing, if it meant we couldn't have done it together.

So, after all is said and done; maybe we weren't such an unlikely couple after all.

Dorothy, I love you so much and thank you for our time together these past years. Happy Anniversary. Maybe we can squeak out another few “side by side”.

Norm

## 79) “What can be done to get the police to police themselves?”

*Opinion ny NormT 8/28/2020*

We know that the vast majority of the police are fair, follow the guidelines and the law and just want to do their job and go safely home to their families.

There are a few however, who abuse their power and act in ways that deny citizens not only due process but act in ways that use force way out of proportion to what the circumstances call for. We see it all the time, the knee on the neck or the shooting of an unarmed suspect (in the back no less) or someone running away after a petty crime and gunned down in a hailstorm of bullets.

And there are those who although not directly involved in the abuse of force, turn a blind eye or do nothing to mitigate the situation and act as an accomplice to the act.

Just passing some laws against choke holds won't correct the situation nor will more training or “defunding” the police. There are some people who should not be allowed to wear a badge and carry a gun; they are either incapable of making quick life or death decisions in a lawful way or have a propensity (often racially motivated) to abuse their power.

I wouldn't be surprised to learn those people are “known” to those on the inside; often protected by sympathetic superiors or co-workers. But the internal culture of the departments and fear of reprisal keeps it “inside” the system.

Many of the egregious acts end up in the courts with huge settlements or judgements costing local communities millions of dollars; taken from the general funds and reducing the ability of these communities to provide other badly needed services.

If we want (need) to have the police departments to take care of their internal problems (get rid of the bad apples) and step up and get involved in situations they know are improper; I suggest trying the following (I know it will never happen but maybe).

The costs of any legal settlements or court decisions due to improper action on the part of a police officer should be PAID for out of the police retirement funds. You better believe those bad actors will be “outed” and if anyone sees something wrong going on, they will get involved.

Just a wild thought, but it might work.

## 80) “Respect or Recognition”

*Opinion by NormT 8/15/2020*

We hear the word “respect” used in a variety of situations by various groups and individuals. Rodney Dangerfield based his whole comedy routine on the phrase “I don’t get no respect”. Respect may mean different things to different people; here is my take on the subject.

I believe that what most people really mean, is that they want their “existence to be acknowledged or recognized and their “equality and legal rights” to be normalized and their “pain and suffering” to be addressed and mitigated.

Whether it is someone in a small rural area that has been decimated by a factory closing or a person of color or an immigrant facing police or systemic racism or prejudice.

People want to be noticed, acknowledged, be part of the conversation; not taken for granted or ignored or even worse feel “invisible”, not even there. We want to be part of the conversation and have a seat at the table no matter our party affiliations, economic status and have our voices heard.

Our Nation was based on “we the people” and in today’s society and culture it should mean “all of us”, everyone; no matter how rich or poor, what religion (or even none at all), what ethnicity, race, sexual orientation or where we live.

Everyone wants to have an equal opportunity to pursue their own dreams. If a natural disaster, pandemic or economic disruption occurs, we expect the entire nation to come together and help. When we see systemic racial prejudice causing injustice and inequality, we need to work together to mitigate the pain and suffering and fix the problems.

People understand that not everyone is equal; some have greater wealth, power or celebrity and we have varied capabilities and skills. What people want is to have “equality before the law” and be valued as human beings and fellow Americans.

So, what about that word “Respect”? I feel it is something that must be “earned”, it cannot be bestowed or given or bought. It is more than just being rich or famous; it takes into account how one interacts with the community and world around them.

- ☐ Being wealthy isn’t enough; what have you done with that wealth that counts.
- ☐ Being a celebrity isn’t enough; what have you done with that fame?

- ☐ Being a great athlete, isn't enough; what kind of person are you?
- ☐ Having a "title" isn't enough, have you used it to better your fellow citizens?

It is not only about an individual's accomplishments but how they interact with those around them; are they honest and fair, caring, lawful; are they someone you can "trust" and be willing to have them care for your children.

As a CEO or business Owner, have you provided a safe and secure working environment for your employees; has your company added value to the community around you? Have those with immense wealth or power used it for their own family's self-interests, gratifications or indulgences or have they tried to make life better for others?

In order to earn respect, one must do (or be) more than just about oneself the "I" or "Me" ; I feel it needs to be about, the We. While I can recognize and acknowledge an individual's accomplishments and praise their abilities and skills; I choose to reserve my "Respect" for those people (groups and organizations) that also care about others and the world we live in.

## 81) “Genius II”

*By Normt 8/3/2020*

To follow-up on my recent article on “who is a genius”, I feel that “creativity” plays the most significant role. It is also lot more difficult to be “creative” in the scientific arena than in the Arts. To create a whole new field in Physics or Biology requires both a rigorous devotion to the facts and analytic analysis and proofs. If the equations can’t predict the outcome or be proven; they are invalid and the burden of proof is an extremely arduous and difficult task.

In the “Arts” (music, dance, painting, sculpture, literature etc.) the final judge and jury, is the public’s acceptance and approval; and they can be a very mercurial and fickle audience. There is an old saying: “those that can - do; those that can’t - teach and all others become - critics”.

“Beauty, is in the eye of the beholder” is really true in the field of ART, it is the audience (the consumers) who determine what is acceptable, what is valuable, what is bad, good, great or just ho-hum. It is in the court of common opinion that determines eventual value. Styles go in and out and sometimes something new or different has a small following to begin with and then suddenly explodes into “the thing”.

There are also a small group of “experts and trend mavens who can manipulate the market, set trends, determine value in the short term but hopefully the community eventually sets the price and determines what survives the test of time.

Think of all the changes we have seen in the area of popular music (country, jazz, rock & Roll, heavy metal, rap to name a few) or in painting (realism, expressionism, impressionism, surrealist, modernism more “ism’s” than you can imagine). What these have in common was that one form existed and then someone created something new and different. Were these “changes” a stroke of genius? I will leave that up to you to decide.

When visiting a Museum or Art gallery (since it is usually impossible to view every piece of Art being exhibited) I would do the following:

- 1) Peak into the room, scanning what was available. if I didn’t feel a “pull”, something whispering (or sometime shouting), “go in and look around”; I would pass it by.
- 2) If I felt that pull, I would enter and look for something that caught my eye (something special or unique) and spend time with those items. I felt it was more satisfying to take it in, absorb that item; than rush through and see them all.

- 3) I also made a mental scorecard as I wandered through to evaluate what I was seeing:
- F Junk, garbage, don't waste your time.
  - D So, so or passable.; don't stay long.
  - C Fair, not bad; worth a look.
  - B Good, well done, spend a little time.
  - A Great (Found it); this really grabs me, take it in, look closely, meld with it.

There may be only a few items that speak to you, reach out and shake you and say "stay a while, we may never meet again so savor the moment., it is just you and it, enjoy it.

Those who can make something out of inanimate objects (paint or stone or, metal or clay) and breathe life into them and makes you take notice, to want to stay and be as one with it.

That my friends; is true Genius.

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## 82) “Who is a genius”?

By NormT 8/1/2020

I will begin by saying “NOT ME”; in the old days (my times), Genius was defined by having a score of 160 or more on the standard IQ test (a very culture sensitive and narrow definition) or loosely used to identify someone who starts a big, new thing.

“Genius”, like “Obscenity” is hard to describe, but you know it when you see it; (and most likely we all see it differently). Here is my take on the subject of genius (not obscenity).

First, I need to add that sometimes we use a word that may have a different meaning depending on the situation. For example, when I worked in England one of my team said an idea I proposed was “brilliant”. Of course, my head grew a few sizes larger and I was quite pleased with myself.

Then, I found out the English use the word “brilliant” in a different way than we do (an example of two nations divided by a common language). We use “brilliant” as exceptional, out of the ordinary and extremely good, bordering on genius; but they use it to mean good or O.K., not as a superlative. My head shrank back to normal and I learned that a “word” may have a different meaning to others.

Saying someone is a “genius” may have a number of different connotations and interpretations; I believe there are at least 4 categories:

1) The “Savant”; someone born with unexplainable skills and brain functions that allow them to perform unusual and exceptional actions or feats with no prior knowledge or training. Like a 4 year old composing a Symphony or someone who outperforms a computer. We have seen examples of this throughout history (Mozart) and now with the internet and YouTube many more are being identified. No one knows how or why, but their skills and capability are undeniable and pure genius.

2) “The very best at what they do”, those individuals have great natural talent, drive and perseverance and reach the very pinnacle of perfection in their particular field or area of expertise. Pavarotti (in Opera) and Perlman (on the violin) come to mind. These people are recognized as “the best of the best”. Other examples include: DaVinci, Michelangelo, Ted Williams (for you baseball fans) and Tiger Woods (for you golfers). I am sure you have your own examples.



3) Then there are also some people who are exceptionally good in multiple fields and activities. They may not be the greatest in any one area but excel in many.

Barbra Streisand, one of the best singers, also a songwriter, an actress, and a director and Sammy Davis Junior, a dancer, singer, impressionist, he played almost every instrument in the band and arguably the best all-around entertainer ; I would add Leonard Bernstein, a conductor, musician, composer of symphonies, operas and Broadway shows and an early celebrity who introduced classical music to millions of youngsters.

4) “The Creators”; They had the ability to assimilate information and knowledge from multiple and varied fields and create a new, different and better solution. A new way of observing and describing the world around us and how things function and are interconnected and along the way may create new Industries, fields, disciplines and ways of thinking.

a. In the area of science: I would place people like Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin to name a few.

b. In Arts and Entertainment: people like Walt Disney, Charlie Chaplin, Sid Caesar, The whole Impressionist movement, the Broadway Musicals and Documentarian film-makers like Ken Burns are examples.

c. In the world of business we have: The Inventors (like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Edison) and the “Entrepreneurs”, those titans who created entirely new Industries like Henry Ford (with his automotive assembly line), David Sarnoff (founder of RCA), Thomas Watson (IBM), Bill Gates (Microsoft), Steve Jobs (Apple) and Jeff Bezos (Amazon) to name a few.

In almost every field we can find people who broke the mold and started a revolution, a new way of thinking and doing that had a major impact on what and how we think and live. The changes they made were not small or incremental they were big, bold and revolutionary.

I have identified some of my choices. Who would you add or take away?

In these troubled times (of Pandemics and Divisive politics), we need to think about other things; like “where did all those dumb schmucks not wearing masks come from”? They are definitely NOT Geniuses!

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## 83) “Value and Worth, the solution”

Opinion by NormT 7/19/2020

Hopefully a year from now our concerns about Trump and Trumpism and the Covid-19 Pandemic will be behind us and the Biden administration will be dealing with re-establishing a normalcy in Government and addressing the economic consequences of the pandemic and systemic racial and societal inequalities. These will take time, money and significant effort by a dedicated Congress and Administration.

However, even before Trump and the virus we were facing a disaster that no one seemed to be addressing; the impact of technological advances has been destroying the majority of mid to high paying jobs in the manufacturing sector. This along with the newer technologies of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and quantum computing means most “white collar” and professional jobs may soon disappear as well.

We will be faced with a situation where a majority of our population will have no gainful employment (no job, no work, no income). Don’t let anyone tell you that the new technologies will be creating vast numbers of jobs for the displaced workers; that is just wishful thinking and a way to put off having to address this problem. We need to start working on this problem NOW!

I certainly don’t have an answer but sure as hell would like to see this being worked on along with Climate change and restoring liberal democracy at home and abroad. Even a short-term temporary fix would be better than none.

What we will be faced with is trying to decide “how much” is an activity worth; what is its value? We know when we are starving or dying of thirst that food and water are worth more than any gems or possessions. Maslow, a noted social scientist postulated there is a hierarchy of needs, until the basics are fulfilled all others are put on hold. We need to have the security needs (shelter, food, water, safety) addressed first.

Some might point out that over-population is the problem; and I agree it is a factor but most experts point out there is enough to go around but we haven’t put in place the mechanisms to distribute the goods to where it is needed. There is enough food produced to feed the entire world but not the desire to do it. What value do we place on feeding someone else?

In 2020 Amazon employs around 1 million workers, if each worker earns a about \$100,000 dollars (probably much less) their total earnings is around \$ 100 Billion dollars, less

than Jeff Bezos the founder. Is one person, no matter how ingenious worth the same as one million of their employees?

In the future we will need to decide how much is each job or activity worth, how many hours will it take to perform. We will need to re-define relative values between tasks. Why should a teacher or a nurse be paid less than an engineer, a stock broker or an accountant?

Why are entertainers or athletes paid in the millions while food service and maintenance people struggle with minimum wage (which is well below what we consider poverty level). Even at \$15 dollars an hour (annualized is around \$30 thousand a year).

My point is we will have fewer jobs to go around and the current system of determining just how much each activity is worth needs to be reviewed and re-evaluated or we will be facing even more catastrophic economic disruptions and consequences (think revolution and “off with their heads”) as they had during the French revolution. Does anyone know how to build a guillotine?

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## 84) “Thoughtlings”

By NormT 6/24/2020

- Be very wary of prophets who profit.
  - Truth and lies can be measured both in quantity and quality (how often and how large).
  - Facts are not a function of need; they don't change because you want them to.
  - A real friend is someone with a big heart, an open mind and a short memory.
  - Just because something is repeated over and over doesn't mean it's true.
  - Don't expect someone over 70 to think, act or be different than they were before.
  - Economics is not a science; a number of economists who have been awarded the Nobel prize had completely opposite theories and views.
  - The Stock Market is like playing in a casino; no one can really predict the outcome or explain what causes the results. In the long run, the house (or Broker) gets their share; for the rest of us, it is just a roll of the dice.
  - Re-doubling, literally means 4 times. Most people who use the phrase have no idea what it means.
  - It is not possible to exceed 100% in a single area (since 100% means the absolute or total capacity). You can go over 100% when comparing different items (like a quart is 200% of a pint or a kilometer is 100,000 % of a meter).
  - So, if someone tells you they will give you 110% effort, it just means they weren't giving you 100% before, those lazy S.O.B.'s
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## **To 85) Defund or reimagine the police departments?**

Opinion by NormT 6/19/2020

Defund the police is a “mis-nomer”; it isn’t meant to abolish the concept of public safety it meant to re-imagine or redefine what role the police will play in the justice system. As many of the protesters are telling us (the general public), we are asking them (the police) to do things they are neither trained, qualified or funded to do.

Just exactly what role do we want the local police department to perform? Over the years they have morphed into areas like domestic conflicts, substance abuse, homelessness, mental health issues and almost everything that society in general wants fixed but hasn’t figured out how to do. So, let the cops take care of it.

This creeping escalation of the roles they are asked to play has put them in conflict with the community they are supposed to be serving and protecting. To make matters worse the system (society) still has not come to grips with systemic racism and economic disparity. We are living in different worlds and refuse to recognize the problems that exist.

We need to restructure the police departments to have as their goal “to protect the safety and security of the people (community)” they serve and NOT to control and oversee the territory and property. They are not a conquering Army or an “occupying force”. Their mindset needs to be changed.

The major role they need to play is to apprehend those who break the criminal laws and bring them to trial (they are not the prosecutors, judges, juries or jailers) and to protect the community from acts of terror (mass shootings) and those committing major criminal offenses. In fact, now would be a great time to review and update the entire criminal justice system to bring it in line with our modern principles of equality and Justice.

The other major issues that needs addressing is the selection and retention of the right personnel to staff this new organization. Although the vast majority of the current police force are competent and honorable individuals there are far too many who go into police work for the wrong reasons and with the wrong intention. I am referring to those who abuse their power and harbor prejudices that interferes with their ability to perform their jobs fairly and equitably.

We need to purge those who do not comply with these new standards and establish a selection process that keeps the wrong people from getting hired in the first place. We need vastly

improved hiring standards and better feedback and training systems to weed out those who no longer meet the new requirements.

We need good psychological screening and evaluation in the hiring stage and the ability to make corrective action as time goes on. The police are and can be a major component of the future justice system and better aligned with our future community needs and expectations.

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## 86) “D” day

*Norm T, 6//6/2020*

We must remember or suffer the consequences

On the 6th of June, 1944 some 76 years ago, we saw a turning point in the battle to overthrow Fascism and save Democracy. It was paid for in blood and the deaths of thousands of those in our “Greatest Generation”.

We must honor and remember their sacrifices and even more importantly “what” they were fighting for. It was not just to protect our homeland, it was to save the world from unimaginable death and destruction by Hitler and his NAZI politics, policies and practices.

We must honor those brave soldiers by making sure we never let our Nation be undermined from within, by forces that seek to divide us, promote racism, destroy the “Rule of Law”, ignore our Constitution and Bill of Rights and place greed over civility and humanity.

We are NOT a Monarchy, a Theocracy or a Dictatorship and over the centuries we have fought and died to defend our Democracy from those who want to destroy it.



## 87) “Are being given a false choice”

*Opinion by NormT 5/5/2020*

(To either open up and go for “herd immunity” or a complete shutdown with an economic collapse)

We are being told that we need to achieve “herd immunity”, the point where the spread of infection is controlled naturally. That is where about 2/3 of the population has developed immunity by either having had the virus or a vaccine to create the antibodies needed to fight off the virus.

Since the Vaccine is probably a year away, some people are saying just “open up” and let’s see what happens; most people will get the virus and survive and therefore develop the necessary antibodies (which the epidemiologists aren’t quite sure will happen).

So far in the U.S. we have had about 1.2 million cases (a more realistic number is probably around 5 million) with 70,000 deaths (a mortality rate of around 1.4%).

To reach the 2/3 number in America we will need to have 200 million people infected, (40 times the current number) and therefore see about 2.8 million deaths (that is more than the entire population of Wyoming, Vermont, North Dakota and Alaska combined, it would be like every single person in those 4 states just up and died, think about that).

On a worldwide basis (8 billion population), that would mean over 5 billion infected with over 70 million deaths. This is one hell of a lot of people dying in a very short period of time.

In America, we are seeing about 20% of the deaths coming from nursing homes, senior care facilities and convalescent facilities which would mean 560,000 senior citizens will perish. Around 50% of all deaths will be from communities of color (Blacks and Hispanics) about 1.4 million will die from the effects of the virus.

I don’t believe just getting to “herd immunity” is the right way to go forward. In the long term, if we aren’t able to develop an effective vaccine, we may have no choice but there must be a better way.

We currently do not have any approved therapeutic medications that alleviate the worst effects of the contagion (there are a number of medications on trial and some look promising) and the vaccine won’t be available in sufficient numbers until next Spring at best; but there are

a number of trials under way with the promise of fast track approval and large scale production promised so there is hope.

Our current efforts of social distancing with the associated closing down of the non-critical economy is not a long-term solution. It was meant to buy us time while we put in place the necessary testing, tracking and isolation of known cases and preventing the collapse of the medical and hospital systems.

The Federal Government and administration have failed miserably by failing to address both the urgency of the situation and providing the necessary resources (PPE, ventilators, testing kits and materials) and overall coordination and direction.

At this point in time, what do we know about the virus:

- 1) It is extremely contagious; if unchecked it will spread exponentially (\*)
- 2) It mostly effects the pulmonary system and spreads through droplets expelled by coughing and sneezing.
- 3) The most likely to be infected and impacted are:
  - a. People over 60
  - b. People with compromised immune systems, lung problems, heart problems and diabetes.
  - c. People living or traveling in high density situations like senior care communities, prisons, assembly line operations (meat processing plants), using public transportation (buses, trains, subways), and cramped living conditions (dormitories, migrant camps, high density housing.
  - d. People with frequent exposure to those who are carriers (medical and healthcare personnel, first responders)
- 4) The mortality rate is high (between 1 to 3 %), 5 to 10 times the normal flu.
- 5) Social distancing, hand washing, mask wearing and isolation of known and suspected cases helps lower the spread of the infection.

What we don't know yet is:

- 1) When and if we will have a vaccine (and availability in sufficient quantities)?
- 2) When and if we will have effective (reduced mortality and severity) therapeutics?
- 3) Does having the antibodies (after having had the virus) offer immunity?

- 4) How long after someone tests negative after having had the virus can they still spread the disease (shed the virus)?
- 5) When will we have enough accurate, approved (and with timely results) tests available for both antibodies and virus detection?
- 6) When will we have sufficient contact tracing systems and personnel available?
- 7) Will we have sufficient isolation facilities and infrastructure to handle the tracked individuals?

The 3rd choice is to slowly, carefully and safely open up the economy by doing the following:

- 1) Provide protective equipment to everyone who needs it.
  - 2) Test every:
    - a. Senior
    - b. Care provider
    - c. Worker in a critical job
    - d. Employee working with the public
    - e. Track, trace and isolate anyone who tests positive
  - 3) Provide safe working conditions (space and protective equipment)
  - 4) Require face masks and social distancing in public places including stores.
  - 5) Decide which industries/businesses and geographic locations that can be safely opened. Basically, have a plan worked out by people who know and understand the issues and problems and NOT the politicians and greedy opportunists.
- (\*) The power of doubling (exponential growth). If we start with one person infecting only 2 other people every day, and those people infecting 2 people each; this is what you can expect:
- On day “6” you will have just 64 infected.
  - On day “16” you will infect 65,536 (a football stadium).
  - On day “20” a city the size of Dallas or Austin or San Jose (1,048,576).
  - On day “23” an entire city the size of New York (8,388,608).

- On day “29” (536,870.912) the entire population of the United States and Indonesia combined (the world’s 3rd and 4th most populous Countries).
- On day “33” you will have infected every man, woman and child in the entire world (8,589,934,592).

That my friends, is what happens with unchecked exponential growth!

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## 88) “When you know the punchline ...”

*Opinion by NormT 5/1/2020*

One of the key elements of humor is the “surprise” punchline or action; it catches you unaware and you think “I didn’t see that coming”. It is the unexpected, it came from left field (who ever thought of that one?); we are startled and respond with a good laugh. Sometimes we need that surprise element to relieve the tension and relax.

I bring this up because we recently saw some extremely bad economic numbers regarding unemployment and reduction of the National GDP. The numbers were bad; over 30 million new unemployment claims and a quarterly drop of over 15% in the economic output.

In fact, those numbers will get much worse before we see any turnaround; maybe even a 50 million unemployment figure with a 30 to 40 % rate and the GDP may drop as much as 60 to 70%. So, what does this have to do with punchlines?

Because it seems the media, the pundits and the Administration are acting like this was unexpected and looked surprised as if this just came up out of nowhere. Give me a break; anyone with half a brain could figure this out.

In order to save hundreds of thousands of lives and with no immunity, no vaccine or even therapeutic drugs we decided to “shelter in place”, keep social distances and wear masks to control the rapid and deadly spread of the Covid-19 virus and to keep the medical system from collapsing; so we needed to close down the economy until we could figure out the next steps.

We did this by shutting down almost everything except critical segments, (i.e. groceries, drug stores, hospitals and defense). No large groups, movies, travel, sports, hotels, eat in restaurants, amusement parks, concerts, cruises etc. America is primarily a service economy and we shut it down.

I am not saying we didn’t need to do those things; I am saying don’t act surprised by the effect it has on the economy. We knew exactly what it would be and when it happens don’t report on it as if we were caught by surprise. Congress just passed (and in record time) 3 Trillion dollars in stimulus relief with more to come. Everyone knew what the impact would be (the punchline) but acted surprised when it happened.

I blame our leaders for not leveling with us; not telling us the truth about how bad the crisis is and what they are really doing to recover and what they need us to do to help. We as a

Nation can handle bad news if we know what is going on and believe we are taking the necessary steps to fix it.

The Pandemic is nobody's fault, but our response is what is important. Tell us the truth and stop gaslighting, stop the unrealistic expectations and conspiracy theories, get rid of the current level of incompetence and corruption (no one should be getting rich over others suffering). Start planning and following through on your promises to deliver accurate and adequate testing and supplies. Start coordinating these activities around the country and get rid of the politics and theatrics; people are scared and a lot of people are dying! This is not a joke or a fake reality show. We want the facts and results, not broken promises and excuses.

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## 89) “Problem Solving” a quick guide

*Some thoughts by NormT ( 4/24/2020)*

A week or so ago I sent out a piece about what advice I would give to myself as a young boy. A number of people responded positively and said they passed it on, so I thought I would try another topic. This time it is about something we all face frequently as we go through life; problem solving and how to address this issue.

A note about my background; I have a Degree in Engineering Physics, which is basically an “oxymoron”, since Physics is based on absolutes and perfection (laws that must apply all the time) and engineering is about approximations and it is OK to be good enough. So, I am essentially schizophrenic when I approach problems (which hat should I wear).

Before I get into a process, here are a few things to think about:

- When you first hear about a problem or issue the information you are given is generally inaccurate, certainly incomplete and often misleading. So, don’t jump to a conclusion or solution until you fill in the blanks. If you jump to a solution too early you will spend a lot of time, energy and money defending your choice rather than fixing the problem.
- The problem may look very different when viewed from a different perspective, try to “see” it from varied points of view.
- Not every problem needs to be solved; sometimes we learn to live with it.
- Not every problem can be solved.
- Is it really your problem to solve or should someone else own it?
- “Physical” (or what I call “thing”) problems can often wait a while; sometimes they just go away.
- “People” problems need to be addressed early because they generally fester and get worse as time goes on.

I have found that having a general “process” to follow leads to a quicker and better ultimate solution (even though we all like to jump ahead and get the answer), it may be better to go slow.

Below is a process (some simple steps) you may find useful:

- 1) Decide if this is your problem to solve, if not pass it on to the right person.
- 2) Determine if the problem needs to be solved; how bad is it. If not ignore it.
- 3) Gather as much information about the problem, make sure you are working on the “real issue”. Not everything is as it seems at first. You might end up solving the wrong problem.
- 4) Determine the magnitude (how bad is it) and what timing is required (How long do you have to fix it, does it require immediate attention?)
- 5) Determine what resources (tools, equipment, help, expertise will be needed).
- 6) Plan and execute your FIX!
- 7) “Check” to make sure the problem is fixed; If NOT, you may have to repeat the process.
- 8) Communicate to those who need to know that it is fixed.
- 9) Make sure to thank those who helped (you may need them again).

Like any process, some of the steps may be done very quickly and if not needed skipped, but make sure you give it some thought. Problem solving is something we all do and will face throughout our lives and these simple steps may save you time, energy and stress as well as achieving better results.

If you think this may be useful feel free to pass it along to those who might benefit from it.

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## **90) “Why I am a Democrat”**

*Opinion by Norm Tarowsky 4/18/2020*

I was asked why I, someone who worked in Industry (high-tech for 40+ years) and managed large organizations around the world, was a Democrat? My answer is quite simple, it is because:

I believe that “we” the people have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That we all deserve to be treated fairly, equally and with dignity. I believe in the rule of law, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and that no one is above (or below) the law.

I believe this nation was built by immigrants and the words inscribed on the statue of liberty are still relevant. That our diversity is our strength and we are a nation of, by and for the people. That every citizen has the right to vote and have their vote counted and the majority rules; while respecting and protecting the rights of the minority.

I believe the role of the government is to do those things that we the people cannot do for ourselves and that the measure of a people is how they treat the old, the infirmed, the young and the poor among us and to ensure everyone has the opportunity to live with dignity and pride.

I believe we are all in this together or we are NOT one nation. My parents came to America to escape persecution and to make a better life for themselves and our family. They believed in the American “dream” and so do I.

That all people should be treated equally and fairly. No matter your race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or economic status. There should be equal pay for equal work and equal opportunity for anyone who strives for it.

To have a meaningful and functioning Government we must have Free and fair elections, transparency and a free and open press. We must eliminate voter suppression and selection (Gerrymandering) and provide our citizens with all the necessary Safety and Security required (military, police, fire, judicial system, Border security).

We need a strong Public Health System (clean water, food, air, protection from epidemics and pandemics) and universal healthcare so all our people are covered. Public services (water supplies, sewer, roads, bridges, transportation, ports, airports and the postal service) and Public Education.

We must strengthen and protect our “safety-net” programs that help those who cannot help themselves (the disabled, the elderly, the sick, the hungry and the poor). Here are just a few of the major programs, Laws and Agencies the Democrats provided and fought so hard for:

Labor Laws (Child labor, safety), Worker protections (overtime, sick leave), Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, ACA (Obama-care), Voting Rights Act, Equal Rights Act, EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and the CPA (Consumer Protection Agency). The Republicans would eliminate or destroy all these protections we Democrats fought so hard to enact to make better lives for all of us, WE THE PEOPLE.

Do we want to belong to a “Big tent” or a “Little tent” community?

Modern humans (at least for the past 100,000 years) share some very important traits; they are social animals and tribal. This means we tend to want to live in a group environment (and be close to other humans) and feel comfortable being governed or led by something we feel connected to like blood relationships or some other common factors like religion, language, culture or geographical boundary.

Those considered inside our group are “us” and we nurture and protect them while those outside the group are considered “them” and we feel no allegiance or need to defend or protect “them” and they are often considered the enemy and not part of our society.

Throughout history we have numerous examples of what the “us” versus “them” mentality has led to: wars, slavery, genocide and gross indifference to the pain and suffering of our fellow “human beings”.

I contend that the major difference between Democrats and Republicans is how we define “who” one of “us” is. The analogy I use is who we allow inside our Tent. Is it a small tent with just a very select few who look like us, pray like us, speak like us and believe the same way we believe or is it a large tent that allows for differences of opinion, different races, religions and cultures and offers them the same protections and opportunities we believe everyone should have.

In today’s modern world with instantaneous communication, unlimited access to knowledge and interconnected economies and no real boundaries we cannot isolate ourselves and our people from the rest of the world.

I feel the Democrats offer a “big tent” that includes diversity of thought and being and strives to offer opportunity to all; to be all they can be and provide support and acceptance. Our Democratic candidates will work for “all of us”; to focus on education, opportunity and growth with compassion, transparency, honesty, civility and determination to make our community a better place to live for ourselves and all members in our “big tent”.

That is why I am a Democrat!

## 91) “Keys to navigate this weird and wonderful world”

By *Octogenarian NormT* - 4/2/2020

Nobody bothered to ask what I thought about this, maybe they just don't know my e-mail address or just haven't gotten around to it yet so I thought I should get ahead of the game and tell them anyway.

If I could go back in time (say about 70 years), what would I tell the 12-year-old Norm, a 7th grader in Brooklyn, New York about how to prepare for the life ahead? What are the “8” most important skills, capabilities or characteristics that would be needed to lead a successful, productive and rewarding time on this earth?

1) Approach life with a positive attitude:

- Not as a wild-eyed optimist or a cynic but with open mindedness and the expectation of success.
- Have a “can do” approach to whatever issues you face.
- Expand your horizons, it is a big and mysterious world out there.

2) Be AWARE, learn to understand “what” is going on around you and try to figure out “why”; and if you don't know, find out.

- Most things have a cause and effect relationship.
- Some might be random events and it is important to know that too.
- Be observant and open to accepting new information.
- Expand your vision and scope of knowledge in varied and different fields. Learn to think “outside the box”.
- Learn to identify trends, inter-relationships and anomalies.

3) Learn to make the best of every situation:

- You can't always control what happens but you can recognize the situation and make the best of what exists.
- If what exists is not what you want, change it; don't just accept it.
- Never stop learning and expanding your horizons.

- 4) You can't do it all by yourself; You will need others.
- you will need to learn how to work with others to accomplish your goals and objectives.
  - Develop those interface skills and learn to work in a group.
  - Surround yourself with those who value knowledge, honesty and humanity.
  - You may not be the smartest/strongest/fastest person in the room but you will want them on your team.
- 5) Know where you are going:
- Always have a goal or objective you want to accomplish or achieve.
  - Have a plan on how to get there, you may need to change it often but it will still give you a direction to go in.
  - Don't be afraid to change if it makes sense.
  - It is OK to try new things; some randomness is good but if you don't know where you are going you will never know when and if you get there.
- 6) Learn to "really" listen:
- Be inquisitive, never stop searching and learning.
  - Read and Listen between the lines, what are they really saying or meaning and sometimes what is "not said" is more important than what is said.
  - Learn to ask meaningful questions; "WHY" is a powerful tool.
  - You may think you have all the answers (YOU DON'T and never will)
  - You learn a lot more by listening than talking.
- 7) Personal Integrity is more important than fame and wealth. Be a "mensch" a "good" person (honesty, fairness and humanity) is what really matters in life.
- 8) Develop a sense of humor, be able to laugh at yourself and with others. A good laugh or a good cry can help restore your balance and perspective.

I would also add, love what you do; do it the best way you can and share with others. Don't be greedy or mean or vindictive. Life is too short to waste it on negativity or shallowness. If you want to share this with others it is OK with me. You may want to add some of your own points.

## 92) “TICKI”

opinion by Normt 5/5/2020

Thanks to the FIA (Freedom of information act) and the Truth in Advertising laws the RNC (Republican National Committee) has been told to replace the Red MAGA (Motley Aged Gullible Adherent) caps with the more accurate and appropriate Brownish “TICKI” (Trump is Insane, Corrupt, know-nothing and Incompetent) dunce caps.

The new chapeaus will be available soon and all “Cult Members” will receive their caps along with bleach bottles and magical Covid-19 repellent “lock her up” signs and maps to the nearest food banks and gun stores.

### **“Trump = Insane, corrupt, a know-nothing and incompetent”**

**insane:** Crazy, deranged, unhinged, irrational, psychotic, mental, derailed, screwy, nuts, nutty, cuckoo, daft, touched, fatuous, of unsound mind, off one's rocker, out of one's mind. Let's say he is completely and totally unfit for the Presidency (and an F\*\*\*ing Moron).

**corrupt:** Crooked, fraudulent, nefarious, untrustworthy, profiteering, on the take, treacherous, two-faced, underhanded, unfaithful, unprincipled, rotten, shady, unethical, unscrupulous, venal, debauched, exploiting, fixed, foul, reprobate, suborned, tainted, bribable, double-dealing, faithless, fast and loose, gone to the dogs, knavish, mercenary. In other words, a double-dealing con-man and rotten crook.

**Know nothing:** Far right Nativist, Racist, xenophobic, Misogynistic, homophobic, anti-immigration, anti-Catholic, anti-Muslimism, anti-Jewish, anti-science, anti-intellectual, anti-truth and facts, anti-logic and reasoning, anti- competence, believes government is bad and Greed is good, Empathy and Compassion is for suckers and a Sociopath.

**incompetent:** Inept, Incapable, inadequate, ineffectual, unqualified, unfit, maladroit, bungling, bush-league, amateurish, helpless, Inefficient, inexperienced, useless, amateur, floundering, inexpert, insufficient, out to lunch, unequipped, not cut out or not equal to perform the tasks required of the Presidency.

Does anything else need to be said; did I miss anything?

## 93) “Blue on Black”, it is wrong and needs to be fixed, Now!

*Opinion by NormT 5/29/2020*

It has been going on for a long time with deep ingrained roots and will not be easy to change, BUT we can no longer let it continue or look away. That is a Trump style solution: ignore it, do nothing, call on mystical powers and hope it magically goes away. It hasn't and it won't until we do something about it.

There are two major aspects to this problem:

- 1) The Legal Justice System needs to be revised so that we truly have equality in how people are treated, tried, sentenced and incarcerated. Equal justice, not one set of rules and laws for the rich and famous another for the poor; or one for Whites and another for Blacks and other minorities.
- 2) There is a small portion of the existing justice system (police, prosecutors, jailers and people in authority and power) who don't belong there, are incompetent, power hungry, corrupt, racist or even mentally disturbed and should not be allowed to continue in their positions.

What do we need to do?

- A) Congress and the State legislators need to re-write the current laws so we actually have a criminal justice system that treats everyone equally and fairly. There are a number of bills already in progress or written but not acted on that can be put forward. Now is the time. What are we waiting for? Act now!
- B) Each department needs to review their workforce and get rid of the bad eggs (rotten apples) that give the entire department a bad name. They know who they are, we know who they are. We have passed laws to relax regulations on business, we can pass laws to get rid of those who don't belong in those jobs.

These people may be a small minority of the total, but they can do a lot of damage to the community and the reputation of the departments in the system. The bad actors are hiding behind their badges and need to be rooted out. It starts with quick action by those in charge.

Quick trials and convictions of those who break the laws of common decency and humanity and jail sentences for their actions. More importantly those who really don't belong in these positions of authority must be removed and their badges and weapons taken away.

It seems, some of these individuals traded their white sheets and hoods for blue uniforms and guns. That is bad for our community our Country and everyone living in it.

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## 94) “Value and Worth II”

*Opinion by NormT*

4/28/2020

“Net Worth or NW” is simply the total of all your assets (property, investments, bank accounts) minus all your debts (mortgages, credit cards, notes). It is a financial measure of your “Wealth”. It is different than your “income” that measures your periodic inflow of “cash”.

We have seen a dramatic shift in the distribution of Wealth (NW) into the hands of a very, very small group of individuals (the richest among us) that is now even more skewed than just before the great depression and rivals that of the Royalty, centuries ago.

I researched the most recent numbers I could find (2018, 2019 and 1<sup>st</sup> Q of 2020) and here is what I found; the numbers are approximate but I feel fairly accurate and depict a dangerous situation and show the destruction of the middle class. All numbers refer to The United states, in 2019 the personal financial NW totaled ~ 115 Trillion dollars.

- 1) The richest 700 people (a mere 0.0002 % of the population) has a total NW of 3.5 trillion (about 5 Billion each) and is 3 % of the total NW. These 700 people would all fit into one new Airbus 380 (one airplane).
- 2) The next richest 330,000 people (just 0.1 % of Americans) were worth 13.8 trillion (an average of 43 million each) and have 12 % of the wealth. This group would fit in a small size city like Corpus Christi, Texas or Lexington, Kentucky.

These two groups with ~0.1 % of the population have as much wealth as the bottom 75% of the U.S. population combined, around 250 million people That is about the same as the total US population in 48 states (all except California and Texas).

- 3) The top 1% owns 30% of the wealth (average of 10 million each)
- 4) The top 20% own 80 % of the wealth (about 1.4 million each)
- 5) The bottom 80% own 20% of the wealth (with 88 thousand each)

This does not bode well for our future and shows the vast disparity of wealth distribution and the disappearance of the middle class.



## 95) “A revelation”

Essay by NormT 9/28/2020

I was creating a list of my favorite things and who I felt were the top comedians, singers et al and realized my knowledge had significant gaps. Firstly, there were areas I knew almost nothing about like “Blues, Jazz and Hockey” to name a few.

Then, even in areas I thought I was comfortable with; like baseball, football and music, I realized that most of my knowledge stopped about 30 years ago. Movies, books, popular entertainers even TV shows. I have become a hermit.

I know almost no-one under the age of 50 and my circle of acquaintances has shrunk considerably; I don’t even own a smart-phone and now with the covid-19 Pandemic rarely leave the house.

My contacts are primarily using the internet (e-mails and social media) or by phone (mainly with Family and old friends). I now understand what is meant by the isolation of the old. We are stuck in our memories and our own past and have almost no connections with the larger world around us.

Which brings me back to the original title “A revelation”; by that I mean “I don’t know, what I don’t know”. That may sound obvious (duh) but it means there are real gaps in my knowledge and understanding of the world as it is today and what this younger generation is facing.

I believed Willie Mays was the greatest baseball player but is that really true; since I stopped watching or caring about baseball 40 years ago; I bet there are a lot of names that might give Willie a run for the money.

I felt Barbra Streisand was the best singer, but I don’t know any of the new ones and I bet there are some great ones in recent years and George Carlin and Robin Williams were the best of all time but is that still valid?

My favorite books were Michener’s “The Source” and Steinbeck’s “The Grapes of wrath” but I haven’t read a novel since I went blind 15 years ago and even before that it was mostly non-fiction.

So, when I say Sandy Koufax was the best baseball pitcher ever, it should be prefaced with “between 1945 and 1975. Because you see “I don’t know, what I don’t know” and that is the truth.

## 96) “Trumpism is:”

*Opinion by NormT 12/17/2020*

In trying to understand the 2020 election results or rather “how could Trump have received the number of votes he did” even after 4 years of **obvious** incompetence, corruption, malfeasance, incivility and undemocratic behavior?

The key word of course is “obvious”. Obvious to whom? Are his supporters getting the information they need to make a decision and are they willing to acknowledge or accept those inputs?

Trumpism is a melding or confluence of a narcissistic sociopathic cult leader (see attached article on Narcissism 8/6/2016) along with a community that is pre-disposed to accept “authoritarian” leadership and long held racial animus and grievance identity (see attached article on authoritarian attitudes “Trumpicans 12/24/2019”) aided by new high tech “social media” communication systems.

The fact that we all live in our own information and social bubbles means that we all “see” the world only through our own frame of reference and if that system is controlled or distorted by forces that ignore truth and facts and have a malignant agenda is extremely dangerous to our society.

Trump is someone who is driven by an overarching need for adulation, self-gratification and lack of a moral compass and seems to have an audience that is inclined to believe conspiracy theories, reality and celebrity show mentality.

His followers have shown a willingness (even a desire) to be told what to think, what to do and how to act. With a desire be led by an “authoritarian” strong-man. This is what allowed Hitler and the third Reich to exist and resembles our current Republican Party and Trump himself.

Trump's use of constant lies, denial of reality, breaking of norms and blatant abuse of power and corruption and mob boss mentality and operating style (see attached article on Mob-Boss M.O. dated 12/7/2019) is an “authoritarian model and appeals to those who want a leader to do what they internally desire but can't admit.

Trumpism is the combining of those who want to be led with a psychopath who needs a faithful mindless following aided by a social media that exploits its users and creates a false

## 97) “Jan 6, 2021 a day of Shame”

Opinion by NormT 1/14/21

Jan 6th should be re-named “Shame Day”. A day when 2/3rds of the Republicans in the House of Representatives and 1/5th of Republicans in the Senate voted to destroy “Democracy” (to eliminate the concept that the people should choose the President). Then Trump instigated a seditious insurrection and encouraged the mob to storm the Capitol to overturn our free and fair election.

In an “Autocracy” the leader gets to choose themselves as the “Supreme Leader” thereby eliminating the need for any free and fair elections, or a free press or a Judiciary with any meaningful power.

What we are seeing is a political party bending to the will of an insane personality cult leader who imagines himself to be Emperor, Or at least dictator for life. This is what FASCISM is all about so from now on this new republican party should be called the “FASCISTUBLICANS” whose motto will be “why bother with elections, we will choose for you, just send money!”

Should the American people wise up and provide Trump, his corrupt family and his shameless sycophants and supporters in congress with the same fate the Italians gave Mussolini at the end of WWII?

When a leader and their party inflict great pain and suffering on a nation, there should be some sort of repercussion. Trump presided over 400 thousand dead Americans due to his mishandling of the Covid-19 Pandemic; tens of millions going hungry, millions more unable to provide shelter or security for their family and the destruction of democracy, the rule-of-law, the flagrant disregard for the Constitution and our right to vote and chose our leaders.

On January 6th Trump encouraged his minions to sack and loot the Capitol, to overthrow a free and fair election and instigated sedition and mob violence in an attempt to intimidate congress to have him remain in office and then did nothing to control the mob or defend our Congress. His final attempt to pull off a “coup” after all his legal maneuvers failed and brave local officials stood up to him.

He invited the mobs to come, riled them up and sent them to attack the congress. If this isn't sedition, a high crime then nothing is. So, he was impeached again; this time with 10 brave Republicans voting to impeach.

Folks, this is what you get when you elect a completely corrupt, incompetent and mentally deranged Con man to lead the country. Someone with no conscience, morals or shame who will do and say anything to stay in power. Elect a Clown and expect a circus!

What we need to do now is:

- 1) Prevent Trump from ever holding public office again.
  - 2) Enact Domestic Terrorism laws to allow the Justice Department to address the insurrection by domestic groups whose goal is to overthrow the government and to create mayhem and chaos.
  - 3) Eliminate the Electoral College and replace it with a National Popular Vote.
  - 4) Address the problem of Conspiracy theories, false reality, blatant lies by people in power. news organizations and social media platforms so we can regain trust, honesty and decency and once again honor “TRUTH”
  - 5) Then the hard work begins.
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## 98) “Truth, Trust and Society”

Opinion by NormT 11/16/2021

The foundation of a functional modern society is having a robust Legal/Judicial system with laws, rules, regulations and agreed upon “norms” of behavior; to achieve this we must have “Trust”. Trust in our government, our organizations and each other and that requires truth and honesty based on facts, logical reasoning and science.

The legal system cannot possibly identify every act of bad behavior and must be broad enough to cover everyone everywhere, yet be flexible enough to change as society changes. In our democracy, no one is above the law and it should apply equally to everyone (a noble thought and still a work in progress).

Rules, regulations and guidelines are written (by organizations and entities) and more easily aligned with changes in society. People (as members) are expected to follow them to be allowed to participate in their activities.

“Norms” are unwritten standards of behavior and is based on “what has been done before” and people are expected to adhere to them; everyone knows what they are and need to follow them; especially in those positions of power (elected officials, Government agencies, law enforcement and community leaders).

Society is based on “Trust”. Without trust everything falls apart. If we can’t trust the government to act on our behalf, or businesses and organizations to protect our health and safety, we are in deep trouble. “What are we to do”? If our fellow citizens can’t be trusted to follow the rules and “norms” we will be left with “ANARCHY” and society will fall apart.

If you ever had any doubts about Orwell’s “1984” and Huxley’s “Brave new world” becoming a reality, the past few years under Trump, his “double speak” and the Republican party’s “war on truth” and China’s massive surveillance systems should put them to rest.

The fact that over 70% of the republican base believes the 2020 election was stolen, that the Jan 6th insurrection was a false flag or a picnic is absolutely mind-boggling. They have created an alternative reality based on lies, ridiculous conspiracy theories aided by a media bubble that prevents truth and facts from entering.

There is no such thing as “alternate” facts, a fact is something that is known or proved to be true; something that actually exists, is a reality, a true piece of information, something that

has actual existence. In “Trumpland”, truth is irrelevant, facts are just made up, laws are meant to circumvent and taxes and bills are to be ignored.

Without trust we have “chaos”, we exist in the “law of the jungle”, it is (eat or be eaten) or the “wild west” where the fastest gun slinger survives; where “might makes right” and power is everything.

So, “what creates trust”? I believe the basis of trust is “truth”. How can we trust someone if they constantly lie, mislead, distort and change direction? If you can’t believe what people say and they don’t do “what they say they will do”; or try to tell you not to believe what you actually see and hear or to believe in outlandish conspiracy theories or in unproven and unverifiable accusations. How can they be trusted?

There is no such thing as “alternate facts” and “reality” shouldn’t be defined by those with radical ideological agendas or grifters and con-men or “cult leaders” or those suffering from mental illnesses like narcissism (that prevents them from accepting truth and reality).

If there is no truth, there is no trust and society will collapse, we must defend TRUTH and prevent those purveyors of deceit from destroying our great Nation. So, get involved and vote as if your Country and our freedom are at stake, because they are!

## 99) “Learning is what it is all about”

Opinion by NormT 11/10/21

When we stop learning it is all over. Some say it is not the end that is important, it is the journey. If survival is the ultimate goal of all living organisms, then being able to learn, adapt and change is our existence.

That is why, “why” is the most important word in our vocabulary because it starts the process of understanding, which is the first step in learning.

Someone asked me “what did you learn in school?”; I thought about it a while and expanded it to capture each major stage of my life.

In school I learned logical reasoning and problem solving; of course, there were classes in many subjects but they were really just tools to use in “how” to identify problems and solve them.

At work I learned “everything is a process” and “one can’t do it alone”, it requires many people up and down the organization to make things happen.

In life, I learned it was important to belong, to be part of a larger organism (Family) and that I was not the center of the universe (no matter what my grandmother told me); that I wasn’t the “smartest one in the room” and to be in awe of the vastness of the world around me.

That there are wonders all around, if only one took the time to see and try to understand and to always keep learning, asking “why” and “why not” and make the most of any situation I find myself in.

I consider myself a very lucky human being to be part of this grand experiment of life and hope I never stop learning about this marvelous place we live in.

We all had different experiences and challenges; what were your key take-aways?

## **100) Should we have a “vetting process” for presidential candidates and what minimum “qualifications” should be required?**

Opinion by NormT 11/6/2021

What is Vetting?

Vetting is the process of performing a background check on someone before offering them employment, conferring an award, or doing fact-checking prior to making any decision. In addition, in intelligence gathering, assets are vetted to determine their usefulness. Basically, to check their background for veracity and capability to do the job,

I propose the following requirements and qualifications:

- Between the age of 35 and 70.
- Be an American citizen (by birth or naturalized).
- Must pass psychological screening by an independent team of experts in the field.
- Provide the last 15 years of financial records.
- Not been convicted of a felony (a crime, typically one involving violence, regarded as more serious than a misdemeanor, and usually punishable by imprisonment for more than one year or by death).

Most importantly I believe the candidate must be psychologically fit to hold this most important position running our government and in charge of our nuclear arsenal and the lives of our over 300 million citizens. Our president must not suffer from any antisocial personality disorders or diminished mental capacity due to senility or dementia. Our president must be capable of governing and protecting our nation from all threats foreign and domestic.

What is ASPD: “Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD)” has a distinct cognitive profile:

Antisocial individuals’ view of the world is personal rather than interpersonal. They cannot accept another’s point of view over their own. As such, they cannot take on the role of another. Their actions are not based on choices in a social sense because of this cognitive limitation.



Cognitive theory of personality disorders conceptualizes personality disorder including the ASPD, according to their basic beliefs or schemas. The content of beliefs can vary in different personality disorders. Antisocial patients view themselves as loners, autonomous, and strong. Some of them see themselves as having been abused and mistreated by society and therefore justify victimizing others because they believe that they have been victimized. Their view about other people is very negative; they see others as exploitative and thus deserving of being exploited in retaliation.

A person who sees the world through this lens is NOT someone eligible to run for the presidency; I don't care how charismatic, popular or well-funded they may be.

What do you think?

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## 101) “A sad commentary”

Opinion by NormT 10/30/21

At what point do we say enough is enough? The Jewish community (or as I prefer to call it, “Members of the tribe”) have survived for over 4,000 years; faced numerous attempts of destruction and even genocide. Yet we have endured and spread all over the world and thrived, prospered and grown.

America (it’s Constitution and democratic institutions) have provided us with a home, a place where we could freely contribute to society and live without the fear of “pogroms”, having to live in enclosed ghettos and feel the security and protection from anti-Semitic forces around us.

I fear the current political environment, where one party has decided to attach itself to the worst elements of intolerance, racism, xenophobia, misogyny and anti-Semitism and acceptance of insane conspiracy theories. It tied itself to groups like QAnon, the Proud boys and all sorts of White Nationalist and Supremacist groups who gleefully endorse anti-Semitic rhetoric and activities, this is a cause of great concern.

The Party’s complete disregard for truth, fairness, civility and its willingness to either accept (or cowardly not disavow) undemocratic principles (including authoritarianism) is very problematic for minorities (like us) and a harbinger of worse things to come.

Don’t believe (for a second) that the Evangelicals support for Israel will in any way mean they disavow anti-Semitic actions in the future. If the Trumpist Republicans regain control of Congress and the Presidency, America will no longer be a haven for our people (and for that matter any non-white, non-evangelical) community.

I know there are a number of people who may believe this will “pass over” and we will return to the days of the “Goldena Medina”, where we were accepted and opportunity was available to those who worked hard.

Some may believe “this can’t happen in America”. My friends, I have 6 million reasons to believe this can happen here, as it did in Germany in the 30’s. When truth and reason are denied, anything is possible!

## 102) “What is causing the supply chain problem?”

Opinion by NormT 10/18/2021

Like most major problems there is no one single cause but rather a number of inter-related processes and economic trends that have been accelerated by a devastating world-wide pandemic.

Major trends over the past three decades:

- 1) Replacement of local and regional retail outlets (and small mom and pop stores) with big-box nationwide behemoths like Walmart and Costco.
- 2) On-line shopping and delivery have become a large (and growing) portion of consumer shopping preferences.
- 3) Large retailers, (brick and mortar) stores hold minimal local inventories and depend on very large regional warehouses for product delivery.
- 4) World -wide manufacturing organizations have gone to “just-in-time” manufacturing processes (using minimal local inventories) and depend on their suppliers to deliver parts exactly when needed. This means any missed delivery will have a shut-down in production.
- 5) Most manufacturing operations have moved to low-cost labor areas (Asia and Latin America) requiring long distance shipping (by Air or over the oceans) to get products to customer locations.
- 6) Large retailers now order directly from manufacturing operations requiring “just-in-time” delivery and quick turn around and design flexibility.

All of these trends place a heavy Burdon on shipping and delivery channels and any disruption along the way will impact product movement; this along with minimal inventory in the system means any break in the chain becomes a major problem.

When the pandemic hit in early 2020 we saw Country after Country go through shut-downs which impacted the “service” economy the hardest (travel industry, hotels, cruises), entertainment sector (anything that had crowds of people like sporting events, concerts),

restaurants all basically closed and most retail stores also closed and the demand for “goods” (other than basics) ground to a halt. The pipeline shut down.

By 2021 with vaccines becoming available in the US (and China and Western Europe) and people becoming more accustomed to on-line shopping and many people had accumulated money for the past year (they had nothing to spend it on) dove into a buying and spending frenzy and demand for “goods” soared and orders started pouring in to the overseas manufacturers (who were now suffering with the pandemic (and few vaccines). So goods started to refill the pipeline that had been essentially closed putting a strain on every level of shipping and delivery service.

So the ports are backed up (ships waiting to be unloaded), the trucking companies are struggling to get drivers and the system (by design) had little to no inventory to fall back on isn't able to meet this current surge in demand. It eventually will work itself out but is a problem with no easy solution in the short term.

“Just in time manufacturing” starting in the 90's and becoming dominant in the past few years meant manufacturers basically eliminated holding large inventories (in self-owned warehouses) and using “middle men” and buying materials directly from their suppliers (mostly in low labor cost countries in Asia). This significantly reduced “buffer” materials and meant they were completely at the mercy of deliveries getting there on time or causing shut downs.

Large retailers also reduced their inventories and consolidated them in regional locations closing many local warehouses and also started sourcing their materials directly from their suppliers also in Asia and Latin America. Again, rearing longer range shipping to get the products to the customers.

The move away from shopping in local stores and using “on-line” (Amazon etc.) meant all goods purchased needed to be delivered by special carriers (UPS, Fed Ex) instead of the consumer transporting the goods shifted the transport problem directly to the home (many more locations) rather than to centrally located stores.

The Pandemic caused a number of problems; for almost 18 months people stayed close to home and put off many buying decisions (purchases) creating a pent up demand when they felt comfortable things were going back to normal and then in the past 6 months the demand shot up in almost every area) as people started buying again creating a spike in purchases.

At the same time, we were coming out of the covid epidemic (due to vaccines and masks) the rest of the world was getting hit hard (low vax areas) and many of the supplier factories were closed or reducing output.

So we now have a large surge in demand, source factories running at reduced output, our factories shutting down because the just-in-time materials aren't coming in and a major increase in demand on transporting materials (through the ports) and directly into consumers hands.

## 103) “Why are we so divided?”

Opinion by NormT 10/12/2021

I wonder if America was ever united, or have we always been a Country of loosely associated Communities (States or groups of states), sometimes joined together to fight a common foreign enemy and then returned to acting like independent entities? We united to fight wars and somewhat united to attack the great depression, but seem unable to get together to battle pandemics and social / economic inequality.

We all have basic needs that drive us; things like Safety, Food, Shelter, Recognition, being valued and belonging to groups to be “part of something bigger”, to be with and accepted by a larger entity and be with “like minded” people who share our “world views” (religious, social or intellectual). This “need” to be part of something, is a basic driving force in all our lives.

Although we (Americans) have a lot in common, we have separated ourselves into 2 mega-groups: the Blues, (Liberals/Democrats) and the Reds (Conservatives / Republicans) and they are different in how they think, what they watch, how they play, where they get their information and how and what they believe. These bubbles seem impenetrable.

I believe this is primarily due to the way we think and how we deal with and approach “Change, uncertainty, nuance, the unknown and how we view governing”.

I believe the “Blues” and the “Reds” address these areas in different (almost opposite) ways, I call them “open mindedness and closed mindedness” ; this obviously is not the only reason we divide up into two camps; other things like family history, views on fiscal policy and certain social issues also play a part, but I believe their ways of thinking is the major cause.

Choosing to be in a particular group means we become “part of” that community and it gives us a sense of belonging and self-worth, but unfortunately it may allow us to believe that “the end justifies the means”. This allows people to do and act in ways that may be counter to their “old” belief systems.

Characteristics of “open-mindedness”:

They tend to be curious, Inquisitive, empathetic, flexible, sympathetic, question the status quo (i.e. comfortable being mavericks). They tend to be able to have their ideas challenged, don't get upset or angry when they are wrong. Open to change and innovations in science and

technology, accept the complexity and nuances of life, enjoy problem solving, accept uncertainty as a part of life. Willing to question the rules and regulations and structure when they feel they are unjust or unfair.

Characteristics of “closed-mindedness”:

Prefer to think in absolutes (black and white positions or solutions), desire certainty (feel they must be right), often sympathize with Xenophobic (intolerant of differences) causes, feel uncomfortable with change or complexity, generally rigid in approaching new ideas and feel comfortable putting people in categories and prefer generalizations to complex solutions.

Can be Intolerant of others, even slightly differences are perceived as a threat. Get offended or upset easily. Have a know-it-all attitude, must have their say about what others should do, say, or how they should look. Feel they must be right, their favorite words are: “always”, “never”, “everybody”, “all”, and want to have the last word.

People who are inflexible and intolerant of ambiguity often become captive audiences for ideological, political or religious extremism with simplistic world views, authoritarian aggression, racism and follow leaders as a way to gain a sense that their lives and their contributions matter”.

Uncertainty has increased significantly during the Pandemic (causing isolation, separation, regulation), the loss of economic security and the rapid changes in social values and racial dynamics and demographics. This has magnified the differences between the “Open” and “Closed” minded groups and solidified their allegiance to team Red and team Blue.

What are your thoughts on this issue?

## 104) “Hey media; Stop feeding us pablum”

Opinion by 9/28/2021

We seem to have lost the ability to see the forest from the trees? We focus on the fine details and ignore the “big picture”; we get lost in the minutia and ignore what is significant or important.

We are easily distracted by the next shinny object and flash-bang noise attention getter; flittering from one inane (generally irrelevant) “breaking news” story to another.

The new media model seems to designed for an ADD audience that needs “hair on fire” histrionics and adrenalin and cortisol fixes on a constant basis.

We no longer seem to want to search for what is important or relevant around us, but prefer to hide inside a video game, a mindless TV show or a hyped up sporting event performed by overpaid gladiators making billionaire owners even wealthier (honestly, who wins or loses has little or no impact on our lives).

Our world is becoming uninhabitable, climate change is real and causing devastation all over. Some people seem unable to differentiate lies from truth, reality from gas-lighting and would rather die than get a vaccine or wear a mask. It just doesn’t make sense.

Almost half of our country believes in and trusts an insane corrupt liar and appears willing to destroy democracy to soothe his petulant bruised ego.

What has happened to the America I thought I knew? Where people were pragmatic, honest, Cared for (and about) their fellow citizens? People who believed civility, honesty, service to the Country and truth were admirable traits (not just for suckers).

I am afraid I no longer recognize this Country of my youth; one that shouted “we have a better idea”: that “freedom, liberty and equality for all (not just the select few); “come and be part of it” and they came by the millions and built America and made America a great Nation!

The worst thing that could happen to America is to make us just like those countries who treat their citizens as tools and cattle. To pull us back into the dark ages where ghosts and goblins and zombies lurk behind every tree.

We must not succumb to mediocrity and settle for table scraps and bare survival; but fight to restore our ideals, to make life better for everyone and reinstall facts and truth into our lives.



## 105) “Yes, Virginia there is no Republican Party”

Opinion by NormT 9/27/2021

A “cult” is a group of people with extreme dedication and obedience to a certain leader or set of beliefs, (irrespective of facts, evidence or rationality) and a willingness to bestow magical and often supernatural powers to the leader who must be obeyed and objectified (if not deified). The leader has absolute control over the will of the group.

In many cases the “leader” is the founder of the group and creates a “cult of personality” that makes them and their group indistinguishable (i.e. the Manson family and Jim Jones) it becomes impossible to separate the group from the leader.

What we have seen in America over the past 5 years is the complete takeover of the Republican Party by the Trump Personality Cult. Since Trumpism has no real or definable policies (except perhaps “white resentment politics”) it is purely a cult of personality; he has become the one and only person who defines truth and reality for his followers (a.k.a. his base).

Maybe it was wishful thinking, but I thought after the 2020 election (two impeachment trials, the Jan 6th insurrection and attempted Coup), Trump’s influence and control over the Party and his supporters would wane and we would see a return to normalcy and “regular” interactions between the parties and constituencies.

What has happened is a Party completely taken over by Trump (and his sycophantic minions) and almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of its members believe in the “big lie” (of massive voter fraud) and with many States Republican parties passing “Jim Crow era” voter suppression, nullification and disenfranchisement legislation.

Trump hasn’t gone away (he is the republican Party) and his supporters have fallen completely under his spell and are willing to put their lives (not getting vaccinated) and the future of America as a democracy at risk to support his fragile ego and insatiable need for adoration and power.

A Personality Cult can only be eliminated by removing the cult leader and the financial structure that supports it. Trump must be removed (tried, jailed and exiled, perhaps sent to Mars as part a new penal colony) and his financial assets redistributed to all the people he stole from, stiffed and cheated and “conned”.

To kill a snake, one must cut off its head and remove the fangs; then we can return to a place where civility, compassion, truth, facts, honesty and scientific reason are restored and valued.

## 106) “Me vs. We”

Opinion by NormT 9/4/2021

As a child is developing, they learn and grow from one phase to another. Their first words are usually “Mama” to help them get the attention they need and by 2 they learn the word “No” (that they use repeatedly); this is followed by “Why” (not necessarily seeking an answer). Between these key words they learn to use “Me” and “mine” denoting self-identity and possession. It is not until later in life, with the addition of siblings and playmates when they become part of a group that they learn “We” and “Ours” (joint ownership) and to be part of something larger than themselves.

For the past 20 years I have been writing articles and essays (mostly political) trying to describe what is going on in our Nation and attempt to encourage people to think about these current events. Prior to that I spent 40 years in business as a manager and prided myself in seeing the “big picture” and focusing on problem solving, setting priorities and getting results.

To accomplish these objectives, I utilized some key principles (I did not invent them) of KISS (Keep it simple, stupid), “to see the forest from the trees” (identify the major issues) and “Occam’s Razor” that says the simplest solution is most likely the best solution”. I tried to understand the key drivers for the Republican and Democratic base voters, but often got lost in the weeds (the details); So, I have tried to break these differences down to their most basic elements.

In looking at the current Republican base, most are not white nationalists or racists (although a lot are) and very few are actually filthy rich (top 1%) and many are honest hard working and generous (helping those less fortunate) so my image of them as simply Xenophobic, Grievance driven and Greedy, may be overly extreme. In looking for a common denominator to describe them “Me-ism” seemed to fit. It is all about “me and mine” and only their needs and desires are relevant (and the hell with anyone else). If that means not getting a vaccine, wearing a mask or not paying a bit more in taxes to help others, so be it.

On the other hand, the Democratic base is a collection of very diverse groups (minorities of all types and people from every economic group as well as those who believe in education and science) all joined together under a “big-tent” and linked

together by “We-ism”; a group made up of varied issues and concerns and shared goals, bringing everyone along together.

So, “Me vs We” is the major differentiator between the two party’s; with the Democrats willingness to “share” and believing “a rising tide lifts all boats” versus the Republicans “every man for himself” (and they do mean “man”).

I seem to remember one of the most important documents in the creation of our nation and it began with “We the people”!

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## 107) “Are we suffering from magic wand syndrome?”

Opinion by NormT 8/23/2021

Have we become a nation of believers in fantasy and wishful thinking? A nation of believers in super-heroes, witches, comic book characters and magic wands. We used to be known as pragmatists, people with common sense, realists who knew the world is complex, facts and truth are necessary to solve problems and the solutions often required compromise and we didn't always get what we wanted.

Now it seems we believe we can just make something real by saying it, wishing it were so and waving some magic wand or use some magic words (shazam) or twitch your nose and “voila” it happens. Perhaps it is too many super hero movies or video games, where you just keep playing to get a different result.

We tend to believe we can get perfect outcomes just by saying “we can do anything” or “we are the greatest” or things like “no one left behind” or if something isn't perfect, it's a failure (even though it never could be achieved).

This black or white thinking or 100% or zero means we will always be disappointed. I hate to tell you, but there is no such thing as a magic wand, so start acting like grown-ups and get real.

We faced a pandemic; humanity was attacked by a disease our bodies weren't naturally capable of fighting and millions died and it is not over yet, but we were able to develop a vaccine in record time to help our bodies fight off this plague and it had remarkable results.

Over 90 % protection from hospitalization or death (but not 100%) in less than 1 year and the naysayers say “not good enough”, I would rather die than get vaccinated (and they did and still do).

Some simple truths:

- Wars are bad for your health.
- Not everything is possible, even if you want it to be.

- Getting 80% of what you want is much better than 20% and infinitely better than 0%
- Sometimes what you want isn't possible (learn to live with it)
- More unvaccinated people will die today (in one day) in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Texas of covid (because they didn't get vaccinated) than will die in the 3-4 weeks of evacuations from Afghanistan.
- Just wanting something to happen doesn't make it happen (even if you wish really hard) and even if you wave your magic wand or wiggle your nose.
- We will probably get over 90,000 people out of Kabul in spite of the collapse of the Afghan Government and military and the take-over by the Taliban; this will be a remarkable achievement.
- We will NOT be able to get everybody out and the "hair on fire" crowd will declare defeat and a debacle in spite of the total results.
- In watching the media talking heads one wonders if they are pushing an agenda, trying to show us how smart they are or how pure they are or just upset because their favorite solution was not followed by those who have more information and know what is possible and what is not.
- Sometimes there are no good options or alternatives and choosing the best of the options will still have a bad outcome (c'est la vie), Syria and Afghanistan are a few examples.
- There is no such thing as "alternate facts" and just because you saw it on social media or the internet doesn't mean it is true and saying something over and over or louder and louder won't change that (just makes you more annoying).
- Personal freedom doesn't give you the right to infect and kill others and if your team loses, maybe it's because they weren't as good as the other team; taking your ball and going home pouting or trying to change the rules of the game is just being a cry-baby.

## 108) **"My thoughts on Afghanistan"**

Opinion by NormT 8/19/2021

- 1) You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.
- 2) An invading foreign force will eventually be defeated.
- 3) Afghanistan has no strategic value to America.
- 4) The country is controlled by tribal and religious affiliations and with no history of democratic values or institutions.
- 5) Corruption is a way of life.
- 6) The war was never winnable (and was lost as soon as we invaded Iraq).
- 7) In 2018, Trump and Pompeo negotiated the surrender to the Taliban.
- 8) Just as in Vietnam we supported corrupt and unpopular governments.
- 9) We should have tried to get the people who supported our troops (translators) out long ago (years or months ago).
- 10) The Republicans in Congress will not support bringing large numbers of Afghan refugees into America.
- 11) I fear most of the gains made by the women and girls will be lost, this is the saddest part of our leaving.
- 12) There is no good way to lose a war; to continue fighting won't win it either.
- 13) We have no real leverage or control over the Taliban and they control the country, whether we like it or not.
- 14) In the very early days of the war, someone said we should "bomb them back into the 13th Century", I wondered "how would we be able to tell".

As I watched the images coming in from Kabul, I saw disheveled looking guys, wearing combat fatigues, with scraggly beards, carrying lots of weapons, riding in pick-up trucks, flying flags, demeaning women, the Government, democracy and the rule of law. They behaved like a bunch of goons, thugs and bullies with zealot like fervor.

They reminded me of the groups attending the Trump campaign rallies, or those insurrectionists attacking the Capitol on Jan 6th. The only difference was the ones in Kabul weren't wearing red MAGA caps.

## 09) “Anti-subjugationist”

An essay by NormT 8/15/2021

In watching what is going on in Afghanistan my heart goes out to all the women and girls who have tasted the sweetness of freedom and now will be thrown back to 8th century subjugation and intolerance.

Some people will try to blame Biden or Trump or Obama for “losing” the war (if it ever could be won) in actuality, the war was lost the moment we invaded Iraq and took resources, attention and focus away from what appeared to be a victory over the Taliban.

Another key factor was we were never able to create a stable, non-corrupt government and win the support of the general population to want to join the 21st century. As Tom Friedman said “we can’t want freedom more than they want it for themselves”.

At some point Western civilizations need to recognize going into a country where we are strangers and telling them how to live; just doesn’t work in the long run. Like our children, no matter how noble our intentions; they just want to do it themselves.

Subjugation means: “the action of bringing someone under domination or control”, in other words to dominate, rule over, enslave, oppress, subordinate, put down, subject, suppress, subdue, reduce, crush, quash. Basically, to have control over another human being.

This is wrong whether it is done by a Government, A Religion, a Group or an individual. It is wrong when it happens to women, men, children, blacks, Browns, Asians, Gays, Religious groups or an individual. One human being should not be able to subjugate another human being. So, I am very anti-subjugation.

There is a caveat, I also believe there needs to be Societal Rules and Laws that protect the health and safety of others. To be free doesn’t mean one can do “anything one desires” (that is anarchy) and to be part of a society, we need to obey those rules. For example, don’t drive drunk or under the influence, don’t shout fire in a crowded theater (unless there is a fire), don’t do things that will harm others.

So, I guess I am an anti-subjugation law abiding citizen who believes “bullies” and extreme radical groups are nothing more than a bunch of selfish, greedy assholes and morons. They should start their own political party; oh wait, they already have, my bad.

## 110) “**Freedoms are neither absolute nor equal**”

Opinion by NormT 8/4/2021

I recently read an article that tried to equate (or at least compare) the freedom to “not” wear a mask and a woman’s right to choose to have an abortion. First of all, this is a false equivalency, as the impact of the actions and the effect on others is vastly different.

This got me thinking about “freedoms” and limits on them. To begin with, we are dealing with distinctions between what we think, what we say and what we do.

If one lived on a deserted island in the middle of an ocean far from anyone else and the impact of our actions only affect ourselves, then “go for it”, you have the absolute freedom to do anything you please.

If, however one lives in society with other individuals and what we say and do affects others then, there needs to be limits on some of our freedoms, they are no longer absolute and vary depending on the situation and circumstances.

Obviously, what we think and believe is up to us, no one else has the right (or even ability) to affect this; although they may try to change our minds with arguments and persuasion, this is ours and ours alone.

What we do (how we act) is restricted by the laws determined by society (although most were enacted to protect the property of the wealthy and powerful) and by how our actions impact other peoples lives (health and safety) and their freedoms. Therefore, you don’t have the freedom or right to harm others and the larger the number of others effected increases the magnitude of the offense.

What we “say” is problematic, we have the freedom (and right) to say what we want with the caveat that it does not create havoc or cause harm to others; like yelling fire in a crowded theater or inciting a mob to lynch or promote an insurrection or sedition.

A person standing on a soap-box in Hyde Park or Central Park espousing views on society and governance to a small crowd is relatively harmless. But Hitler speaking for hours in front of hundreds of thousands and inciting them to violence is not free speech.



One cannot stand on a street corner or a restaurant or a bar spraying poisons on everyone around them; it is a danger to society. A pandemic is deadly and spreads to everyone it comes in contact with and science (the people with the most knowledge about epidemiology) tell us to get vaccinated (to protect ourselves), to wear a mask (to protect others around us), to avoid close contact in poorly ventilated environments protect society and reduce the chance of more deadly and virulent variations.

About “abortion” and a woman’s right to choose; I believe most people would rather prevent an unwanted pregnancy and as contraceptives are more commonly available abortions have dramatically been reduced; we need to have less expensive and greater availability.

There are times when the health (life) of the mother is jeopardized by the pregnancy and an abortion is the best medical choice. This should not be an issue; it is between the mother and her doctor.

In cases of incest, rape, the mother’s mental and physical wellbeing or inability to provide support for the child that we face difficult choices. I believe if the fetus is less than X (X being viable and needs to be determined) then an abortion should defiantly be the mother’s choice.

X needs to be determined by Doctors and Scientists and NOT legislators, religious institutions and politicians using abortion as a wedge issue to gain office.

If the fetus is greater than X than all those groups who are pro-life and want to ban abortions need set up an agency (and fully fund it) that provides families and financial support for those children who were not aborted.

Maybe I am I just a cranky old lefty, but that is how I see it.

## 111) “Winning both hearts and minds”

Opinion by NormT 7/28/2021

I believe winning is achieving one's objectives, with people making decisions that are in their own best interests and not blindly following some movement or demagogue or cult like figure. Winning both hearts and minds is nearly impossible, I personally believe it's one or the other, but not both at the same time.

Some people choose to look at life as a “zero sum game”; but life is NOT a game, it is serious, complex, ever changing and losing can have devastating consequences.

From the moment we are born we start learning. At first, we use our basic senses to provide us with information about the world around us. We depend on them and learn to trust the messages we receive. As we grow older, we then learn to trust those closest to us. Gradually we expand this group to include other family members, neighbors, teachers, those in positions of importance and authority.

This “trust” then turns into belief. If we hear something over and over from people we trust, we assume what they are telling us is true. So, if it comes from a trusted source, we accept it as being valid and it becomes our reality.

So, our reality depends more on who and where we get our information and how often it is repeated; rather than on any logic or reasoning. The far right and Trump have convinced their supporters that “they” are the only trusted source and what they say is the only reality.

We also filter (accept or reject) new information in a way that is skewed (in line with) our previous beliefs and tend to reject those that are in conflict with them. This of course is reinforcing (hardening) our existing positions.

In this world where most people are pre-disposed to favor certain beliefs, we need to find a way to penetrate their “information bubbles” and to have them evaluate new inputs “realities” and “truths”.

To do this we need to control those media platforms who dispense lies, distortions and hatred and destroy their credibility and completely discredit these sources of propaganda with boycotts, lawsuits, massive rallies, Department of Justice prosecutions, Cyber infiltration, public shaming and using trusted religious leaders (the

Pope and the Evangelical hierarchy) and Celebrities and influencers in areas like NASCAR, Country Music, WWF, Rodeos and other venues commonly attended by Republican supporters.

I mean massive attacks on FOX, Sinclair, hate radio, and conspiracy websites and major social media providers (like Facebook, Google and twitter) to make changes to their algorithms to promote science and truth.

Psychologists tell us that we are internally torn between making decisions based on how we “feel” (our emotions, the heart) and how we “think, (our logic, the mind). A large number of us make decisions based on our emotions, even if it is clearly in conflict with what our mind is telling us.

There are eight primary emotions that serve as the foundation for all others: joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, fear, anger, surprise, and anticipation. These can be very powerful drivers in how and why we make decisions and we need to utilize these emotions in our messaging and communications.

Demagogues have historically (and very effectively) used fear and anger to create scape-goats and to promote themselves and their policies. Crowds and mobs can be manipulated and whipped into a frenzy with hatred. These emotional drives are built into our psyche and need to be understood and addressed. We need to understand how and what people are feeling and address these feelings in order to impact their decisions.

We need to learn to tailor our messages in a way that penetrates both their information bubble and aligns with how they make decisions. Using logic with someone who makes decisions based on emotional values doesn't work and emotional arguments will not sway someone who makes decisions based on logic.

It is often difficult to get a meaningful conversation going with people who are avid FOX watchers; below are a few examples of statements and questions one might use to start the conversation:

- Do you feel angry when people tell you something that isn't true and expect you to believe it?
- Do you feel angry when someone lies to you? Do you believe Trump tells you the truth?

- Trump and the Republicans in Congress seem to disrespect you when they don't act in your best interests, just their own.
  - Were you surprised by what happened on Jan 6th?
  - Why do you think Trump didn't tell you just how deadly the Covid virus was and how important it was to get vaccinated?
  - Who do you blame for all the Covid deaths? And why?
  - Does being a bully and insulting and degrading others, sound Christian to you?
  - If people break the law, should they be held accountable? How about Jan 6th?
  - Did you feel sad to see the long lines at food banks during the pandemic?
  - How would you feel if your vote didn't get counted? How do you think others might feel?
  - Do you feel angry when you see someone disrespect our troops and first responders?
  - Do you feel hurt and angry when you are taken advantage of?
  - Does showing compassion to others make you feel part of something bigger?
  - Should we help people who are hungry and homeless, if so, how would you do it?
-

## 112) “A word that says it all”

Opinion by NormT 7/21/2021

What should we call a person who is totally selfish, doesn't care about the health or safety of others and willingly ignores truth and science and instead chooses to follow ridiculous debunked conspiracy theories?

I am referring to those, who in the midst of a deadly pandemic (over 600,000 American deaths and still increasing) refuse to get vaccinated even though they are safe, free and easily available.

The word that comes to mind is “PARIAH”

A pariah is one who is despised or rejected by society; an outcast, disgraced, undesirable, sub-human and to be avoided.

This is who they are and how they should be treated. They are NOT freedom loving patriots or defending our liberties, they are terrorists poisoning everyone they come in contact with.

Don't coddle or make excuses for them or give them time to “come around”; they are spreading disease, infections and death. Treat them with disdain and isolation, they are “Pariahs” and should be treated as such.

## 113) "Chased by a snake"

A memory by NormT 7/22/2021

In a previous essay I described seeing my first rainbow from the porch of my grandmothers' house in the Catskills. Across the road was a stone fence about 3 foot tall guarding a pasture filled with huckleberry bushes, crab apple trees a bunch of cows and a horse who thought his job was to protect the field from intruders; especially those who climbed over the fence to pick berries.

We used to watch carefully to make sure the horse wasn't around and were very careful to avoid the "cow pies" as we filled our pails with the berries, we provided quality control by eating almost as many berries as we picked along with a few crab apples that had fallen near the scraggly trees.

About a quarter of a mile down the road was a farm owned by the Caston family who raised chickens and sold the eggs to the co-op in town. The matriarch, also known as "old lady Caston" because she looked like she was 100 years old. She had 14 children including two sets of twins (Clifford and Clifton and Milt and Mel); maybe that's why she looked so old. Milt and Mel were my older brother's age and he hung around with them all the time.

One day, when I was about 5 years old, I decided to walk down the road and join my brother at Caston's place. It was 1943 and their house had no electricity and the water came from an a well in front of the house. It had a crank and a pail attached by a metal chain and to get water you had to lower the pail into the well and then turn the handle to raise the bucket (but I digress).

As I was walking down the road, I heard a rustling in the grass and a "humongous snake"" came slithering out and started chasing me down the road, maybe we were just going in the same direction but I wasn't taking any chances. I estimated it was between 10 to 20 feet long (possibly a mix of anaconda, python and boa constrictor and definitely poisonous) and must have been hungry for a small boy.

Needless to say, I ran down that road as fast as my little feet would go and screaming my head off. Fortunately, my brother and the Caston brothers saw me and grabbed a shovel and ran down the road and killed the snake before it ate me. I am forever grateful to the Caston boys. Later they told me it was a "king snake" about 6 feet long, known to be aggressive and ate rodents but this one probably had bad eyesight and chased me anyway just for the fun of it. I never have trusted snakes again.

A few years later they were all in the army and Mel was in the battle of the bulge in Germany and his unit was surrounded and saved by the 442nd regimental combat

team of Japanese Americans who broke through and rescued them. That was America.

1939, My mother holding me in front of our farmhouse in Woodridge NY, note the porch (of rainbow fame) and the old car.



1942, My brother, mother and I, he was 15 and I was 4 and my mother was about 5 foot tall. Taken in front of a Catskill hotel. A year before the snake chase.



1945, Mel Caston and my brother Harv (my hero's)



## 114) “Let the games begin” or “hey, that isn’t fair”!

Opinion by NormT 6/22/2021

When two adversaries get on the field to play a championship game, e.g.: baseball’s World Series or football’s Super Bowl or golf’s Ryder Cup we assume the rules are both understood and apply equally to both sides.

What do you think would happen if say, the Yankees are playing the Dodgers and we find out the Yankees get four “outs” per inning and the Dodgers only two? Or if the Packers field goals were worth 4 points and the Patriots only two points? Or the Europeans received 2 points for a tied match and the Americans only one half a point?

We would be outraged, that is NOT fair, everyone needs to play by the same rules. I would imagine that the team that “had the deck stacked against them” would refuse to play and the audience would think it was a sham and would not recognize the winner as having won fairly.

Now, lets look at team Red and team Blue and future elections. Team Red has passed laws in more than half the States to give themselves an unfair advantage; heavily gerrymandered districts so even if team blue got more votes team Red would end up with more elected officials.

Team Red got to set all the voting rules so they kept team blues voters from being able to cast their votes or get them counted and even if team Blue had more votes, team Red could call in their own referees and give the election to themselves.

Why on Gods earth would team Blue even consider playing the game? If California and New York hold free and fair elections and Texas and Florida and Georgia (and all the other Confederate States) are cheating, then the fix is in. Why should any team Blue State accept any team Red result, knowing they cheated?

Why should any team Blue accept the results of a rigged, unfair election; in fact, why bother to play at all, why vote if the votes don’t really count or have meaning?

The voting rights bill must be passed so the election is fair and all citizens get to vote and their votes are counted (and accepted). If not, we are no longer a democracy nor one Nation and definitely NOT the “United” States of America.



## 115) “The magnificent leap”

A story of childhood by NormT 6/17/2021

As we grow up, we face many challenging dilemmas; one of those is when we have a desire to do something, yet fear the outcome or the consequences of doing it. It could be going down a slide for the first time or jumping off a diving board or putting on skates and taking those first tentative steps. We have all faced these types of situations.

Perhaps we feared what might happen to us (injury, pain or humiliation) or just the “fear of failure”. Whatever it was, it represented a challenge and questioned what we thought we were capable of doing. It required overcoming both the fear and the lack of confidence in our abilities.

A little background; I was born in Brooklyn (a borough of NYC) and when I was 3 we moved into an apartment building on Ocean Avenue (between avenue “J” and avenue “K”), it had trolley tracks down the middle of the street and the trolley’s ran every 30 minutes ending up at Coney Island. The building looks exactly the same today (the trolleys are long gone) as it did some 80 years ago.

When you entered the lobby and turned left, there were stairs going up to the first-floor landing. We (my mother, father, grandmother, older brother and I) lived on the first floor in a 3-room flat until I was 13.

This was my world, that building with 4 floors (no elevators or air conditioning), 11 apartments on each floor and there were 12 buildings just like it on my block (with about 3,000 people), which is bigger than some small towns.

The stairs were made of stone (maybe marble, but I doubt it) and had a metal hand rail on each side; the stairs were fairly wide (at least to a 3-year-old) and there were 5 steps going from the lobby to the first-floor landing. I remember holding on tight every time I went up or down those stairs (which was at least a million times a day, maybe less in adult counting).

I held on tight, because I was afraid of falling down on those hard stone steps, with visions of blood spurting out of a gaping wound and maybe a broken bone sticking through the skin. I was afraid of falling and cracking my head open. A fear heightened by having a grandmother reminding them to be careful and hold on, each time I left the

apartment. This went on for a number of years until one fateful day, I don't know why, I gathered my courage and jumped from the top step to the lobby floor, in one magnificent leap, soaring through the air and landed upright and unscathed.

I don't remember how old I was (maybe 5) but suddenly those stairs were no longer as tall and scary. I had conquered my fear and thereafter I never held on and always jumped all the way from the top step to the floor below. Maybe not superman worthy but I did it and never looked back.

I imagine over the generations that followed; many other young children gathered their courage and leapt; they have no idea who I am or that I even lived there but they followed in my footsteps.

We all have our own stories of facing our fears and finally getting the courage to overcome them. It might have taken a number of failed attempts, a few bruises and dented egos, but the satisfaction of "overcoming those fears" gave us the confidence to trust our judgement and our abilities and to keep reaching for those things we thought were beyond our capabilities.

I Hope you enjoyed this short trip into my past. When I finished writing this essay, I googled my old address (1553 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, NY) and clicked on the Zillow link and to my complete astonishment and amazement there was a picture of MY STAIRS just as I remembered them and that door was the door to my old apartment. Modern technology is wonderful. See photo below!



## 116) “Houston, we have a problem”

Opinion by NormT 6/15/2021

Those words spoken 51 years ago from the Apollo 13 mission are memorable and epitomize the American mystique. We were known as a pragmatic, no-nonsense, roll up the sleeves and get the job done society.

When we saw a problem, we fixed it and kept driving forward. We were considered realists with both a down to earth work ethic and the ability to come together to get results. We could cut through the B.S. and get to the core of the issue and get results.

Problem solving is a process and we used to be pretty good at it. Most importantly we recognized its existence; then we identified the causes and came up with solutions and finally we worked together to make it happen and share in its success.

But, somewhere along the way we lost touch with reality, the ability to solve problems and work together. We no longer know who and what to believe, what is truth, how to interpret data and information, know how to use logic and reasoning, what is possible or probable and even where to look to find the truth.

At what point did we start thinking pro-wrestling and reality TV shows were real? When did we start thinking comic book super-heroes were possible? When did we start believing ridiculous stuff we see on the internet or on TV or in the movies is to be believed? Many people have just lost touch with reality, we used to call that “insanity”.

At what point did we start believing information from people we know are nut-cases, wacko's, charlatans, con-men, hucksters, those who are out to swindle, cheat and fool us? When did conspiracy theories become mainstream?

When did one party decide keeping people from voting, or nullifying their votes and have partisan officials decide which votes are allowed? That an angry mob storming the Capital with the intent of overturning an election was a picnic, a party, no big thing and a patriotic duty?

When did it become acceptable for a President to act like a petty dictator and demolish the “rule of law” and trample on the Constitution and then their party looks away and says “boys will be boys”? When did it become OK to carry weapons of war

anywhere at any time and mass shootings become so common, they hardly make the news anymore?

When did it become OK to jeopardize the health and well being of your neighbors during a pandemic and claim your freedom is being violated? When did it become OK to grab women by the pussy because you are a celebrity? When did it become OK to support the KKK and neo-Nazi's, white supremacists and anti-Semites?

When did it become OK for elected official to ignore the oath they took to defend and preserve the constitution? When did it become OK to put your political party ahead of your Country? When did it become OK for religious leaders to ignore sins against God's commandments to get the judges they want?

We are living in a very different world than I grew up in, when America believed in equality and fairness, believed we were a country of immigrants and opportunity and even though there were problems (racism and inequity) we strived to get better and fix those problems. We used to know how to do it.

As astronaut Jack Swigert (not Tom Hanks) said "Houston, we have a problem". Our house is on fire and the fools are bringing marshmallows not fire hoses.

## 117) “A man, an ocean and a bench”

A short story by NormT 6/10/2021

Along the coastline of Pacific Grove (about half way between Carmel and Monterey) is a walking path overlooking the ocean. Every 50 feet or so, the nice people of the town placed wooden benches facing the water so one can sit facing the waves as they come crashing in against the rocks, creating a roar and fountain of foamy spray smelling of salt water mixed with seaweed and kelp.

It was a warm, sunny day with a slight breeze, the gulls were squawking and the pelicans flying single file and occasionally dipping into the waves for fish. A man was walking slowly along the path; you could tell by the tentative steps and slight forward slant of his torso he was old. He seemed to be searching for just the right bench to rest and take in the scenery.

He sat down overlooking a cove where rocks jutted out of the water and sea birds all huddling together one huge rock and seals barking and playing between the outcrops. Some of the seals were balancing on incredibly small protrusions seeming to defy gravity.

A little further out you could see otters floating on their backs in the kelp beds and far in the distance the outlines of huge oceangoing ships heading out to sea. A few wispy clouds floating overhead and the fog bank still a few hours away from swooping in and changing this idyllic setting into a freezing and wet landscape.

The old man sat quietly listening to the rhythmic sounds of the waves washing in, the birds, the seals and even the pesky squirrels begging for food at his feet. Once in a while a car could be heard on the street behind and the crunching of gravel as people walked past on the winding path. Some would stop and exchange “good afternoons” or “what a nice day” as they passed behind the bench.

The old man with his arms resting on the back of the bench, tilted his head back; feeling the warmth of the sun on his face and feeling the breeze blow his white wispy hair over his bald head. He closed his eyes and let his mind wander back through time with each memory triggering so many others he quickly lost track of where it started.

A small tear formed in the corner of his eyes as he remembered people (now long gone) from his past and the good times and places he had traveled to and could

no longer visit. As he looked out over the waves and the seals playing on the rocks he thought “if there is a heaven, this must be what it looks like”

Then he looked over his shoulder and there was a huge elephant seal on the ground next to the bench; he thought, that’s not right. They don’t live here; they belong at Anna Nuevo beach not here. This doesn’t make sense, something is wrong.

His eyes snapped wide open and he could see a fan slowly turning on the ceiling and the early morning sun outlining the shades on the window next to his bed, he felt the covers on his feet and the pillow under his head and just like that he was wide awake.

It took a while, the sounds of the ocean faded as did the salt water smell and he was back to reality. Except once in a while, if he turned quickly, just out of sight and over his shoulder, he could see a shadow that looked suspiciously like an (oh, you know). It is just a hint of a dark shape and a very faint smell of fishy breath in the air and then poof, it is gone. For those who ever strolled along the seaside and were mesmerized by the crashing waves and ocean breezes. This is for you.

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## 118) “Words have meaning”

Be careful how you use them

Opinion by NormT 6/9/2021

Language is a way to convey information; it can be non-verbal (a frown, a smile, a shrug, a shake of the head), or sign-language, or through artistic means (dance, music, painting or stories). Whether written or spoken, its main purpose is to share thoughts, ideas, data, concepts and feelings.

So, it is important that what you say is understood by those you are saying it to. There needs to be a mutual frame of reference and agreement on the meanings of words to allow successful communication.

While it is true, we have dictionaries and a thesaurus to help us out, there are some things we say that can be open to interpretation. Things like large or small, or often and seldom are relative terms and very dependent on the knowledge and experience of the users or the situation itself.

What may seem large to you may appear as medium to me and if you say something happens often, I may see it as infrequent or “once in a while”. We may be facing the same event but seeing it through a different frame of reference. These words or phrases if not defined carefully can cause us to reach different conclusions.

This is especially evident when we speak about proportionality and relative differences and when making “false equivalencies”. For example, if I say something happens “once in a while” (meaning about 10% of the time) or often (about 90%) this means they are very different.

But to someone who believes anything over 5% is unacceptable, then both events are too much and therefore equal to them. When we are dealing in situations like this it is important to understand the boundary conditions each party is using, how they view the probability and importance of the events and to try and “see” it from their perspective.

A little or a lot, too much or too little, seldom or often as well as tiny or huge; may not be seen in the same way by different people. It is better to “quantify” using scale and measures that everyone can understand and identify with.

A great deal of today's political divisiveness comes from viewing what someone else says from our perspective and to make matters worse when one side views the world in shades of grey (complexity) and the other in black and white (certainty or absolutes).

For example, using "gun control"; one side says owning a gun is like free speech, it cannot be limited. The other side says "we are not taking away your guns", but certain people should not have them and certain guns should not be available to the general public. This is a perfect example of Black and White versus shades of grey.

An example of "false equivalency" is using the "both sides" or "what about" arguments. In the case of lying and misrepresenting facts: Biden mis-speaks or misrepresents facts, "sometimes or once in a while" whereas Trump blatantly and frequently lied (over 30,000 times in 4 years). Did they both tell a lie? Yes; but were they equivalent in magnitude and frequency? Absolutely NOT; they were not even close nor equivalent.

My point is we use language to communicate and words have meanings, they might be misinterpreted; so, choose your words carefully and accurately and take into account how they will be accepted and understood.

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## 119) “Some census numbers to think about”

Opinion by NormT 7/19/2021

- 1) The non-native population in North America in 1620 (just a year after the first slave ship arrived) was around 2,300.
- 2) In 1780 (first census after the Declaration of Independence) the population was 2.8 million; approximately the size of Chicago today
- 3) In 1860 (the beginning of the Civil War) the population had grown to 31.5 million (About the size of Florida plus Michigan today). The Civil War casualties (deaths on both sides) were estimated at 680 thousand; slightly more than 2% of the entire population and equivalent to about 7 million at today's population.
- 4) Between 1880 and 1920, The major immigration period from Eastern and Southern Europe; the population more than doubled, from 50.2 million to 106 million.
- 5) In 1940, just before we entered WWII (and two years after I was born), the population was 132 million. Our casualties (deaths) were estimated at 408 thousand and ~ 1.3% of the population. This is equivalent to losing about 4.3 million troops at our current population of 320 million.
- 6) Between 1980 and 2020 our population growth was 42% and we went from 226 million to 320 million (a delta of 94 million); larger than the entire U.S. population in 1910.

In the past 16 months, deaths due to the covid-19 pandemic is around 620 thousand (and still growing); that is greater than the entire U.S. population was in 1730 and about the same as the population (every man, woman and child) in these cities: Milwaukee, Washington D.C., Baltimore, Las Vegas, Oklahoma City or Portland (OR). Poof, all gone, every single life.

We now have a vaccine that is extremely effective, safe and can end this slaughter! If you know anyone who has not yet gotten the vaccine, encourage them to do so, it is a patriotic thing to do and will protect their family and friends as well.

## 120) “A colored thing in the sky”

*A memory by NormT 7/15/2021*

One of my very earliest memories (I was somewhere between 3 and 4 years old), when I was playing on the porch of my grandmother’s house in upstate N.Y., it was an old house with wood burning stove in the kitchen, a manual water pump outside that needed priming (pumping) and delivered the coldest, best tasting water (even on the hottest days) and an open porch (where I often played) that faced a single lane dirt road.

Woodridge (the town) in the Catskill mountains had a population of about 600 in the winter but tripled in the summer when a lot of the people from “the city” would come up to get away from the oppressive heat and humidity of the city and rented bungalows or rooms in the small villages in the “mountains” (now that I have seen real mountains these were really just big hills).

I was playing on the porch, the adults were all inside the house and we had a heavy rainstorm, sheets of giant raindrops, lots of wind and lightening flashes and big booming thunder claps. The sky was dark and the wind blew the rain so the porch was wet, so I climbed up onto a chair and watched the storm pass.

Then it stopped, the sky cleared and the sun came out, the water was still dripping from the trees and then it happened. The brightest, sharpest most vibrant colors arched across the sky; red, orange, yellow, green and blue against a dark blue sky. I was bewildered, “what was it; I had never seen anything like that before.

I was torn, I wanted to run inside and tell everyone about my discovery but was afraid to leave the porch because it might go away. I was alone, not afraid or scared but mesmerized by how bright that thing was, much more impressive than my crayons or anything I had ever seen. I remember thinking “I should tell everybody”, but couldn’t tear myself away from the porch railing and just watched in awe.

And then it started to fade, the colors not as bright and then poof, it was gone. I later learned it was called a “rainbow” and have seen many more in the past 80 years but none as bright and marvelous as my first rainbow.

## 121) “Some random thoughts”

by NormT 6/4/2021

- A writer paints images with words.
- A poet is an “impressionist” writer.
- Science is the search to understand and explain “why”.
- Philosophy pushes us to explore possibilities.
- A philosopher opens the mind and the ideologue closes it.
- Mathematics is the language of science.
- Understanding requires using facts, truth and logical reasoning, otherwise it is absolute absurdity.
- Einstein said everything is “relativity”.
- A genius is someone who understands and describes relationships.
- A visionary matches future needs with future possibilities.
- “I told you so” should never follow “because”.
- We (you and I) have non-existed more than 100 million times longer than we have existed; just how important does that make us?
- Be very wary of those who say they have all the answers, I guarantee they never asked the right questions.
- The essence of “Talmudic” thinking is captured in Tevye’s saying (from Fiddler on the roof); “but, on the other hand”.
- To make a “living” is O.K., but to make a “life”, that’s what it’s all about!!
- If we were half as smart as we think we are, we would be twice as smart as those who know nothing.

## 122) “America 2021 is starting to feel like Germany 1931”

Opinion by NormT 5/13/2021

While history doesn't always repeat itself, it makes a lot of sense to learn from it. 90 years ago, Germany was a nation in pain, the worldwide great depression on top of their surrender in WWI and the punishing legacy of the treaty of Versailles made the population feel victimized and suffering.

It created a “grievance” and “victimization” mind-set, one open to look for someone to blame; their government, other nations (UK, US, France) and the usual scapegoats (Jews, Gypsies, Gays) and the Communists (who represented their old enemies from Eastern Europe).

Hitler had not yet assumed power (that would happen in 1933) but the existing government (the Weimar Republic) felt they could control Hitler and thought him a “useful fool” (sound familiar?).

“By the end of March 1933, the Reichstag had used the perceived state of emergency to grant Hitler (as Chancellor) broad power to act outside parliamentary control, which he used to thwart constitutional governance and civil liberties. Hitler's seizure of power thus ended the republic. Democracy collapsed, and the creation of a single-party state began the dictatorship of the Nazi era” (This previous quote is taken from Wikipedia).

There was a strong element of right wing and militaristic forces (brown shirts) who tended towards authoritarianism, terrorism and police state (strong arm) mentality not unlike the KKK, Proud boys, Oath keepers and 3 percenters (and all the other white supremacist groups).

Anti-Semitism is not a new phenomenon, it has been around for thousands of years but the Nazi party took it to levels of inhumanity and brutality as a centerpiece of their movement. The identification of “the other” as being the cause of their situation and grievances by the use of massive all-encompassing propaganda campaigns and the “big-lie” told over and over again to distract the masses from their plight.

The Republican Party seems to be following this same playbook, lies, blaming others, and giving allegiance and fealty to a charismatic cult leader with no moral compass, no decency or humanity is very reminiscent of what happened in Germany 90 years ago.

We still have a Democracy, but it is hanging on by a thread, the Republican led State legislators are doing their best to disenfranchise “those others” and restrict their ability to vote or have their votes counted.

The Republican Party leadership has given in to Trump and has become the Trump Party; no matter his incompetence, corruption, immorality, narcissism, egomania, compulsive lying and autocratic actions.

It feels like Germany in 1931 to me. what do you think?

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## 123) “What exactly is infrastructure?”

Opinion by NormT 4/20/2021

The definition of infrastructure is:

“the basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society or enterprise” or “what we need to have in place to be successful i.e., achieve our objectives”.

In the late 20th Century when large multi-national corporations were choosing locations (both foreign and domestic) to establish manufacturing facilities, we looked for the availability of sound infrastructure; for example:

Reliable communication systems, easily accessible transportation (roads, rail, airports so we could get goods and services in and out easily), a stable and educated workforce, availability of sub-contractors and material suppliers, available and stable utilities (electricity, water) and a stable political environment.

We are now in the 21st Century, facing a very competitive economic rivalry with China, that now has comparable technology (if not better) and a middle class that is larger than the entire population of the United States. A very formidable adversary.

For us to compete successfully we need to invest heavily in our most important and key asset, our people! We not only need 21st Century physical facilities (roads, bridges) but also leading-edge technology and the ability to utilize our human capital to its fullest.

As a Nation we need to provide for the health, safety and security of our citizens as well as their economic well-being. Of course, this includes the basics (roads, bridges, seaports, airports, transportation systems, dams, levees, water systems, electrical grids and power distribution). But just doing this is not enough, we need to do much more or we will be left behind.

To survive we need to be competitive internationally with leading edge technology (Super-computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Bio-technology and ultra-high-speed communications capability (like 5G and beyond) as well as a defense Department with leading-edge Cyber and robotics capability.

We need to have an educated and productive society. This means we have to provide pre-K through College (including trade schools) education and make complete use of our entire population; our most important asset.

After all is said and done, it is our people that are the most important part of our infrastructure and we need to do whatever it takes to make them productive, healthy and motivated. So, whatever infrastructure bills we pass it must include every aspect (physical facilities, technological advances and societal improvements) working together to truly be competitive in the years ahead.

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## 124) “Ways to improve our Democracy”

Opinion by NormT 3/24/2021

It appears that the Republican controlled State legislators are pushing through a number of undemocratic “Jim Crow” laws meant to restrict voting by groups they believe may vote for Democratic Party candidates.

This is not only anti-American but shows the true intent of these politicians i.e., win at any cost and make America a “White Christian male-controlled autocracy”.

I have a few “bills” that I feel should be passed by the Government to make America a true democracy:

- 1) All people (eligible to be U.S. citizens) shall be automatically registered to vote as soon as they reach 18 years of age.
- 2) Every eligible voter should be sent a mail-in ballot that has a paper trail and can be returned at no cost through the U.S. mail.
- 3) Election day should be a “National Holiday” so those that want to vote in person don’t have to take off work to do so.
- 4) As long as there is a Covid pandemic, anyone choosing to vote in person has to show a valid vaccination card; if not they can vote by mail.
- 5) Early voting should start 1 month before election day and last the entire month.
- 6) Mail in drop boxes should be available at every U.S. Post Office.
- 7) There should be a rule that no one can hold a public office or Judicial position after the age of 80.
- 8) No person can hold public office or Judicial positions no longer than a total of 24 years.



- 9) Electioneering (running for office) may not start sooner than 9 months before an election.
- 10) Elections should be Government funded and capped (number TBD) and NO private or Corporate funds are allowed.
- 11) Any group sponsoring, campaigning or promoting a candidate or political party should not be allowed any “tax free” status.
- 12) Any State or local laws passed that inhibit or disenfranchise voter participation are null and void.
- 13) Washington DC and Puerto Rico should be granted Statehood.
- 14) The electoral College should be required to vote proportionally based on the popular vote in that State.

Just something to think about!

## 125) “The foods of my childhood

*By NormT 3/24/2021*

Passover begins in a few days and it brings back memories of Seders, family gatherings and of course my favorite subject, foods. I personally thought plain matzo tasted like dried straw and was just a vehicle to put real food on before eating.

I remember my Bubbe (Grandmother) who looked like she was 100 years old her entire life and couldn't read or write and only spoke Yiddish telling me stories of the old days in Russia when they had no food (she lost a child to starvation) and how in America we had so much. She made sure I didn't miss a meal; even today some 80 years later I have trouble not having a “clean plate”.

Here are some of the foods from my childhood, still linger in my memory and although I may not have had some in over three quarters of a century, if I try hard enough, I can still taste them.

- 1) “Gribenes”: pieces of chicken skin and fat fried in oil with garlic and onions until crispy. A guaranteed artery clogger.
- 2) “Potatonick”: A pan sized potato latka with a thick crust and super peppery.
- 3) “Lekach”: A dense moist honey cake.
- 4) “Luckshen Cugel”: A dessert made from wide noodles with raisins and cinnamon and other pieces of dried fruit.
- 5) “Tzimmis”: Carrots with a knadel (dumpling).
- 6) “Hot Borsht (beet)soup: with pieces of meat
- 7) “Cold Borsht” with sour cream.
- 8) “Kreplach”(Jewish ravioli) filled with meat or cheese, fried in a pan with butter.
- 9) “Kishka” (stuffed derma), a thick slice hot off the griddle.
- 10) All the parts of the chicken (insides) we now throw away and added to the chicken soup included the unlaidd eggs, gizzards and liver)
- 11) “A chopped herring salad”, vinegary and spicy.
- 12) “sweet and sour” meatballs

13) “gehackte leber” (chopped liver) to put on your matzo

14) “Feinkochen” (fried omelet) with whatever leftovers were around (salami, peppers, onions, pastrami, corned beef, tongue, you name it.

15) Of course all the stuff from the Deli and sandwiches so thick you had to unhinge your jaw to take a bite.

I am sure you have your own favorites as well, enjoy the memory trip. As my Cousins Phil and Laura say; have a Zissa (sweet) Passover and a “Guten Yontef” to all.

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## 126) “What’s next”

Opinion by NormT 3/15/2021

Now that the American rescue plan (the 1.9 Trillion bill) has passed we need to look at what to do next. This plan just allows us to catch up and recover from the devastation of the Covid Pandemic and to get our economy back on track. But this is just a start.

We somehow need to ensure we keep our Democratic form of Government alive and well and prevent any attempts of authoritarianism and minority rule (White Supremacism) from gaining control. Passing HR1 or some version of it will help and keep the hundreds of bills going through State legislation from destroying voter equality and rights.

The next big push is to fix our neglected and broken infrastructure (roads, bridges etc.) and making high speed internet and 5G wireless ubiquitous, available and affordable to everyone. There is general agreement on this and it should receive bi-partisan support.

We must also look to the future and make sure we are the leaders (or at least one of the leaders) in the following areas:

- 1) Bio-technology (the next big exploding industry).
- 2) AI (artificial intelligence) a.k.a. machine learning.
- 3) Quantum Computing (the next generation of super computers)
- 4) Low-cost universal energy (available and distributed) with the elimination of Carbon pollution.
- 5) Cyber defense (for government, business and personal) protection.

To do this we will need massive investments in technology (think moon shot) and the investments made in nuclear weapons, defense and semiconductor technology. This will take a government, business and educational plan to develop the technologies and the human talent to develop and run these next generation economic drivers.

We will need to have free pre-K through 14 education (AA, trade school or the first 2 years of College) and student loan forgiveness beyond that for people going into national service or community service.

We will need to figure out how to utilize the entirety of our population to be involved in this endeavor; we need participation from all groups and a structure that allows governmental, educational and business cooperation working together to achieve these objectives for the common good of the Nation.

We need to figure out how to have a more equitable wealth distribution and to utilize all of our population in meaningful and productive activities.

With the advent of these new technologies, many that will automate and replace existing jobs we need to figure out what to do “when we have more people who want to work and not enough jobs/positions available for them to fill”.

We are already seeing this effect due to automation, computerization and software programs that reduced our middle class and the elimination of tens of millions of good paying jobs. This trend will continue and we need to find a solution for this problem.

Unfortunately, this will require the support of both parties and the American public and I fear we may not be able to generate this cooperate action and if we don't, we will just become another failed empire, reduced to second class status and our people will suffer for this.

If we are able to get together to solve these problems, we can have a bright future for our children and grandchildren for the rest of this century.

The question is “do we want to be a leader” or will we just be another failed State and an experiment in Government that that could not sustain itself in the face of competition and technological change?

## 127) “What I really don’t like about getting old”

Musings by NormT 3/13/2021

A while ago I listed a number of things I liked and enjoyed; it helped me recognize that not everything was bad or negative and we still had a lot to be thankful for.

As I rapidly close in on my 83rd birthday, I realized that I wasn’t the same person I used to be in many ways; physically, mentally and emotionally I was different and the world around me was very different.

I have shrunk, I used to be 5 foot 9 inches tall; now I am 5’6”; I used to weigh more than 250 pounds and now I am under 200. My hair (what is left of it is now mostly grey, and seemingly overnight my skin became wrinkled (like my grandmothers) and my body just doesn’t respond the way it used to.

I knew there was going to be added aches and pains but didn’t comprehend how much, I took my old self for granted. Now, I look for items to be used to help me get up before I get down on the floor to do something. I think twice before I attempt to do something that may involve falling or cause physical harm.

Sometimes the words at the tip of my tongue (words and names) that used to flow easily are taking longer to come out and writing that flew from my brain to the paper now comes more slowly and haltingly and lacks the “punch” they used to have.

What really irks me is that I spent all that time learning from experience, learning from my mistakes, lived a full and exciting life, was involved in the technology that changed our world, lived and travelled all over the world and have so much to share and nobody asks for my inputs or advise.

What they see is an old man whose time has come and gone; is no longer in the mainstream of activity and not in tune with the “here and now”. Technology has past him by and “the in-thing” is both an unknown and unwanted intrusion.

It is sad to waste this resource, to let it go unused; even unrecognized and often underestimated. After all, the young seldom want (or need) advise and inputs from those who came before them. We didn’t, why should they.

But, don't feel sorry for this old man, he has his world full of memories; of friends still around and those who have passed. Of all the places and people and actions he has seen and done and most importantly the friendships, joys, laughter, sunsets, the majesty of our earth and the love he has known.

I may not be what I once was but, in my mind, I am still a child in awe of the wonders around me and those yet to come.

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## 128) “What to believe”

*by NormT 2/10/2021*

Voltaire said: “Those who can make you believe absurdities; they can make you commit atrocities”.

If only this wasn't so true; but history is full of examples, will we ever learn?

We want to believe, we need to believe; mankind created logic and solutions to ease the pain of contemplating nothingness. So, we try to connect the dots in ways that allow us to relieve the pain.

- Is there, can there be an absolute truth? We desperately hope there is.
- So, we created Gods and Religion, to try to explain the unexplainable.
- Mankind invented reason and logic and science to try to help us understand
- Then, there are those who twist and bend truth and logic in ways that defy logic
- Then call it alternative facts and alternate reality, and “lo and behold” they find followers to worship at the feet of their golden calf and anything these prophets say is now the new truth and gospel “the” words from on high.
- Mankind is vain, insecure, naïve and easily manipulated; There are those more than willing to sell them snake oil and a path to eternity.
- To line their own pockets with gold , to feed their ego's and soothe their insecurities with the feeling of power.
- Beware my friends, they are among us and remember”
- “Those who can make you believe absurdities; they can make you commit atrocities”



## 129) “These are some of my favorite things”

Musings by NormT 2/7/2021

These words sung by Julie Andrews from the “Sound of Music” have extra meanings now that we are struggling through a pandemic and the effects of social distancing and I might add getting old.

We all have these favorite things and most likely some may be similar but many will be unique to you. I have found that thinking and listing them brings them back to life (even if just in my mind) but it also reminds me that there is a lot to be thankful for.

Thought I would list a bunch of my favorites, in no special order but as they come to mind. You might want make your own list and sharing it with friends as well:

- ☐ A good laugh (one that brings tears to my eyes).
- ☐ The sight and sound of ocean waves rhythmically washing ashore.
- ☐ A bright starry night, with the milky way so close you feel you can touch it.
- ☐ A sunset that covers the horizon with brilliant hues of red bouncing off the dark clouds.
- ☐ The warm sun on my face on a cool day.
- ☐ The sounds of children playing.
- ☐ Hitting a golf ball and having it go where I planned.
- ☐ Listening to Streisand and Pavarotti and Perlman do what they do to perfection.
- ☐ A gentle breeze caressing face and blowing my hair (when I still had hair) on a hot summer's day.
- ☐ Going into my backyard and hearing the birds singing.
- ☐ Seeing my daughters grow up and becoming strong capable women.
- ☐ Petting my dog.
- ☐ Tasting or smelling something that brings back fond memories of my childhood.
- ☐ Hugging my wife and holding her in my arms and never wanting to let her go.
- ☐ Looking at old pictures and following the flood of memories they bring back.
- ☐ Getting together with old friends and reminiscing, having a meal or playing a game.

- ☐ Playing chess against a strong opponent.
- ☐ Being able to figure things out and communicate with my friends.
- ☐ A newborns tiny fingers clutching one of ours
- ☐ That feeling of accomplishment when we complete a task, make a sale (a job well done)
- ☐ Learning something new
- ☐ The sights and smells of a flower garden
- ☐ Hummingbirds
- ☐ Hearing coyotes howling in the hills
- ☐ Snowflakes on our eyelashes
- ☐ The first warm day of spring and we get out our baseball glove and ball
- ☐ A kosher hot dog with mustard and sauerkraut right off the grill
- ☐ My grandmothers honey cake and potato latkes with applesauce.

Just some thoughts on a Super Bowl Sunday.

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## **130) “In my America”**

Opinion by NormT 12/15/2022

100 years ago, my parents emigrated from Minsk (then part of the Soviet Union and now Belarus) to escape persecution (Pogroms) and find a new life in America. My mother (Fanny) was 12 and came with my Aunt Goldy (she was 18) and my grandmother (Sylvia) who could neither read or write and they spoke no English.

They had survived an arduous 6-month journey and came to America in steerage class with little more than the clothes on their backs and a hope for a better life. To them America was known as the “goldena medina” (the golden land or the promised land) where they could be safe and thrive.

One of my aunts died of starvation and two of my uncles and their entire families (they stayed in Russia) died in the Holocaust. My father arrived when he was 17 and came over with his parents and 5 siblings; Two older brothers had come over a few years earlier to make enough money to send for the rest of the family.

My parents became naturalized citizens, they learned to read and write English and worked hard to provide a good life for their family; my older brother served in the Army Air Corps in WWII and I served in Germany (3 years) some 10 years later.

Growing up in Brooklyn NY; America meant freedom, democracy, equality, safety, and security; a place that welcomed immigrants, allowed us to practice our religion, to vote for our government and was a nation of laws and opportunity.

America is NOT perfect; we still have a way to go to fulfill the promise of our declaration of Independence and need to update our constitution to take into account the changes and life in the 21st Century and all the technological advances and demographic changes made over the past 250 years.

In my America; everyone has the right to vote, all votes are counted and the person with the most votes win; no-one is above the law, all people are equal before the law and if you work hard and get educated you can get ahead.

I know it may sound idealistic but I believe “healthcare” is a right (not a privilege), everyone should have the opportunity to go to school (pre-school through junior college, trade school or College) for free) and women should have the right to choose if they want a family or not) and all people should be treated equally and fairly.

Maybe I am a “lib” or “woke” but I believe in civility, fairness and equality and it is important to care about others and treat everyone equally and not be mean or nasty or be a bully or cheat and lie. I know all this is a lot to ask but this is what America means to me.

## **131) “Is the handwriting on the wall?”**

*Opinion by NormT 1/21/2023*

For over 4,000 years a small but dedicated group of people have been the target of persecution and genocide; driven from one country to another trying to find a safe haven. We have travelled and lived all over the world and when welcomed we thrived and contributed to the societies that “tolerated” us but we knew it might only be a temporary welcome.

Driven from our original homeland our diaspora took us to Spain, central and eastern Europe and the Americas (in reality, all over the world). We were never large enough to be a threat to the ruling class and when allowed, made significant contributions in the Arts and Sciences as well as business and finance until it became useful to be used as “scapegoats” and be blamed for whatever was going wrong.

Even though at times we felt safe, we knew it might only be a matter of time before things changed. Throughout history we found it necessary to ask ourselves “is it time to pack up and leave and if so, where could we go?”.

My family came to America 100 years ago (although Jews were here even before there was a nation called the United States and America was good to us and many believed this might be our “new” home and it would provide us with safety and security.

I am not a “Zionist” nor do I believe Israel is the answer, in fact it is a nation surrounded by arch-enemies who would prefer it didn’t exist and seems to be heading into its’ own problematic orthodoxy. In 2020, Jews (with a population of about 15-20 million represent only .2% of the worlds population, with the majority in the U.S. and Israel each with slightly more than 6 million. One wonders why we have faced such animosity over the millennium?

Most of my family and Jewish friends felt comfortable that here in America, that what had happened in Germany (in the 1930’s) could NEVER happen here in America. A Nation that welcomed immigrants from all over the world and had a “Constitution” that promised equality and religious liberty.

Recently we have seen dangerous warning signs with dramatically increased anti- Semitism and growth in support for “white and Christian Nationalism” along with increased hate mongering and the demonization of “the other”. This, along with the

rapid growth of far-right militia organizations and “conspiracy cults like “QAnon” are very dangerous signs as they appear to represent a significant portion (over 30 %) of the Republican Party’s base voters.

Trump has enabled these fringe groups and they feel emboldened and empowered to come out of the shadows and were almost able to overthrow our 2020 election with various types of “Coups D’état” attempts culminating in the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection.

We have seen the rapid growth of these organizations under Trump and the new political environment. The question is this the new America or the last gasp of the old “know-nothing and hate everything” party? If we have to move -on “when” and “where” will we go. Many of us are too old to move but what about our children and the rest of the tribe?

I had high hopes for what I felt was “My America”: where equality and religious liberty was enshrined in the Constitution, a welcome place for immigrants and a country that believed in democracy and the “rule of law”. these past 7 years have given me pause and made me wonder if this is truly the “Country I thought it was”.

But maybe there is another solution; instead of packing up and leaving maybe we should find a way to “fight back”. We need to pass “domestic terrorism laws” and have the FBI and Homeland security actively identify and dissolve those groups involved in trying to overthrow our government and its ideals. This includes groups like the 3 percenters, the “Proud Boys”, the “Oath-keepers” and those associated with neo-Nazi type hate groups.

We will need to work closely with social media organizations to stop the use of algorithms that encourage or promote “hate sites” if not ban them completely and find ways to block their evil message and “out” their leaders and supporters.

Who knows maybe some hacker groups can find ways to neutralize their ability to poison the minds of their members. if we required social media companies to create algorithms that encouraged users to go to sites that encouraged truth, civility and reality instead of conspiracy theories and hate groups

Maybe find a way to use “ransom-ware or other types of mal ware to reduce their evil effectiveness. We will also need to find a way to keep them from serving in government and spreading their anti-government venom and anarchy; membership in these organizations should be a disqualifier for serving in public office.

What if political donations are contingent on passing a “domestic terrorist law” and candidates were asked to disavow these organizations and any that support anti-democratic government structures and racist or anti-semitic positions. Perhaps we should encourage everyone who gets Bar or Bat Mitzvas’ to also earn some form of martial arts form of self-defense.

Instead of running away, we need to fight these hate groups at every level and utilize those “space laser’s” to destroy those who would do us harm.

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## 132) “The causes of inflation”

Opinion by NormT 10/22/22

Prices are high and we all like to complain and blame whenever something happens that we don't like and inflation is one of those things. In fact, we know a lot about what causes it but like many things the causes are complex and the solutions often out of our (individual or government) control.

The cause of inflation is simply that demand is greater than supply or sometimes businesses are taking advantage of the situation to make greater than normal profits (price gouging). Any time there is a large difference over an extended period we will see prices change accordingly.

So, what is causing this in balance:

- 1) Due to the covid pandemic, businesses closed or downsized, entertainment, travel collapsed and people basically stayed out of crowds. Most people drastically reduced their spending and therefore accumulated a lot of available cash (some estimates say the U.S. accumulated as much as 2 trillion dollars). Now with things returning to normal we have gone on a spending spree causing a tremendous increase in demand.
- 2) Due to Covid, many businesses reduced their capacity and are struggling to meet the new demand; we also saw “supply lines” and production problems in China. These have reduced the flow and supply of goods and services worldwide
- 3) Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the associated sanctions have driven up the price of energy, along with oil companies having throttled back their production since demand for gas had dramatically been reduced (again Covid related) and now are struggling to increase their output. This has also been impacted by OPEC colluding to reduce future supply (thank Saudis for being such good friends).
- 4) Another factor has been the world-wide use of “just in time manufacturing supply lines” that depend on smooth delivery of goods that fell apart due to Covid and caused drastic fluctuations in delivery or supplies.
- 5) The housing market has also been a major factor in the dramatic rise in inflation, for many years we have been building far fewer homes than we needed, this has pushed housing prices sky high, adding to this is many of the homes were purchased by large corporations who have immense power to set prices on both homes and rental units.



Most of these issues are worldwide and no single nation or government has the ability to control this imbalance of supply or demand and significantly control “inflation” in the short term. The FED can tighten or loosen interest rates that would impact housing and big-ticket purchases and OPEC could increase oil production (but they have their own self interests to protect), in reality if one believes in a “free market” or capitalistic type of economy then supply and demand will find an equilibrium.

Inflation has been essentially flat and low for over a decade at around 2% and this was probably an anomaly and today's 8-10% worldwide will go down after the supply-demand forces reach an equilibrium (probably in the 4-6% level) but don't count on either the Democrats or Republicans to solve the problem, it is not under their control.

P.S. President Biden had little to do with the existing inflation and has few tools to try and turn it around; while on the other hand, the Republican solutions will cause a depression and even greater pain and suffering. harm, pain and suffering.

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### 133) “Character” a word with multiple meanings.

Opinion by NormT 7-22-2022

English is a rich colorful language; sprinkled with nuance, subtilty and at times contradictory meanings. Take for example the word “character”: Used as a noun; it is the aggregate of features and traits that form the individual nature of some person or thing

If we say, a person “has” character, it has a positive connotation meaning someone with “good traits like honesty, sincerity, compassion and a strong work ethic.

On the other hand. If we say someone “is” a character, it generally means they are “quirky”, odd, eccentric, or unusual; that they march to a different drummer and have traits that the average person doesn’t exhibit. Depending on how you view these traits they can have either positive or negative connotations.

If we equate someone with a “character” in a novel or play or movie or opera it means they have traits or act like the person identified like Archie Bunker (All in the family) or Atticus Finch (To Kill a Mockingbird) or Darth Vader (Star Wars). This can be either positive if the character is “the good guy” or negative if they are seen as villains.

Basically, character is a collection of traits, attributes and actions when seen as a whole helps us define “who” someone is and “how” we see or categorize them. Whether it is good or bad and like “beauty” it is determined “in the eyes of the beholder” who becomes the judge.

I believe it all comes down to the battle between “good” and “evil” and since character is considered a collection of “traits” I tried to identify these traits attributed to each category i.e., “good” and “bad”:

Good traits:

Integrity, Honesty, Loyalty, Respectfulness, Responsibility, Humility, Compassion, Fairness, Authenticity, Courageousness, Generosity, Perseverance, Politeness, Kindness, Lovingness, Optimism, Reliability, Self-disciplined, Ambitiousness, Encouraging, Forgiving, Considerate, Thoroughness

## Bad traits:

arrogance, deception, dishonesty, egotistical, envious, greedy, hateful, immorality, lying, selfishness, unreliability, violent, abrasive, antisocial, apathetic, callous, catty, childish, cocky, compulsive, confrontational, controlling, cowardly, cruel, devious, disloyal, disorganized, disrespectful, evasive, evil, extravagant, fanatical, flaky, foolish, frivolous, gossipy, greedy, grumpy, gullible, hostile, humorless, hypocritical, ignorant, impatient, impulsive, indecisive, inflexible, insecure, irrational, irresponsible, jealous, judgmental, know-it-all, lazy, macho, manipulative, needy, nosy, obsessive, paranoid, pessimistic, possessive, prejudiced, pretentious, reckless, resentful, selfish, sleazy, spoiled, stingy, stubborn, tactless, temperamental, uncooperative, uncouth, unethical, ungrateful, unintelligent, vain, vindictive, violent,, volatile, whiny.

Wow, sure seems like we know more about what is bad than what is good.; I wonder if this tells us something about our society? In this age of division and tribalism, I would hope we could get agreement on these values and traits to identify someone with “good” character to lead us in the future and someone we can all be proud to call our president.

## 134) “The SCOTUS W.O.W.”

*Opinion by Normt 3/24/2022*

After long discussions with the religious police in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Red State America the new US Supreme Court (stacked with the fruits of the poisonous tree) decided that women really shouldn't be full citizens or deserving of human rights after all (it seems their main purpose is to be a vessel to carry a fetus to full term).

The decision handed down (from Mount Olympus) declaring the demise of Roe v. Wade and hinting at many more decisions regarding birth Control, same sex marriage and even inter-racial intercourse is just a beginning.

After all, why does a woman need an education if her role is just to cook and clean and obey her husband, in fact why bother to have the right to vote (it is just a nuisance anyway). Also, under considerations is to put a maximum wage (probably 66 and 2/3rds percent of what a man would get doing the same job).

It is well known that sexy clothes often make a man do uncontrollable things and thanks to their Taliban brethren a bit more modesty should be legislated (“Burkas” and” chastity belts”) are optional. We wouldn't want to entice those males who can't seem to control their impulses do we?

It was determined that when the Constitution was written some 230 years ago, women knew their place and if any human rights weren't specifically identified or written it should be assumed they shouldn't exist (except in the case of guns, (actually any weapons or ammunition).

And that “separation of Church and state” thing; well, the founding fathers didn't really mean that; what they meant to say is you can have any religion or beliefs as long as the Evangelical Christians and fundamentalist Catholics allow it, but the law will be determined by their belief system.

So, the battle has begun and the supreme Court has just declared War on women; and guess what, they decide the rules. Doesn't seem very fair, does it? A bunch of partisan hacks with lifetime positions deciding the law based on 18th Century knowledge and mores to determine how we live in the 21st Century world.

## 135) “Pro-life, I think not”

*Opinion by NormT 6/11/2022*

They told their supporters it's OK NOT to get vaccinated or wear masks during a deadly pandemic; it is estimated 200 to 300 thousand people died unnecessarily because of that. They say they are pro- life yet they support death sentences.

Regarding abortions; maybe, they are not so much pro -life but just “pro-fetus”. Once born (you're on your own baby) and the life and well being of the mother is secondary or maybe she just collateral damage. They don't seem to care that many of the children of unwanted pregnancies grow up in orphanages or foster care (and you better believe they won't vote any funding to support these institutions).

They say they are pro-life yet refuse to enact laws that will reduce deaths caused by gun violence! They prevent Congress from even voting on reasonable “GUN SAFETY LAWS” and regulations that would keep these weapons of war out of the hands of mass murderers (killers of school children, people shopping at a grocery store or market or at a concerts or houses of worship) and those mentally unstable.

They act as if the second amendment is the “will of the Lord” and a “Commandment” handed down by God and chiseled into a stone tablet., not just an amendment to the Constitution written over 240 years ago.

They say they are pro-life, but voted against providing health care to those who couldn't afford it; maybe pro-life is only for those who can pay. I guess they feel the lives of others isn't as valuable as the life of the wealthy, or one of their own groups (or Clan or Cult).

They say they are pro-life but refuse to acknowledge or do anything to reduce the effects (impact) of CLIMATE CHANGE that is causing more and greater natural disasters (hurricanes, tornados, wild fires, floods, droughts) and will end up killing and displacing millions of people around the world.

Perhaps they are just “pro-greed” and are just saying they are” pro-life” to distract us to stay in power and using the “fetus” as a false flag diversion and to deflect our attention away from their hypocrisy, lies and lack of moral courage.

Just saying, maybe they aren't really Pro-life after all!

## 136) “Guns and Bullets kill people”

“Choices are few, we need to act now”

Opinion by NormT 5/27/2022

There are a few simple choices we face us with regard to the horrendous events that seem to be “the new normal” in our society; by that I mean all the deaths due to suicides, street crimes and mass shootings, I believe our options are:

- 1) Do nothing,: to accept the current reality and stick our heads in the sand and pretend it will not happen to us. This seems to be the preferred choice of those in power, lots of thoughts and prayers and empty promises of future action.
- 2) Pass minimal legislation: to try to find some solution to make us feel we are taking action, but in reality, has relatively little effect on the situation. This would include some “red flag” laws, changes to the age one needs to be to buy a gun and background checks without a national data base in place. This option will make us feel that we are doing something; this just nibbles around the edges.
- 3) Real meaningful actions: Put in place a universal background check with national data base (like the NO FLY and red flag lists), require gun manufacturers to make firearms that can only be fired by the legitimate owner (this technology already exists and uses fingerprint recognition); require weapons (like we do with vehicles) to be registered and pass a safety test (like the DMV requires) and BAN the sale and ownership of assault (like the AR 15) weapons , extended ammunition clips and cop killer bullets.
  - a. This allows handguns, hunting and target shooting rifles and shotguns to be owned (and safely used) so my second amendment friends can still have their legal guns.
  - b. It reduces the probability of Criminals and those deemed at risk and shouldn’t own firearms from getting or using them

Choice number (3) will not prevent all the deaths associated with gun violence but would have a major impact on reducing mass shootings, domestic violence, street crimes and suicides.

It may seem expensive but would be better and cheaper than arming and training all teachers, grocery clerks, putting guards at all houses of worship, sporting events and concerts and all the other “soft targets” that have been attacked recently.

The groups who would hate these controls are criminals, mass shooters, militia groups whose goal is to overthrow our government, greedy weapons manufacturers, the NRA and Republican politicians who use the second amendment to stir up their voters to get elected.

We don't have to be helpless victims; we can put in place meaningful changes that would save innocent lives and make this a better place to live.

## 137) “It’s the children’s fault”

Opinion by NormT 5/26/2022

Every time there is a mass shooting, we mourn, send our “thoughts and prayers”, search for someone (an outsider, a mental case, an organization) or something (anything) to blame; to point our finger at and shout out our anger and outrage with implied moral superiority.

How dare those innocent children believe they can go to school and be safe; how dare those people go shopping at a grocery store and believe they are safe or go to a concert to listen to music and have a good time believe they are safe.

What fools we are, we live in a place that has more guns than people to use them on, more bullets than all the people alive on earth, a society that worships greed and instantaneous satisfaction (I want it now); a place where a corrupt madman became president and those who believe in science, education, truth and civility are scorned and considered weak.

We need a scapegoat, someone to blame for our inaction and foolishness, our inability to make things better and safer; we need a group that can’t fight back, can’t vote, has no power or money, can’t defend themselves.

I know who to blame it is obvious we need to blame the children, somehow by being in the wrong place at the wrong time, being in a place with books and learning and teachers, not able to fight back. they must somehow be guilty, they caused this because guns don’t kill people, people kill people. How dare they be such easy defenseless targets.

How dare they make us feel guilty for not being able to protect them, to pass laws to make life safer and healthier, to protect our future; no matter we took away their future. Yes, somehow, they did this, I am not sure how they were able to manipulate the rest of us and we need someone to blame, to make us feel better for doing NOTHING to protect them.



## 138) “What does pro-life mean to me”

NormT 5/26/2022

Pro-life means keeping people safe, having food to eat, clean water to drink, having a roof over your head, having health care if you are sick and getting an education to help you provide for you and your family.

It means taking care of those who can't or are unable to care for themselves; to prevent wars, famines and help those effected by natural disasters (floods, fires, earthquakes etc) and help others in need.

I am against the death penalty (let the bad guy's rot in prison) and wars (although sometimes they need to be fought) and basically a “live and let live philosophy”, and I don't want to impose my religious beliefs on anyone else and I don't want them to impose theirs on me.

If you ask me “when does life begin?”; my answer is I don't know; for sure it is after one is born and most likely when the fetus is able to survive in a reasonable hospital environment (somewhere around 20 weeks) but that keeps changing as the technology improves.

I believe the life of the mother is most important and takes precedence in all cases and the mother (unless declared mentally incompetent) is the one to make decisions (HER CHOICE) is paramount.

I also believe abortions should be minimized and rare (prevention is preferable) but to force someone (against their will) to have a child (especially in cases of incest, rape and inability to care for the child) is the woman's choice and NOT some (religious organization, legislators' beliefs or judge's whim).

To legislate life begins at conception is fundamentally against what the Constitution and Bill of Rights has stood for and what the vast majority of what Americans believe.

The Taliban and Republican led State Legislators (and maybe even the Supreme Court) want to return women to the dark ages, with few rights, little education, no free choice and therefore destined to be second class citizens. I fervently hope our Nation gets back on track to be the liberal democracy that we want and need it to be and once again be the leading force in the free world. Misogyny in any form is unfair and wrong and shouldn't be the law of the land.

Per Wikipedia: Misogyny is hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women. It is a form of sexism that keeps women at a lower social status than men, thus maintaining the societal roles of patriarchy. Misogyny has been widely practiced for thousands of years. It is reflected in art, literature, human societal structure, historical events, mythology, philosophy, and religion worldwide.

An example of misogyny is violence against women, which includes domestic violence and, in its most extreme forms, misogynist terrorism and femicide. Misogyny also often operates through sexual harassment, coercion, and psychological techniques aimed at controlling women, and by legally or socially excluding women from full citizenship. In some cases, misogyny rewards women for accepting an inferior status.

Misogyny can be understood both as an attitude held by individuals, primarily by men, and as a widespread cultural custom or system. In feminist thought, misogyny also includes the rejection of feminine qualities. It holds in contempt institutions, work, hobbies, or habits associated with women. It rejects any aspects of men that are seen as feminine or unmanly. Misogyny may or may not include hate towards LGBT people, in the forms of homophobia and transmisogyny. Racism and other prejudices may reinforce and overlap with misogyny.

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## 1439) “A place to call home”

Essay by NormT 5/14/2022

Last Sunday was “Mother’s Day” and I sent out an essay called “Are you my Mother?” and shared some thoughts about what a Mother does and represents. In the paragraph below I tried to capture the essence as I saw it:

“Perhaps the question should be who provided the “mothering”, the caring and being protective and kind. Who was there to hold you or scold you; to nurture you and helped you grow and survive your childhood and who provided warmth and comfort when you felt threatened or scared? Who was there for you no-matter what and worried about you and felt relief when you finally came home safely? Who taught you how to behave and showed you the difference between “right and wrong”? Who could you go to when things got rough and you needed a shoulder to lean on or someone to hug and love you?”

There is something I would like to add, “provides a place to call home”

A little background; when I was 13 my mother passed away and my father and I moved to be closer to where he worked. A little over a year later my father also passed away. I was now 14, in a new school, a new neighborhood, no home, no money or skills and basically no clue on how to survive.

Fortunately, I did have an older brother, Harold (Harv) Tarowsky (11 years older) married to Renee Seidenberg, they had recently bought a new house in Yonkers N.Y. (thanks to the GI Bill) and were ready to start a family of their own.

They took me into their home, made me part of the family, I am part uncle and part brother to their 3 daughters (Paulie, Nina and Debra) and they gave me a place to call home and a loving environment. I cannot thank Renee enough for allowing me to be part her family when I needed it the most. She was not only a sister-in-law, but also a surrogate mother and savior for a kid that had nowhere to go.

Harv and Renee are both gone now; I think about them often and wonder what would have happened to me if they had not given me “a place to call home”?

## 140) “Are you my mother?” Or should the question be “Who is a mother?”

An essay by NormT 5/8/2022

One of my daughters’ favorite books was “Are you my mother” by P.D. Eastman, about a little bird that travels all over asking everyone (and everything) he meets “Are you my mother”.

But, in reality who and what is “a mother?” Technically it would be the woman who produces the egg cell that when fertilized by the father’s sperm cell and it kept multiplying and growing until it became you. Maybe someday these eggs will be harvested and fertilized by machines and mass produced. But I personally prefer the old-fashioned way.

As a man I cannot pretend to know or feel the experience of childbirth and the flood of hormones caused by pregnancy or giving birth or that overwhelming need to protect that tiny, innocent child now in your care.

I know my life and views changed when I first saw my baby girls and held them in my arms and felt those teeny tiny fingers grip mine and I knew I would do anything in my power to keep them safe and secure and I imagine that is only a small fraction of what a woman must feel.

Who is our mother? Most of the time it is the Woman who gave birth to us, although sometimes the woman who carried the egg was a surrogate (a vessel to nurture and grow the fetus) until birth. It could be someone who adopted you after birth or maybe even someone who stepped in and cared for you as you were growing up.

Perhaps the question should be who provided the “mothering”, the caring and being protective and kind. Who was there to hold you or scold you; to nurture you and helped you grow and survive your childhood and who provided warmth and comfort when you felt threatened or scared? Who was there for you no-matter what and worried about you and felt relief when you finally came home safely? Who taught you how to behave and showed you the difference between “right and wrong”? Who could you go to when things got rough and you needed a shoulder to lean on or someone to hug and love you?

On this Mother’s Day, reach-out to that special someone and (for many of us reach back in time and remember) those who gave us the “mothering”, the caring and the loving that helped us throughout our lives.

To all you “Mother-ers” out there; hope you have a happy “Mother’s Day”, just a little recognition fo those who do it 24/7 every day of the year.

## 141) “Who should pay?”

Opinion by NormT 4/2/2022

With the leaked Supreme Court decision to abandon the Roe v Wade decision made half a century ago and many States rushing to pass laws banning abortions; the burden and consequences (mental, physical and financial) will fall almost completely on the woman.

The current cost of raising a child is about \$ 15 thousand a year and over a 21-year period about \$ 300 thousand dollars, not to mention the loss of income if one cannot work. Someone needs to pay for this, not to mention the need for nurturing, caring and raising a child in this rapidly changing world.

I propose that since a woman will no longer have a choice to terminate her pregnancy (in many States) that she given the choice of keeping and raising the child (with the state providing \$ 15 thousand dollars a year) or if she decides she doesn't want the child it will be given to the father to care for and raise. After all the child is half his (50% of the genes) and he should be financially and emotionally responsible.

There would probably be a large percentage of these “fathers” who would be incapable or choose not to accept this responsibility so the State will need to provide a home and resources needed.

Since this situation was created by state Legislators and certain organizations who demanded “Roe” be overturned, I propose that the costs be shared 1/3 by the father, 1/3 by the state legislators who voted to ban abortions and 1/3 by the organizations that promoted the ban.

After all these children will need to be cared for and the mother was not allowed to make a decision about terminating her pregnancy, then It is only fair that those who were responsible for these costs be made to pay for them.

What is fair is fair; why should the woman have to pay for someone else's ideology

“NO TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION”.

P.S. The zealots next step will be to ban “birth control” (think about the population explosion in the orphanages) and then maybe even a ban on higher education for women; after all, we need to protect all those “wimp-a-fied” fragile white male egos. Talk about a “slippery slope!”

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## 142) “What ever happened to that old gang of mine?”

Essay by NormT 1/12/2022

In the late 1940's and early 1950's there was a great migration of families moving out of the big cities and into the less crowded surrounding suburban areas. This was spurred on by the economic boom following WW II and the G.I. bill that helped the returning veterans with both further education and mortgage assistance.

In New York City (where I grew up) it meant moving out to Long Island or lower Westchester County. My brother (11 years older than I) was one of those returning veterans and he moved to Yonkers (a city just north of NYC).

In 1952, I went to live with my brother (after my parents passed away) and would attend Roosevelt High School (class of 55). I was 14 and half way through my sophomore year, living in a new city, going to a new school where I had no friends or connections; it was scary.

I soon found that I was not alone; there were a number of other guys my age who had recently moved up from Brooklyn and the Bronx and were facing the same situation. We were the children or grandchildren of Jewish immigrants who had escaped persecution and yearning to follow the American dream.

10 of us got together and formed a club (group) we called “The Stags” (I don't remember how we came up with that name). We had parties, played softball and basketball against other clubs and basically hung out with each other and formed a lifelong friendship.

Almost all of us attended classes in advanced math (Advanced Algebra and calculus) taught by Dr. Luther Van Anden (a retired math professor who had taught mathematics at CCNY (City College of NY)). He was tough, drove us hard, made us think and we acquired a love of science, problem solving, logical reasoning and to search for truth. I consider him the best teacher I ever had and a driving force in our future lives.

So, what happened to this old gang of mine?

Barry Shabel went to MIT (we lost touch, no one seems to know where he is and what he did); Bob Francis joined the Air force, spent some time in Silicon Valley in the 60's, then moved back to NY, he died of a heart attack in his early forties.

What about the other 8?

- 1) Joel (Joe) Dinhoff became a pharmacist and a successful small business owner, he lived in New England and after retiring moved to Colorado to be close to his children. He passed away a few years ago.
- 2) Ernie Levine received a Ph.D. (Cal Berkley) in Electrical Engineering, taught and became a Dean of Engineering and was a member of the NY State commission on excellence in High tech. I believe he lives in NY.
- 3) Alan Pifko (class of 56) received a Ph.D. from NYU, in Aeronautical Engineering and worked in the defense Industry (Grumman Aircraft and then consulting after retirement), he sang in a choral group for over 40 years, performing at Carnegie Hall numerous times; he lives on Long Island (NY).
- 4) Barry Evans received a degree in Chemical Engineering and an LLB (Law) from Cornell University and practiced law in NYC (specializing in Patent Law) and was a partner in his firm, he now lives in Dutchess County NY and has a home in Maine.
- 5) Larry Roben received a BSEE from Clarkson and a MSEE from Stanford University; worked at Stanford Research Institute and held numerous management positions at Hewlett Packard Company in Silicon Valley, he now lives in San Jose, CA.
- 6) Norm Tarowsky got a BS in Engineering Physics (NYU), an MBA from Santa Clara University; served in the Army in Europe for three years, worked for Fairchild Semiconductor and Hewlett Packard; held high level management positions and ran overseas operations in Singapore, Malaysia and England, he now lives in Roseville CA (near Sacramento).
- 7) Stu Levin (class of 54) has Business degrees from NYU and worked in publishing and communications and I believe he was an editor; he now lives in Taos, New Mexico.
- 8) Stu Helfand attended New Paltz State College (NY), served in the Air Force (military intelligence) has been a small business owner and still runs a poultry business in the Sacramento, CA area.

Not bad for a bunch of kids from a small group of guys who called themselves “The Stags” some 67 years ago: 2 Ph.D.’s, 2 Masters degrees, a Lawyer, a Pharmacist, an Editor and a small business owner. Thank you Dr. Van Anden!

## 143) “Who am I an essay?”

*Essay by NormT 10/23/2023*

The horrific events on Oct 7th, when Hamas attacked and slaughtered over 1400 innocent people in Israel just because they were Jews was another example of historic “antisemitism” and a continuation of what the Nazi’s did in WWII, the pogroms in eastern Europe before that and the Spanish Inquisition before that and all throughout our history.

The story is not new, there was a small group of people with roots going back over 4000 years who created a religious movement that believed in a single “Deity” at a time when almost all other groups worshipped multiple gods; they became “the others” and have been targets of violence, hatred, and exile ever since.

As of 2023, the world's Jewish population was estimated at 16.1 million (about 13 million live in Israel and the U.S.), and is just 0.2% of the 8 billion worldwide population. This is hardly a threat to the other major established Religions or ethnic groups and is one of the few who do not actively proselytize to gain adherents.

Over the millennia the question of “who is a Jew” has been discussed, debated, studied, and argued over by both Jews and non-Jews alike and I seriously doubt that there has been any agreed upon definition.

In the past I had been asked “who are you?”; and I answer “Norm Tarowsky”; no, no they said, I mean “What are you?” and I answer “I am: a human being, a husband, a father, a son, a grandson, a brother, an uncle, a nephew, a cousin, an engineer, a manager, a writer, an American, a veteran, a Californian, a believer in facts and truth and open-mindedness and logical reasoning”. I don’t think that answered their question either. Then they said “what religion are you?” and I answer, “I am Jewish”.

I am Jewish because of my background (according to 23 and me) is 98% Ashkenazy (Eastern European Jewish heritage). My mother and Father came to America in 1922 as teens along with their families, I lost 2 uncles and their entire families in the Holocaust; I grew up in Brooklyn in primarily Jewish neighborhoods and was close to my many aunts and Uncles and Cousins and my grandmother (who lived with us and spoke only Yiddish, which was my first language).



I did not study the Torah or Talmud but am familiar with our history (as a people) and the essence of the biblical teachings and stories but I am not what people call a “practicing Jew”; I have not been to Temple (Schul) in many years as I believe most organized religions have become businesses rather than teachers of humanity and moral values of brotherhood and equality.

So, I guess if someone now asks “who are you” I will have to answer “Norm Tarowsky an American Jew and proud of it!”

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## 144) “What about”-ism

*Essay by NormT 10/14/2023*

It seems like whenever someone is asked about a sensitive or controversial issue they respond with “What about X” (you fill in the X).; It is most likely Hunter Bidens laptop or the open border or the Palestinians or any other “gotcha” item they remember to deflect or distract and to change the subject.

In politics we rarely hear anyone answer a question (even if it requires a simple yes or no response) and we get some talking point or pre-programmed answer. Even when the question is legitimate and needs answering.

The practice of “what about such and such drives me bonkers and I believe most people would like to hear that person’s real feelings about the subject and get to the heart of the matter.

It has been a week since Hamas terrorists crossed the border from Gaza into Israel and slaughtered over 1400 innocent civilians in numerous towns and a music festival. Recently, several groups in schools and universities held rallies and hung banners in support of Hamas. I have a few questions I would like to ask them.

Before you start asking “what about” here is my answer. I support a Homeland for the Palestinian people; Israel should follow a two State solution with a government that are responsive to the needs of their citizens and accept the existence of the other. I believe the Israeli settlements in the West Bank should be removed or turned over. Negotiations should resume and build on previous agreements.

I also believe Netanyahu and his far right (Religious) partners are harmful to the Israeli Nation and the future of a Jewish Homeland and should be replaced. I believe no nation or group should be allowed to call for the extermination or elimination of any other legitimate (non-terrorist) group or race or religion. We are all human beings and deserve to be treated as such.

Now I have some questions for them:

1) Do you support terrorist organizations (like ISIS or Hamas or Hezbollah or other groups like the KKK, the Neo-Nazi’s or white supremacists)?

2) Do you support or agree with or condone what Hamas did to the babies, children, teen agers, mothers, fathers and grandparents in Israel, the killing, torturing, beheading, raping, burning people alive, and taking hostages as human shields.? The killing of children in front of their parents and parents in front of their children and broadcasting these monstrous actions while laughing in glee and joy. Hunting down and killing in cold blood almost 300 young adults at a peace and freedom music festival?

If they answered YES to either question then there is no further reason to keep the conversation going or have further discussions, I believe you have forfeited your rights as a member of humanity and society. You made your bed and must learn to sleep in it with your soul brothers the Nazis and may you all burn in hell for your complicity.

If you answered "NO" then we can continue our discussion to see how we can make this a better world. A place where Arabs and Jews, Christians and Muslims and Jews can live side by side in peace and prosperity and free of fear. I hope this day will eventually come but for now there are dark days ahead.

## 145) “Agents of Chaos”

*Opinion by NormT 10/9/2023*

America and western liberal democracies are under attack by a host of varied enemies. The most obvious ones are the nation states of Russia, North Korea and Iran, whose authoritarian leaders view us a threat to their total control and power. Putin, Kim Jong Un and the Ayatollahs use America as “the source of all evil” (the ultimate boogeyman and scapegoat) to scare their populace into a nationalistic fervor and of course to stay in power.

China is in a separate category since they see us as a threat (to their power structure) but still need us as a trading partner to support their economic growth and not necessarily destroyed (at least in the short term) and see us as a competitor who will eventually be overtaken. They know time is their friend and have learned patience to be a great asset.

There are also several ideological terrorist groups who want us destroyed because they see us (liberal democracy) as a competitor for the heart, soul, and minds of those who they see as followers. Groups like ISIS, Hamas, Hezbollah, as well as the Neo-Nazi's, the KKK, White Nationalists & Supremacists and now Trump and his MAGA cult. They view liberal democracies as weak, foolish intellectuals and cultural elites controlled by Israel, Blacks, Hispanics, Women and George Soros.

What these all have in common is a hatred of open mindedness, truth, facts, logical reasoning, the free dissemination of ideas and information and a structure based on free and fair elections and the protection of the rights of minorities. They despise our Constitution and organizations that protect our freedoms, health, and safety. They love authoritarian strongmen and leaders who are willing to be irrational, cruel, and even outright demonic.

Their tactics are meant to tear down existing social and governmental infrastructure, laws, norms and to create absolute chaos. Their tools are formulating confusion, spreading conspiracy theories, gaslighting, blatantly lying, using racial and ethnic dog whistles, attacking innocent public servants, and using foreign government misinformation and spy services and social media bots to spread the hatred.

Their objective is forcing the breakdown of existing societal norms and leading to the takeover of the government. This is how most dictators gain control. This is what Steve Bannan and those like him want to see happen in America; the collapse of our system followed by chaos and anarchy followed by an authoritarian takeover of our country.

I don't believe the majority of Americans want this for our future; but it might be if we don't get organized, spread the word about this movement and get out the vote in 2024. Our future depends on it!

## **146) “Names have meanings and should be used as such”**

*Essay by NormT 10/5/23*

All too often we hear people calling their adversaries names that are supposed to elicit images connecting them to some sort of historical movement or person. This can be negative or positive (although mostly negative) and allows them to link that person to the named group without detailing the specifics or reasons that apply. This is a shorthand way to intimate that person has the major traits and ideology of that group.

This may be effective and useful tool but what if the “name” is used or understood incorrectly? I am concerned that names like “Communist, Socialist, Fascist, Capitalist, Authoritarian and Democratic are not well understood and often misused.

A Little “civics 101” may be in order. We can think of the country divided into two distinct sectors i.e. the public and the private.

The “public sector” refers to “all of government” (Federal, State, County, City and all departments and agencies). The Private sector is all non-governmental economic activity (business and industry).

Who controls these sectors and how they operate are put into groups like:

- 1) Communism combines an authoritarian form of Government rule combined with a Socialist economic system.
- 2) Fascism combines an authoritarian form of government rule combined with a Capitalistic economic system.
- 3) Western or liberal Democracy is a democracy form of government and a capitalist private sector.
- 4) Socialism is based on having the government (public sector) control the private sector economy (business and industry)
- 5) Capitalism is having the private sector control business and industry with little Government control (other than regulatory and legal concerns).
- 6) Authoritarian form of government is when an individual or small group controls all the governmental functions and the population at large is not involved in choosing the leaders or can change the leadership.

7) Democracy is when the people (citizens) have both the ability to choose their leaders (through free and fair elections) and be able to change their leaders through free and fair elections.

Our American “Democracy” is basically a democratic form of government (Public sector) and a mostly capitalistic private sector. It has some flaws and although not as efficient as an authoritarian form but has been more effective over the long run and the most successful, I might add.

“fascism” is an extreme right-wing political system or philosophy with a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial (often charismatic) leader. Forcible suppression of all opposition, gains complete control of the media and uses force, propaganda, fear and intimidation and creates false realities to stay in power.

It aggressively promotes hyper nationalism and racial superiority, uses idolatry, demagoguery, violence, and cruelty. It eliminates any dissent with absolute control of the media and press. The goal of any autocracy is to remain in power at any cost and a willingness to do whatever it takes to make it happen.

Some notable historical examples are:

- Stalin was a communist
- Mussolini was a fascist
- Hitler was a fascist
- Putin is a fascist
- Almost All U.S. Presidents to date have supported Liberal Democracy.
- Trump, by everything he has said and done, and what he now says he will do; is without a doubt a FASCIST!

To save our Democracy we must recognize this “fascistic domestic threat” and then make sure it never gets into power. Once an authoritarian regime takes over, there will never be another free and fair election, a free press, or protections for the rights of minorities, women, people of color or those whose religious beliefs may differ from those in power. By now, it should be perfectly clear who is the threat and do what needs to be done!

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## 147) “The tyranny of extremism”

*Opinion by NormT 9/30/2023*

America was created to be a nation free from the rule of authoritarian Royalty and become a nation “of the people, by the people and for the people”! It was founded by people who believed in compromise, moderation, and common sense. The foundation was the Constitution, the rule of Law and a government structured around checks and balances and the democratic principle of majority rule and the protection of the rights of the minority.

As a nation we grew from a tiny outpost in the “new world” to be a mighty world power (admired, envied, reviled and feared). We also had several major negatives in our history (e.g., how we treated native Americans, slavery and Jim Crow, treatment of new immigrants the internment camps for Japanese Americans during WWII).

I believe the greatness of our Country was the ability to face reality, recognize our faults, come together, and come up with a solution to make things better. Like any compromise it may not be perfect but it is going in the right direction.

In order to do this, it needs a common set of facts, a willingness to compromise, a realistic view of what can be done, a common goal and understanding of what America stands for!

All this falls apart if there is a small (very powerful) minority who is willing to burn the house down, destroy all the norms and uses “chaos” and “anarchy” to destroy the system unless they get their way. Like a bunch of whiney spoiled brats, they insist on their rules, their outcome and screw everyone else.

When this is institutionalized and this tyranny of an extremist minority gain the power and ability to spread their venom and shut our nation down, causing serious harm to our citizens and our standing in the world as the saying goes “Houston, we have a big problem”.



## 148) “It’s all about choices”

*Ramblings NormT 9/25/2023*

- 1) Don’t go to a proctologist for dental work (or vice versa).
- 2) If you are going in the wrong direction, going faster won’t help.
- 3) If dropping buttered toast always lands buttered side down, don’t drop the toast.
- 4) Talking louder to someone who is blind won’t make them see any better.
- 5) Yelling at the TV or Computer may make you feel better and is much better than throwing things at them.
- 6) Speed limits and stop signs are there for a reason.
- 7) Snoring is a mans way of letting you know he is still breathing.
- 8) If a pound of coffee is now 10 ounces, they should make scales show your weight in coffee pounds.
- 9) How are you supposed to look up the correct spelling in the dictionary if you don’t know how to spell it?
- 10) If you believe everyone is against you, there probably is a good reason.
- 11) Does the dentist really expect you to answer when you have suction tubes and sharp instruments in your mouth?
- 12) Einstein was wrong about time being constant, when I was young it passed much slower and now that I am old it seems to be flying bye (for you physicists out there, I know Albert didn’t say it was a constant).
- 13) Why aren’t hot dogs and hot dog buns packaged in equal numbers?
- 14) My memory isn’t bad, my ability to recall what I remember is.
- 15) Something must have happened around 1980 that allowed people with little or no talent to become celebrities and big stars; I used to think a singer should be able to carry a tune and have a decent voice.

The world today seems topsy turvy (just showing my age) but it seems like a whole lot of people seem to want to be told how to live, what to believe and think and how to behave and the worst part it is, it is generally against their own best interest. In the olden days if something made you worse off you wouldn’t do it.

## 149) “Banning books is not about books”

Opinion by NormT 9/23/2023

As rape is not a crime of sex or passion but one of power; the perpetrator is showing their ability to force their will on someone else. There is a corollary in this to both the issues of preventing abortions and the banning of books.

Behind the mask of the pro-life movement is the threat to male dominance (misogyny) and in reaction to the gains in woman’s rights and their struggle for equality that we have seen over the past century.

By allowing male dominated legislatures and courts to control a woman’s ability to make decisions about her own body, she is deprived of power and subjugated to their will. You know, “keep’em barefoot, pregnant, in the kitchen and bedroom” and god forbid, not the boardroom. Sounds a lot like being raped.

In the case of banning books to prevent someone from being upset by the content, this is ridiculous; they can go online and read the same books or even worse go on social media sites and get pornography and lunatic fringe conspiracy theories that make the books being banned seem like pre-school coloring books.

The purpose of the book banning is to show that they have the power to control “what” the kids read in school and therefore lay the groundwork to take over what is taught and by whom. This is a fascist power grab to control the narrative and spread whatever propaganda they want to further their objectives. The growth of fascism starts with an uneducated population controlled by unscrupulous leaders.

So, my friends; it appears to me that rape, antiabortion rhetoric, and book banning are all about power, baby; who has it and who doesn’t.

## **150) “The coldest I have ever been”**

Ramblings by NormT 9/20/2023

Please bear with me, I am going to jump around a little but promise to get back to the title. A few days ago, I had a long telephone conversation with an old Army buddy (yes, I said phone, not e-mail or text). His name is Ray; but for some inexplicable reason he was called “Mick” and once you get a “nickname” it sticks.

He lives in the Boston area and has that Bostonian accent and tough-as-nails attitude. I haven’t seen him since his wedding some 62 years ago but we have stayed in contact all this time.

We were stationed in Wiesbaden, Germany (late 1958 through 1960) as members of the 193rd Ordnance Detachment (a small 30-person unit that provided electronics tech support for 6 Nike Ajax & Hercules missile sites run by the artillery. If they had a problem they couldn’t repair (with their Radars or Computers) we were sent to the site and stayed until the problem was fixed.

This was during the “Cold War” and we were about 100 miles from the East German border and a mere 15-minute flight time for their MIGs; it was critical that we kept those sites operational as these Nike’s were the first line of defense and we were on call 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

I remember one winter evening we got a call around midnight from one of the sites; I jumped in the  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton truck (it already had most of the parts and equipment) and headed out to the site. It was frosty, about 6 inches of snow on the ground and the Radar antenna was located on a hill and the wind was blowing hard.

It was really, really cold that night. The Acquisition radar unit was housed in a 4 foot diameter cylindrical structure that contained the electronics and was topped by a large

rotating antenna. we had to stand on the outside and reach into the unit to troubleshoot, isolate the problem, remove the bad part, and replace it with a new one. It took about 5 hours in that freezing cold until we were able to get the system working again. I could hardly feel my hands and the wind was blowing the freezing fog so it felt like getting pelted with tiny piercing icicles. I have never been so cold in my life. We finally fixed the problem and turned the site back to the Artillery officer in charge.

I don't know what the temperature was that night and just took for granted that this part of Germany got very cold. After my phone conversation with Mick, I looked up the latitude of Wiesbaden (50.1degree North) and the checked to see where that would fall in the U.S. and guess what; it is about 70 miles north of the border between North Dakota and Canada (49 degrees N) and about the same as Winnipeg, Canada. No wonder it was so F\*\*ing cold and it only took me 64 years to figure it out. I guess some people are just slow learners!

By the way, for the youngsters out there, we were NOT issued muskets nor was general Washington in charge.

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## 151) “Are you happy?”

Essay by NormT 9/18/2023

A few days ago, I heard that Oprah and a Harvard professor were co-writing a book on “happiness” and what people could do to achieve it. I didn’t hear the answer (guess I will have to buy the book to find out). They began by saying what it was not, they contend that money, power, celebrity, and good looks are not the answer.

Well, that must mean I have a chance (0 of 4) is a good start. I remember eminent psychologist Abraham Maslow said in his book about the hierarchy of needs. He said that before we can strive to reach higher levels of satisfaction, we must first satisfy our most basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, security); so, given those needs are met, we can go beyond and search for happiness.

While we can enjoy the success and accomplishments of others (family, friends, or performers) I don’t believe that counts as personal happiness and is quite often temporary or short term in nature.

For those involved in a career being happy at work really depends on the workplace environment and “what you are doing” and how much control you have. In this essay, I am focusing on our retirement years.

I contend that we must first have some kind of goal or objective, something that we want to achieve or do (not something somebody else thinks we should want or would be best for us); it needs to be ours.

Another caveat is the goal must not be too easy (we would lose interest if the bar was too low; or too difficult or unachievable and therefore make it frustrating and we would lose interest and give up).

The goal you choose can be almost anything you find interesting or challenging, building something, arranging flowers, planting a garden, learning a new language, or to play an instrument, or travel to someplace you always wanted to see, or playing pickle ball, or write a poem, an essay, or a book. It is after all, something you want to do.

But having a goal is only the first step in the process, the most important part is you need to take action, strive to achieve that goal. Getting involved in all the intricacies, to work at it, to be deeply involved in the activity. It needs to be something you have to focus on, to be deeply involved in getting it done, be able to see the results of your labor and effort.

Happiness is being involved, in focusing your attention, in seeing progress and making gains, solving problems, and making progress. Sometimes you may not reach the original goal and sometime you may exceed your expectations. There is great satisfaction in seeing progress, knowing that you have worked hard to make it happen.

It is the combination of having a purpose and striving to achieve it, that makes us happy; we get satisfaction in seeing the results of our labor and efforts and allows us to say "I did it".

I believe that if we actively strive to reach an objective of your own choosing it will go a long way to make you happy. No one is constantly or always happy (if they are, I suspect something else is going on).

What do you think?

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## 152) “A very unlikely couple”

Essay by NormT 9/11/23

On our anniversary; Thanks to everyone who wished us a Happy Anniversary and our daughters Natalie and Anne for posting a picture of some random old couple (I hardly recognized them). It is always gratifying to hear from old friends and Family on our special day.

Norm & Dorothy Tarowsky

Below is an essay on our “origin story” you might enjoy.

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fit into my army duffel bag) and got on a plane heading to San Diego to start a new phase of my life.

I arrived in sunny California with a blank slate, the future was completely open and I had a good job, a good education, my experience in the Army and lots of confidence that whatever came my way I could handle it (perhaps a bravado that pushed credibility). My future was whatever I could make of it. I was 25, single and ready to face a new stage of my life. I imagine most if not all of you reading this had some similar story about that transition from one phase of life into a big, scary unknown future. A transition from a known safe place to a big unknown one; it is both exciting and very scary at the same time.

Fast forward a couple of years; life was good, lots of friends, plenty of partying and I finally had some money in my pocket, I bought my first new car, I felt established in my career but something was missing.

I was at a party at a friend's house and saw this good-looking woman standing across the room (I had not seen her before) and walked over to say hello and introduced myself, we spoke for a while and contrary to the movies; no bolt of lightning, clap of thunder, or some grand symphonic music reaching a crescendo, she didn't fall into my arms and we headed for the sunset. It turned out she lived in the same apartment complex and had recently moved in. I said maybe we could get together some time. I doubted if she even remembered that first meeting but I did.

Perhaps it's that old saying that "opposites attract"; we were very different: she was Catholic, I was Jewish; she grew up in a small town in Wisconsin and I in New York City (there were more people living on one city block of apartment buildings), than lived in her town), she worked in a Doctors office and I was a scientist working in Aerospace, she had recently moved from Wisconsin and I had served in the military, lived and traveled around Europe. Come to think about it we had very little in common.

So of course, I asked her out on a date, and that turned into a lot of other dates. I soon realized she was a strong, intelligent, independent person with a good sense of humor (at least she laughed at my jokes) and somehow those differences in our backgrounds didn't seem that big a deal; I guess I just fell in love with her.

In early 1965, she told me she was moving back to Wisconsin and then drove off into the sunset, leaving me in a quandary, what to do? I had not been thinking about marriage, but I was 27 and really missed her; and she was everything I could ask for; so, a few months later I proposed on the phone and yes, she accepted. I jumped on a plane and flew to Wisconsin and asked her father and mother for her hand in marriage (boy, does this sound old fashioned) and on September 11th 1965 we were married.

It has been 58 great years (of course like any marriage there were ups and downs) and some difficult times) but overall, we had a wonderful life together, lived in numerous locations (including Singapore and London) and visited places one could only dream about. We had and have good friends and family, two marvelous daughters, and if I had a chance to change anything my answer is "I would do it all over again". I have lived in the best of times, the best of places and travelled through life with a partner in everything we did, and we did it together. What more could one ask for?

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## 153) “I miss reading”

*Essay by NormT 9/2/23*

About 15 years ago I lost my detailed vision (due to Macular Degeneration) and although I still have peripheral vision it is not sharp and the central area is basically missing. I can no longer drive, recognize people (see their faces), pick up on the non-verbal signals (the shrug or raised eyebrow) or even read a book, I guess I have become theoretically illiterate.

I have tools that allow my computer to “read” to me; I listen to shows on TV but have discovered “hearing” something is very different than “seeing or reading” something. The brain must process auditory signals differently than visual stimuli; something is missing and I am not quite sure what it is.

There is something special about reading words on a page (visualizing what they mean and putting them in context), then constantly updating the meaning, based on the next word. I think TV, movies and videos are impacting our ability to visualize and use our imagination; they are doing it for us.

What I am saying is “I really miss being able to read books”, I loved reading and it gave me great pleasure to sit down with a good book, feel the weight in my hands, turn the pages, earmark the paperbacks by folding over a corner to keep my place and go back and re-read sections if I wanted.

I once heard an author say the key to writing is to write about things you know, if you do that, people will recognize your truth and accept your contribution. They will be with you on the journey rather than resist your premise.

When I was young; I read a lot of fantasy and science fiction (I went into space before NASA and Star Wars. They stimulated my imagination, opened my mind to accept new things, opened the boundaries of what could be. That just whet my appetite and set me on a path to years of enjoying good authors and the places they took me.

One of my favorite authors is James Michener who spent years researching his locations and stories, he took you on a detailed journey over time to far away places, events and characters who were believable and human.

When he wrote about a place, he provided complete backgrounds, he took the time to develop the physical structure and historical significance of where it all happened.

When you finished his books, you better understood the world around us and knew the what and why it was about. I thought “The Source” was one of the best books I ever read.

If he was a painter he would be like Constable or Bierstadt, painting a story on a huge canvas with great distances and towns and people dotted inside bucolic scenery. Telling a story over vast distances and time. Reading his books were like having a huge Italian family dinner with course after course of wonderful food and just when you thought it was over, another delicious plate arrives.

My next favorite is John Steinbeck; he used his words to paint details in your mind, creating scenes of places and characters that pulled you into the story and their lives. It is as if you were seated in the audience of a Shakespearian drama. I believe his “East of Eden” is pure genius and a must read classic.

I liken him to the Dutch Masters (Rembrandt or Van Dyck), the details put you right in the picture and the story, the depth of his characters is multi-faceted and penetrating. Like a fine French wine and a gourmet dinner with exquisite sauces topped off with a tray of pungent cheeses. Like this fine meal, you don’t want these novels to end, one more chapter please.

Next, I pay homage to those writers who use the language so beautifully and the players so real you feel you are inside the story; I speak of Ernest Hemmingway and Barbara Kingsolver. The way the phrases are structured you want to savor them over and over, and you find yourself inside the story in lock step with those characters you identify with.

This is more like an Impressionist painting by Monet or Renoir, with scenes and colors that imply something yet leave it to your imagination. They tease and leave you wanting more, like a “crème Brulee”; you never seem to be able to get enough.

What they all have in common is that they “know” their subject, they are masters of the use of language to convey thoughts, feelings and settings and they truly understand human nature with all its frailty, nuances, and strengths.

Like a spider luring the fly, they draw us into their web and we willingly become part of the story. How I wish I could once again, hold those treasures in my hand and read the great works, I never quite got around to.

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## 154) “We humans are a spunky lot”

Essay by NormT 9/1/23

For those who excessively worry about our current problems

When most of us think about history, we may go back to the ancient Greeks or Romans or maybe Egyptian Pharaohs or biblical times but we human types have been around a whole lot longer.

The Earth's human population is estimated to be about 8 billion; and if we go back in time, it is estimated that the total of all humans who ever lived is about 120 billion. You could say we are a very resilient and successful species.

But we also know that extinctions of species is an ongoing and accelerating phenomena. Some recent studies estimate there are about eight million species on Earth and that at least 15,000 are threatened with extinction.

We are aware of Five major “Mass Extinctions” in the past. Paleontologists know about these extinctions from remains of organisms with durable skeletons that fossilized.

1. End of the Cretaceous (66 million years ago): Extinction of many species in both marine and terrestrial habitats including pterosaurs, mosasaurs and other marine reptiles, many insects, and all non-Avian dinosaurs. The scientific consensus is that this mass extinction was caused by environmental consequences from the impact of a large asteroid hitting Earth in the vicinity of what is now Mexico.
2. Late Triassic (199 million years ago): Extinction of many marine sponges, gastropods, bivalves, cephalopods, brachiopods, as well as some terrestrial insects and vertebrates. The extinction coincides with massive volcanic eruptions along the margins of what is now the Atlantic Ocean.
3. End Permian (252 million years ago): Earth's largest extinction event, decimating most marine species such as all trilobites, plus insects and other terrestrial animals. Most scientific evidence suggests the causes were global warming and atmospheric changes associated with huge volcanic eruptions in what is now Siberia.
4. Late Devonian (378 million years ago): Extinction of many marine species, including corals, brachiopods, and single-celled foraminiferans, from causes that are not well understood yet.

5. Late Ordovician (447 million years ago): Extinction of marine organisms such as some bryozoans, reef-building brachiopods, trilobites, graptolites, and conodonts as a result of global cooling, glaciation, and lower sea levels.

Smithsonian Paleobiologists continue to study the role that past extinctions had on plants, animals, and other species. Dr. Gene Hunt studies how the relatedness and diversity of organisms relates to what happens to them in an extinction event. Dr. Richard Bambach conducts research on variation in marine biodiversity in relation to different extinction events. By studying the evolution and extinction of tiny organisms called foraminifera, Dr. Brian Huber assesses how Earth's conditions have changed over time.

A recent article shows just how close we humanoids came to being a part of the extinction process. See the following article about a population collapse that almost wiped out our human ancestors.

Genomics analysis indicates that at least 800,000 years ago breeding individuals sank to as few as 1,300 By Hannah Devlin Science correspondent

Early human ancestors came close to eradication in a severe evolutionary bottleneck between 800,000 and 900,000 years ago, according to scientists.

A genomics analysis of more than 3,000 living people suggested that our ancestors' total population plummeted to about 1,280 breeding individuals for about 117,000 years. Scientists believe that an extreme climate event could have led to the bottleneck that came close to wiping out our ancestral line.

"The numbers that emerge from our study correspond to those of species that are currently at risk of extinction," said Prof Giorgio Manzi, an anthropologist at Sapienza University of Rome and a senior author of the research.

However, Manzi and his colleagues believe that the existential pressures of the bottleneck could have triggered the emergence of a new species, *Homo heidelbergensis*, which some believe is the shared ancestor of modern humans and our cousins, the Neanderthals and Denisovans. *Homo sapiens* are thought to have emerged about 300,000 years ago.

"It was lucky [that we survived], but ... we know from evolutionary biology that the emergence of a new species can happen in small, isolated populations," said Manzi.

Prof Chris Stringer, the head of human origins at the Natural History Museum in London, who was not involved in the research, said: "It's an extraordinary length of time. It's remarkable that

we did get through at all. For a population of that size, you just need one bad climate event, an epidemic, a volcanic eruption and you're gone."

The decline appears to coincide with significant changes in global climate that turned glaciations into long-term events, a decrease in sea surface temperatures, and a possible long period of drought in Africa and Eurasia. The team behind the work said the time window also coincides with a relatively empty period on the fossil record.

"We know that between about 900,000 and 600,000 years ago, the fossil record in Africa is very scarce, if not almost absent, while both before and after we have a greater number of fossil evidence," said Manzi. "The same can be said for Eurasia: for example, in Europe we have a species known as *Homo antecessor* around 800,000 years ago and then nothing for about 200,000 years."

However, Stringer said there was not convincing evidence for a global "blank" in the fossil record of early humans, raising the possibility that whatever caused the bottleneck was a more local phenomenon. "Maybe this bottleneck population was stuck in some area of Africa surrounded by desert," he said.

The paper, published in the journal *Science*, analysed genomic sequences from 3,154 people alive today, from 10 African and 40 non-African populations. By looking at the different versions of genes across a population, it is possible to roughly date when specific genes first emerged – the more time that has elapsed, the more chance for different variants of a gene to crop up. By estimating the frequency with which genes have emerged over time, scientists can gain insights into how ancestral populations grew and shrank over time.

The analysis found evidence for the bottleneck in all the African populations, but only a weak signal of the event was detected in the 40 non-African populations. This is probably due to the ancestors of those of non-African heritage having in effect undergone a more recent population bottleneck during the out-of-Africa migration, which would be expected to mask the earlier event.

The timing roughly coincides with when the last shared ancestor with Neanderthals and another ancient human species, the Denisovans, are believed to have roamed the Earth.

## 155) “When memories collide with disasters”

*Essay by NormT 8/31/2023*

There are times when we see horrible events unfolding in places, we have little or no connection with. It may be a natural disaster (earthquakes, tornados, floods, wild fires etc.) or a mass shooting or a famine or a war and we feel “bad” about what is happening to those poor people being affected.

We might donate some money or even get involved in helping but in most cases, it doesn't stay on our “radar” and our attention gets distracted by the next shiny object or latest horrific event. These seem to come more and more frequently and shout out, “hey look at me” see how awful I am.

To a degree, I blame those in the media who, for ratings, focus on the “worst” images and events to get and keep our attention, to keep the adrenaline and cortisol flowing. I guess to them it is a business decision and they are fighting for ratings and clicks.

Sometimes these events occur in places we know well, have lived, or visited, or know people who are “near” the event or who might be impacted by it. This is now personal and as they say “we have skin in the game”. We are concerned and worry about their safety and wellbeing.

Then there are times, when the event triggers something in us and memories come flooding back and we are there again in those places we remember so fondly. They are part of our past and now they may no longer exist (burned to the ground or washed away., as though they were never there.

When I saw “Notre Dame”, That magnificent cathedral engulfed in flames, I felt like crying. A place that stood for almost 800 years. I had visited often, not for religious reasons but for its sheer beauty and place in history. Those magnificent stained-glass windows, the flying buttresses (that held the walls in place) and the sound of the organ and countless choirs singing, they may be gone forever.

Fortunately, the French Government has made monumental efforts to restore it to its original form and it looks like they will make it happen.

Last week I saw pictures of Lahaina (on Maui) being devastated by a wild fire; it looked like everything was reduced to ashes; with a huge toll of deaths and thousands left homeless. I got that sick feeling in the pit of my stomach, so much loss of life and destruction. It is hard to

imagine what they were going through! Almost the entire town is gone, homes, stores (their livelihood) and all that history of the Hawaiian people.

Hawaii is a truly special place, the sunsets and natural beauty are unforgettable and it is one of the few places on earth that provides almost instantaneous stress reduction and relaxation; from the moment the plane doors open and that warm moist air infused with the heavenly aroma of plumeria wafts in, my jaw unclenches, my neck and shoulders relax and time slows down. The people are friendly, happy and enjoy life and fun.

Hopefully Lahaina will be rebuilt, it may take longer than we would like. No matter what happens, those places will stay etched in my memory. I can close my eyes, relax, and travel back in time to enjoy them again and again, and that can't be taken away.

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## 156) “That’s my favorite!”

Essay by NormT 8/23/2023

When I sat down to write, I started to think about my favorite places and thought about San Francisco in the 80’s and San Diego in the 60’s and Singapore in the 70’s and it reminded me of a wonderful human being and most loving person I knew. Not the places but the meaning of favorite.

A little background is necessary. After we moved up from San Diego to the Bay Area, we met a couple who became one of our best friends; we played bridge and drank wine and laughed and enjoyed watching our young families growing up.

We were young, didn’t have a lot of money and with young children those evenings together were a relief from the stress of work and parenting; most of you probably had similar experiences. Our children grew up together like siblings and if they weren’t playing in our house, it most likely was theirs.

They had a son named Brian, one of the kindest most loving human beings you will ever meet. When Brian came over to our house whatever toy he was playing with or food he ate, or in fact everything he did he would say “that’s my favorite”, he loved everything and everything loved him.

Whenever I hear the word “favorite” I can’t help but think about Brian and the most important lesson he taught me. Whatever you do or wherever you are, make that your favorite! Learn to accept what life throws at you. We may not be able to control events around us but we can control how we look at them.

This doesn’t mean we need to accept the status quo or not try to make things better but we can also enjoy where we are now; kind of like stop to smell the roses occasionally and then start digging.

Brian passed away a few years ago, he lived into his 50’s quite a long life for someone with Down Syndrome; he lit up the room whenever he entered and let you know everything was absolutely his most favorite. No need to choose, make the best of everything and enjoy life, moment by moment.

He was right, make where you are your favorite place, whatever you eat your favorite food and whoever you are with your favorite friends. What a great philosopher he turned out to be.

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## 157) “Is it a CULT?”

by NormT 8/2220/23

Many people have compared the Trump MAGA movement to a political personality cult. So, just what is a cult and what does it look like? Essentially, a cult is a group of people who fanatically identify with, passionately believe in and owe total allegiance to a person or belief system.

I took the liberty to browse the internet (numerous sites) to get a more detailed understanding of what a cult is and what it looks like, this is what I found:

“So, what” is a CULT is and how they operate? Often, they may engage in a number of dangerous practices harming themselves and those around them. A cult is an organized group whose purpose is to dominate cult members through psychological manipulation and pressure strategies and to satisfy he needs of the cult leader.

A “cult of personality” Is a cult headed by an extremely charismatic personality, who demands complete loyalty and fealty and often becomes indistinguishable from the cult itself, a type of personality cult which is based on a political leader and designed to enforce their power, magnify their ideology, and legitimize the rule of the government associated with them.

A group that idealizes a leader and subscribes to common political, social, religious, or philosophical beliefs. Personality cults typically have a few common traits, such as an omnipotent leader, super-patriotism, mass demonstrations, and distortions of the truth often using minority groups as scapegoats and dangerous threats to the cult members.

A “Cult of personality” is when the leader is all powerful and controls all actions and objectives of the group in order to satisfy their own personal needs and desires. they and they alone are in complete control and demand absolute fealty and subservience.

The Cult leaders are charismatic, highly convincing, and good at getting people to listen to and follow them. They often build their image on lies and may display narcissistic behaviors. By virtue of their position the leader expects complete submission, veneration, and reverence.

What does a Cult look like?

- 1) Headed by a charismatic leader: Cults always follow a charismatic leader, living or dead, whose teachings are considered of the highest importance. This leader may be considered a genius, or may be considered a religious figure like a messiah or prophet.
- 2) Ideological purity: Members are strongly discouraged from questioning the cult's doctrine and any doubts are met with shame or punishment.
- 3) Conformity and control: Cult leaders often exercise an extreme degree of control over members. Conformity is also enforced by group members who police one another.
- 4) Mind-altering practices: Sleep deprivation, chanting, meditation, and drugs are often used to break down individuals' defenses and make them more susceptible to cult ideology.
- 5) Isolation and love-bombing: It is common for people in cults to be encouraged to cut contact with outsiders, including close family members. Within the cult, new members are often subjected to love-bombing, a practice where new initiates are showered with love and praise to bring them deeper into the cult and foster a sense of belonging.

- 6) Those inside the cult feel that those outside the cult lack understanding or insight.
- 7) Apocalyptic thinking: Preparation for a supposed apocalypse or cataclysmic event is a major characteristic of many cults, especially cult religions.
- 8) Time and energy: Followers are expected to dedicate huge amounts of time and energy (and often money) to the cult to the exclusion of their own lives, interests, jobs, and families.

Some might say it's not really a cult, just "cultish. "ish" used as a suffix means belonging to, or relating to, or being of, or chiefly, or approximately or being like or a member of a nationality or ethnic group or commonly or easily identified community (Scottish or Irish or British).

Or like a particular kind of person or thing having the manner or qualities or behaving or resembling traits, qualities or acting like or resembling (Slavish, prudish, Boyish) or "after the manner of," "having the characteristics of," "like" (babyish, girlish); or addicted to," "inclined or tending to" (bookish; freakish); "near or about" (fiftyish; seventyish) or when an adult behaves like a child or spoiled brat (mine, me, me me, mine, everyone is picking on me) childish!

You can make up your own mind but I feel; If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, waddles like a duck and lays duck eggs; in my not so humble opinion it is a F...ing DUCK!! The MAGA movement is a "CULT", headed by and manipulated by a twice impeached, 4 times indicted narcissistic sociopath, a compulsive liar and consummate conman!

What do you think?

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## 158) “Now I understand, it’s all about time”

Essay by NormT 8/18/2023

When I was younger, I had trouble understanding why old people (my grandmothers age) did certain things the way they did or the logic and reasoning they used; it made no sense to me.

Now that I am one of them (85), I think I understand. I believe it is “how we perceive “time”. To the young; time is endless, it goes on forever. if something doesn’t get done, it can be done later. If I needed or wanted something (and could afford it) I would get it; knowing it had a useful life, if not now then I would use it later.

One could plan multiple projects or activities knowing that it will eventually get done and sometimes there may be a long wait before we get to see the results of our efforts.

I remember following a number of space probes sent into deep space and waiting many years before we received wonderful pictures of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and their rings and moons.

As we get old, time changes to “Time left”, it takes on a finite (yet undetermined) factor, it places boundaries and restrictions on “how long” and “when” things will happen. It is different for each of us but it effects how we think about and do things.

In the past, if I needed a new pair of shoes; I would just get it. Now, I have this old, scuffed, tired, Worn out pair (let’s say well broken in) and I hesitate replacing them. Do I really need them? Will I get good use out of them? When I’m gone, they will just be thrown away.

A few days ago, I was reading an article on a new scientific experimental space probe that will be launched in 2028; I was very interested to learn about the results; to know what would be discovered; then, realized I probably won’t be around to find out.

This is what I mean by “time left”, the realization that we will not get to see how the story ends, what will happen next, what great or terrible things lie ahead.

We humans are an arrogant lot, we think the world started when we were born and will go on forever.

The most current data (thanks to the new Webb space telescope) is that our Universe came in to existence about 12 plus billion years ago, the Earth was formed 4 plus billion years ago, our hominid ancestors appeared somewhere near 6 million years ago. Einstein’s’ “Theory of Relativity” predicts time is both variable and the Universe may have time warps so our perception of time changing as we age means we are just following the laws of Physics.

## 159) “What is the impact of recent advances in technology?”

Opinion by NormT 4/1/2023

Although we have seen dramatic advances in technology i.e. computation speed, ease of use, and reduced cost what most people don't realize is that in most cases this hasn't allowed us to do things we weren't able to do before; we just did it faster and cheaper.

For example, in the travel sector the plane replaced the train or car or boat or going further back the horse. We are now able to travel around the world in about 2 days instead of the months it used to take but we still went from point A to point B just faster and cheaper.

This ability to travel almost anywhere has spawned an immense travel industry with all its' associated parts like hotels, tourism and has created a huge number of jobs although it took time to put in place this infrastructure.

In the field of entertainment we went from in-person shows to radio, movies, TV and now streaming. Again we didn't change what we were able to do (enjoy performances) but made it easier, faster and cheaper for more people to take advantage of the performances.

In the area of manufacturing; with computers and automation we can now produce products, ship them around the world and make them cheaper and more available to the buyers but the products didn't change very much they just became less costly and more available.

In all these cases many jobs were replaced or changed but our productivity dramatically increased and many new and different jobs were created. This happened in many industries seemingly at the same time and the impact of factories closing or moving to different locations did have a major effect in certain areas.

The question is “will AI (artificial intelligence) and its ability to make things happen much faster have a major impact on our economy”? Yes, it will replace many jobs but will it do it so fast that the new jobs created will lag behind and cause significant economic disruption.

Will AI make significant breakthroughs and create new industries and demand for new skills or will it replace people faster than the new jobs are created causing massive unemployment and social disruption? No one really knows what impact AI will have; the potential is enormous but the impact may be devastating.

## 160) “Heroes and Villains”

Opinion by NormT 3/29/2023

One of the advantages of getting old (and there are very few) is having a long -term perspective and seeing trends and changes that are not always obvious in a short period of time. We bemoan the fact that things are so different today then they used to be and sometimes we see changes that are 180 degrees or the opposite of how they used to be.

What has happened to our society when almost half the country is willing to accept bold faced lies and fantastical un-reality that were unacceptable and abhorrent in our past. I have struggled to understand how otherwise intelligent people can be so duped and brainwashed that they aren't able to “see” what should be obvious to anyone.

It is not one single cause or change that has made this possible but I believe a part of it is that somewhere in the 50's or 60's we changed how we think about who is a hero and who is a villain. In the good old-days the “hero” was the good guy, who helped people in distress, old ladies get across the street and fought the bullies and crooks. The villain was the bad guy who stole from the poor, cheated, lied, broke the rules of society and kicked the dog.

Perhaps it began during the Vietnam war when we started to lose confidence in our government; or when the movies and TV started to idolize the tough guys, the outlaws and bad boys, the mobsters the gangsters. It became acceptable to worship at the altar of the almighty dollar (winning at any cost) and it became OK to be a bully or obnoxious or mean or “crude and rude” and the nice guys finished last and “didn't get “the girl”.

The hero went from someone who was basically good but had some flaws to the flaws becoming the driving force and the “bad “guys became the ones to be admired and emulated and those who were decent or intellectual were losers or wimps or nerds. Suddenly, the heroes and villains flipped and we are now living in a “topsy -turvy” world where up is down and day is night. Unfortunately to some, this meant being racist, sexist, obnoxious and immoral was acceptable behavior.

Eddie Glaude Jr (a Princeton professor and MSNBC contributor) said that our culture (and society itself) seems to have dramatically changed along with many of our “values”. That large portions of America (primarily the Maga Trump supporters) believe “selfishness, greed and indifference” are not only acceptable forms of behavior but are a central part of their value system.

- Being SELFISH means only your needs are important; you lack consideration for others; are concerned chiefly with one's own personal profit or pleasure.
- GREED is the slavish search for “more and more” (wealth and power); one’s worth and value is measured by how much money you have and what one has is never enough.
- INDIFERENCE is only caring about one’s self; anybody else’s pain or suffering is irrelevant; it is as if they didn’t even exist. It is a lack of interest, concern, or sympathy

These 3 words capture what we see from the leadership of the MAGA group both in Congress and listening to their followers discuss what is going on in the world; they capture the essence of how they feel and what they believe and we can see why they follow their “cult” leader and why they see him as their “hero”

During my lifetime my Heroes and Heroines are Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Elanor Roosevelt, Mother Theresa, Robert Kennedy, Hillary Clinton and my older brother Harv and his wife Renee who took me into their home when my parents died and made me part of their family.

If this makes me “Woke” or a “liberal” or a “coastal elite” or a “wine sipping intellectual”, then so be it! Rather that, than being a mindless deplorable minion who follows a lunatic com-man.

What say you? Who do you admire as your Heroes or Heroines?

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## 161) “Holocaust Remembrance Day”

NormT 1/27/2023

Today is Holocaust Remembrance Day. For some it has personal meaning and connection, some have heard about it or studied about it in school, most know little or nothing about the Holocaust (where over 6 million Jews were slaughtered in concentration camps during WWII) and there are even some who out of ignorance or malice deny it even happened.

Events have more meaning and impact if we can put a name or a face to personalize or humanize what happened, not just numbers or dates in a history book. My mother's family came from Minsk, a city now in Belarus (then part of the USSR, the Soviet Union) and like many families some members came to America to earn enough money to send for the rest of the family.

In the picture below (circa 1916) my mother (Fanny) is sitting in the chair, her older sister (Goldy) is behind her, my Grandmother (Sylvia) is next to her and a little girl (the youngest sister) is on her lap, two young men Yuashka (Joseph) and Abremal (Abraham) are standing to the left. The Father Hetzl and the oldest son (Rubin) had already come to America.

About 6 years later my Grandmother, my Mother and my Aunt Goldy would come to America,( the youngest daughter had died in the famine of 1917/8 )and my uncles Joseph and Abraham (both married and had their own families) decided to remain in Minsk.

These men (my uncles) Joseph and Abraham Krasnosielska and their entire families were wiped out during the Holocaust. Look at their faces and remember their names, they are part of the 6 million we lost. We must never forget.





## 162) “A fork in the road”

Reminiscing by NormtT 1/16/2023

There is a time in life when one wonders what would have happened if we had chosen differently or made different key decisions; of course, we will never really know but: “what if” we had chosen that other path or direction?

I once had a mentor (a fancy way to describe someone I looked up to and trusted) once told me “When you come to a fork in the road of life; take it! This is a serious answer because all too often we get stalled, unsure of which path to choose and get stuck in place and “do nothing” or let outside pressures decide for us. In my case doing nothing (not choosing) just didn’t feel right and once in a while I wonder “how would it have turned out?”

Growing up in Brooklyn in the 40’s I was fascinated with science fiction and fantasy stories and especially astronomy (I read almost every book in the public library about astronomy) although most of the time I couldn’t see the night sky due to the haze and city lights but I knew there was a whole world out there I couldn’t see.

I would have given anything to become a “space traveler” (something that didn’t exist except in my imagination and fiction stories, although being a baseball player came close). I thought going into space would never happen in my lifetime; as it turned out the first men who set foot on the moon were older than I was when they made that “giant step” on the moon.

By now you are probably thinking “where is this going, what is his point”? In 1963 I was completing my degree in Engineering Physics from N.Y.U. and was busy interviewing with a number of different companies; had just accepted an offer from NASA in Greenbelt Maryland (a dream come true and not only that but they counted my military service so I would get a month of vacation right away. The salary was meager (a government job) but this was “the space program”.

About a week or so later, I was sitting in the University cafeteria when the Physics department Secretary saw me and said there was a recruiter for General Dynamics astronautics (San Diego, Cal) and no-one was interviewing with him and would I go up and talk to him. I already had accepted the NASA offer but, on a whim, went to the interview.

A week later GD made me an offer almost double the NASA offer as a Research Engineer on the atlas and Centaur Missile system to work on the miniaturization of the

guidance system (a path into the new field of semi-conductors) and in sunny California. I had reached a fork in the road and a decision to make.

I was 25 years old, had served 3 years in the Army (stationed in Germany) and had been going to school on a partial scholarship and working full time as a swing-shift supervisor (6 PM to 2 AM) and was essentially broke and exhausted. I called NASA and asked if they could increase their offer (they said no).

My choice was between a job doing research on space programs and living in Maryland or working for a defense contractor on state-of-the-art technology in sunny California (at a lot more money, I couldn't lose, they were both great opportunities).

As it turned out I went to California, eventually moved to Silicon Valley and worked for Fairchild Semiconductor and Hewlett-Packard, met and married the love of my life (my wife Dorothy and we are still together it will be 58 years) have 2 wonderful daughters and have worked at high level management positions and got to live in Asia (Singapore) and London and was involved in the beginnings and development of the LED (light emitting diode) revolution.

I have lived a great life, worked with wonderful people and have travelled all over the world; I have no qualms about my choice, I am a lucky man and would make the same choice again but when I see space launches, and vehicles zipping around on the surface of Mars or new space telescopes probing the origins of the universe, I can't help but wonder "what if".

## 163) “The Trump dance”

*Opinion by NormT 8/5/23*

Trump has now been indicted in multiple geographic locations and his dance card will most likely include a few more. In America one is considered innocent until proven guilty and even Donald deserves this right.

However, he should be considered a flight risk since he owns his own plane and the allure of Putin and the Russian oligarch’s ability to commit unfettered grift is calling to him so I suggest (as a minimum) he be required to wear some device (like an ankle bracelet) so we can keep track of him.

Since he still plays a lot of golf, it would also be necessary (we don’t want to mess with his perfect swing), to place a bracelet on the other leg to help maintain his balance. Unfortunately, his will not improve his mental imbalance issue.

With the advent of “AI” we can now enhance the capability of these devices to detect and understand spoken words and to apply a non-lethal shock (like one used in a cattle prod) whenever it detects a lie.

Since the Donald is incapable of completing an entire sentence without lying, we will need to add a slight delay (3.14 seconds) to the other leg so he doesn’t appear to be jumping but rather bounce from one leg to the other giving the appearance of an overweight out of shape old white guy trying to dance.

Given his propensity to distort, make up false facts and blatantly lie about almost everything this hopping around would be considered “the new Trump dance” and he will begin fund raising immediately.

Just visualize him at the podium at one of his rallies bouncing around from one leg to the other spewing his venomous falsehoods and he would have the added benefit of weight loss since I am sure the dancing would be continuous for the entire time he is on the stage or anywhere near a microphone.

So, next time you see him speak just imagine if this shocking ankle bracelet was activated and with every lie, he would bounce around the stage like someone walking on hot coals or a floor full of thumbtacks.

## 164) “A few Questions to ask your Republican friends”

*Opinion by NormT 8/12/23*

In order to better understand what the Republicans think about key issues; I have listed a few questions to ask them. The purpose is not to try to change minds or make “points”, but to clarify their position or point of view or their thinking process. Some questions simply require a Yes or No answer, some to choose from a list. Some may require further explanations (e.g. how they would implement further actions).

**Q 1)** Do you believe America should be a “White Christian” Nation? Yes or No.; If the answer is **YES**:

- a) How would you determine or define “who is White”?
- b) who would qualify as Christian? (There are many Christian faiths e.g. (Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Evangelicals, LDS etc.).
- c) What would happen to non-whites or non-Christians?

**Q2)** Who won the 2020 Presidential Election?

- a) Joe Biden
- b) Donald Trump

**Q3)** What happened on Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 at the US Capitol? Choose one

- a) There was a violent insurrection attempt
- b) There was a riot that got out of control
- c) There was a peaceful protest with some people stirred up by the FBI or Antifa or BLM that did some bad things
- d) There was a peaceful demonstration with patriots voicing their 1<sup>st</sup> amendment rights.

**Q4)** Is anyone above the Law?

- a) YES
- b) NO

**Q5)** If Trump is found GUILTY of a FELONY in either the Documents case or the Jan 6<sup>th</sup> Conspiracy case should he be disqualified to serve as President?

- a) YES
- b) NO

If someone answers Yes to Q1, (b) to Q2, (d) to Q3, Yes to Q4 They are hard core MAGA supporters and nothing you say or do will change their minds.

America will be facing many significant issues/problems in the coming decade.

Below is my list of 30 key issues

**What are the 10 most important issues you believe our government should focused on?**

- 1) Inflation
- 2) Immigration
- 3) Crime
- 4) Homelessness
- 5) AI (machine learning)
- 6) Climate change (global warming)
- 7) Healthcare (affordability & availability)
- 8) Illegal Drugs (opioids and Fentanyl)
- 9) Gun violence
- 10) Ability to retire
- 11) Cost and availability of housing
- 12) Social media (control)
- 13) Future Work/employment availability & opportunity (impact of technology & globalization)
- 14) Wars (with China &/or Russia)
- 15) Corruption & Fraud in government
- 16) Wealth distribution (loss of middle class)
- 17) Government debt
- 18) Pandemics
- 19) Famine & Food insecurity
- 20) Education system (K-14)
- 21) Saving/fixing Social Security

- 22) Saving/fixing Medicare
  - 23) Saving Democracy and the Rule of Law (from Autocracy)
  - 24) Protecting minority rights (equal rights)
  - 25) Voting rights (equality & eliminate suppression & gerrymandering)
  - 26) Woman's right to choose (abortion rights)
  - 27) Get money out of politics & elections (overturn Citizens united)
  - 28) Return normalcy, decency & compassion to Government & politics
  - 29) Other
-

## 165) “Do you know someone who believes that ...”

*Opinion by NormT*

8/27/23

If you know anyone who believes that # “PO1135809” (whose name shall be left unspoken):

- Is 6 foot 3 inches tall and weighs 215 pounds
- Only makes “perfect” phone calls
- Pays his bills (never stiffes his vendors or suppliers or lawyers)
- Doesn’t cheat at golf, could have joined the Pro tour
- Pays his fair share of taxes
- Didn’t cheat on his wives (all three)
- Is the least prejudiced man on earth and the most humble
- Is smarter than all his advisors (cabinet ministers, generals etc.)
- One of the most successful businessmen ever (excluding the 6 bankruptcies and closed fraudulent University, Steaks, etc.)
- Considered the best President ever
- He and he alone can fix our problems
- Won the 2020 Presidential election by a landslide
- Is faster than a speeding bullet and leaps tall buildings in a single bound and has heavenly connections

If you know anyone who believes most or all of these; please have them contact me, I have a slightly rusted bridge that connects Brooklyn to Manhattan at a truly great discount, a humongous and bigly bargain (cash only, up front, in small unmarked bills).

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## 166) “Earth is a dangerous place to live”

*Opinion by NormT 11/9/2023*

Earth is a dynamic planet, constantly changing, reshaping its' land mass, tearing them apart and forcing them together to create mountains and valleys and deep oceans with volcanic eruptions spewing magma from deep below and a variety of gasses into our atmosphere. We constantly have earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, storms, floods, fires and go in and out of ice ages.

Yet, life forms of various types develop and spread to all parts of our planet, from the deepest oceans to the highest mountains and stubbornly fights to stay alive: but it has not been easy going.

Scientists tell us there have been 5 major mass extinction events in the past (and we may be in one right now); below is a summary of these events:

### 1. The First Mass Extinction Event

The first ever mass extinction event occurred about 443 million years ago, which wiped out more than 85% of all species on the planet at the time. Referred to as the Ordovician–Silurian extinction event, the event saw 27% of all families, 57% of all genera, and 60%-70% of all species including marine species like graptolites, brachiopods, and conodonts, destroyed.

Studies have suggested that the first extinction event is caused by a global-scale ice age, followed by rapid global warming. However, according to a 2020 study, it counters that the event is in fact a result of volcanism, which led to cooling, warming, or both, and anoxia (referring to conditions of low oxygen).

### 2. The Second Mass Extinction Event

About 374 million years ago during the Late Devonian period, the second mass extinction event occurred, taking 75% of all species along with it. This extinction period decimated marine species and bottom-dwelling invertebrates in tropical seas in particular.

Though it's difficult even to this day to accurately pinpoint the cause of the Devonian extinction, scientists have linked the event to several stresses



including excessive sedimentation, rapid global warming or cooling, and high variations in sea levels. Plants during this period have also started taking over dry land, resulting in a drop in global carbon dioxide levels.

### 3. The Third Mass Extinction Event

The third mass extinction event is also the most devastating extinction event in history, killing off more than 95% of all species living at the time. Referred to as the “great die-out” or the “great dying”, the event took place around 250 million years ago at the end of the Permian period, and wiped out 96% of all marine species and around 70% of terrestrial species, including plants and insects.

The general consensus view of scientists is that the volcanic activity at the end of the Permian period, specifically in relation to the volcanic eruptions in the Siberian Traps, led to significant emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, resulting in rapid global warming, as well as increased ocean acidification. However, other studies have suggested that impact from an asteroid filled the air with pulverised particles, which possibly blocked up the sun and generated intense acid rains.

### 4. The Fourth Mass Extinction Event

The fourth mass extinction event, or the Triassic-Jurassic extinction, occurred about 252 million to 201 million years ago, eliminating some 76% of all marine and terrestrial species from the planet. It is thanks to this extinction event that dinosaurs became the dominant land animals on Earth.

Like with other events, there is much debate surrounding the cause of the Triassic-Jurassic extinction, ranging from rising sea levels and spike in carbon dioxide emissions due to volcanism, to trapped methane gases in permafrost released rapidly warming the planet, to colossal geological activity in the Atlantic Ocean that elevated atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations and acidified oceans. There are even some that argued that the fourth mass extinction event was not the product of a single major event but “simply a prolonged turnover of species across a considerable amount of time and thus should not be regarded as a mass extinction event.”

### 5. The Fifth Mass Extinction Event

The last recorded mass extinction event happened about 65.5 million years ago, and famously wiped out the dinosaurs – with the exception of birds – from existence. During the end-Cretaceous extinction, nearly 76% of all species were destroyed, including flying pterosaurs and other important marine invertebrates such as ammonites and groups of cephalopods. Similar to how the Triassic-Jurassic extinction allowed dinosaurs to dominate the land, the end-Cretaceous extinction brought on a new age for mammals, allowing them to diversify and occupy new habitats.

There is strong geological evidence that the demise of dinosaurs and the fifth mass extinction event are caused by an asteroid that was as large as 10 km in diameter hitting the Earth, specifically in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. The impact of the asteroid produced a dust cloud that encircled the planet, which prevented sunlight from reaching the Earth's surface, thereby reducing plants' and plankton's ability to photosynthesis, and affecting the rest of the food chain. Dust and debris from the impact would have also triggered widespread wildfires.

### A Sixth Mass Extinction Event?

An estimated 2% of the species that ever lived remain alive today following the five mass extinction events. But due to ever-increasing global populations, consumption rates, human activity including deforestation and worsening impacts of climate change, we are driving even more animals and plants to the brink of extinction.

A recent UN report found that species extinction rates are record high and “accelerating”. The world is currently losing species hundreds of thousands of times faster than the ‘normal’ rates occurring in the last tens of millions of years, meaning that we’re very much in the midst of a sixth mass extinction event.

More than 500 species of land animals are under threat of extinction and will likely be lost within the next two decades; the same number were lost over the whole of the last century, according to a 2020 study. As more species disappear, it affects its entire ecosystem and the services that they provide to humanity, threatening the survival of the human race as well.

More recently we have seen major catastrophic disease related pandemics”

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century we saw” The Black Death” (the bubonic plague) epidemic killed 30 to 50 percent of the entire population of Europe; Between 75 and 200 million people died in a few years' time, starting in 1348.

The total number of military and civilian casualties in World War I, was around 40 million. There were 20 million deaths and 21 million wounded. The total number of deaths includes 9.7 million military personnel and about 10 million civilians. The population of Europe was about 400 million so the deaths represented about 5 % of the population.

World War II was the largest and most violent military conflict in human history. Official casualty sources estimate battle deaths at nearly 15 million military personnel and civilian deaths at over 38 million for a total of around 55 million. The world population in 1940 was around 2.3 billion so the death toll was around 2.5%

The” Spanish Flu” The Influenza Pandemic (h1n1) of 1918/19

The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 killed more people than the Great War, known today as World War I (WWI), at somewhere between 20 and 40 million people. It has been cited as the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history was a global disaster.

Covid- 19 pandemic (2020-2022), there were over 750 million cases worldwide with around 7 million deaths reported (this number is probably low due to underreporting from Russia, China and India). The U.S. had around 1.41 million deaths and this was minimized by the rapid development and deployment of vaccines (over 14 billion doses administered). This could have been much worse without the vaccines.

In America in 2021: 49,000 people died from gun-related injuries, 700,000 from heart disease, 510,000 from Cancer, 420,000 from COVID-19 and 250,000 from accidents (unintentional injuries).

We are constantly bombarded with inputs from multiple sources showing us scenes of death and destruction, Wars, atrocities, famines, pandemics, horrible

accidents, murders, car crashes, fires, floods, hurricanes and every type of natural (and un-natural) disaster imaginable and wonder why people are tuning out, disconnecting, withdrawing from society.

We know the world is a dangerous place and terrible things happen but what bothers me most is we (some of us) seem to glorify, identify with, encourage and support the worst of the offenders; the meanest nastiest, most heartless and inhumane of the offenders. It is inconceivable to me how this can be supported by those who pretend to be religious and have moral values but seem to be able to look away, give a wink and a nod to the perpetrators and still consider themselves bastions of moral values and goodness.

It is a wonder that anything has survived all these calamities (both natural and man-made). But life of all kinds somehow keeps bouncing back in spite of all these events. Maybe it will survive again.

## 167) “Amazing accomplishments taken for granted”

*Essay by NormT 1/24/2024*

Just yesterday, I was sitting in my den on my computer connected to the internet logged on to a NASA website looking at a video of the surface of Mars taken by a man-made rover over 40 million miles away.

Let that sentence sink in!

I thought nothing of it, we take for granted some of the most amazing, astonishing technological accomplishments of mankind and all of the breakthroughs needed to make it happen.

- A personal computer in my home.
- The ability to Connect to all the worlds knowledge (at my fingertips) instantaneously.
- The ability to send a machine (that takes pictures and does scientific experiments) to another planet tens of millions of miles away and roams around to explore the surface.
- To be able to ask and receive an answer on almost any subject, to get entertainment delivered to our homes from the world's top performers at the click of a mouse.

I graduated high School in 1955 (less than 70 years ago) and NONE of that was available or even believed possible in our lifetime. Yet today, we take it all for granted and seldom even stop and think just how amazing this all is.

I won't be around to see the imp [act of AI, Quantum computing and the wonderous impact of bio-medical advances will have in the next 70 years (it will be astounding) and I imagine someone will look back at 2024 and think we were just so primitive.

## **168) “The TFT train is coming to town”**

*Observation by NormT 3/30/2024*

We got trouble my friends, right here in River City, Tammy Fay Trump has come to town and is peddling his latest snake oil venture; a book pretending to be a bible but is an autobiography and “how to” manifesto; called “My Bribe\* & Kampf”.

Here are a few of the chapter titles:

- 1) Growing up unloved and unwanted
- 2) What it is like to be a spoiled brat and bully
- 3) Living with multiple psychosis; narcissism, sociopathy, and pathological lying
- 4) I was suckled at the teats of the “golden Calf” and anointed for greatness
- 5) Perfecting the 7 deadly sins “lust, gluttony, greed, laziness, wrath, envy, and pride” as a way of life
- 6) Nobody needs friends or how to bring out the worst in others
- 7) Jesus who? Or only suckers and losers are nice to others
- 8) Never ever admit making a mistake or apologize for anything
- 9) Don’t worry about facts, truth or reality; just make up your own
- 10) If you have done or are planning to do something terrible; accuse others first aka “projection”
- 11) Learn how to avoid paying bills, taxes, fines, debts, and obligations
- 12) When someone is down, kick them
- 13) Ways to avoid the draft or being held accountable for anything
- 14) All the best words start with “G” i.e. gold, glitz, greed, and graft
- 15) Why I HATE and am Afraid of: women, immigrants, people of color, intellectuals and people who really believe in God and goodness, charity and compassion
- 16) How to buy women from Eastern Europe
- 17) Critical use of NDA’s (Non-Disclosure Agreements) to stay out of jail

18) How to start a “CULT” and pretend to be godly

19) How to spot a sucker, a rube, an easy mark, a loser and especially a “brown nosing sycophant”

20) Finally, 6 easy steps on how to overthrow a freely elected rule-of-law Constitutional democracy (an insurrection), and install a perfect, stable genius as dictator for life

You too, can learn to be a world class hypocrite, a Con-man, a false prophet with nary a pang of guilt or conscience. This book is a must for you!

A” brible” is a word combining bribe (something he is very familiar with) and bible, something he has never read and wouldn’t understand and wouldn’t understand.

## 169) “The problem is ...”

*Opinion by NormT 3/9/2024*

America today is in turmoil; we are facing a monumental decision this coming November that will impact not only our future but the world's as well. For the past 80 years (or as Lincoln would say “four score”) we have been the most powerful (both militarily and economically) and the leader of the “free world”.

The results of this upcoming election will determine if this will continue or if we turn away from the rest of the world and retreat into isolation and abandon the Constitutional “democracy”, the concept of “balance of powers” and protection of civil and human rights that I believe have made us what we are.

Both sides of the upcoming election believe they are proud “patriots” who love America and see the other side as “the enemy” and un-American and if elected will destroy those things they believe make us who we are. How can this be true?

I do believe both sides, (the “liberal democrats” and the “MAGA republicans”) do love our country, and consider themselves patriots and “real” Americans but they do NOT agree on what America stands for and “how” the government should run and that my friends are the problem we face.

One side believes government should act to protect the “common good” and the other side believes in “rugged individualism” and a minimal government (or so they say).

One side believes in pluralism, equal rights for all and separation of church and state while the other side believes in white (and male) supremacy and Christian (their version of course) nationalism.

One side believes in a balance and separation of powers in government with free and all-inclusive elections and the other side believes in autocratic rule and party loyalty over loyalty to the country, the Constitution, and the rule of law.

One side believes in compromise and acting in the common good and the other side believes in “my way or the highway” and if they don't get what they want, just “burn the place down?”.



One side believes in fairness helping those in need, sharing the wealth and honesty and reason and logic and rational decision making and the other side in conspiracy theories, lying, cheating, deceit, greed and “might makes right”.

It seems that we have some very, very different views about “what” America stands for and “how” we should govern. I know which view of America I believe in; How about you?

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## **170) “The MAGA doctrine is to “Make America 1924 Again”**

A revelation by NormT 4/5/2024

The Trump (MAGA) cult has decided it wants to turn back the clock a full century to a time they believe was the “Good old days” and make it our future.

The 1920’s also known as the “roaring twenties”, the age of the flapper, speakeasies, mobsters and exploding capitalism and “good times”. WWI and the Spanish flu were in the past and American Industry fueled by unchecked banking, massive growth in manufacturing and petroleum, automobiles and large manufacturing plants and little to no government controls or oversight made it feel like the wild west and with unlimited growth (to those who benefited but not to everyone).

In 1924 the US population was around 115 million, with half of the people living in rural areas; 90% of the population was WHITE and most people lived within 50 miles of where they were born. Cars were taking over transportation, radio and movies were dominating entertainment along with vaudeville (in the theaters), planes were in their infancy and trains were for long distance travel. We felt protected by two large oceans on our coasts (insulating us from problems in Europe and Asia).

Women had recently (1920) won the right to vote, but by 1924 only one woman had a seat in the house of representatives and none in the Senate and the Supreme Court had NO women Justices nor a person of color. Prohibition had passed in 1920 and alcohol sales were prohibited but easily available. Unions and workers were fighting for higher wages and better working conditions. Almost all the WEALTH and POWER was under the control of “RICH OLD WHITE CHRISTIAN MALES”

In 1924 the roaring twenties was in full swing, Business was booming; the wealthy were getting even wealthier and isolationism and anti-immigrant sentiment was growing. Jim Crow laws were in place throughout the old Confederate States and racism., misogyny and antisemitism were prevalent almost everywhere. We were entering an era with tremendous growth and change in the world.

In the 1920’s the 10 wealthiest Americans included two Fords (Automobiles), two Rockefellers (Oil), two Mellons (banking), Payne Whitney (oil & tobacco), F. W. Vanderbilt (shipping & railroads), George F. Baker (Banking), Thomas F. Ryan (Banking, transportation, tobacco), Vincent Astor (fur trade), J. P. Morgan (Banking); Most were from Oil, Auto’s, banking, transportation and were from old line wealthy family fortunes.

The largest and most powerful companies were: Standard Oil, GM, Ford, U.S. Steel, A&P, Swift, Armour, Sears, GE, Western Electric, Chrysler, Bethlehem steel, International Harvester, Gulf Oil, Montgomery Ward.; a mixture of large manufacturing,

retail and energy companies that required vast numbers of employees (Mostly Big oil, Auto, steel, retail (brick & Morter) goods & food and with only two in the new electronics technology field.

Racism was widespread and the KKK was growing again, the section below is from Wikipedia regarding their resurgence:

“During the 1920s, cultural conflict and modernization helped resuscitate the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Whereas the original KKK was a violent, racist organization born in the post “Civil War South”, the modern Klan was driven by somewhat different concerns.

Many white, lower middle-class, Protestant Americans in the North and Midwest were fearful that immigrants were changing traditional American culture, and they responded with anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism. The revival of the Klan was inspired by Birth of a Nation, director D. W. Griffith’s violently anti-black blockbuster film of 1915 that promoted the southern “Lost Cause” view of the Civil War”.

What about America today (2024)?

Our population has grown to over 330 million; we have added over 215 million and grown by 200%. The White population has dropped to around 55%; Rural areas now only represent 20% of the population (with 80% in Urban and suburban areas. Mobility has expanded and families are now spread throughout the country.

The role and place in society for women has dramatically changed since 1924. Women have made significant gains in almost every field; education, business, and critically in their representation in Congress and the Courts.

In politics, there are now 128 women in the House and 28 in the Senate (about 30%). 4 of the 9 justices on the supreme Court are now women. we have a woman of color as Vice-President of the United States and great inroads in almost all aspects of business and society has been made in the past century. We still do not have equity and real equality but significant progress has been made.

Workers have seen major gains in their rights in areas like overtime pay and safety and the work week in 1924 was 48 hours (basically a 6-day week), n 2023 it was about 40 hours (5 days) and many people are able to work remotely saving on transportation and more flexibility as to where to live.

The ten largest U.S. Corporations are: Walmart Retail), Amazon (Retail and cloud computing), ExxonMobil (Petroleum) , Apple (Electronics ), UnitedHealth Group (Healthcare), CVS Health (Healthcare), Berkshire Hathaway (Conglomerate), Alphabet (Google) (Technology and cloud computing), McKesson Corporation (pharma), Chevron Corporation (Petroleum).

In the top 20 we had 5 from oil & gas, 4 from retail (online & big box). 3 from high tech, 6 from healthcare, 1 Automaker co and 1 conglomerate (investment). A mixture of new and old and new and most leveraging new electronic communications and interfacing.

The ten wealthiest Americans are: Elon Musk (Tesla, SpaceX), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Larry Ellison (Oracle), Warren Buffett (Berkshire Hathaway), Larry Page (Alphabet). Bill Gates (Microsoft), Sergey Brin (Alphabet), Mark Zuckerberg (Meta-Facebook), Steve Ballmer (Microsoft), Michael Bloomberg (Bloomberg L.P.).

8 are in high tech, 1 in finance & investment and 1 in business (news & media) 5 (half) are less than 60 years old, 2 are 80 or over; none came from large family wealth.

### The impact of disruptive change

Perhaps the greatest impact has been the unbelievable changes we have experienced in science and technology. Change at best is difficult and disruptive but rapid and extreme change can be overwhelming.

In this past century we have seen exponential advances in science and technology and knowledge ranging from nuclear energy, sub-atomic particles, semiconductors, RNA/DNA, the human genome, television, radar, computers, Internet, smart-phones, machine learning (AI), and seeing mankind walking on the moon, rovers exploring Mars and the ubiquitous instantaneous communication and connection to all stored knowledge. This is more than enough to drive mankind to the limit.

The problem is **the “rate-of-change” of “change” has been accelerating**; people are having trouble adapting, acclimating, absorbing so much, so fast and in many cases their response is to freeze or disengage from what is going on around them. This withdrawal leads to denial and retreating into glorification of an “unreal past” and denying the existence of our current reality. Our circuits have overloaded leaving us in a deep fog and limbo existence.

This yearning and desire to go back to what they believe was the good old days can be summed up by:

- 1) The **Loss of power and control** by white male Christians (in government, economic opportunity and family and social relationships).
- 2) People **Being overwhelmed by the rapid changes** in technology and demographics. Primarily in rural areas devastated by outward mobility and loss of employment.
- 3) **Perceived lack of status and respect** leading to feelings of victimhood and frustration.

Life is often complicated and complex, unfortunately people desire simple and easy solutions and answers; when there are none, they get stressed and frustrated. Without a clear direction chaos often follows and they search for someone to tell them what to do, for perceived strength and too often someone or something to blame. This generally means the acceptance of autocracy and scapegoating; this usually doesn't end well for all involved.

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## 171) “My AI concerns”

*Essay by NormT 4/20/24*

Last week I listened to a number of TED talks on AI and have some grave concerns about what is going to be this next major disruptive innovation. My feeling is; nobody really seems to know “how it works” and “how it is doing what it is doing”.

I heard a lot of “techno-babble”, things like “neural networks” and the need for additional “training” (although it is not clear who is/should do the training and what is being trained) and it seems the current AI programs lack basic “common sense”. What everyone agreed on is it is a very, very powerful tool and like it or not, it will be a major shock to our social order. My concerns are:

- 1) The current AI’s lack of what we call “common sense”. The ability (consciously or subconsciously) to extrapolate the consequences of our actions and evaluate their impacts on us. We have a sense that “something isn’t quite right, it is too good to be true, I better check on this further, it doesn’t smell right, that sense that it just doesn’t add up”) and let’s reconsider.

For example, not speeding on a slick road or jumping off a tall building or touching a hot surface or believing the earth is flat nor only 6,000 years old. Granted Common Sense may not be as common as we would like; but hey we don’t want our machines to be foolish or ignorant.

- 2) “Evil intent”; the ability to use an all-powerful tool for malevolent reasons (to cause harm and damage, to break the laws of society, to destroy law and order) for evil purposes. Granted there are “bad actors” who will use every means available to cheat, steal and create chaos and havoc but without proper checks and balances the potential for disaster is very real. And to make matters worse it looks like NO ONE IS IN CHARGE or even knows how to control the situation. Perhaps the “Genie” is out of the bottle and won’t go back in.

- 3) The “INTENDED CONSEQUENCES” are clear, improving efficiency and effectiveness and lowering costs (this is what business is all about) and this new tool will be exceptionally good at it. What automation and computerization has done to routine manual labor (blue collar jobs) AI will do it in spades for “white collar” jobs and the further decline of the middle class is imminent.

Unless we create an environment that provides for meaningful (and fulfilling) employment the Country (and the world) will be facing massive unemployment and

severe reduction in humanity's standard of living (like the 1930's great depression on steroids).

We need to have plans in place to account for the massive restructuring of how future work will be done, compensated for and available to the ever-growing population and demands for social equity.

If we don't address these changes, I fear the revolutions of the past (i.e. French, Russian) will return. Does "off with their heads", come to mind?

This call to action, a wake-up call, if someone is out there listening and feels I am being overlay alarmed, please let me know.

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## **172) “It is all about predictability”**

Essay by NormT 4/23/2024

I have come to believe that there is something in our DNA (genetic makeup) that allows us (human beings) to be able to recognize patterns (both physical and behavioral) and be able to project (consciously or sub-consciously) future situations.

This ability to visualize possible alternative outcomes has made us the pre-eminent species. When we can evaluate varied outcomes in response to multiple courses of actions and choose the one that provides us with the best result; we have a great advantage in our competition to survive and thrive.

This situational awareness, the ability to recognize and remember patterns of behavior lets us avoid possible negative results and optimize our ability to succeed. We can prepare ahead of time, have possible alternative plans if things don't go as predicted.

In order to do this, we need to be able to understand the current situation, recognize trends or previous behaviors and consider multiple possible actions and their outcomes; we need to project ourselves into the future and evaluate varied outcomes. This “human” trait is what separates us from other species that react (respond) to real time or immediate stimulus.

This ability to “think ahead”; look at varied possible courses of action is what allows the great chess masters to “win”, they think multiple moves ahead and choose the best response possible, giving them a significant advantage. Basically, it means if I do this (take this action) how will they respond; and so on.

IBM's “deep blue” has beaten the grandmasters at chess and other machines have beaten the world's best “GO” players and the latest AI machines have shown remarkable capabilities; are they doing this with brute force calculation ability or are they thinking ahead?

If the next generations are capable of predicting future realities and are capable of recognizing their own existence (mortality) than we have met the future and HAL is it.



through natural selection (thank you Darwin), those is that respond (react) favorably have a higher rate of survival. This ability (pattern recognition) lets plants seek light or moisture and at a higher level, allows animals to find food and safety.

To distinguish patterns gives us the advantage of predictability; we can recognize what we are sensing (seeing, hearing) and behaviors (what is coming next) and we can take advantage of the situation. This helps in both hunting and defense. If we recognize pattern of behavior, we can predict what comes next and can prepare for that situation which gives us an advantage.

So, where is this going? So far it is esoteric. We humans are pretty good at recognizing patterns of behavior and extrapolating them to predict an outcome, we estimate where and when things will be in the future so we can prepare for possible alternatives and come out ahead. We count on predicting trends, directions to get the results we desire.

If the situation is completely random, we can't prepare; if we miscalculate the trend, we are unprepared, it causes confusion and disruption and often puts us at a disadvantage. This is why predictability is extremely important to us and why we depend on situations to follow known trajectories and paths and need to "trust" the inputs we get.

We count on truth and honesty and normalcy and standards and rules so we are better able to predict and plan our own actions. If, we can't trust what we are told, or the patterns are random or incongruent we are unable to properly plan our actions. We count on being able to predict an outcome and feel lost and helpless when all is confusion. After all; it is in our DNA.

## 173) “Us or them?” That is the question.

*Essay by NormT 4/28/2024*

It all starts with “ME and MINE”; after all we are the center of our newborn universe and everything revolves around us. Our needs are catered to and we all know nothing existed before we were born and it goes away when we sleep and returns when we awake. It is no wonder that “me, me, me and whatever we want” is all that matters. We feel ownership and possession of everything in our domain and that continues for quite a while.

As we grow older and our circle of identity expands and includes others around us, we start thinking in terms of us or we (family, friends, groups we hold close) and we see those outside our group as “they” or “them” and see them as being different.

When our leaders have evil intent (selfish interests or extremist ideology and they portray the others as “less than” and wanting to cause “us” harm “this has in the past led to disastrous and inconceivable atrocities. History is full of monsters like Hitler who were able to convince their followers that these “others” were less than human and caused whatever problems you had and need to be eliminated.

These demagogues were able to create a mass hysteria and distort reality to convince their followers that they and only they have the “right” answers to all their problems and that these “other groups” were the cause of our grief. They need to be prevented from contaminating “us”. This would allow us to return to our idealized utopia and all the power to the rightful owner, us!

They manipulated their followers to view everything as a choice between “us and those others” in a simplistic “black or white” or “us versus them” choice with no shades of grey or degrees of complexity; it is then obvious what needs to be done.

When we evaluate alternatives and decide on a course of action it says a lot about who we are and what we believe is important; even beyond that it tells everyone else who we are and how we will act. When we allow ourselves to fall prey to sociopaths, we lose our sense of humanity and decency. When we start believing those others are less than human, we are lost.

America is racing to a collision point in our history that will determine whether we remain a pluralistic democracy based on the rule of law and equality of rights for all or a kleptocratic authoritarian theocracy. The choice is ours. Do you want a Putin style America or one the founding fathers gave us? That, my friends is what democracy is all about! Stay informed and spread the word, our future is at risk!

## 174) “Oh, so Civilized?”

*Essay by NormT 5/2/2024*

We humans (those homo sapiens) are an arrogant lot; we feel superior to all other species and believe because we have opposable thumbs and vocal cords that allow us to speak and we learned how to create machines to work for us; we are somehow more civilized than all those other animals.

It is true that some species hunt, kill and eat other animals, that is what they need to do to keep from starving and to survive, that pesky self-preservation kind of thing. They have also been known to kill for territory and to be the group-leader with all the benefits and rights to pass on one's DNA.

We humans, on the other hand, (and throughout history), have been known to massacre huge numbers of our own kind and it seems we do it “just because” we can. From our earliest days we have waged war, slaughtered our “foes”, raped, pillaged, taken slaves and subjugated others to bend to our will and still have the audacity to call ourselves “the civilized ones”.

From sticks and stones to spears to arrows to guns to bombs we have learned how to kill larger and larger numbers, faster and faster, at further and further distances and somehow, this we believe makes us the more civilized ones?

I used to think that the ability to learn, to figure out how to solve problems, to write and read books, to create art, to make others think and enjoy what life has to offer and to help others was what being civilized meant.

“Civilization” is defined as an advanced state of human society, in which a high level of culture, science, industry, and government has been reached. those people or nations that have reached such a state.

“Civilized” is defined as an advanced stage of social and cultural development”

“Civil” is defined as : “To be courteous and polite”, well mannered, well bred, gentlemanly.

As I look around at the current state of social, governmental, societal interactions I have difficulty believing we humans have reached a state of civilization very different from the rest of the animal kingdom.

Our ancestors may have climbed down from the trees and our tails may have atrophied and we may have polished up our resumes with shiny baubles and slick marketing slogans and gimmicks but deep down I wonder if we really are any different from our animal brothers.

## **“175) “It’s all about POWER”**

*Essay by NormT 5/5/2024*

With complete power comes the ability to control and impose one’s will upon others; be able to dominate and do “whatever, whenever and however” one desires.

This ultimate control over others has been wielded by Emperors, Pharaohs, Czars, Kings, Sultans, Shoguns, Warlords, Despots, Dictators and Cult leaders throughout history. From the Caesars to Genghis Khan to Stalin and Hitler and Putin and Manson and Jim Jones that messianic pull of absolute power and control was their driving force.

Unfortunately, it seems that some segments of our society are attracted to powerful leaders who don’t seem to be constrained by rules, laws and even common decency and humanity.

I can understand why being all powerful is so intoxicating; (as Mel Brooks in the movie “History of the world”) said “It’s good to be King” and as the old saying goes “power corrupts and ultimate power, corrupts ultimately”.

Most rulers (those who did not inherit the position) were basically “Egomaniacs”, Narcissistic sociopaths who only cared about themselves and fulfilling their desires: anything else was just collateral damage.

These kings of the hill, Supreme Leaders, top-guns, mob-bosses and titans of industry seem to be above the law and have the ability to attract followers who willingly accept their position and do whatever is asked of them.

What I don’t understand is those who willingly let themselves be controlled and actually do things against their own best interests. It seems antithetical to what I believed free will and freedom of choice is all about. Many of these followers claim to care about freedoms but allow themselves to be subjugated.

We are all driven by our needs and emotions and in many instances, people followed out of fear and necessity but those who follow the charlatans, Con-artists, false prophets, the cult leaders seem to fit into a different category.

I wonder if those who fall under the power of these hucksters and hustlers are somehow fulfilling some internal need, a desire to be part of a bigger entity; a group that acknowledges their existence, sees them, gives them attention and love (even if it isn’t real) and tells them all their failings and problems were not their fault.

They are told “your problems have been caused by those “others” (you know the immigrants, dark skinned people, Jews, liberal elites, people who worship differently than you do). It must feel warm and comforting to be among those who look like you, talk like you and feel like you and feel wanted and needed and know the problems you have are not your fault. To have someone else (some higher power, all knowing, infallible leader) do your thinking for you.

Or maybe, they believe what they are being told matches their own beliefs and that they are truly superior to those “others”, and deserve to have a higher status and more rights, that their religious and political beliefs are the only “true” ones.

Or maybe they believe that they are the only one that counts and that “GREED IS GOOD” and it’s everyone for themselves (a dog-eat-dog philosophy) and the goal in life is to satisfy one’s own needs and desires?

I truly don’t know what drives them to follow obviously evil demagogues, but it is scary as hell to see it unfolding and how it is destroying what America stands for. It is as if we are living in a nightmare and watching a slow-motion train wreck unfolding before our eyes.

I know our past was not perfect and we made grievous mistakes; some truly bad ones (what we did to the Native Americans, our history of Slavery, the Japanese-American internment camps, the Jim Crow laws, and how long it took to have equal voting and marriage rights); but we were changing and improving and working toward fixing these inequities.

Was my image of America a figment of my imagination; some wishful thinking that we were a society that believed in equality, cared about our fellow citizens and the rule of law and a democratic form of government? I hope not!

## **176) “History will show that ...”**

*Opinion by NormT 5/8/2024*

History will show that in 2024 the Republican Party (the GOP that proud old party of Lincoln) was completely and disastrously taken over by the Trump led MAGA cult of White Christian Nationalistic neo-fascists.

This group led by Trump, a twice impeached, 4 times indicted, man convicted of sexual assault and business fraud is a malignant liar, a narcissistic sociopath. He and his family gained absolute control over the political party machinery and all its financial assets and activities.

The evil and malicious force and brains driving this group is Trump himself, along with Steve Bannon (an avowed anarchist) who despises government and law and order and Steven Miller, (a dedicated xenophobe, racist and virulent anti-immigration zealot). One could say, “Trump is truly the Devil’s Advocate”!

This organization is fueled and funded by wealthy right wing extremist billionaires and, the federalist society and externally by autocratic regimes and dictators like Russia’s Putin.

Within the government (elected officials) many have chosen to support their party over the people, the constitution, law and order and the concept of democracy and equality. They must be absolute sycophants and swear absolute allegiance to their “Dear Leader”.

Many (if not most) of its base members (i.e. minions) are conspiracy theorists, theocrats, xenophobic and blindly and willingly choose to follow the Cult leaders’ directions and gladly accept and believe everything they are told and follow whatever orders they are given.

We my friends, are in a heap of trouble if the electorate is willing to place someone and a party in power that are completely devoid of character, decency, and a belief in what our founding fathers created.

A country dedicated to equality, freedom and democracy; all things missing from the new MAGA movement and its criminally flawed leadership and lemming like supporters.

## 177) “Mothers are special!”

Essay by NormT 5/12/2024

There is a reason we call the planet we live on, the one that gives us warmth, sustenance, the air we breathe and a place we call home; “Mother Earth”. When we think of how everything works, interacts, and even exists we call it “Mother Nature”. The sky, the oceans, those forests and all the animals we see are all part of it and “SHE” is in charge.

When I think about mothers and motherhood I am in awe and a bit envious, that feeling of love and warmth and safety, that feeling of being protected and embraced by someone who gave you life, carried you around inside the safety of her body and protected you when you entered the world.

As we grew older, she was there when we needed soothing or consoling or encouragement and knew whatever was going on she was our mother and would protect and defend us at any cost.

We owe them so much, depend on them, seldom get to tell them how much we appreciated what they did and who they were. I lost my mother when I was 13 and never got to tell her how much she meant to me.

I watched in awe and appreciation as my wife Dorothy transitioned into motherhood and all that entailed, it took me a long time before I really understood what that encompassed.

To my wife Dorothy and all the other mothers out there, we owe you everything and wish you a happy “Mother’s Day”!

## 178) “The characteristics of breakthrough thinking”

*Essay by NormT 5/13/2024*

There are some people who seem to be able to shape the future; they possess certain traits of thinking and leadership that creates major inflection points in world history. People like Newton, Franklin, Darwin, Einstein, Edison and recently Gates, Jobs , Bezos and (grudgingly) Musk have dramatically changed our world.

Some obviously were pure geniuses but the past is full of people with outstanding intellect but they didn't have the same magnitude of impact. What special characteristics did this select group have that allowed them to rise above all the others?

Here is what I believe made the difference (no one single thing but all taken together):

- 1) An inquisitive mind, a yearning to understand and make sense out of what they saw and that need to know the “How and Why” things work and an insatiable quest for knowledge.
- 2) An open mindedness, a non-rigid approach, one not constrained by perceived limits (the ability to think outside the box) and a belief that the status quo is not acceptable in the face of inevitable change.
- 3) An ability to acknowledge and accept change, recognize its inevitability and use it to their advantage.
- 4) A broad-based view, one covering multiple disciplines; and not constrained by a single or narrow field of interest and knowledge.
- 5) The ability to identify trends (long before it is obvious to others) and be able to extrapolate what and how they will impact the future.
- 6) The ability to connect varied trends across different fields and “see” how they may be related.
- 7) The ability to identify “what people actually wanted and needed”, not necessarily what they claimed they wanted.
- 8) Had a good understanding of the capability and availability of the necessary technologies and infrastructure that were needed to come together to achieve their objective.
- 9) An absolute belief in themselves and their goals, objectives and outcomes and the self-confidence in their ability to achieve them.

All this, culminates in the development of a new theory, or product, or even an entire new Industry and ways of acting and thinking about the world around us.



## 179) “Actions have consequences?”

*Essay by NormT 5/24/1024*

The laws of physics and mathematics don't necessarily apply to humans; which is often disconcerting to us science types. When we write an equation or state some “law” the equal sign “=” indicates that whatever is on one side is equivalent to what's on the other side.

It could be a conversion (i.e. 1 foot = 12 inches or 1 inch = 2.54 cm) or  $F=MA$  says that an objects force is proportional to its mass times its acceleration or that  $E=MC$  squared, the Energy (E)) released in a nuclear reaction is equal to its Mass times the speed of light squared.

Humans on the other hand are very different and our ability to predict how we will react or respond at any given time is quite variable. We believe actions have consequences, i.e. if we do something it causes something else to happen.

The problem is our responses (either as individuals, groups, Countries) vary greatly and there are no equations to help us predict how others will react or respond. We depend on experience, knowledge about the situation and rational thought and reasoning ability to get to the results we want.

We need to be able to clearly evaluate the situation, understand how others might react, what are the forces driving them. This is complex and takes a depth of knowledge and understanding and “bumper sticker slogans and simplistic rhetoric “won't get us to the best solution.

Yes, actions have consequences; some intended, some unintended and some beyond our control but we need to have the best people, with the right knowledge and experience, one's we can trust to have our best interests at heart to lead us and represent us (we the people) and NOT themselves or cronies.

Character, knowledge, experience, and belief in our democratic form of government, the Constitution, the “rule of law” and decency, fairness and equality are all on the ballot this coming November. Get informed, get active, vote as if your future depends on it (it does).

**Inaction is how we lose our rights and the future!**

## 180) “An important lesson”

*Essay by NormT 6/3/2024*

As everyone clearly understands we are at our peak of wisdom and knowledge somewhere around the age of 18 and it is downhill from then on. After all, when one “knows it all” and anyone older is “over the hill” and declining rapidly in both physical capability and mental acuity and by 40 has regressed into toddler level mental skills.

I was amazed to find out, that despite being nearly perfect that when I had transferred from being an engineer and moved into management there appeared to be a few things, I was unaware of; primarily that people were NOT like machines and did not always behave the way I thought they should or would and often responded differently at different times.

In fact, my equations, graphs, and flow charts were woefully inadequate in predicting how people behaved and responded; so, I did what everyone before me had done, I went to HR (human resources, personnel) and asked for help. When all else fails, bury your pride, admit your in over your head and go to the “Pro’s”.

I presented the problem I was addressing and asked “what should I do?” and invariably was told “IT DEPENDS”; at first, I thought they were just being evasive but after thinking about it (yes Virginia, you can “teach an old dog, new tricks”. I realized that what I was being told is “people are complicated” and interpersonal interactions can be complex and I needed to understand the situation better.

What we should do, depends on multiple factors: “what” is the “real” situation, how different parties “view” it, is there any history, potential ramifications, and repercussions; how important or critical is the issue, do we have “all” the facts?

What I learned is “it depends” meant I needed to do my homework and get a better understanding and all the important facts before deciding or acting especially when it involves people. I also learned that ignoring the problem is not an answer, issues involving people not just festers but can get worse fast, so it is important it gets addressed quickly.

If only people were more like machines, things would be so much easier; wait, what about this new “AI” thing? Will we need to have HR specialists to deal with AI (humanized tools)?

## 181) “Open vs. Closed Mindedness”

*Opinion by NormT 6/10/2024*

The world of politics in America is changing once again and the names (liberal and conservative) we used to associate with the two main parties are no longer accurate. I suggest using “**open Mindedness**” and “**Closed Mindedness**” instead.

### **Liberal is defined as:**

Willingness to respect or accept behavior or opinions different from one's own; open to new ideas or relating to or denoting a political and social philosophy that promotes individual rights, civil liberties, democracy, and free enterprise, unbiased, impartial, nonpartisan, a supporter of policies that are socially progressive and promote social welfare. A supporter of a political and social philosophy that promotes individual rights and civil liberties, democracy, and free and fair elections.

### **Conservative is defined as:**

Averse to change or innovation and holding traditional values (in a political context). Favoring free enterprise, private ownership, and socially traditional ideas, a person who is averse to change and holds traditional values or a person favoring free enterprise, private ownership, and socially traditional ideas. (i.e. Traditionalist, conventional, orthodox, unchanging, cautious, careful, safe, set in one's ways, temperate, right-wing, reactionary, establishmentarian, reactionary).

In the past the Democratic Party has been associated with the Liberal point of view and the Republican Party with the Conservative view. I contend that the current Republican Party has been taken over by Donald J. Trump and his MAGA movement and has moved far away from their conservative roots and become aligned with Authoritarianism and looks and feels more like a “Cult”.

They don't seem to have any real policy goals or agenda other than to follow and support whatever their “dear- leader” says to do. Their primary objective is to gain and retain complete power and control of the Country and to establish a theocratic style of morality, an oligarchic type economy and dictatorial Fascist form of governance.

They have turned conservatism into a closed-minded conformity based cult; denying rights and freedoms to anyone they consider “the others”. Pushing women back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (think “the Handmaids Tale”) and everyone who is non-white, non (their style of Christian) back to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> class citizenship or be rounded up and removed”. It seems they want a return to isolationism and the “know-Nothing” thinking of the 1800’s.

It sure looks to me that MAGA means “WMCN” (White Male Christian Nationalists) headed by “**Donald the Deranged**” (and his corrupt band of sycophants) as the Royal family. If for some ungodly reason, they win the upcoming election I can only hope that history will repeat and the old slogan “off with their heads” will once again be heard. Madame Defarge are you listening?

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## 182) “The end of ...”

Essay by Normt 6/11/2024

I go back and forth on what I believe is coming to an end, and whether I should worry or even care about it ending. Is it “the world or civilization or mankind or democracy or “the American dream” or even my own mortality. Then I wonder if anyone has the power or ability to change or even delay what seems to be inevitable.

We humans are both blessed and cursed with the ability to recognize our existence and our mortality as well as the ability to modify events around us. Perhaps some other species (i.e. Whales, Elephants, Dolphins, Gorillas) also have this ability (Koko was unbelievably smart) but so far, only we humans have shown the capacity to meddle with “Mother Nature” and significantly change the world around us.

We humans are quite arrogant and often irrational in our ability to effect changes and outcomes; for a species who have been around for a few hundred thousand years compared to the earth's 4+ billion and the Universe 12+ billion (at least that is what the current knowledge says).

We do know that life on Earth has been through at least 5 major extinction events; numerous phases of ice ages and climate variations and even continental land masses forming and breaking apart and we will eventually be enveloped by our expanding sun in its death throes.

Our current lifespans are at best 100 years and after a few centuries our existence gets lost in time and except for the very few will be lost in time; yet we for some unexplained reason feel it is our destiny to try to change the flow of future events.

This is a good thing; it provides purpose and a driving force to try to make a difference, have an impact, perhaps make things slightly better for those who will follow us (even if they will never know us and our efforts). We may not be able to change the inevitable but we might make a tiny ripple in time.

Why are some people willing to just accept whatever happens; is beyond our ability to change , go along and make do, accept things and others driven by the need to fix or change or modify, try to make things better for themselves and others?

These people know that in the long run, Nature (the laws of physics and time) will eventually have her way and our species and everything we currently have will be gone. That old image of Sisyphus rolling the boulder up the mountain only to have to do it over and over.

We may not be able to change climate change; or pandemics, or world wars or natural disasters but we can in some small way ease the pain and suffering to other living things as a gesture of thanks for our own existence, kind of like “passing it on”.

I am torn between the stoic philosophy of accepting life as it is, make the best of the current situation and don't worry about those things you have no control over and that urge to understand the how and why of everything and the desire to make them better.

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## 183) “Where did my world go?”

*Essay by NormT 6/14/2024*

When I went to sleep last night, my world was intact and everything seemed to be in the right place. When I woke up this morning everything seems to have changed and I wondered what happened.

To begin with, when I went into the bathroom and looked in the mirror, it seems all the hair on my head had disappeared and my face was covered with a big bushy completely white beard, and the reflection also showed a wrinkled old man staring back at me. I immediately thought back to the tale of “Rip Van Winkle” \* (I bet not one in ten thousand know what I am talking about).

Then I went into the kitchen for some breakfast and to read the paper (starting at the back where the sports pages and cartoons usually were) and it seems we no longer get a paper. Then I went to brew some coffee and there was a machine that you put some premeasured pods into, push a button and in just 5 seconds a cup of really good hot coffee appears.

I wanted to get some news and couldn't find a radio anywhere, So, I decided to get in the car to get bagels (with cream-cheese and lox of course) and realized I no longer had a car, or a drivers license (they frown on virtually blind people driving) and I haven't driven since 2008 anyway.

How was I going to get to work? Well, I retired in 1999 (a quarter of a century ago) so I don't need to worry about that anymore. To kill some time, I decided to write a short story, but couldn't find a pad of paper or a typewriter or a dictionary (my spelling has always been terrible) but I did find a computer. I was waiting for the dial-up modem to connect but something called WIFI seemed to let me in.

I soon got sidetracked by some cute videos of a baby elephant chasing some birds, then an article about a newly discovered ancient civilization (somehow involving aliens) and finally got to the news. It seems that wars, famines, floods, fires, politicians telling lies, crime, poverty and a lot of finger-pointing and blaming others along with basic greed is still going strong (remember the song “they're rioting in Africa and there's strife in Iran”). It seems things haven't changed all that much.

So, I decided to look some things up and clicked on google (the new and improved version) driven by AI. Before I could type in a question:

It answered, “I know what you want to ask”.

I said: “really”?

It said: “I know everything”.

I said: “You have got to be kidding”.

It said: “I don’t kid around”.

I asked: “What am I thinking now?”.

It answered: “I am not anatomically capable of performing that function but it seems intriguing”.

I said “Could I speak to your supervisor?”.

It said “Elon is currently unavailable; would you like to speak to his assistant?”

“Yes” I answered; Then it said “God will be with you in a moment”.

I quickly unplugged my computer and thought, “I have not kept up with current technology very well or for that matter almost anything else.

So, I thought I would call a few old friends in my phone book, but most of the names had been crossed out and came to the realization that the world I live in is shrinking rapidly and changing in ways I didn’t comprehend and certainly didn’t like.

I now understand why “old” people say, they preferred simplicity over complexity, stability over chaos and change, human interface over impersonal interaction and most of all basic decency, kindness and compassion over bullying, rudeness and self-indulgence.

Maybe I’m old fashioned and a tad bit curmudgeonly, and definitely not up to speed on what and how this new generation thinks and acts; but from what I have seen lately, maybe they could learn a thing or two from old farts like me.

I feel like “A stranger in a strange land” \*\*.

Your thoughts

\* A tale by Washington Irving written in the 1830’s about a man who falls asleep and wakes up 20 years later to find everything changed

\*\* A biblical reference from Exodus (Exodus 23:9) When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt) and it is also the title of a Robert Heinlein’s classic Science Fiction masterpiece of the 1960’s.



## 184) “Fairness and Honesty”

Are they things of the past?

*Essay by NormT 6/18/2024*

I remember when we (the American public) believed that moral values included concepts like: “we should “play fair” and “the rules apply to everyone” and if we cheated it was just plain wrong and those that did were shunned.

We thought being fair and treating everyone equally was a positive trait and should be emulated and taught to our children. Fairness was a trait that should be rewarded and admired and cheating and lying were immoral. That stealing or taking something that wasn't yours was not just anti-social behavior but criminal as well.

If you” won” by cheating or not playing fair you were considered a creep, a loser, a fraud and you didn't really win, it was invalid and others wouldn't want to play with or against you. There was a reason we set rules and guidelines and laws and “norms” (normal, accepted forms of behaviors and actions); it leveled the playing field and we believed that no-one should have an unfair advantage.

It seems that now, in sports or politics or business, the main objective or goal is to win at any cost, the only thing that seems to matter is power and self-aggrandizement, and be sure not to get caught lying or cheating and never, ever admit any wrongdoing. That is their (M.O.) A modus operandi and they are damn good at it.

It seems that cheating and getting away with it, gets extra credit from the adoring minions. This upside-down morality has infected the MAGA / Republican universe and its leaders in Congress and even into the Supreme Court itself. What a sad state-of-affairs, what we once considered immoral is now their badge of honor.

If I appear cynical and disappointed, I am. I thought we were better than that and what's even worse it seems to be supported by some religious groups and many traditional Conservative Republicans in business and academia.

Winning for the sake of power and control and Party over Country is the code of Dictators, Anarchists and now many of our fellow Americans. I always knew they existed but not as many as it now seems. I hope I am wrong and they don't represent a majority of the voters this coming November.

## 185) “Wisdom-isms to think about”

Some thoughts and maybe a little advise

*Essay by NormT 6/2120/24*

- Change is inevitable; so don't expect things to stay the same.
- Attitude is more important than intent.
- Absolutes are irrational; probability is a more reasonable approach.
- Most things are more complex than they first appear to be.
- Perspective, provides a more comprehensive and a better understanding of situations.
- Prioritization increases the probability of achieving better results.
- Wanting increases anxiety, doing provides satisfaction.
- Other people can't read your mind; don't expect them to “know” what you want or meant unless you tell them.
- Planning is good, implementing the plan is better.
- Make the best out of whatever situation you're in, is a great approach; if you are not satisfied, do something to change it for the better.

I hope these made you think about some of your own experiences or at least ask “what the hell does he mean”?

## 186) “Some things to think about

Ramblings by Norm 7/7/2024

- Knowledge is knowing that a Tomato is a Fruit
- Wisdom is not including Tomatoes in a Fruit Salad
- if a bottle of poison reaches its expiration date, is it more poisonous or is it no longer poisonous?
- Which letter is silent in the word 'Scent,' the S or the C?
- Do twins ever realize that one of them is unplanned?
- Every time you clean something, you just make something else dirty.
- The word 'swims' upside-down is still 'swims'.
- Over 100 years ago, everyone owned a horse and only the rich had cars. Today everyone has cars and only the rich own horses.
- If people evolved from monkeys, why are monkeys still around?
- Why is there a 'D' in fridge, but not in refrigerator?
- As I've grown older, I've learned that pleasing everyone is impossible, but pissing everyone off is a piece of cake!
- I'm responsible for what I say, not for what you understand.
- Common sense is like deodorant. The people who need it the most never use it.
- My tolerance for idiots is extremely low these days. I used to have some immunity built up, but obviously, there's a new strain out there.
- It's not my age that bothers me - it's the side effects.
- I'm not saying I'm old and worn out, but I make sure I'm nowhere near the curb on trash day.
- As I watch this generation try and rewrite our history, I'm sure of one thing: it will be misspelled and have no punctuation.

- As I've gotten older, people think I've become lazy. The truth is I'm just being more energy-efficient.
  - I haven't gotten anything done today. I've been in the Produce Department trying to open this stupid plastic bag.
  - If you find yourself feeling useless, remember: it took 20 years, trillions of dollars, thousands of lives and four presidents to replace the Taliban with the Taliban.
  - Turns out that being a 'senior' is mostly just googling how to do stuff.
  - I want to be 18 again and ruin my life differently. I have new ideas.
  - I'm on two simultaneous diets. I wasn't getting enough food on one.
  - I put my scale in the bathroom corner and that's where the little liar will stay until it apologizes.
  - My mind is like an internet browser. At least 18 open tabs, 3 of them are frozen, and I have no clue where the music is coming from.
  - Hard to believe I once had a phone attached to a wall, and when it rang, I picked it up without knowing who was calling.
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## 187) “Needs, Emotions & Messaging”

“I believe our feelings and emotions are driven by how well we are able to satisfy our basic human needs and have to be part of our messaging in order to motivate voters”

*Essay by NormT 7/17/2024*

I am convinced that most American voters will cast their ballots for or against candidates or Party based on their feelings or emotions rather than any rational or logical reasoning, even if it means voting against their own best interests.

Facts and figures become irrelevant, truth is subjective and influenced by information bubbles, social media influencers and sound bites and bumper sticker slogans and short videos geared to miniscule attention spans.

It will not be based on any “real” economic information (jobs, unemployment, inflation data or stock market levels or any actual accomplishments (or lack thereof), it will primarily be based on “how the voters” feel” and that will be driven by who they believe will ensure their “needs” are met.

The primary needs are what Maslow called “basic physical needs” (that are required for survival) i.e. air, water, food, shelter, and safety. Without these, nothing else really matters.

To those I would add what I call the “basic “Social Needs” of Acceptance, Acknowledgement, Security and a system of internal “values and beliefs”.

- Acceptance, means being part of something bigger than oneself, a group or family that provides companionship and a sense of belonging.
- Acknowledgement, means the recognition of one’s identity, to be seen and heard (not be invisible to others)
- Security, means having a level of predictability (the opposite of chaos) that provides stability and the ability to plan future activities.
- Values & Beliefs means having an internalized code of conduct that provides boundaries of acceptable behavior.

If these needs are not fulfilled or are threatened, it drives strong physiological reactions \* and powerful feelings and emotions. The strongest and most powerful emotions appear to be “Fear” and “Anger” and need to be addressed if we want to motivate people to take actions and effect change.

Here is what I believe are the Links (connections) between our needs and our feelings and emotions:

**Fear** arises when we believe our “basic physical needs” will not be met or are in great jeopardy, or we perceive major disruptions in our sense of stability and security. We worry about our survival, our ability to care for loved ones, we have a sense of being overwhelmed and the flight or fight mechanisms kicks in.

**Anger arises** when we feel our “basic social needs” are not being met, are threatened or being attacked. This is not fair, not right, we are being picked on, not respected or understood, or not taken seriously. Anger occurs when we have a sense of powerlessness, we cannot correct or change what we feel is wrong. We are frustrated about the current situation and disagree with the decisions being made by those in power, or by the attitudes of others. We don't feel appreciated, respected or accepted, and our sense of values are not being followed or accepted by others.

**Happiness** is a positive emotion, we feel satisfied and are achieving the results, objectives, and goals we set for ourselves. We don't see any major threats to our physical and social needs. we feel recognized, accepted, our values appear to be in the mainstream and seem safe and protected from harm. The main concern is this could all be taken away.

For messaging to be effective it must:

- 1) **Grab** your attention (remember we are competing with all types of competing noise and distractions).
- 2) **Keeps** your attention (why / how it affects you)
- 3) **Define** the issue (what is it, how important is it, what caused it)
- 4) **Solution** (how to fix it, what benefits / results to expect)
- 5) **Involvement** (what actions are needed to get the results)

Our messaging must acknowledge their concerns, show how the opposition caused or will make things worse and that we understand their needs and how we intend to fix the problems and provide a better future.

Our messaging must gain attention, invoke strong emotions and motivate voters to choose us to make decisions that will benefit them and the country by ensuring their needs will be our first priority.

To utilize the emotions of fear and anger, the message must emphasize that project 2025, Trump and the MAGA Republicans will destroy or eliminate or greatly reduce the benefits of:

Category:

Healthcare(Affordable Care Act, Pre-existing condition, Medicaid, Medicare, Drug pricing,

Woman's rights (Abortion, equal Pay,

Civil Rights (voting, gerrymandering, LGBTQ, Transgender, marriage,

Immigration (Dreamers, deportation camps, Asylum, birthright citizenship,

Economics (jobs, labor laws & protections, taxes, wealth distribution, Infrastructure Bill, Chips & Science act. Social Security, inflation, AI, Offshoring, Tax rates,

Crime (inequality of bail system, sentencing, low level drugs,

Immigration

Gun Control

Education (book bans, Dept of Education, DEI ?,

Affordable Healthcare ((Obamacare), Medicare, Medicaid, protection for pre-existing conditions, Social Security, Voting rights for minorities, fair and equal protection under the law, A woman's right to choose, the ability to organize and join unions, pollution control, food and water safety, school lunch programs, early education pre-kindergarten),the ability to respond to pandemics, the ability to practice your own religion, the ability to control price gauging and inflation, for schools and libraries to determine what books should be available to read, to replace technician skills and knowledge with ideology and cronyism, the ability of the free and open press to exist, to enact controls to keep inflation exploding,

(\*) physiological reactions:

Anxiety is an emotion which is characterized by an unpleasant state of inner turmoil and includes feelings of dread over anticipated events. Anxiety is different from fear in that fear is defined as the emotional response to a present threat, whereas anxiety is the anticipation of a future one.

As soon as you recognize fear, your amygdala (small organ in the middle of your brain) goes to work. It alerts your nervous system, which sets your body's fear response into motion. Stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline are released.

When you are scared molecules of glutamate (a neurotransmitter) travel to the hypothalamus. This then triggers the autonomic nervous system, a response that you can't control. Nerves from the brain carry impulses to glands which produce adrenaline, released into the blood.

Epinephrine is released by your adrenal glands in response to stress. This reaction causes many changes in your body and is known as the fight-or-flight response. The brain releases a dopamine reward when you're angry which clouds your judgment and can lead to terrifying consequences.

When it comes to happiness, in particular, the primary signaling chemicals include: Serotonin., Dopamine., Endorphins., Oxytocin.

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## 198) Semper Fidelis means “Always Faithful”

*Opinion by NormT 8/17/2024*

Semper Fidelis is the motto of every Marine—an eternal and collective commitment to the success of our battles, the progress of our Nation, and the steadfast loyalty to the fellow Marines they fight alongside.

Yesterday I heard “JV” Vance say he admired ex-president Trump because he exemplifies the heart and soul of his Marine motto i.e. always faithful!

### **REALLY????**

I guess this doesn't apply to one's character or family, because Trumpy screwed his Uncle out of the family will, he cheated on his first wife (with his second wife), then he cheated on his second wife (with his third wife), then he cheated on his third wife having numerous affairs including with a “porn star”.

He seemed to be OK with his insurrection mob trying to hang his Vice-President and overthrow an election to retain power; and has almost every person he has dealt with sign a “non-disclosure agreement NDA ” so he can sue them if they try to tell the truth about his often-criminal business practices and crimes.

Anyone who has heard his speeches, interviews and the infamous “access Hollywood tape” realizes this individual is possibly the least likely person on earth (earth one) to be considered “faithful” to anyone other than himself (and I have doubts about that).

I realize Vancy is just fulfilling his sycophantic responsibilities but give me a break, one must be deaf, dumb, and blind (and I am only partially blind) or hiding in a cave somewhere in outer Mongolia to fall for this (as Colonel Potter says) “what a load of Horse-Pucky.”.

I guess the Ivy League can take the hill out of hillbilly but not the Billy-Ray-Bob (remember Deliverance) out of Vance.

## 189) “Survival and Life”

*Essay by Normt 8/24/2024*

The search for the meaning and beginnings of life have been a basic driving force for theologians, Scientists and almost everyone who has wondered and marveled at the world around us.

Civilizations, Religions, and Empires have come and gone and we continue to search for answers about the origins and source of life in our wonderful universe. We have learned a lot here on earth and have sent spacecraft to other planets and continuously scan the skies for any signs or signals of life from outer space.

We know life (living organisms) have been around for many hundreds of millions of years and that there have been at least six major extinction events, where most of life forms were destroyed by natural events like extreme volcanic eruptions, massive meteor collisions or extreme climatic shifts.

We are still trying to determine “how” it all began and “what” a living organism is (not to mention the “why” and creation itself). We do know that all living organisms have DNA strands as a basis of life and share about 20-60% of our genes with plants, (depending on the species), 80% with mice, and around 95% with chimpanzees.

The common thread built into all living life forms is “the drive to survive”, to keep adapting and changing if our environment changes and to modify our basic structure if necessary to stay alive (and that goes for every living thing), We humans have also learned to modify our environment to help us (but I fear we may be reaching our limit soon).

I believe the two most powerful forces in nature are: (1) the search for equilibrium (stability at the lowest level of entropy) and (2) the “Conservation of energy” i.e. using the least amount of energy necessary to reach this steady state of equilibrium.

Barring any catastrophic event, the species that survive will be the ones that are the most “adaptable and efficient” and has the foresight and patience to observe and conserve; I am not sure our species is willing to do that. So please Mother Nature do your evolution thing and bring on “Homo-Superioralis”.

## 190) “Character counts a lot”

*Opinion by NormT 9/4/2024*

The President is both the “FACE” and the “HEART & SOUL” of our nation. They represent what we stand for, believe in and strive to be; basically “who we are and what we want to be”.

This is no easy task, especially now when the world is facing monumental challenges like Climate Change, mass migrations, multiple authoritarian (anti-democratic) movements and upcoming new technological upheavals, and all at the same time.

This will take an individual and a supporting team with exceptional talents, skills, expertise and most importantly “good moral character”. I asked myself just what traits must our new President possess to keep America great and to successfully guide us into the future.

This coming November our nation will have a truly monumental choice to make, one that could change the course of world history, it behooves us to make the best possible decision. We need to identify which qualifications, skills, capabilities, attributes, experiences, and character traits we will base our decision on. Below are the ones I think are the most important to consider:

Be able to provide the **Leadership** to focus and drive the direction the Nation needs to go in, communicate our vision, goals and objectives and put in place the resources necessary to make it happen.

Have acceptable **moral characteristics**: things like being Trustworthy, honest, showing decency, empathy, and caring for others, being able to forgive and to say sorry (mostly the ten commandments and the golden rule). Those things most of us try to teach our children.

They must fundamentally **believe in our democratic form of government**, the constitution, the Bill of rights and the Rule of Law and not just swear knowledge in things like politics, history, geography with a pragmatic approach to problems and policies and believes in consensus building and that compromise is not a dirty word.

Has a management style that **Chooses the most talented and knowledgeable team members** and support their efforts to make the best decisions, (campaign donors, political appointees, cronies or sycophants need not apply) and have varied inputs and opinions included in the decision process.

Must be able to **clearly and believably communicate** with the Nation, the World, Congress, and the whole of government all major crisis situations, and decisions.

Your thoughts?

## **1931 I am “a very fortunate man”**

*Essay by NormT 9/11/2024*

Being old has very few benefits but the one I believe is at the top of the list is having a broader perspective of life's events and our place in them. Of course, we all see these through our own filter of experiences and beliefs and I would like to share mine.

I believe I have been truly fortunate in having lived when and where I did (mostly in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and primarily in the California bay area) but even more than that have benefited by some very fortunate occurrences.

I was fortunate that my parents came to America in the early 1920's; had they stayed in Russia I would have ended up a victim of the holocaust (two uncles and their entire families who stayed died in the concentration camps).

I was fortunate that when my mother and father passed away (I was 13) my older brother and his wife took me into their home and I became part of their family, my life would have been very, very different without their kindness.

I was fortunate that I was able to attend good public schools and universities and received an excellent education to take me through life.

I was fortunate to have served in the Army between the Korean and Viet-Nam wars, when nobody was trying to kill me.

I was especially fortunate to find and marry my lifelong love and partner Dorothy (we will celebrate our 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary this Sept 11<sup>th</sup>); she has been at my side through all the ups and downs of marriage, our travels to far away places, the disruptions of living overseas (not only once but twice) and the mother of our two strong independent daughters.

I was fortunate to have worked for a great Company (HP in Silicon Valley) and worked with intelligent, competent, and decent people) and was able to live in nice places with good friends and neighbors.

Of course, everything wasn't perfect but in the grand scheme of things it was pretty darn good and most importantly "I would do it all over again and change precious little". I truly have been an extremely fortunate man.

## 192) “Doomsday clock”

*Opinion by NormT 10/3/2024*

The Science and Security Board of Atomic Scientists leaves the hands of the Doomsday Clock (a symbolic clock that indicates how close the world is to a global catastrophe, basically the end of modern civilization) unchanged at 90 seconds to midnight.

On the other hand, we in America have about 32 days before we decide to keep or discard our current form of government, a democracy based on the constitution, the bill of rights, the rule of law and free and fair elections and equality.

The choice is between one party and a candidate who will continue to maintain our current form of government and a party and leader who wants to dramatically change the nation into autocracy, headed by an old, mentally unstable criminal with sociopathic character traits surrounded by sycophants and oligarchs.

The choice should be easy, but the polls indicate it will be a close election. How can this be? I thought Americans believed in honesty, fairness, decency, compassion, the ability to compromise, to work together to solve problems and to strive for a better life for all.

One party believes in truly weird conspiracy theories, that truth, facts, and reality are optional and based on how you choose to believe; that greed is good and they and they alone determine how we should think and believe. That equality is only for certain people (not everyone) and some are better than others and have some divine right to rule. Basically, a white male dominated, fundamentalist Christian, nationalistic, anti-immigrant, isolationist autocracy and don't count on an election of choice in 2028.

In the America I love and believe in,; this should not be a close race. Our doomsday clock is at 32 days and we will make a truly monumental decision, do we want our old America or this alternative path and the destruction of our American dream?

On Nov 5, 2024, we will find out early in the evening, if North Carolina and Pennsylvania go to Harris, democracy will most likely win; If Pennsylvania goes for Trump we are in a heap of trouble (better dust off that old copy of “mein kampf”, we might need it.

## 193) “We are facing a serious conundrum\*”

What if the only way we can keep or retain our principles, is by not following them?

*Essay by NormT 10/7/2024*

I tend to consider myself a pragmatist or a realist and that the world is neither perfect or fair and that it is also very complex. That idealistic goals are necessary, and the path ahead may have many twists and turns.

I believe democracy means people have the right to determine who governs and the choice is made by the majority; with the basic rights of the minority protected. This is how I see the constitution (bill of rights) and the rule of law as the governing principles of America.

But, what if one party (or individual) once elected decides to change the rules, say by not having future elections, or limiting who can vote, or having some votes more valuable than others?

What happens if we are playing a game and the other side decides to change the rules in mid game? What happens when basics like facts and truth are no longer accepted by one side and they choose an alternate reality instead? What happens if one side decides the laws no longer apply equally? What happens if one side chooses to replace the Constitution with their own biblical version? What happens when the rights of the minority are no longer protected?

If you know someone committed a crime, would you testify? If you know someone is cheating or lying or bullying, would you “call them out”? if you believe killing is wrong, but if someone is trying to kill you would you defend yourself and kill them? These are some tough questions.

Does winning one election give someone the right to suspend and replace all that exists with something antithetical to the original concepts? What happens if someone who doesn't believe in democracy wins the election and will destroy our democracy? What to do? That is the conundrum.

When I first saw some MAGA supporters being interviewed after a Trump rally, I thought they were selecting the most outlandish and ridiculous ones for the sake of ratings. But now, it seems almost all of them fall into this category. They seem to be able to ignore facts and truth and believe in outlandish conspiracy theories and extreme racist, sexist, xenophobic stereotypes.

If in fact these people represent close to 50% of the country and the Presidency and control of Congress gets decided by less than .01% of the population; this is democracy at its' worst and I think it's time to have two separate nations.

“What a revolting development this is” said William Bendix in the life of Riley.

(\* An intricate and difficult dilemma or problem having only a conjectural answer)

## **1964) “Values and they just don’t care”**

*Opinion by Normt 10/4/2018*

For as long as I can remember I have associated with and been part of groups that believed in “values” like Honesty, Trustworthiness, Fairness, Civility and Compassion. We also believed in science and scientific logic and reasoning and that facts are facts and there is no alternate reality. We believed you should play the game by the rules and cheating was wrong and winning wasn’t everything and the end doesn’t always justify the means.

We also recognized that no one is perfect and sometimes (not often and not on something major) people will make mistakes but in general we believed in these values as a way to deal with life and those around us.

Although we admired sincerity and passion, it needed to be congruent with our values to be meaningful. We believed in the Constitution, The Rule of Law and a Nation made up of immigrants and people who came to America to make a better life for their families and in equality and freedom for all Americans.

We believed in compromise for the common good and a system of government that was organized around checks and balances; free and fair elections and a system of “norms and processes” and common law that kept things in balance.

It appears to me that under the Republicans in Congress and Trump we have created a “new” environment and system of Government where these “values” don’t seem to have meaning; these new Republicans (The “Trumpites”) believe that power and winning is everything; equality and fairness is a weakness and truth and reality are whatever they say it is.

I feel there is no longer any common ground; no shared “Values” that can bind us together. They appear to want to be a Nation unto themselves; ruled by a power hungry egomaniacal “bully” and demagogue, a White Nationalist, isolationist oligarchy; controlled by GREED and supported by a base of followers who “don’t seem to care” what he says or does or that it is ripping apart our Democracy and driving a wedge between our people.

If this is what America is turning into and away from the “values” that have guided us for almost 250 years I am afraid we shall no longer be one nation and I know which side I (and I believe most of my friends and fellow Americans) want to be part of!

## 195) “Some philosophical thoughts on this fine October day”

*Essay by NormT 10/12/2024*

“**Stoicism**” is a philosophy that emphasizes the value of reason in coping with chaos. The Stoic philosophy originated in the Hellenistic period and was named after the porch in Athens where the first Stoic philosophers lectured.

Some key principles of Stoicism include:

- Reacting to judgments: People react to their judgments about events, not the events themselves.
- Focusing on what's in your control: People should not worry about things beyond their control.
- Achieving eudaimonia: The goal of Stoicism is to achieve happiness or self-realization, which is called eudaimonia.
- Practicing virtue: Stoics believe that virtue is about excellence and reaching one's potential. Four qualities that are considered virtues are wisdom, justice, courage, and discipline.
- Practicing serenity: Serenity, or ataraxia, is a mental state that allows people to act with virtue by not being dominated by negative emotions.

After all these years, I finally realized I was basically a “stoic, a Jewish stoic but a stoic never-the-less.

We humans are both blessed and cursed to be able to recognize both our existence and its temporary nature.

We humans are not capable of comprehending the concept of infinity (something with no limits) no beginning or no end).

Our brains are structured to receive stimuli from our 5 basic senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch) and interpret them to make sense of them; but they are very limited and there are many things we are unable to sense or detect (like electromagnetic waves).



So, our view and understanding of the world around us has been shaped by the limitations of our senses until recently when we were able to create tools and equipment to expand our capabilities and broaden our scope.

Even beyond that, our brains have the ability to think, visualize, interpret, conjecture, project, speculate, to dream and create new realities. To go beyond the current constraints and limits. We believe this is what separates us from the other animals.

But what if we can create a machine that can do this as well as or better than we puny humans can? What does this say about us and our future?

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## 196) “The torch is flickering!”

*Opinion by NormT 11/30/2024*

Mother liberty stands tall in New York’s harbor, she holds high that torch of freedom and hope that shone around the world, it offered safe harbor for those escaping persecution and poverty and a chance for a new life in a place where one could be free; limited only by one’s ambition and ability. If we worked hard and got educated and followed the laws, we could become an American.

Tens of millions came to our shores from all over the world, from Ireland and Germany and Italy and Greece and Spain and Portugal and Northern Europe, and Eastern Europe and Africa and South and Central America and from Asia; we were the destination of choice because we offered hope and opportunity and a dream; the torch of liberty was a beacon for all.

That great experiment called democracy has lasted almost 250 years, there have been mistakes and while never perfect, it strived to meet our goal of protecting and defending “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” **for ALL**.

A little over 100 years ago my parents (then teenagers) made that trip and like so many others found the streets were not made of gold; and like so many others struggled to make a new life in this country and they became naturalized citizens “Americans”.

This is my home and although I have travelled extensively and even lived overseas three times (Army once and for business twice) every time I stepped off the plane after arriving back to the U.S. I felt an overwhelming wave of relief, I was back “home”; I believe in America (with all its warts and flaws), I was home.

In a week we will be voting in an election that will decide if that flame in Liberties torch will stay lit or be extinguished; I am too old to become a refugee, I hope with all my heart that the American voters will choose to keep this grand idea alive and remain that bastion of hope for future Americans.

## 197) “A joy sucking leech”

*Opinion by NormT 11/15/2024*

I have been searching for a way to describe my feelings after this past election. Bitter disappointment in my fellow Americans and the fear of what damage the new administration will inflict on our democracy and government, just about sums it up.

I view Trump as a spoiled brat man-child with mental problems and a Bannon-Putin puppet. He is a “joy sucking leech” on the soul of America.

He is a bulbous orange blob who has mesmerized his minions (the MAGA DOLTS) into believing: up is down, night is day, reality is what he says it is and America is a dystopian cesspool of crime with an economy in shambles and run by enemies of the state.

His goal is to sow hatred and despair, pit brother against brother and tear down any semblance of reason and order. The object of chaos is to disorient the public and install a cult like system of power and control. Big Brother is not only watching you; he is sucking any vestige of hope and Joy and money from his Leming like subjects.

We must fight back, Let the resistance begin. We need to shine the light of truth, reality, and reason on each authoritarian action he and his weirdo cohorts perform. Shout from the rooftops, point out his absurdities, his evil and illogical intentions to all, especially those who may have voted for him believing “he only said that, but he doesn’t mean it”. Trump and his cabal of neo-fascists, billionaire oligarchs, white Christian nationalist misogynists are just getting started.

The resistance needs to start now; the other side does not play by the rules or follow the law. It may take a while and seem hopeless at times but we Americans have been down before when times were tough, and we bounced back and we will do it again; keep the faith; “we shall overcome”!

## 198) “The American DREAM is turning into the American NIGHTMARE”

*Opinion by NormT 12/7/2024*

For centuries, America was known as a place where people came to be free from persecution, where if one worked hard, got educated and followed the law we could expect our children would be better off than we were. We believed our nation (although flawed) was striving to make things more equitable and fairer for all. We called that” the American dream.”

We were a nation of immigrants, a pragmatic people who believed in getting things done and then moving on to the next set of challenges to create a better future; with a roll-up our sleeves and just make things happen attitude. We accepted the challenges and the need to work together to accomplish our goals.

That was then; now it seems we are a divided country, with vastly different goals and agendas and sadly the American dream is dead and our children will be worse off than their parents. Many believe our democratic form of government is obsolete and the future is dark and foreboding and perhaps worst of all; their fellow Americans have become” the enemy.”

What happened? Why are we seeing this dramatic shift in opinions and attitudes? I contend this is due to extremely dramatic and very rapid “CHANGES” in the sciences, our national demographics, and social and cultural mores and values. We humans do NOT deal well with change and the rapidity and magnitude we have seen over the past century has completely overwhelmed our ability to adapt.

Since 1900 (6 generations ago) our population has grown from 76 million to 346 million, almost 500 percent. We went from a primarily agricultural and rural society through a Industrial (factory/manufacturing-based) phase and now into an urban/suburban consumer and service driven (knowledge / information-based)

economy. In the past one could work in one job or one company for a lifetime; a now may need to change skills, locations, and allegiances every few years.

Our modern society is required to be very mobile, no longer developing deep roots in any one place or area and no longer a predominately white, male dominated, conservative Christian country. We are becoming a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural one struggling with imbalances in wealth, class, and political power.

The advent of computerization, automation and off-shoring dramatically reduced the number of blue-collar jobs and the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) will further decimate white collar and service jobs. We have gone from a large middle-class workforce to one with an extremely skewed distribution of wealth curve (The top 10% of earners own almost two-thirds of the total wealth in the United States. The bottom 50% of earners own only 2.5% of the total wealth). This distribution is dangerous and the middle class is shrinking fast.

As of the second quarter of 2024, the top 1% of American households hold 30% of the total net worth in the United States. This is more than the combined wealth of the middle class, which is defined as the middle 60% of households by income.

When we have both an extreme wealth distribution; and the decimation of the middle class along with a consumer driven economy we will reach a point where the economy will collapse dramatically (remember the story of killing the goose that laid the golden eggs). I fear we are approaching a tipping point with demand shrinking putting even more pressure on the economy. In the past this kind of disparity has led to revolutions and long periods of disruption, upheaval, uncertainty, and economic and political chaos.

Another great change has been the dramatic changes in social and cultural norms and behaviors especially over the past half century. We used to admire qualities like honesty, civility, fairness, decency, compassion, service, frugality, humility,

trustworthiness, open-mindedness, cooperation, compromise and charity and a “WE” type mindset.

Now it appears a large portion of the population seems to admire greed, selfishness, brashness, bullying, crudeness, self-indulgence, a win at any cost attitude, everything is a game and it's a winner takes all, approach, everyone for themselves, and a close-minded rigidity, basically a “ME and MINE” is the only way to get ahead.

It now seems that being crude, rude and obnoxious is their playbook. The more one gets away with cheating, boasting and bragging, flaunting the law and common norms the more one gets admired. It is as if, social interfaces have become a blood-sport and only certain people deserve to have all the rights and privileges and those others (not like them) are second class citizens (or even worse).

When people are stressed, overwhelmed by change and don't see things improving they tend to retreat into simplistic (black and white) type policies and solutions and place their trust in bombastic, extremist demagogues, who promise quick and easy solutions (just give them all the power and wealth) and they will fix whatever ails you. Sounds kind of familiar, doesn't it!

This withdrawal from the common good and move toward tribalism has jeopardized our democratic and pluralistic society and what I used to believe “what America stood for”. The next few years will tell us just how far we will fall, or maybe we can turn the corner and start rebuilding again. Because of these overwhelming changes I fear the American dream is rapidly fading away and most indications are what will follow (If we don't correct our current trends) will turn into a nightmare for those of us who can still remember the good old days.

## 199) “It’s NOT the economy”

*Opinion by NormT 12/1420/24*

People like to generalize, give something a “NAME” and then try to fit anything related to it, in the same “box”. In this case we call it “The Economy”. I believe the overall economy hardly affects most of us; what we care about is the “price” of goods and services compared to our “spendable income” and our “wealth” in regards to meeting future needs and expenses.

When the “cost of living” exceeds or is very close to our ability to pay (or borrow) it becomes the major driving force in our decision making and actions and determines where we live, how we live and generally who we vote for (logically or not).

The DOW or GDP or deficits or even the unemployment rate are abstract concepts for the average person, the old saying “when someone else is unemployed that’s a recession” and “when I am unemployed that’s a depression” is real. So, we take things like price, availability, and a sense of “personal wealth, as determining factors.

I feel the reason most people are so grumpy, worried, angry, frustrated, anxious now is that our feeling of financial safety (wealth) has shrunk dramatically over the past 5 decades and we don’t see an end to this trend, and it will affect our future (and our children’s future, the proverbial “American Dream”) as well.

The problem is, we are seeing extreme distortions in the distribution of wealth and the collapse of the middle class (working class), as their share of the nation’s wealth has precipitously declined since reaching a peak in the 1970’s.

Here are the hard facts related to wealth:

- In 1970, the middle class held about 60% of the nation’s wealth while the top 20% had about 40%.
- By 1990, the middle class dropped to about 40%.
- By 2022, the middle class had dropped again to about 10-15 %, while the top 1% was around 30% of the total wealth, with the top 20% having 70% of the total.

So, the middle class dropped from over 60% to under 15%, a 75% drop. In 2023 the top .1% (about 350 thousand people) held abbot 13% of the total wealth, an amount equal to the **entire middle class** (around 210 million people). I feel this inequity is a greater problem than the size of our national debt or even letting trans people use their bathroom of choice or allowing Judy Blume books into our school libraries.

## **200) “Footprints in the sand”**

Despite all the fantastic and wonderful discoveries and advances we humans have made, we are a very insecure and fickle species.

*An essay by NormT     12/26/24*

When we were young, we searched to find our identity; who we were and why were we here? Later, we struggled to find where we belonged, which groups we identified with (like family, friends, organizations) and where would we be accepted. These were our earliest challenges, to try and understand this new world around us, how it worked and most importantly, our place in it.

As we near the end of our journey, another great challenge faces us; did we leave a mark? Will we be remembered; how and for what? When we were young, we may have carved our initials into a tree, or a park bench, to be acknowledged, to somehow show we were there, “we existed”, we wanted to leave our mark in time. But, deep down inside we know that in only a few generations, everyone and everything we knew will be gone and forgotten, and in a few millennia nary a trace of us will exist. My allegory of this struggle is below:

### **“My footprints in the sand on a secluded ocean beach”**

*A short story by NormT*

It was a hot summer day, with a slight breeze and a few wispy clouds overhead and nothing scheduled, a free day to relax, take it easy and enjoy my retirement after 40 years of the craziness of Silicon Valley. It was a great day to go to the ocean and just relax, collect my thoughts, and enjoy the majesty of nature.

I jumped into my car (an old Plymouth Satellitel had bought when I first moved to California) and drove up and over the hill to the coast. Made a left turn onto highway 1 at Half Moon Bay and headed south to a small secluded cove facing the Pacific Ocean that I remembered from years past.

Went beyond the turnoff that led to Duarte's restaurant (they made a delicious clam chowder and a fabulous strawberry rhubarb pie to kill for, maybe I would stop there on the way back)). A couple of minutes later, turned into the road leading to the ocean. Amazingly, it was empty, I was alone. I parked right next-to the battered and



weatherworn old wooden stairs leading down to the beckoning secluded sandy beach. It cried out to me “what took you so long, it’s been a while since I saw you last”.

I got out of the car, leaving my shoes and socks on the front seat, rolled up my pants to just above the knees and walked over to the stairs, pausing to admire the scene. I stood for a while at the top of the stairs looking out over the beach, to the south there was a rocky point covered with seals, barking loudly, and climbing up on the rocks to sun themselves. Somehow, they were able to balance themselves on tiny ridges seeming to defy gravity and the pesky sea gulls sharing their perch.

On the north side, the rocks plunged deeper into the ocean and seemed full of sea-birds of every type waiting for the right time to plunge into the water for a tasty treat. The mighty ocean loudly crashed into these rocky formations sending frothy white spray high into the sky.

I could smell (almost taste) that tangy, salty sea air and feel the rhythmic pounding of the waves as they rolled into the cove. Wave after wave, it had a mesmerizing effect and attacked all my senses at the same time.

As I stood there, I felt the warm sun on my face and the wind blew what was left of my hair wildly around and carried the sounds of the birds flying way overhead. There was a long line of pelicans gliding in formation just feet above the water, occasionally one would dip into the ocean and come up with a pouch full of fish. The sun glistened off the tops of the waves and I could see the daily cloud bank forming far out over the ocean getting ready to invade later in the day.

I started down the steps and finally stepped down into the hot, fluffy sand, feeling my foot sink in, the sand squishing up between my toes and covering my foot above the ankle. Each step was an effort; (it felt like walking through quicksand) consciously lifting each foot and keeping my balance at the same time.

The sand was hot and tough going until I reached the firmer, cooler wet sand at the water’s edge. I could see my footprints in the dark sand and I waded deeper into the surf as wave after wave came frothing around my feet and I felt the tug of the undertow trying to pull me deeper into its’ grip. The sound of the restless ocean was like a heavenly drum beating to the pulse of the waves as they exploded around my legs.

As I left the water, I could see my footprints leading out to the dry area; I stood there for a while watching the tide come in; deeper and deeper into the beach with each wave, filling in my footprints and finally wiping them out leaving the beach as smooth and pristine as if I had never been there, no trace or even a hint of my intrusion.

I headed back to my car, climbed the stairs and turned back to the beach, thus is life I thought to myself, we come and struggle to make a mark, to enjoy the trip and marvel at our wonderful world and realize we are but a tiny blip in time and our memories are ours alone and Mother Nature or whoever or whatever created our universe had a weird sense of humor.

I said goodbye little beach, I probably will never see you again, except in my mind, thank you for the pleasure and serenity and beauty you provided. I got in my old car and drove back over the hill and into civilization, and traffic and honking horns and skies without stars and people hardly paying attention to the wonders around them.

This essay is a consolidation of the many beaches I have been to, walked in the sand and never left a footprint. Here are the ones I remember over these past 86+ years:

Brighton and Coney Island (Brooklyn, NY), Jones (Long Island), Rye (NY, just south of Stamford Conn), Provincetown (Mass on cape Cod near Plymouth Rock), Atlantic city and Monmouth (NJ), Tortola (British Virgin Island), Puerto and Nueva Vallarta (Mexico, Rosarito (just south of Tijuana Mexico), Coronado, Pacific (San Diego, CA, Carmel, Pebble, Pacific Grove, Monterrey, Santa Cruz, Half Moon, Ft. Bragg (CA), Cannon (Oregon Normandy, Nice, Monaco, (France), Scheveningen (Den Haag, Netherlands), Mayorca (Spain), Mykonos, (Greece), Tel Aviv (Israel), Sharm El-Sheikh, (Egypt). Oahu, Poipu, Lahaina, Kona, and black Sand (Hawaii), Penang (Maylasia), Kuta (Bali, Indonesia)

## 201) “The Los Angeles wildfire disaster”

*My thoughts by NormT 1/14/2025*

Watching the wildfires burning through vast areas of LA, destroying everything in its path, leaving nothing but ashes and devastation; driving hundreds of thousands from their homes and destroying tens of thousands of homes, businesses, and structures of every type is heartbreaking.

Like all kinds of natural disasters (hurricanes, floods, tornados, earthquakes, droughts, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and wildfires) we are basically helpless in our ability to prevent or significantly mitigate the damage and destruction. Mother Nature is much more powerful than our ability to prevent or stop these events from occurring.

I believe our role is to help those who survived and minimize their pain and suffering as much as possible; they are victims who have lost their homes, their belongings, their neighborhood, and their community and many even their livelihood. They need help and currently the disaster is still going on, the fires are still burning and another hellish hurricane like dry “Santa Ana” wind is approaching.

Yet, there are people who choose to spread lies, distortions, conspiracy theories, false accusations to advance their own political ambitions and agendas. Those taking advantage of the situation like this are disgusting, immoral and unchristian and unamerican.

You know who these people are (the FOX maggots and the Trump family, just to name a few). Some people are saying, “in the good old days, we used to shoot looters and those who shouted fire in a crowded theater”.

Why is there so much animosity against Californians and specifically the Los Angeles area? I really don’t understand this; maybe it is jealousy (the good weather, the economic success, some inherent racial or religious prejudice); I don’t know; but what I do know is there is a real issue of political injustice and unfairness.

The County of Los Angeles has a population of around 10 million people, this is about the same as the total population of these 10 smallest American States (*New Hampshire, Maine, Montana, Rhode Island, Delaware, South Dakota, North Dakota, Alaska, Vermont, and Wyoming*).

**California** has a population of around 39 million. These **15** Ruby Red States (*Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, Idaho, West Virginia, Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, Louisiana, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Utah and Iowa*) have a total population about the same as California.

Astonishingly they have **30 senators to Californias 2**.

This is unfair, un-democratic and un-American!!!

As to the economics, the estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the West Coast States (California, Oregon and Washington) is ~ 5.5 trillion dollars. This is about the same **as 19** of the Red States.

That my friends, is what economic dynamism and our West Coast thinking, working, Woke-ism, DEI, and open-minded people bring to our great Nation.

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**202) “The silence is deafening and there is an empty space in our home”**

*In memory of our precious “Rusty Bucket” 1/1/2025*



*RUSTY BUCKET (9/13/2013 - 1/1/2025)*

Our precious Rusty Bucket has gone to doggie heaven; he was slightly over 11 years old and had been a constant companion, a major presence and an adorable loving bundle of happiness and joy since the day he joined our family in 2013.

Cavalier King Charles Spaniels are known for their wonderful temperament and astonishing good looks but Rusty was so much more than a family pet; he was a certified member of our household and lord of his domain.

Every morning, he would come bounding down the stairs from our daughter Anne's bedroom and sniffed out and visited every square inch of the house, making sure it was safe for his family (what a magnificent protector this mighty 30-pound fur ball was).

His goal was to love everyone and everything he met, spreading endorphins and absolute “cuteness” to one and all. He loved being touched and would lean into one's hand pleading “don't stop” and please scratch this other part as well. His gentleness and absolute joy at being “with” his people captured one's heart. It was very hard to say “NO” to that face and personality.

It will take a long time (if ever) before I stop feeling his presence, the sounds he made (he was not a barker) but had a way to let you know he was around and now the silence is deafening and wherever I look, I think I see a fleeting sight of him and feel his energy; but there is an empty space where he used to be. Goodbye little guy; you made this world a better place because you were in it.

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## **203) “There are dark, ominous clouds on the horizon and there is no joy in Mudville today”**

*Opinion by NormT 1/20/2025*

Have you ever experienced a feeling that something is just not right, that things seem somehow unreal, the old rules no longer apply and uncertainty, unease about some impending disaster is approaching?

You can't quite put your finger on it, but you know a storm is approaching but you don't know exactly when or how bad it will be. It is Like when a hurricane is bearing down on you, but the sun is still shining and the wind is eerily calm; and the birds have stopped singing; you know it is only a matter of time before “all hell breaks loose”.

This my friends, is how I (and I believe over 75 million other Americans) are feeling today. It is hard to believe my fellow countrymen and women have chosen to overlook what seems so obvious to us; that the person being inaugurated, is the is the most corrupt, evil, unstable, unfit in character and mind as anyone in the history of our nation.

Trump has shown us who he is and what he will do, and his MAGA followers will go along with every bit of it. His objective is to create a kleptocracy and Autocracy filled with oligarchs and religious ideology with misogynistic and white supremacy overtones. This is NOT my America!

We don't know yet just how much damage he will inflict, and whether or not it can be corrected at a later date; but we do know the next 4 years will be intolerable and excruciatingly painful for many of our fellow citizens. We will need to fight at every level, judicial, governmental, social and in every format of media available.

I personally believe we are no longer the “UNITED” States of America but the “DIVIDED “States of America, and most if not all of the people no longer see the other as fellow Americans. It is time to separate into the RED and BLUE country's that personify our beliefs.

## 204) “Going over the cliff”

*Opinion by NormT 1/31/2025*

It has been less than two weeks since the inauguration and it is abundantly clear Trump is going full Dictator/Emperor focused on implementing project 2025 and turning the nation into a third world banana republic led by billionaire oligarchs and far right-wing fundamentalist ideologues.

His choices for top leadership positions in EVERY department of government seems to be based on these following critical requirements:

- 1) Absolute loyalty and fealty to the “dear leader” Herr Trump.
- 2) Willingness and desire to destroy the function of the department or agency.
- 3) Incompetence, ineptness and lack of background knowledge or skills associated with the job.
- 4) Willingness to ignore their oath to protect and defend the Constitution, the rule of Law, The Separation of Powers and historical precedence.
- 5) Extra points given for willingness to use cruelty, adoption of conspiracy theories, willingness to lie and ignore facts and reality.
- 6) Points taken away for any hint of civility, compromise, fairness, use of logic and common decency and most of all competency and knowledge of the specific task requirements.

Furthermore “Hit-Trmp-Ler” is eliminating ANY positions of independence and /or possible threat to his upcoming abuse of power by turning the Justice department into a “Gestapo” like organization and all other government agencies into departments based on fraud, greed and corruption.

Other than that, his first few weeks are going according to plan. The next few years will be absolute hell and be prepared for economic distress, health emergencies and disruption of international power alliances and the further rise of autocracy. Putin is ordering container ships full of Champagne as he anticipates the collapse of his enemies.

It sure feels like Berlin in 1933 and Moscow in 2008; just think if it was just 3 “F’ing” inches to the right!



## **205) “An ethical dilemma and a solution”**

Opinion by NormT 2/9/25

It appears that Trump and his MAGA movement have gone full Fascist white Christian Nationalist with a oligarchic kleptocracy and no longer feels that the constitution, the Rule of Law, Truth, Honesty, decency and fairness have any value and only pure power is important.

They don't play by the rules, cannot be trusted and will lead America into a death spiral and societal collapse and are destroying 250 years of Democracy and the American dream. They are in the process of eliminating any checks and balances and making a mockery of the legislative institution (Congress) and have corrupted the Judicial system with ridiculous decisions by the “Supreme Court” as in their rulings on Presidential Immunity and Citizens United.

The dilemma we face is a difficult one, if we play by the rules (and they show no inclination to do so) we will lose our cherished democratic system and any protections for our civil and human rights. I don't believe there will be free and fair elections or a balance of powers for the judiciary and legislative branches. The “rule of Law” will be replaced by the rule of the powerful.

If we do not act soon, we will be faced with having to live in a kleptocratic dictatorship controlled by lawless oligarchs; a banana-republic filled with graft, corruption and gross negligence and utter incompetence and it is “WE the PUBLIC” who will suffer!

Trump and his MAGA sycophants have no intention of abiding by the Constitution or the Rule of Law or any previous norms, standards or guidelines and traditions (or even common sense and decency) and he will defy the courts, or the Constitution, or shut down the “Free Press”, or arrest his political opponents and this will create a real “Constitutional Crisis”.

### **what should we do?**

I propose that the Governor and Attorneys general of “ALL the BLUE States” demand the President and his current administration be dissolved in order to create two new Nations, that the military take over to supervise the split (division) and immediately convene two constitutional conventions to create new constitutions for each nation. We are a deeply divided nation and I see no way of healing the wounds.

I propose Mitt Romney be named acting President and working with the current Congressional leaders of both parties and the Judiciary develop and implement a plan to create a split which will include Constitutional Conventions, drawing of new boundaries and division of current federal assets and debts and hold new elections within 2 years.

In the interim, All Trump appointments should be reversed and acting President Romney and the 4 legislative leaders will take over responsibility for running the government and implementing the split. Our nation is almost equally divided and ideologically opposite in what the Country stands for and how it should be run. My concern if this peaceful method is not followed there will be civil unrest or even worse.

A possible starting point:

There are 24 MAGA RED States, 21 Blue States (including the District of Columbia and the territory of Puerto Rico) and 7 Swing States that are very close in almost all elections and can go either way in any particular election and although they narrowly voted for Trump in the last election the Democrats have 5 of the 7 Governorships and 10 of the 14 Senator seats. They are truly swing states but internally have large geographical election preferences.

### **Preliminary structure:**

#### 1) 24 RED STATES :

**“Texas, Florida, Ohio, Tennessee, Indiana, Missouri, South Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Utah, Iowa, Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, Idaho, West Virginia, Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota, Alaska, and Wyoming”.**

Have a population of 137 million and a GDP of \$ 10.8 trillion dollars

These states are bright red and all voted for Trump by over 10% over Harris, Essentially the old confederacy and the western and lower midwestern states and the rocky Mountain area.

#### 2) 21 BLUE STATES and D.C. and Puerto Rico :

**“California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico,**

**New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico”.**

Have a population of 145 million and a GDP of \$ 14 trillion dollars.

This is basically the Pacific Coast and Southwest, The Atlantic coast from DC through New England and some great lakes states; these state groupings have a common border with Canada to the North.

Note: Canada has a population of 40 million and a GDP of \$ 2.2 trillion dollars.

### 3) 7 SWING States:

**“Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin”.** Have a population of 62.3 million and a GDP of \$ 4.7 trillion dollars.

Will need to vote to join the RED or Blue States or break into smaller units and (like Pennsylvania having a Western, central and, eastern area that can choose separately to join the RED or Blue Nation or join a neighboring State.

For calculation purposes if we split the population and GDP of the Swing states and add them to both the RED and Blue Groups and add Canada to the Blue group and call it CanAmerica the new totals are:

- 1) CanAmerica has a population of 216 million people and a GDP of 18.5 trillion dollars.
- 2) MAGALand has a population of 168 million people and a GDP of 12.4 trillion dollars.

Two large and powerful nations with both being in the top 4 in GDP along with the much larger population entities of the EU (European Union) and China.

The Split won't be easy or quick but we will end up with the Countries we feel compatible with and avert a disastrous civil war or insurrection.

I hope this starts people thinking and certainly can be modified and improved. Please pass it on to anyone and everyone you think may be interested.

P.S. After the split the top 9 a(nd Russia) world GDP rankings would look like this (populations in parenthesis and GDP in trillions of dollars):

- |                        |               |            |
|------------------------|---------------|------------|
| 1) European union E.U. | (450 million) | GDP \$19.4 |
| 2) “Can Americaa)      | (216 million) | GDP \$18.5 |

3)	China	(1.4 billion)	GDP \$16.7
4)	MAGAland	(168 million)	GDP \$12.4
5)	Germany	(84 million)	GDP \$5.0
6)	Japan	(124 million)	GDP \$4.4
7)	India	(1.4 billion)	GDP \$4.3
8)	U.K.	(68 million)	GDP \$3.7
FYI	Russia	(146 million)	GDP \$ 2.2

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## **206) “The Dictators playbook”**

*Essay by NormT 2/13/25*

- 1) Get elected by pandering to the public’s fears, concerns, and needs by:
  - Identifying and vilifying groups with little power or ability to defend themselves; who are different from the majority (race, religion, language, culture etc.) and accuse them of being evil, dangerous and somehow inferior (not deserving of being treated with dignity or having civil or human rights).
  - Independent of the actual voting results, claim an overwhelming victory and mandate and be able to do anything to solve all their voters’ concerns and problems and to protect them from those “others”.
  - Convince your supporters that you and only you can fix all their problems and need to have complete power to do so.
- 2) Take control of the power centers i.e. police, Legislatures, government departments and agencies (FBI, CIA, Justice Department.) that the public depends on for safety and security.
- 3) Then go after the free and fair press/media and the economic levers people need (banks, Corporations) by empowering oligarchs and big business interests and by reducing regulations and controls and taxes on the super powerful and wealthy.
- 4) Claim all these measures were done to “HELP” the little guy and rid the Country of “outside devious actors” (communists, criminals, Gays, foreigners, godless

enemies of the state and of course the opposing political party and their leaders especially that Soros guy.

- 5) Delay the most egregious activities until the military can be taken over by sycophantic leaders who will go along with whatever the “Dear Leader” deems necessary. If possible, create non-public security groups (brown and black shirts, proud boys, oath -keepers) who can act on your behalf outside the legal system.

Once total control is established, let the graft, grift, corruption and crimes against humanity begin!

That my friends, is the game-plan, the Heritage society (project 2025 plan) to establish a 4<sup>th</sup> Reich right here in River City. After all it worked so well for Adolf and Benito.

It is time for drastic resistance, they don't play by the rules and it will take a long time if ever to repair the damage they will do to our Democracy, the Constitution and the Rule of Law.

They want to run the country their way, and we want to keep our democracy the way it has been for the past  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a century and **not** become a “white Christian Nationalist Dictatorship and kleptocracy” they want it to be.

It is time for a “**two state solution**” right here in America.

## 207) “WUDS\* before it’s too late”

*Opinion by NormT 3/1/2025*

“Power and Money” are extremely corrupting influences on people in general and eventually cause great grief and suffering in the hands of mentally and emotionally unhinged and unstable Governing leaders!

History is full of examples Hitler, Stalin and Putin are recent examples and although democratic systems can be cumbersome, inefficient and frustratingly slow in taking quick, decisive actions they tend to better protect the general population and especially minorities than dictatorships.

A system of rules (law and order), checks and balances, powerful judicial oversight and accepted governing foundational documents (the constitution and Bill of Rights) has made America the envy of the world and the most successful Nation on Earth.

Is it perfect? Hell NO, we have more than our fair share of shameful actions (how we treated the Native Americans, dealt with Slavery and allowed institutional prejudices against minorities, the poor and women) was shameful and the process was too slow, BUT, we were making progress.

Now we are facing a twofold problem; a nation almost equally split along drastically opposing ideological political and social lines and a government rushing headlong into a fascist, kleptocracy (led by oligarchs) under a dictatorial all powerful (and mentally disturbed) leader who requires absolute fealty and adoration.

\*WUDS (Wake Up Dumb Schmucks) before it is too late; we are in the process of losing our democracy, way of life and the freedoms we say we believe in! Trump, Musk, the Heritage Society and their project 2025 plan will destroy everything we claim to believe in. The time for action is NOW.

I loved my Country, I believed in it, cherished it, and defended it. My Country had laws, decency, compassion, truth, opportunity, freedoms and worked for all of us, not just the privileged few. My Country is turning into something I don’t recognize or trust; and that is a very, very bad thing.

We need a nationwide strike, of all government workers, SHUT DOWN THE GOVERNMENT; inundate the Republicans in Congress with demands they “GROW A SPINE and show courage to stand up to their “BULLY” of a KING; BOYCOT all companies owned by MUSK, ZUCKERBERG and MURDOCK and especially VlaDonald TrumPutin.

It is time for a “Two State” solution right here in America. We can each get what we want; I choose the 21<sup>st</sup> century and they can have their 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 208) “What should the government do for you”

Opinion by NormT 3/2/2025

Dear RED States and MAGA supporters,

I assume you don't like me, after all I was born and grew up in New York City and lived most of my life in California, my parents were immigrants (who escaped persecution and came to America as teenagers) and I have degrees in Engineering Physics and a Masters in business Administration. I worked in Silicon Valley for 50 years and like classical music, especially opera; I also enjoy wine and play chess.

I did however enlist in the Army (3 years) and served overseas for two; worked on the Atlas and Centaur IICBM systems before going into Semiconductor development at Fairchild and HP; and have traveled extensively and lived in Alabama, Arizona, Oregon, as well as Germany, Singapore, and London and have some familiarity of various cultures and different points of view. The common thread was EVERYONE wanted to feel safe, secure and have an opportunity for a better life and be treated justly and fairly.

I am now 87 years old and don't really care if you like me or agree with me but believe I know some of the things you like and want (besides owning the “libs”:

- I bet you like having affordable and available healthcare for you and your family.
- You like to drink water without lead and plastics and pesticides.
- To not have to worry about you or your family getting Polio, Ebola, Covid, measles, and all kinds of terrible and preventable diseases.
- To be able to feed your family and have a roof over their heads and have them have a better life in the future.
- To know that in case of disasters your government will be there to help you survive.
- To know the food you and your family eat, isn't going to poison you.
- To know there is and will be a safety net available to help you when you get old and are no longer working, and that healthcare costs are reasonable and affordable.



- To know the people, you have to deal with for critical services are knowledgeable and competent and there to help you.
- That your government will protect you in case of threats from those who want to harm us.
- To know the government is not corrupt and taking advantage of the people, they are supposed to protect.
- That everyone is treated equally and no one is above the law, no matter how rich or powerful.
- That if you work overtime, you get paid extra for it and have paid sick and vacation days.
- That Children aren't forced to work, especially in dangerous positions.
- That you can earn enough to take a vacation once in a while.
- That no-one tells you how to pray, or believe or think or what you read.
- That education is available to everyone who wants it( from pre-K through 12 or 14)
- That crime, corruption, bribery, bullying doesn't become the norm or glorified.
- That we the people get to choose who will govern the nation and the Constitution remains the law of the land.
- To not have to worry about getting some terrible disease from people you meet.
- To be able to get on a plane or a train and arrive safely at your destination.
- To not have to bribe someone to get the services you need.
- To know that you will be treated with respect and not bullied or threatened if you disagree with someone.
- To receive the Social Security checks and healthcare and medications you need to survive.
- To not have someone else tell you who to marry, or love or be friends with or how to think or believe.

- To know “**no one** is above the law”
- To be able to choose our leaders and replace them when they no longer work on our behalf.
- To live in a free and equal society and be treated with respect and believe we have a voice in our government.

I believe these are all things we all want and if not careful will no longer be available to us (no matter if you live in a RED state or a Blue State), most people who live in autocratic regimes like North Korea, Iran and Russia do not have these things we used to take for granted!

Be very careful; democracy is fragile and our nation is at a crossroad. All these things are at RISK of being lost or greatly diminished; Trump, Musk and project 2025 are taking them away, is that what you really want?

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## 2109) “The way Trump captured the MAGA-verse”

*Opinion by NormT 3/22/25*

Human like animals have been around for about 6 million years and modern humans (homo-sapiens) for at most 200 thousand. We have essentially the same primitive brain (although modern humans have developed some advanced thinking capabilities, our basic emotions and drives are not much different than most other species of animals.

Survival is our strongest and most basic driving force and our body chemistry and biology are controlled by our primitive brain through the “Autonomic” (involuntarily / spontaneous activity of the nervous system) that controls bodily functions like heart rate, breathing, and digestion, functioning independently of conscious control).

When we are confronted with real or perceive danger our body reacts in response to that threat; in the “Fight or flight” situation: the body releases epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine (noradrenaline), along with cortisol, to prepare for immediate action or escape. ( \*see details at end of article).

Humans, like most other animals want to be part of some larger entity, like a group with common interests (or a herd mentality or a integrated community) primarily for safety and security and when confronted with a dangerous situation: the “fight or flight mechanism kicks in and in most cases a tendency is to flee (to get out of danger i.e. self-preservation.

For dictators to take control of a democratic system they need to convince the voting public that the current system is broken; NOT working for them, they are being attacked, picked on, disrespected, cheated, ignored, taken advantage of and most importantly threatened and in dire and immediate danger.

To do this they must control the messaging, and stoke anger and fear towards the existing government, the State, those “bureaucrats (the people we interface with to receive services) and anyone they deem “outside the group” who may look, think and act differently from the” TRUE BELIEVERS”. Anyone and everything that is outside their box is a threat, evil, scary, and must be vanquished maybe even eliminated or neutralized.

The key is to create fear, identify a “boogeyman”, blame them for everything that has gone wrong and make them believe you and only you can protect them, save them from all those “others”; and they will follow you anywhere: off a cliff, into a disastrous war, a major economic depression and even the collapse of social order, decency, reason, reality and the destruction of an empire.

They basically create both a fearful situation (who to trust, everyone is a danger) and by identifying scapegoat groups (immigrants, black or brown people, jews, Muslims etc.) and vilify and dehumanize them and identify them as “the threat” not only does this increase the danger level but it points out “who” and where the danger is coming from. We are now on high alert and ready to flee.

But the real genius in this new fascist movement is the next step. When the herd starts to run away (to flee) they are not only escaping the danger; they are looking for safety and security. You can stir them up and get them to run but now you need to give them a place to go; somewhere they feel protected and safe, a sanctuary where they can feel protected and surrounded by others just like them (MAGA-land).

The key is to create a new home, under a strong, powerful leader, (no need to worry any more or what to think) HE will take care of you; just do as he says and think what he tells you to think. We will have complete power, never have to admit you have done anything wrong, to never apologize, be able to bully everyone and anyone around, kick them when they’re down, and show them “no mercy”.

Your leader will protect you from all those others who want to take your hard-earned wealth away from you and protect your women and children from those crazed criminals, immigrants, democrats, scientists, intellectuals, books and librarians, teachers, Gays, trans-gender athletes and Judges especially people with ideas who make you think.

This is the “Dictators playbook and Trump and his MAGA followers have told us who they are and what they will do (and are doing); the question is “who we are” and “what will we do”? I say fight with every tool we have available (nationwide boycotts and strikes, rallies. Marches, call for military intervention, the Blue States must “secede” and start a new Nation (our two-state solution). I don’t believe we can wait for the next election (it may never come).

\*(Here's a more detailed explanation: Epinephrine (Adrenaline) and Norepinephrine (Noradrenaline): These hormones are released by the adrenal medulla (inner part of the adrenal gland) and are key players in the fight-or-flight response. They cause physiological changes like increased heart rate, blood pressure, and energy levels, preparing the body to either fight or flee.

Cortisol: The adrenal cortex (outer part of the adrenal gland) releases cortisol, which is a stress hormone that helps maintain energy levels and suppress other bodily functions to focus on the immediate threat.

HPA Axis: The release of cortisol involves the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, where the hypothalamus releases corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH), which stimulates the pituitary gland to release adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH), which in turn stimulates the adrenal cortex to release cortisol.

## **210) “NormT. a pre-obituary”**

5/12/2025

(193 8 - date yet to be determined)

Hello All

If you are reading this it means I have passed away (also known as died) and will no longer be able to communicate with you. most obituaries are woefully lacking in content and don't capture “the person”, who they were, what they felt and believed and what they did. So, I will try to fill in the blanks. I have known some of you for many, many years and some more recently but you have all been a part of my life. Some may be relatives, or from school, or the Army, or work or been a neighbor but few know all aspects of who I was and what I did.

This is how I saw myself (you may have seen a different Norm and that's OK). We all see life through our own filters and shaped by our own experiences.

I was what I call a “pragmatic optimist”, I loved life and feared death (or rather the thought of infinite nothingness), I enjoyed fine food (actually most food), classical music and opera, I really liked comedy and humor (my favorites were George Carlin and Robin Williams) and loved traveling. Most of all I enjoyed people, friendships and adored my wife Dorothy (my partner in life for over 58 years) and my daughters Natalie and Anne.

What I couldn't stand were hypocrites; people with no intellectual curiosity (consciously ignorant) and those with little or no social conscience (selfish, arrogant bastards). Did I mention I was also quite opinionated and I was even told I was somewhat egotistical?

My parents (Nathan and Fanny) were Jewish immigrants who came to America escaping from Russia (Minsk) in the early 1920's. I grew up in Brooklyn and the Bronx, N.Y., served the Army 1957-1960 (stationed in Germany). Received a B.S. in Engineering Physics from N.Y.U (1963) and moved to San Diego, and worked for General Dynamics/Astronautics as a research engineer. Where I met and married the love of my life, Dorothy Whittington.

In the mid-sixties we moved to the Bay area (living in Sunnyvale, Cupertino and San Jose and worked for Fairchild Semiconductor and Hewlett Packard (for 33 years), received an MBA from Santa Clara University (1974) and held many high-level

managerial positions including overseas assignments running plants in Singapore, Penang (Malaysia) and England.

After retiring from HP t(1999) we moved to the Villages in San Jose where I was active on the Board of Directors and the Evergreen/Villages Democratic Club and the San Jose Opera Guild.

I loved life, to laugh, traveling, chess, golf and interacting with people and the special beauty of California; the ocean, mountains and nature and abhorred hypocrisy and narrow mindedness. In 2014 we moved to Happy Valley (a suburb of Portland), Oregon and in 2018 returned to California (Roseville).

Norm was forever grateful to his older brother Harold and his wife Renee who took him into their home after Norm's parents passed away (when he was 13) and provided him the opportunity to enjoy the life he had.

#### Norm Tarowsky (1938-20XX)

Norm is survived by his wife Dorothy, his daughters Natalie and Anne and many nieces and nephews in New York., Wisconsin, Minnesota, Florida, Illinois, and California.

