

Miscellany 47: Do You Eat Bug Juice?; J. Willard Marriott Quote; The Rising Cost of Gumballs; Health Insurance Is the Problem, Not the Solution; Inept Management, Inept Leadership; A Point of View; Irving Berlin and the Black Keys; Two One-Chord Songs; Millionaires in the White House; A Comment by Jay Leno; Debt Creation to Stimulate the Economy; Postal Rate Increases; Eugenics Is Alive and Well in the US; Forex Trading for Everyone!; Increasing Population Leads to Violent Deaths; Good Always Wins over Evil? Better to Ask for Forgiveness than to Ask for Permission?; Ralf Hotchkiss's \$175 Wheelchair; Tom Selleck on Calvin Coolidge; Does God Exist? The ACORN Scandal: David and Goliath; Only Whites Can Be Racist, and Only Whites Can Do Racial Profiling; Health Care for Illegal Immigrants; Credit-Card Fees; Military-Service Path to Citizenship; Electric Cars and Trains; Singer Billy Walker; On Remembering Robert McNamara; On Remembering Ted Kennedy; Why Do Spirits Lie? Allergies Are Psychosomatic; Am I a Direct Descendant of Conan the Conqueror?; Parallel Universes / Physics / Spiritualism; On Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol*; Deport All Illegal Aliens Immediately; Lester Brown's *Plan B 4.0*

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Commentary on recent news, reading and events of personal interest.

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Do You Eat Bug Juice?

I was in a local grocery store (a Publix supermarket) a few weeks ago, helping my wife buy the weekly groceries. In this capacity, I spend most of my time glancing around and casually examining the products for sale and reading ingredient labels. At one point on our route through the store, we were the fresh fruits and vegetables section, near the turnips, and on this particular day I happened to notice a small poster on the side of a vegetable bin. The poster read as follows:

Coated with food-grade vegetable petroleum- beeswax- and/or lac resin-based wax or resin: Apples, cucumbers, grapefruit, lemons, limes, melons, nectarines, oranges, parsnips, peaches, bell peppers, specialty peppers, pineapples, plums, rutabagas, hard squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, yucca root.

In a recent Internet search for information on food additives, I had noticed that lac resin is used as a food additive. It is euphemistically called “confectioner’s glaze,” “food grade wax,” “food glaze,” or “resin.” It is used to make foods shiny and fresh-looking. The INS or “E” number for lac resin is E904: “a resin from the lac insect.” This food additive is of particular interest to Jews and Moslems because they are proscribed from eating insects or insect products (tamé (not kosher); haraam (not halaal)). Lac resin is the primary ingredient in shellac. (For a detailed description of how shellac is made, see <http://www.orahsaddiqim.org/Kashrut/shellac.shtml>.)

During a recent river-boat cruise down the Danube, my wife packed a few “granola” bars for us to eat while waiting in airports. One of them was Kellogg’s Fiber Plus Antioxidants Chewing Bar. One of the ingredients listed was “confectioner’s glaze (shellac, hydrogenated coconut oil). (You may be interested in the complete list of ingredients: chicory root fiber, rolled oats, crisp rice (rice flour, sugar, malt extract, salt, mixed tocopherols for freshness), sugar, roasted almonds, inulin from chicory root, semisweet chocolate drops (sugar, chocolate, cocoa butter, dextrose, milk fat, soy lecithin, confectioner’s glaze (shellac, hydrogenated coconut oil), vegetable oil (hydrogenated palm kernel, coconut and palm oil), fructose, canola oil, contains two percent or less of honey, chocolate, cocoa (processed with alkali), glycerin, tricalcium phosphate, whey, salt, baking soda, soy lecithin, natural and artificial flavor, sorbitan monostearate, polysorbate 60, vitamin E acetate, gum Arabic, zinc oxide, nonfat dry milk, whole wheat flour, partially defatted peanut flour, soy protein insolate, BHT (for freshness), xanthan gum. Contains almond, milk, soy, wheat and peanut ingredients, may contain other tree nuts. Many of these ingredients are not natural products on which mankind evolved – it is no wonder that our cancer rates are soaring.)

On a related topic – granola bars loaded with hydrogenated oils – the June 9, 2009, issue of the Spartanburg Herald-Journal contained a column, *The You Docs*, by Dr. Michael Roizen and Dr. Mehmet Oz, entitled, “Don’t scarf energy bar laden with trans-fats.” Here follows an excerpt:

“Question: Hydrogenated oils seem to be in every type of energy bar and granola bar. How far down the list of ingredients does it have to be for the bar to be OK to eat? – Anonymous

“Answer: If the dreaded “h” word appears among the first five ingredients on a label, think of that food as poison and put it back on the shelf immediately. Hydrogenation creates trans-fatty acids, which create clog city for your arteries. Trans-fats decrease good cholesterol and increase the bad, and they also boost inflammation, damage the cells in your arteries and make your blood more prone to clotting. Even if hydrogenated oils are low on the list, you should still stay away; anything you eat should have no more than 4 grams of saturated and trans-fats combined (and, by the way, 0 grams is even better).

“Did it pass that test? Don’t scarf it yet. Make sure you know what else is in there. Most seemingly healthful (lower-calorie, high-fiber) granola bars flooding grocers’ shelves these days contain an alternative fat – and often, it’s artery-wrecking saturated fat by another name, like fractionated palm kernel oil.”

J. Willard Marriott Quote

I saw or heard the quote recently, attributed to John Willard Marriott, “I’ve never been satisfied with anything I’ve ever done.” I checked the Internet and found his quote “Entrepreneurs are never satisfied.” In that same search, I came across his following observation: Lesson #3: “No person can get very far in life working 40 hours a week.”

This reminded me of a discussion I had a long time ago, at a Lambda Corporation sherry hour. Lambda Corporation (the Arlington, Virginia-based, Delaware-incorporated defense-research corporation founded in the mid-1960s, not the then and extant electronics firm of the same name) was founded by Hugh Everett III, founder of the “Parallel Universe” theory (“Many-Worlds Interpretation of quantum mechanics”). Hugh also developed the Generalized Lagrange Multiplier (GLM) method, which can be used to find optimal solutions to large constrained-resource problems in which the payoff function is nonlinear, nonconvex, and discontinuous. I had the opportunity and privilege of working at Lambda Corporation for five years – that’s where I did most of my work in game theory, mathematical forecasting (Box-Jenkins methodology), optimization (using the GLM methodology) and ballistic missile defense.

Every Friday at 4:30 pm, Lambda Corporation had a sherry hour for all of its employees and occasionally, some invited guests. At this particular one, someone mentioned to Hugh that a certain Lambda employee (Larry Schmitt, a programmer) was working about 60 hours a week. Hugh exclaimed that he thought that this was ridiculous, and that anyone who could not get all of his work done in 40 hours or less had no business working for the firm.

That was back when Lambda was in its heyday. A few years later, it was out of business, a victim of the shrinking science and defense research budgets brought on by the War on Poverty, the end of the Race to the Moon, and the Vietnam War. Marriott Hotels is still very much in business. Cause for reflection.

The Rising Cost of Gumballs

When I was a kid, many restaurants had gumball machines at the door as you left. The cost everywhere was the same – two gumballs for one cent. The gumball machines are still there, but now the cost is 25 cents (for a single large gumball).

I read recently (Spartanburg Herald-Journal, July 12, 2009, “Do-it-yourself disasters”) where a lady paid \$250 for a new tail-light for her five-year-old Nissan Altima. My sister recently had to pay \$200 for a new key for her several-year-old Volkswagen Beetle, after her husband lost the original. Our society, as all of evolution, is marching toward ever-increasing – and ever more costly – complexity. A few years ago the government passed a regulation that car bumpers should be designed to not incur damage of more than \$100 in a “bump” of less than ten miles per hour (I may have forgotten the exact figures). I wonder what ever happened to that regulation. The starting capacitor in my home air conditioner failed recently, and I was charged over \$200 to replace it (a capacitor is a low-tech item consisting of nothing more than a few rolled-up sheets of metal foil and wax paper. Our local pharmacist recently quoted a price of eleven dollars per gram for sodium chloride capsules (ordinary table salt) – this rivals the price of gold!

Joseph Tainter once wrote a book entitled *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), expounding on the thesis that societies become increasingly more complex, to the point where it becomes more efficient to become less complex rather than more complex, at which point most of them simply collapse (since they cannot figure out how to return to simpler structures). It looks as if we are fast approaching the “tipping point.”

Health Insurance Is the Problem, Not the Solution

America’s path down the road to a national-health-care crisis began when health care became so expensive that ordinary citizens needed health-care insurance in order to pay for basic-care services, not just catastrophic-care incidents. That was back in the 1960s. When my first child was born in 1960, the physician bill was \$125, and the cost of a hospital room was about the same as the cost of a first-class hotel (about \$25 per day). People could easily afford the cost of having a child or of a few days in the hospital for something like tonsillitis, an appendectomy or a broken bone.

Insurance should be protection against high-cost rare events, not for ordinary (usual, expected, anticipated) events. When the cost of routine medical and dental care started getting out of reach for the average wage-earner, this was a clear symptom that something was drastically wrong with our system of health care. It is rather amazing that it took about four decades of this ill-considered, wrong-headed approach before it bankrupted not only itself but the country as well.

A colleague of mine recently contracted malaria in Benin (while on a business trip), and the symptoms became manifest after he returned to the US. The cost for treatment – one week in the hospital – was \$60,000. Our health-care system is insane!

Inept Management, Inept Leadership

Most managers – entrepreneurs, heads of companies and middle managers – are not very capable. They can succeed only in a growth environment. When things get tough, as in the current recession, it becomes very clear that many of them can make money only when the economy is growing.

Growth (economic or population) cannot continue in a long-term-sustainable system. As the recession lingers on it will become clear who are the capable managers and who were just “along for the ride.”

Our current economic system is based on debt-based money, interest (actually, on compound interest), and private banking. This system is designed for growth – for exponential (geometric) growth. An exponential process cannot continue forever, or even for very long. It can continue only if there is periodic debt forgiveness or collapses (contractions, recessions, depressions), as happened recently. Each time a recession occurs, many ordinary people are wiped out. Most of the wealthy are not wiped out, but go on as a group to expropriate a greater portion of the total wealth (under this system, the wealth is continually funneled to the lenders from the borrowers, and when the system contracts, the transfer accelerates – it is the “little guys” who go broke – and the income distribution becomes even more skewed. Our leaders vigorously support and promote the debt-based, interest-based, private-banking-based system.

Under our current economic / monetary system, it is inevitable that (1) the rich become richer and the poor become poorer (because of the continual transfer of interest from the borrowers to the lenders); (2) contractions must occur and many ordinary citizens will be periodically wiped out; and (3) the planet’s ecology will eventually be destroyed. Such a system will eventually fail. It is not long-term-sustainable, it makes the poor poorer and the rich richer, and it destroys the biosphere. The fact that our leaders support and promote it reveals how inept (or evil) they are.

For a very readable description and discussion of our monetary system, see Ellen Hodgson Brown’s book, *Web of Debt* (Third Millennium Press, 2007).

A Point of View

I read or heard recently the quote from Abraham Lincoln to the effect that “I will hold one point of view until someone shows me the value of a different point of view.” John Maynard Keynes once remarked, “When the facts change I change my mind. What do you do, Sir?”

Irving Berlin and the Black Keys

I heard recently that Irving Berlin, composer of such great hits as *White Christmas*, *Blue Skies* and *God Bless America*, played the piano using just the black keys. I found this statement surprising, since there are only five black keys, compared to seven for a full standard (Western) scale. I tried to play a few of Berlin’s tunes using only the black keys (including *White Christmas* and *Blue Skies*), and it is not possible – you can certainly use all of the black keys, but you still need to use two of the white ones. This is the key of F-sharp major (or D-sharp minor). It is relatively easy to play in the key of F-sharp major (i.e., using all of the black keys) since they are

elevated and widely spaced. After composing a song in the key of F-sharp major, you can then transpose it (or have someone else, or a computer program, transpose it) to any other key (that will use fewer black keys and more white keys. It actually seems easier to me to play a piece in the key of C, which uses only white keys, except for the fact that they are all evenly spaced (and not split into two groups, such as the black keys (i.e., a set of two and a set of three).

In the Western music scale (devised by the ancient Greeks), the frequency scale from one tone to the tone of twice the frequency (an octave) is divided into twelve tones that are evenly spaced on a logarithmic scale. This means that ratio of the frequencies of any two successive tones is exactly the same (e.g., the ratios of the distances between successive frets on a guitar). The tones of this scale are named A, A-sharp, B, C, C-sharp, D, D-sharp, E, F, F-sharp, G and G-sharp (or A, B-flat, B, C, D-flat, D, E-flat, E, F, G-flat, G and A-flat). Most songs, however, use only eight of these twelve tones, spaced 2-2-1-2-2-1. This is called a “major” scale. For example, if you start with C, the C-major scale (or “key”) is C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The only reason for the different major scales is to play a musical instrument, from music, at a different average level of pitch (e.g., a piece played in C and E sound exactly the same, just at a different pitch level).

If you start from the fifth note on the major scale, you obtain a scale that is called the relative minor scale, e.g., the relative minor scale of C-major is A-minor. A song written in a minor scale uses the same seven notes as a song written in its relative major scale, but it sounds quite different. The minor key uses a different starting point in the above tone sequence: 2-1-2-2-1-2-2. The ancient Greeks named the scales (called modes) from each of the seven starting points as Ionian (major scale); Dorian, Lydian, Locrian, Mixolydian (dominant scale); Aeolian (natural minor scale) and Phrygian. An example of a song written in the Dorian mode is *Are You Going to Scarborough Fair?* (To determine the minor scale relative to a given major scale, move two letters back, e.g., A minor is the minor scale relative to C major, and E minor is the minor scale relative to G major.) Pieces played in different modes, even played at the same average pitch level, sound different; different scales within a mode (e.g., all major scales) do not (except for the average pitch level).

Dividing the octave into twelve tones using ratios or logarithms is not how the ancient Greeks did it. They divided the scale using simple mathematical ratios, called diatonic ratios. This approach produces a set of tones that are about the same as the evenly-tempered scale. The reason they did this is that Greek mathematics did not recognize irrational numbers, which is what are obtained if the scale is divided evenly on the logarithmic scale. (Irrational (“non-ratio”) numbers are numbers that cannot be represented as the ratio of two integers.) That is, on the evenly tempered scale it is not possible to represent the ratio of frequencies of successive tones as ratios of integers. The concept of dividing the octave (distance from one frequency to twice that frequency) into twelve evenly spaced (on the logarithmic scale) is a brilliant idea (for a couple of reasons – see my article on playing the guitar by ear for more information (at <http://www.foundationwebsite.org/Guitar.htm>). The use of diatonic ratios to define the tones of the evenly tempered scale is a poor approximation.

Two One-Chord Songs

In my lyrics books, I include the song *Don't Let Go* (songwriter Jesse Stone, popularized by singer Roy Hamilton), and I include the observation that it is the only song that I know that is sung entirely using one chord (most popular songs use three chords, and most of the remaining

use two chords; a few use four chords, and very few use more than four chords). On the radio a few months ago (March 27, 2009, about 3 pm EST), while I was returning from the Charlotte Douglas airport to Spartanburg, I heard the following song on WNCW (a National Public Radio community-college radio station at 88.7 on the FM dial): *(Come Back Baby) I Wish You Would* (author Billy Boy Arnold). It is also a one-chord song (essentially the same tune as *Don't Let Go*). The disk jockey followed that song up with *Amazing Grace* played by Alabama to the tune of *House of the Rising Sun* (by the Animals), and *Rising Sun Blues* by Doc Watson. These are really neat!

Millionaires in the White House

The April 10, 2009, edition of CNN's American Morning television program contained a segment on the number of wealthy people in President Barack Obama's inner circle of advisors: "White House Millionaires Club." Here follows an excerpt from the transcript (T. J. Holmes, CNN Anchor):

HOLMES: All right. The president, he's got a heck of a gathering around him. His closest advisers, some of them, the inner circles, make up a bit of a millionaire's club. But how exactly do that square with the president's image of being a man of the people? We're taking a closer look. It's 18 after the hour. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

HOLMES: I did not choose the tune, Alina. I did not. They have a deejay here on staff at AMERICAN MORNING. We're going to get one of those on our weekend show, I'm sure.

Well, President Obama, he made the move from Chicago to Washington. He brought a lot of his best friends with him. Some of the best, the brightest, and turns out they are some of the richest. The White House inner circle, a bit of a millionaire's club here. What does that say about the Obama administration, and how it does business? Does this say anything? It's just some accomplished people. Maybe accomplished (INAUDIBLE) the country.

ALINA CHO, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Well, certainly accomplished and rewarded handsomely for it.

HOLMES: Yes.

CHO: You know, a lot of people are saying, T.J., that you really can't put a price tag on comfort, and the president does feel comfortable around these people. And that's for sure.

Good morning, everybody.

You know, every year, the White House releases financial disclosure statements about those people in the administration. The Obama White House is no different. Releasing new documents that show many of the president's top aides are millionaires.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CHO (voice-over): Chief of staff Rahm Emmanuel, senior advisers Valerie Jarrett and David Axelrod, social secretary Desiree Rogers, President Obama's inner circle with big bucks in the bank.

LARRY SABATO, DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR POLITICS, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA: Being a millionaire is almost the price of admission.

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Please have a seat.

CHO: In a Democratic administration? The party of the middle class? Republicans have long been known for having wealthy aides in the White House, but President Obama is famous for being a man of the people.

SABATO: It's a conundrum. You want really successful people to be in the White House, but if you have all extremely successful people, successful financially, they're no longer representative of the broad body of Americans.

CHO: And no longer in touch with average American concerns, or are they?

ROLAND MARTIN, CNN POLITICAL ANALYST: Anybody can say, well, how are they going to relate to me? I'll tell you why. If you've been broke, you remember what it means to be broke.

CHO: Thirty years ago, according to "Newsweek," most of the 56 aides in the Carter White House lived on little more than their salaries, about \$45,000 a year.

At the beginning of their tenure during the Clinton administration, top aides George Stephanopoulos and Dee Dee Myers according to "The Washington Post" reported five-figure salaries. Once they left the White House, they went on to make much more in the private sector.

Then there's chief of staff Emmanuel, who also served as a Clinton senior adviser. Emmanuel left the first time to work in finance, made more than \$16 million in two and a half years, and is now back at the White House with assets totaling between \$4 million and \$11 million. Like almost everything in politics, whether that's good or bad depends on the spin.

SABATO: Money is not just the mother's milk of politics, it's the currency of employment today in the White House.

DAVID GERGEN, CNN SENIOR POLITICAL ANALYST: Money often flows to talented people in our society. And rather than being surprised by it or knocking it, I think we should celebrate when a president has the -- I think is smart enough to bring people along with him who had some success in life.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

CHO: David Gergen goes on to say these are people who know how hard it is to break through. They've also dealt with heavy hitters, and frankly, they're not intimidated by them. Exactly the kind of people, Gergen says, who are badly needed in the White House. He adds that the real headline out of all of this is that these people gave up a lot of money, T.J., to work at the White House.

HOLMES: OK. And you've been...

CHO: For a man they believe in.

I mean, listen, the real question is money or not, can you relate to the concerns that the average American -- unemployment, health care and the like? David Gergen argues, listen, you know, if you came from nothing, if you came from modest means, you never forget it.

HOLMES: You can't. No matter what. No matter how long it's been, you won't forget that.

All right. Alina Cho -- Alina Cho for us, thank you so much.

Kiran, I'll hand things back over to you.

[End of excerpt from CNN transcript.]

The level of wealth of Obama's advisors does not matter a lot. What matters is how they came by that wealth. If they came by it by hard, honest work, that is fine. But if it is wealth obtained by dishonest or dishonorable means, that is quite another matter, for it is an indicator of the person's character and allegiance. Consider, for example, the case of Rahm Emanuel, Obama's White House Chief of Staff. Here follows the Wikipedia entry describing how he amassed his fortune:

After serving as an advisor to Bill Clinton, in 1998 Emanuel resigned from his position in the Clinton administration and became an investment banker at Wasserstein Perella (now Dresdner Kleinwort), where he worked until 2002. In 1999, he became a managing director at the firm's Chicago office. Emanuel made \$16.2 million in his two-and-a-half-year stint as a banker, according to Congressional disclosures. At Wasserstein Perella, he worked on eight deals, including the acquisition by Commonwealth Edison of Peco Energy and the purchase by GTCR Golder Rauner of the SecurityLink home security unit from SBC Communications.

Emanuel was named to the Board of Directors for the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation ("Freddie Mac") by then President Bill Clinton in 2000. His position earned him at least \$320,000, including later stock sales. He was not assigned to any of the board's working committees, and the Board met no more than six times per year.

During his time on the board, Freddie Mac was plagued with scandals involving campaign contributions and accounting irregularities. The Obama Administration rejected a request under the Freedom of Information Act to review Freddie Mac board minutes and correspondence during Emanuel's time as a director.

The Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight (OFHEO) later accused the board of having "failed in its duty to follow up on matters brought to its attention." Emanuel resigned from the board in 2001 when he ran for Congress."

[End of Wikipedia excerpt.]

There is no person on earth who merits the payment of \$16.2 million for two and one-half year's work. This money represents a payoff of the banking industry to influential government officials in exchange for the government's support of a private banking system. By accepting this money – these ill-gotten, ill-deserved gains – this man demonstrates that he is not worthy to serve as a leader in the government of the American people.

A Comment by Jay Leno

Before moving to a prime-time television spot after serving for seventeen years as host of NBC's Tonight Show, Jay Leno was interviewed by Meredith Viera of NBC's Today Show (May 29, 2009). She asked Leno whether it was better to be a comedian than a Tonight Show Host. Leno quickly responded that it was better to be a comedian. To be a host, he reasoned, you need a program. If you are fired, you are out of work. If you are a comedian, you still have your profession.

Debt Creation to Stimulate the Economy

A lot of people do not realize that we have a "debt-based" monetary system. Money is literally created by banks when they make loans. Money is no longer backed by gold, since President Nixon eliminated the gold standard. Banks do not simply lend money that is deposited with them. If all debt were eliminated, our money supply would absolutely disappear.

This fact has profound implications for how the government is handling the current recession. It is trying desperately to keep debt levels high. It wants banks to continue to loan money. If the loans are repaid, or go bad, then money disappears, and the economy would cease to funnel fabulous wealth – interest – to the bankers, who control the government.

One way that the government keeps debt levels high is to fund massive bailouts of failing banks and other industries, such as Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, American Insurance Group (AIG) and General Motors. It doesn't matter a whit whether the money is ever paid back – all that matters is that the loan exists (so that the money exists). Another way is to provide incredible incentives for people to go into debt. This was the rationale of the "Cash for Clunkers" ("Car Allowance Rebate System") program, in which an individual could receive a credit of \$4,500 by trading in an older car, which was then destroyed. The program resulted in the destruction of about 800,000 automobiles, all of which had to be replaced. It cost the government about three billion dollars, and generated several times that amount of debt. Another debt-creating scheme is the \$8,000 tax credit for first-time home buyers. This generates many times that amount of debt (i.e., an amount equal to the size of the home mortgage). Another is the \$1,500 tax credit for energy-efficient home improvements, such as well-insulated windows. This credit is paid for up to 30 percent of the total cost of the improvement, so that it generates about twice the amount of debt as the credit.

Postal Rate Increases

It seems that every time you turn around, postal rates are being changed. When I was a kid, the rate for a first-class letter had been three cents for a long time. Over the period from 1985 to the present, the rate per ounce for first-class postage has been as follows (from Andrew K. Dart's list, published at <http://www.akdart.com/postrate.html>):

1885-1932: 2 cents (temporary raise to three cents for war years 1917-19)

1932-1958: 3 cents

1958-1963: 4 cents
1963-1968: 5 cents
1968-1971: 6 cents
1971-1974: 8 cents
1974-1975: 10 cents
1975-1978: 13 cents
1978-1981: 15 cents
1981-1981: 18 cents
1981-1985: 20 cents
1985-1988: 22 cents
1988-1991: 25 cents
1991-1995: 29 cents
1995-1999: 32 cents
1999-2001: 33 cents
2001-2002: 34 cents
2002-2006: 37 cents
2006-2007: 39 cents
2007-2008: 41 cents
2008-2009: 42 cents
2009-: 44 cents

We see that the rate remained at two cents for 48 years and at three cents for 27 years. Since then the rate changed about every 3-5 years until the last three years, when it has changed every year. (In 1981, the rate changed twice, on March 22 and November 1.)

Changing the basic postal rate every few years is inefficient. It is only necessary if inflation is spiraling out of control (which may soon be the case, given the rate at which the government is now printing money). Instead of changing the rate from 41 cents to 42 cents to 44 cents, why not simply change it from 41 cents to 50 or 60 cents, and keep it at that level for several years? Once the cost increased to the double-digit range in 1974, it no longer made any sense to make single-digit changes in it. The answer: The government wants to waste money – it is good for the economy.

Eugenics Is Alive and Well in the US

On March 29, 2009, I saw a television segment (on NBC Today?) about an \$8.2 billion National Institutes of Health grant program to study brain cancer. It turns out that the most common types of malignant brain tumors are gliomas, and it scientists have identified genetic risk factors for gliomas.

Eugenics – genetic improvement -- used to be a dirty word. It is now alive and well. Parents routinely abort defective fetuses, once genetic testing reveals a birth defect. The US government is investing heavily in this important – and once maligned – field.

When my step-daughter discovered that her serious skin condition was genetic disorder that not everyone possessed, she decided not to have children. Until recently both Canada and the US routinely sterilized “defective” people. This rather crude approach has been replaced by high-tech measures such as selective abortion based on genetic tests. Eugenics, like cannibalism (use of body parts from corpses for organ transplants) is alive and well in the United States.

Forex Trading for Everyone!

There are lots of ads on television now touting foreign-exchange trading for individuals. Time was when the only people who engaged in foreign exchange trading were banks and industries who exported or imported. When engaged in by individuals, this practice is nothing more than legalized gambling, it should be regulated and taxed in the same fashion as casino gambling.

The same applies to derivatives trading. Once was that derivatives were traded simply by people with legitimate business interests in hedging, such as a farmer who wished to sell his crop in advance, to avoid potential losses from commodity price fluctuations (uncertainty). Trading in derivatives was a factor in the stock-market crash of the Great Depression (“bucket shops”). It was made illegal until recently, when bankers and people such as Alan Greenspan persuaded Congress to legalize it once again. It quickly got out of hand, with bankers making massive unbacked (uncollateralized) bets on the performance of stocks and bonds (credit default swaps). When the economy turned sour, many of the bets could not be repaid – they represented some 60 trillion dollars worth of value, much more than the world’s entire gross domestic product.

The really insidious aspect of these bets is that when they failed – as they eventually had to (since business cycles always happen) – the US government decided that the US taxpayer should cover the losses. Had the wealthy bankers simply been gambling with their own money, with fully collateralized (backed) bets, no one would have cared, and the derivatives industry would not have “brought down” the economy. That’s our government for you – let the fat cats bet as much as they want, and make the taxpayer cover their losses when they can’t pay (under our income tax system, 80 percent of tax revenues are from taxes on the middle class).

A derivative works as follows. Someone proposes a bet that GM would not fail, and someone else, for a small fee, offers to cover the cost of the loss if it did – that’s a credit-default-swap derivative. Neither party owns stocks or bonds in GM – it is just a bet, pure and simple. If you check back about a hundred years, you will see that almost all firms fail before very long. The person or organization that offered to cover the cost of GM if it failed was a fool. The US government should not use taxpayer funds to cover this ridiculous bet.

Increasing Population Leads to Violent Deaths

Because of the availability of energy from fossil fuels, the global human population has exploded from about a billion people two hundred years ago to over six billion today. The industrialized world has now consumed about half the global reserves of petroleum, and global petroleum production will now start to decline (Hubbert’s Curve, Hubbert’s Peak). As it does, the global human population will also decline, falling back to less than a billion very quickly (there is no alternative source of energy equivalent to oil). Every time a family gives birth to multiple children from fertility drugs, everyone exclaims how wonderful this is. It is not wonderful at all. All of the population increase caused by a fertility rate above replacement rate (about two per woman) will eventually be destroyed, by famine, disease or war. Every mother who gives birth to more than two children is directly responsible for the violent death of human beings who cannot be supported by the planet’s recurrent energy resources.

Good Always Wins over Evil?

You often hear that good always wins over evil. This is a very misleading statement. While good always wins over evil, evil always wins over good. War always ends in peace, but peace always ends in war (in a growing society).

Better to Ask for Forgiveness than to Ask for Permission?

Is it better to ask for permission to do something, or to go ahead and do it without asking permission and ask for forgiveness after it is done, if something goes wrong? It is argued by some that when you ask for forgiveness, you have guilt, but when you ask for permission, you have clearance, and will not feel guilty. But others reason that if you want to get a job done, it is more efficient to charge right ahead and do it without permission, and ask for forgiveness later, after the job is done, if something goes wrong.

Ralf Hotchkiss's \$175 Wheelchair

My son was involved in an auto accident many years ago, and uses a wheelchair. These wheelchairs are very expensive – several thousand dollars apiece. There was a piece on television a few months ago (PBS *Dateline*, June 23, 2009) about a gentleman, Ralf Hotchkiss, who had set up a program for building heavy-duty (“RoughRider”) wheelchairs for \$175. A tip of the hat to Mr. Hotchkiss!

Here follows a write-up on Mr. Hotchkiss's accomplishment (posted at <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/1224-02.htm>). If you wish to make a donation to a worthy cause, this one certainly qualifies!

Published on Friday, December 24, 2004, by CommonDreams.org
Ralf Hotchkiss & His Whirlwind Wheelchairs
by Ralph Nader

Nearly forty years ago, a young high school motorcycle rider in Rockford, Illinois went over a grate, flipped over into the air and landed with a broken body. He became paraplegic. Because of the remarkable way Ralf Hotchkiss responded to his disability, thousands of people with disabilities here and in developing countries are now riding in durable, affordable wheelchairs.

He entered Oberlin College and graduated with an engineering degree. After interning with one of our groups as an undergraduate, he started the Center for Concerned Engineering where he began taking on a British corporation which monopolized wheelchair production and charged unaffordable prices for an inferior product. Hotchkiss began inventing improvements using inexpensive materials and then making them available publicly. He took no patents out on his inventions.

Not content with both helping start competitors to this British monopoly and perfecting wheelchair engineering design, Hotchkiss widened his area of advocacy to help make possible

the great breakthroughs in access to buildings, airplanes, buses and trains for physically disabled people. You can witness the results everyday where wheelchair riders (as he prefers to call them) can participate in so many occupations, community and athletic activities formerly denied them.

Handing out wheelchairs to people – the charity model – did not appeal to this determined, problem-solving young man. First, the wheelchairs were not that good. Wheelchairs currently being imported from China are designed for hospital floors, not outdoors where paths and terrain are quite uneven. Such chairs can be dangerous to their occupants by breaking and tipping over riders. And, it is often difficult to obtain spare parts.

Hotchkiss started Whirlwind Wheelchair International (WWI) to teach people in South America, Africa and Asia how to manufacture their own wheelchairs in small shop facilities.

The need is vast and growing. As WWI says: "Mobility is as basic as food and shelter, but 98% of the 20 million people who need wheelchairs in third world countries don't yet have one." Western models are prohibitively expensive. Locally produced designs can be not only much cheaper, more rugged and more drawing on locally available materials that simplify repairs, but they also elicit the pride and care that goes along with locally producing what you own.

Many of these shops are owned and operated by women with disabilities. More and more of the inventive ideas to improve a wheelchair's responses to the stresses, pressures and bumps are coming from riders and mechanics. One such invention was the Zimbabwe front-caster wheel. It was adapted from a pushcart that was observed in Harare, Zimbabwe, and is now used for negotiating rugged paths.

Based at San Francisco State University's School of Engineering, with key participation of Professor Peter Pfaelzer, Whirlwind Wheelchair International brims with new ideas. Hotchkiss is driven by a technical and moral imagination. He says, "Imagine not being able to go where you want, when you want. Imagine being stranded the last place someone set you down. Imagine the waiting, the frustration, the loneliness. Imagine it is lifelong." He aims to break what he calls "the imprisonment of immobility" by expanding his coalition to be beyond the nearly 50 workshops in 25 countries from Nicaragua to Uganda to Afghanistan.

Current initiatives include a new toddler's wheelchair for children one to six, built low enough to the ground to allow interactions with other small children. His valiant crew is pioneering new distribution and marketing strategies to get "wheeled mobility into the lives of people with fewer resources." Jobs are produced for people with disabilities along with greatly enhanced mobility.

Next year Hotchkiss will travel, in his easy riding wheelchair, to Colombia, Uganda, Eritrea, Vietnam and Thailand to launch or expand these production workshops. His energy is irrepressible; all obstacles and difficult circumstances, regarding his life's mission, are only problems to be methodically analyzed and dealt solutions.

Now, wouldn't you think his Center would be besieged with public and private donors? If you did you would be rational. But Hotchkiss's group is achieving every day. Foundations too often favor long-winded studies about what needs to be achieved like the endless large grants for groups to produce the redundant report on energy policies or ways of learning in schools. His group's non-profit budget, which was around \$400,000 three years ago, is now down by half, to about \$200,000!

The more he produces with fewer resources, the fewer resources he can raise. He is now down to four staff, including himself, to help turn around, with his sustainable and multiple trim tabs, the lives of 20 million people.

The U.S. government, which plows tens of billions of dollars into unneeded weapons systems from the wasteful Lockheed-Martin et al., which blows tens of millions of dollars regularly on foreign aid and consultants' projects which do not work, can't seem to lend Whirlwind Wheelchair International a hand. Imagine the goodwill for America's best instincts that some modest assistance will facilitate.

Hotchkiss has received the prestigious MacArthur "genius" fellowship and been given many engineering design and other major awards. It isn't as if he has trouble filling out a one page vitae. It is just our society's messed up, cruel priorities that prevent making possible thousands of more locally produced wheelchairs of rugged, affordable design, from rolling into their grateful riders' arms.

If you want to help or suggest sources of help, call Ralf Hotchkiss at (415) 338-1290, e-mail him at whirlwind@sfsu.edu or log into his website at <http://www.whirlwindwheelchair.org> . Contributions are deductible.

[End of Nader write-up.]

Tom Selleck on Calvin Coolidge

On CNN's Situation Room on 28 March 2009, actor Tom Selleck quoted former President Calvin Coolidge, "A nation that forgets its heroes will soon be forgotten."

Does God Exist?

Recently there have been a number of books written on the topics of the nature of God and whether God exists. These books include Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006); Christopher Hitchens' *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Twelve / Hachette Book Group, 2007); A. C. Grayling's *Against All Gods* (Oberon Books, 2007); and Victor J. Stenger's *God, the Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows that God Does Not Exist* (Prometheus Books, 2007). Of these, I enjoyed the Stenger book most.

The issue of whether God exists is decided by a very simple argument. For this argument, "God" is defined as the god of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The argument is founded on the logical fact that no entity can be both A and not A, where A denotes any characteristic. Upon reading the Torah, Bible, and Koran, it is quickly seen that God, as defined in those books, displays both good and evil attributes. Therefore, this particular God cannot exist. Gods defined in other ways may certainly exist, but not this particular God, because it is defined inconsistently – in a contradictory manner.

This fact begs the question about the issue of food that has been dedicated to a particular deity. Christian tradition holds that Christians should not eat food that has been dedicated to another god. But if the Christian view is that God is good (even though Richard Dawkins argues

otherwise), then the Christian God cannot be the Hebrew God, who is clearly not good (e.g., he sent a flood to destroy mankind, he sent Israelite armies to commit genocide on occupants of the Promised Land, he asked Abraham to kill his son, Isaac), or the Moslem God, who also differs from the Christian God in certain respects (as defined by any differences between the Bible and the Koran). In other words, kosher food and halaal food have been dedicated to gods that are different from the Christian god. It follows that Christians who take their Bible seriously should not consume any food that is kosher or halaal.

It is of interest to explore what gods exist. As Stenger (and others) points out, any god who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent (the three “O”s) does not exist (since there is clearly evil in the universe). The simplest definition of god is the pantheistic concept, “All That Is.” This definition is consistent and this god clearly exists (since every person has a sense of identity – “I think, therefore I am”). Karl Popper claims (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (Basic Books, 1959 (original German Springer-Verlag 1934)) that any theory that explains everything explains nothing – that to be of value, a theory must specify what counterevidence would refute it (refutability). This observation does not apply to the “All That Is” definition of god, since this definition simply defines his scope, not his abilities, behaviors, or other characteristics. Moreover, it is a definition, not a theory. Under this definition, since we don’t know much about the universe, there is still much room for faith and belief. There is simply no need for faith or belief concerning the issue of the *existence* of that god.

Since the holy books of Judaism, Christianity and Islam contain many inconsistencies, most (rational) people “pick and choose” the parts that they believe in, to form a consistent set. This set then defines their god, by inference. It is of interest to ask whether a god defined in this way (e.g., by picking and choosing the parts of the Bible that you believe in) exists. He may or may not. If the definition of god is inconsistent, then that god clearly does not exist. But simply because the definition is consistent does not imply that that god exists. It is not impossible that a red heifer exists – there is nothing inconsistent or impossible about this – but one may not exist. Also, even if such a god exists, he may not be very impressive or capable – such as a Golden Calf. I came to the conclusion a long time ago that the “All That Is” definition is the only practical one, since that god not only exists but is consistent with all of reality – and non-reality as well.

The issue of establishing the existence of god is similar to the topic of existence proofs in mathematics. An “existence” proof is a proof that something exists, but it may not reveal it. For example, Shannon’s 1948 Fundamental Theorem of Coding Theory proves that it is possible, by suitable encoding, to transmit information over a noisy communication channel at a rate called the channel capacity with as low a (nonzero) probability of error as desired, but he did not provide any examples of codes that would do this. Such codes, the Bose-Chaudhuri-Hocquenghem (BCH) codes, were developed about ten years later. A “constructive” proof, on the other hand, not only establishes the validity of an assertion, but provides a concrete example. The “All That Is” definition of god is in the nature of a constructive proof, since it provides a concrete specification of god (proved solipsistically by each person). Unfortunately, this definition sheds little light on the nature of god, and it has some limitations from an operational perspective. The utility of any theory – and it is noted that “All That Is” is a definition, not a theory – rests with its ability to make verifiable predictions. The “All That Is” definition includes all of science and all of the physical universe, and so there is much that is verifiable under this definition, and much that is predictable (i.e., all of established physical-science theory). What is lacking is information about the spiritual world – answers to questions such as Why does anything exist at all? Do I have a purpose? What is that purpose? Do I

have a soul? Does my personality (ego) disintegrate after death? Do I reincarnate? Are there parallel universes? What are alien abductions? What are crop circles?

The ACORN Scandal: David and Goliath

Glenn Beck and many others have been railing for months about corruption in community organizer ACORN (Association of Community Organizers for Reform Now), with no success. But last week (September 7-11, 2009) a 20-year old young lady (Hannah Giles) and a 25-year old young man (James O'Keefe) produced four videos, at a cost of about \$1,300, exposing illegal practices at four ACORN offices around the country (promotion of tax fraud, tax evasion, prostitution and sex slavery). (The videos were posted at the website <http://www.BigGovernment.com>.) ACORN had received approximately \$53 million in grants from the US government over the past few decades. Earlier this week (September 14, 15, 16), the US Congress voted to stop all federal funding of ACORN. For more information on the ACORN scandal, see the September 17, 2009, issue of the Spartanburg Herald-Journal, "ACORN plans independent investigation."

The mainstream media did not report on ACORN, even when the videos were posted. There was actually relatively little coverage until Congress voted to defund ACORN. The response of local government was rather bizarre. When informed of the first video (which was filmed in Baltimore, Maryland), the Maryland State's Attorney's reaction was to "kill the messenger." Here follows her statement (posted at Glenn Beck's website, <http://www.glennbeck.com/content/articles/article/198/30570/> :

Maryland ACORN update

September 15, 2009 - 12:47 ET

**OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY
FOR
BALTIMORE CITY**

208 THE CLARENCE M. MITCHELL, JR. COURTHOUSE

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21202

Patricia C. Jessamy Phone
State's Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Information Contact: Margaret T. Burns
Chief, Communications & Governmental Affairs
Office (443) 984-1121 or Cell (443) 474-7479
or
Joseph Sviatko, Deputy Chief, Communications
Office (443) 984-1122 or Cell (410) 790-3248

PRESS RELEASE

STATEMENT OF STATE'S ATTORNEYS OFFICE FOR BALTIMORE CITY RELATIVE TO THE ALLEGED BALTIMORE ACORN INCIDENT

Baltimore, MD – September 11, 2009 – We have received inquiries from citizens and the media asking whether the Baltimore City State's Attorneys Office would initiate a criminal investigation for acts allegedly committed at ACORN offices located in Baltimore. The only information received in reference to this alleged criminal behavior was a YouTube video. Upon review by this office, the video appears to be incomplete. In addition, the audio portion could possibly have been obtained in violation of Maryland Law, *Annotated Code of Maryland Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article §10-402*, which requires two party consent.

If it is determined that the audio portion now being heard on YouTube was illegally obtained, it is also illegal under Maryland Law to willfully use or willfully disclose the content of said audio. The penalty for the unlawful interception, disclosure or use of it is a felony punishable up to 5 years.

Only Whites Can Be Racist, and Only Whites Can Do Racial Profiling

I have written on a number of occasions that only whites can be racist. When other races are racist, nobody seems to care. A couple of months ago, a black Harvard professor, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., was arrested at his own home, because a neighbor reported that someone was trying to break into his house (he was returning from a trip, and had misplaced his keys). When a white policeman, Sgt. James Crowley, arrived and requested to see identification, the professor screamed "racial profiling." The professor had in fact written much on racial profiling, and the policeman had given many talks on the topic.

The policeman acted properly in the incident. The professor did not. Instead of chastising the behavior of Professor Gates, whom he knows, President Obama invited the two gentlemen to the White House "for a beer." He does not invite white people who are charged with racial profiling to his home for a beer. I wonder why not. It appears that, as with racism, only whites can do racial profiling.

Health Care for Illegal Immigrants

Many people are upset that the 12-20 million illegal immigrants in this country receive many free social and economic services, including health care – often very high-cost health care provided at emergency rooms of hospitals. There is much concern that the new health-care legislation will continue to allow illegal aliens free access to health care.

At the present time, illegal aliens who show up at emergency rooms are not turned away. It seems hard to imagine that this practice will not continue. US taxpayers are fed up with paying

for illegal aliens' health care, and understandably want assurances that, under the new legislation, this practice will end. The only way to make sure that illegal aliens are not provided free social and economic services is to deport them from the country. The law requires that all illegal aliens be deported. Unfortunately, the US government wants the illegal aliens to remain, because it serves the interests of the wealthy elite who control the government. The illegal aliens flaunt the law, and the treacherous US government ignores the law. The government is not about to deport the illegal aliens, and the government is not about to deny them health care.

Credit Card Fees

Because of the recession, banks are making much less income from interest on loans (because many loans have gone bad, and fewer new ones are being made). As a result, they have made substantial increases in their fees. Recently, the US government has passed legislation placing some restrictions on fees.

The problem is not with fees. The problem is with compound interest. With compound interest, the amount charged to the customer (both interest and fees, and interest on both) grows exponentially, to levels that eventually enslave or bankrupt the borrower. The focus on fees is simply obfuscatory legislation to make it appear that it is doing something, when in fact it is doing nothing at all to solve the real problem.

Military-Service Path to Citizenship

The United States government cheapened US citizenship when it started the practice of giving 50,000 citizenships away each year, in a lottery. Recently, it has been reported in the news a number of times that the US government is now granting massive numbers of citizenships to aliens who are willing to fight our wars for us. The February 15, 2009, issue of the Spartanburg Herald-Journal reported that the Army has unveiled a new program, offering to grant citizenships to new recruits in as little as six months. It is expected that this program will provide as many as 14,000 volunteers a year, or about one in six recruits. The new program is designed to enlist temporary-visa holders who have lived in the US for at least two years – permanent residents have been able to enlist for a long time.

In its dying days, the Roman Empire hired mercenaries to fight its wars. Selling citizenships for two years of military service is far too cheap – but it is better than giving it away for free in a lottery! Both practices are disgusting.

Electric Cars and Trains

Quite some time ago I promoted use of electric cars. It appears that this idea is now catching on, with a number of auto companies having electric models in production or on the drawing boards. I also suggested a massive shift from individual automobiles to electric rail mass transportation. A similar idea has taken hold in the United Kingdom, but for replacing planes, not cars, with electric trains. The August 5, 2009, edition of *The Guardian* reported in its lead article, "High-speed rail plan to eliminate domestic flights," a plan to eliminate the need for short-haul air travel in Britain by linking UK cities with 250-mph trains.

A number of states are working on a plan to develop high-speed rail service, using federal “stimulus” money (Spartanburg Herald-Journal, April 16, 2009, “8 states unite to seek high-speed rail funds”). The April 17 issue of SHJ reports that President Obama has outlined plans for a large high-speed rail network throughout the country (“Obama outlines vision for high-speed rail network”).

If it were up to me, I would place electric rail tracks on all suitable interstate highways, and terminate all further construction and maintenance of highways for automobiles and trucks. Now that global oil production is about to decline it is time to end the exquisitely wasteful system of individual automobiles and trucks for long-distance transport.

Singer Billy Walker

An article in the Saturday, March 8, 2009, issue of the Spartanburg Herald-Journal presents the interesting story of Singing Billy Walker, who grew up in Spartanburg. The article was written by Rev. Kirk Neely, the father of my friend Scott Neely. Here follows the article.

Wofford, Morningside Baptist to honor Singing Billy Walker
The Rev. Kirk Neely, for the Herald-Journal

What do Charles Darwin, Edgar Allen Poe, Abraham Lincoln and William Walker all have in common? They were all born in 1809. This is the 20 anniversary of the birth of these notable men. Probably the least well known is Walker, a South Carolinian who grew up in Spartanburg.

Singing Billy Walker was born May 6, 1809, at Martin's Mills, near Cross Keys. He grew up near Spartanburg and died here on September 24, 1875. His grave is in the old Magnolia Cemetery.

This year, the legacy of Singing Billy Walker will be celebrated throughout the South. Walker was a Baptist song leader, shape-note singing master and compiler of three shape-note hymnbooks. Walker married Ann Golightly, whose sister Thurza was married to Benjamin Franklin White, publisher of shape-note book “The Sacred Harp.” In 1835, Walker published “The Southern Harmony,” the best known of his hymnals. Using a four-shape note system, he arranged many of the spiritual songs we sing in worship. He was the first to combine the words and the tune of “Amazing Grace” as we know it best.

In 1866, he published “Christian Harmony,” where he changed from the four-shape to seven-shape notation.

Walker is listed as the composer of many of the tunes in his hymnals. However, he acknowledged that in many cases, he borrowed his tunes, probably from the living tradition of folk music that surrounded him.

In the introduction to “The Southern Harmony,” he wrote that he used a “great many good airs, which I could not find in any publication, nor in manuscript.” Working from original tune to finished hymn, Walker followed a common practice in his tradition, borrowing lyrics from established poets such as Charles Wesley and adding to the tune treble and bass parts, creating three-part harmony.

Walker's hymnals remain in print. His "Southern Harmony" continues to be used for many annual singing events. His songs are widely sung today by Sacred Harp singers as well as others. According to the collated minutes kept by the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association, his song "Hallelujah" is sung at Sacred Harp conventions more than any other.

Converse College hosted a Singing Billy Walker weekend last month. On March 14, at Wofford College, shape-note singers from throughout the Southeast will gather for the annual tribute to Walker. On March 15, Morningside Baptist Church will remember the man who helped bring musical literacy to remote country churches around the South.

Harry Eskew, a renowned hymnologist and the leading Walker scholar in the world, will be a guest at the 11 a.m. service. No experience in shape-note singing is necessary to sing the hymns at the service.

Following the 11 a.m. service, down-home cooking will be provided by Shealy's restaurant in Leesville.

Fried chicken, barbecue and all the trimmings will be served as the singing continues in the Fellowship Hall. Tickets for lunch are \$10 for adults and \$7.50 for children age 10 and younger. Tickets will be available this Sunday and Wednesday in the Welcome Center and in the church office until Friday.

The Rev. Kirk Neely is pastor of Morningside Baptist Church.

[End of Neely extract.]

On Remembering Robert McNamara

The following column by Bob Herbert appeared in the July 12, 2009, issue of the Spartanburg Herald-Journal.

No lessons learned in Vietnam

Robert McNamara, Lyndon Johnson's icy-veined, cold-visaged and rigidly intellectual point man for a war that sent thousands upon thousands of people (most of them young) to their utterly pointless deaths, died last Monday at the ripe old age of 93.

Long after the horror of Vietnam was over, McNamara would concede, in remarks that were like salt in the still, festering wounds of the loved ones of those who had died, that he had been "wrong, terribly wrong" about the war. I felt nothing but utter contempt for his concession.

I remember getting my draft notice in the mid-1960s as Johnson's military buildup for the war was in full swing. I'm not sure what I expected: I was staggered on the first day of basic training at Fort Dix, N.J., to be part of a motley gathering of mostly scared and skinny kids who looked like guys I'd gone to high school with.

That's who was shipped off to Vietnam in droves – youngsters 18, 19, 20 and 21. Many, of course, would die there, and many others would come back forever scarred.

Horrors of the battlefield

Johnson and McNamara should have been looking out for those kids, who knew nothing about geopolitics or why they were being turned into trained killers who, we were told, could cold-bloodedly smoke the enemy – “Good shot!” – and then kick back and smoke a Marlboro.

Many would end up weeping on the battlefield, crying for their moms with their dying breaths. Or trembling uncontrollably as they watched buddies, covered in filth, bleed to death before their eyes – sometimes in their arms.

I was lucky. The Army sent me to Korea, which was no walk in the park, but it wasn't Vietnam.

I served in the intelligence office of an engineer battalion. But no one could truly escape the war. I would get letters from home that would make my heart sink, letters telling me that this buddy had been killed, that that buddy had been killed, that a kid that I had played football or softball with – or had gone to the rifle range with – had been killed.

For what? McNamara didn't know.

The obscenity of war

McNamara, it turns out, had realized early on that Vietnam was a lost cause, but he kept that crucial information close to his chest as America continued to send tens of thousands to their doom. How in God's name did he ever look at himself in the mirror?

Lessons learned from Vietnam? None.

More than 58,000 Americans and some 2 million to 3 million Vietnamese died in Vietnam. More than 4,000 Americans have died in Iraq, and no one knows how many hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. Even as I was writing this, reports were coming in of seven more American GI's killed in Afghanistan – a war that made sense in the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks but makes very little sense now.

None of these wars were pursued with the kind of intensity and sense of common purpose and shared sacrifice that marked World War II. Wars are now mostly background noise, distant events overshadowed by celebrity deaths and the antics of Sarah Palin, Mark Sanford and the like.

The obscenity of war is lost on most Americans, and that drains the death of Robert McNamara of any real significance.

Bob Herbert writes for The New York Times.

[End of Herbert extract.]

On Remembering Ted Kennedy

I was in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, a couple of weeks ago, with two colleagues. As we were passing a newsstand, one of them happened to notice a publication with a full-size picture of the late US Senator Edward Moore ("Ted") Kennedy, who died a few weeks ago (August 25, 2009). As we passed the picture, one of my friends commented, "Oh, there's a piece on Ted Kennedy," and the other said, "Yes, that's sad." As I passed the picture, I commented that Ted Kennedy was the most evil American of all time. My friends were rather shocked at this observation, and asked me why I would say such a thing. As we walked on, I explained to them that Kennedy was the primary senator responsible for passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, which resulted in the increase in US population from 200 million to 300 million people and the cultural fragmentation of the nation.

We had just arrived at our dinner restaurant, and my friends asked me for additional explanation. One of my friends was a lady, about age 35, and the other was a gentleman of age about 50. She had never heard of the Immigration Act of 1965. He had, and knew that it had something to do with "family reunification" and "cultural diversity." He pointed out that when the Act was passed in 1965, Ted Kennedy was just a junior senator with no power, and that he could not possibly have been the senator primarily responsible for passage of the Act. I pointed out that the Jewish lobby had been working for years to change US immigration law to promote mass immigration from diverse ethnic groups from around the world, in order to weaken control of the nation by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) and thereby channel US support to the Zionist program of creating and maintaining the Jewish state of Israel. On hearing this, my male friend exclaimed, "Oh, blame it all on the Jews!" I went on to say that without substantial non-Jewish support, they could not accomplish their goal of changing immigration law. They needed a Gentile "shill" to front for their program. Kennedy was an excellent choice for several reasons: he was a new senator, without power or prestige (other than the Kennedy name, which he had blemished by cheating in college and abandoning Mary Jane Kopeckne to drown in a car), and would likely welcome the opportunity to join forces with a politically powerful group; he was a Catholic, and Catholics has long chafed under Protestant hegemony; his brother President John Kennedy – assassinated in 1963 and much adored by the American people – had written a book, *Nation of Immigrants* (which had in fact been reprinted by B'nai B'rith) promoting the cause of immigration in the US – with his death so fresh in the minds of Americans, they would be delighted to further a cause of his.

There was a large protest against the passage of the Act. Senator Sam Ervin of North Carolina argued strongly that passage of the Act would flood the nation with immigrants from around the world and destroy our culture. Kennedy lied that his would not happen. Ervin and other opponents of the Act were drowned out, and the Act passed. The rest is history. Exactly as predicted by Ervin, the country has been flooded with immigrants and the culture has been fragmented. The population has exploded to a size that cannot possibly be supported by recurrent solar energy, and most of the population will die as global energy supplies exhaust. The nation has been destroyed, and Ted Kennedy – the greatest American traitor of all time – brought this about.

Kennedy and all others who condone or support the illegal-alien invasion are traitors. On this issue, there can be no compromise. The Constitution of the United States explicitly requires the President and all top government officials to defend the country from invasion. The last US president to do this was Dwight Eisenhower ("Operation Wetback") – all presidents since Eisenhower have committed high treason and gross malfeasance in office, by condoning and supporting the alien invasion.

Why Do Spirits Lie?

Has it ever occurred to you that spirits – or your subconscious personalities, if you don't believe in spirits, spirit guides, oracles, previous incarnations, universal subconsciousness and the like – deliberately obfuscate and equivocate, to the point where the information that they provide is rather useless? Certainly, some incredible revelations and other useful information is provided from time to time, but it seems that the potential pearls of wisdom are always imbedded in a subjective and qualitative flow of material that invariably contains ambivalent, misleading or downright false information, so that you can't really trust anything they say. Are these entities / personalities toying with us, or are they simply unable to convey material that is factually correct and sufficiently quantitative to be of practical use in the physical world?

[Update 31 December 2009] I recently read the second edition of Laura Knight-Jadczyk's book, *High Strangeness: Hyperdimensions and the Process of Alien Abduction* (with Harrison Koehli, Red Pill Press, 2008). The second edition of this book contains an Afterword by Laura's husband, physicist Arkadiusz Jadczyk (pp. 354-361). In this Afterword, Jadczyk makes some comments that shed light on the answer to the question, "Why Do Spirits Lie?" He observes that communications from timeless beings can introduce paradoxes – impossibilities. Impossibilities are rather "awkward" to deal with, since their resolution might imply that you do not exist – your "world" might vanish. In general, "noiseless" (errorless, perfect) communication from the future is not possible in a linear, non-branching universe, since it generally generates paradoxes (see the reference for an example). Communication from the future is feasible, however, under certain conditions. One of these is that the communication channel is noisy – that there is "equivocation" in the transmission. The reason why this works is, basically, that it cannot be proved that the communication happened (see the reference for additional discussion) – the paradox is not established. In other words, in order to communicate with the physical (time-bound) world, spirits must lie! (This does not imply that they cannot tell the truth most of the time, just that there must be some nonzero probability that what they tell you is untrue – there must be some unreliability in what they say.) There must always be some doubt whether the communication was made, or that it was truthful. That is a fundamental reason why it is impossible to prove, in our physical, time-bound world, any "supernatural" events, such as spirit communications, messages from spirit guides or angels, poltergeist, flying saucers, alien abductions, or crop circles.

Another way of avoiding the paradox of communication from the future is to allow branching universes, such as the Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics. I worked for a time with Hugh Everett III, who developed this theory (also called the Parallel Universe Theory). If the universe branches at each event, then communications from the future cause no problem. Whenever a communication from the future happens and the receiver (observer) chooses a different event as a result, he and the rest of his world simply follow a different time-path of existence (realization) from that point on. Although the parallel-universe theory describes the behavior of subatomic particles well, it is difficult to reconcile with spiritual concepts such as the theories of Akasha (universal memory), reincarnation and immortal souls. The problem is that the same individual can follow a number of different "branches" of the universe, so that it becomes difficult to define who the individual is, and what the soul's experiences are. More importantly, once branching is allowed, the number of distinct individuals who ever exist (in all simultaneous worlds) explodes exponentially (and instantly) to infinity. This is not only difficult to comprehend, but it seems quite unnecessary.

Consideration of paradoxes is also important in the issue of whether God exists (see the segment “Does God Exist?” earlier in this piece): if one’s definition of God is inconsistent, then that God is impossible, and does not exist.

(I wrote my PhD dissertation in the field of communication theory (error-correcting codes – my dissertation was entitled *Synchronizable Error-Correcting Codes*). According to the fundamental theorem of coding theory (Claude Shannon, 1948), it is possible to communicate over a noisy (discrete memoryless) channel with a nonzero error rate as low as desired, at a rate called the “channel capacity.” By suitable means, it would appear that communications from the future (“channeling”) could be quite reliable under certain conditions. Jadczyk discusses this concept also in the Afterword.)

Allergies Are Psychosomatic

Did you know that in the case of a person who has multiple personalities, some of the personalities may be afflicted with severe allergies, and others may be completely allergy free? Furthermore, the state of the allergic reaction is instantaneous, as one personality replaces another.

Am I a Direct Descendent of Conan the Conqueror?

Late in his life, my father gave me two old books and a diary. The diary was that his grandmother, Edna Mary Conant, and the books were written by his great grandfather, Thomas Conant. The books were *Upper Canada Sketches* (William Briggs, 1898) and *Life in Canada* (William Briggs, 1903). These books are still in print in low-cost editions (prints included, but not in color): *Upper Canada Sketches* by BiblioBazaar, PO Box 21206, Charleston, SC 29413 and *Life in Canada* by Kessinger Publishing’s Legacy Reprints. An online edition of *Upper Canada Sketches* is posted at http://www.archive.org/stream/cihm_00740. A .pdf-format copy is posted at http://ia311228.us.archive.org/3/items/cihm_00740/cihm_00740.pdf. (This edition is black-and-white. Someday when I have time I will scan a pdf copy of the color prints of the book, and post them on my website.)

My father died in 1993, and I had never gotten around to reading these items until recently. The diary is typed out on my website, at <http://www.EdnaMaryConant.htm>. The George that Great-Grandmother (Mrs. Conant) refers to is my grandfather, Joseph George Caldwell of Belleville, Ontario, Canada. A few months ago I had some time, and I decided to read the two books. I am half way through one, and it is really interesting. It turns out that I am a direct descendent of Roger Conant the Pilgrim, who came to Salem, Massachusetts in the second ship, the Ann (following the Mayflower) in 1623 and became the first Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, the first successful colony established by Britain in North America. Roger Conant’s descendents lived in New England until the time of the American Revolution, when his sixth-generation descendent, also Roger Conant, remained loyal to Britain, became a United Empire Loyalist, and moved to Canada. His 13,000-acre farm was confiscated by the United States government, and none of his descendents have ever been reimbursed for this confiscation

Colonists who opposed the Revolution were called United Empire Loyalists. British patriots were found in all the colonies. I did not realize until I visited the battle site of King’s Mountain,

near Spartanburg, that most of the fighting on the side of the British was not done by British soldiers, but by United Empire Loyalists.

A detailed genealogy of the Conant family is presented in *A History and Genealogy of the Conant Family in England and America* by Frederick Odell Conant (privately printed in Portland Maine 1887), which is currently published by The Apple Manor Press of Markham, Virginia. The Conant family name has many alternative spellings (43 in all), one of which is Conan. There were two branches of the Conant family, the Breton branch and the Cornish branch. Frederick Odell Conant writes, "...it is possible the family [the Conant family of America and England] is descended from some Breton follower of William the Conqueror."

Parallel Universes / Physics / Spiritualism

As I mentioned, I worked for a number of years with Hugh Everett III, developer of the Parallel Universe theory (Many Worlds Interpretation of quantum mechanics). It is interesting to note that many spiritualists believe the universe to be comprised of parallel worlds, consistent with Everett's theory.

On Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol*

Last week (September 15, 2009), Dan Brown's new book, *The Lost Symbol* (Doubleday, 2009) was released. This week I am spending the week at the beach with my wife and friends, and so I was able to finish it quickly (it is 509 pages long). The book is a fast-paced action-adventure, and will lend itself well to a movie.

In the novel, Brown makes frequent reference to esoteric (occult, Hermetic) material. In his many discussions I thought that he was right on the mark with his observations about this material, except for one item. One of the characters in the book weighs a person (in a sealed container) as he is dying, and observes the weight change (this phenomenon has been known for a long time – it is not something new). In her lab notes, this character writes, "There seems to exist an invisible 'material' that exits the human body at the moment of death. It has a quantifiable mass which is unimpeded by physical barriers. I must assume it moves in a dimension I cannot yet perceive." On seeing this, another character exclaims, "I think you just weighed the human soul."

The substantial weight change that takes place at death is caused by the loss of the astral body, not the soul.

Deport All Illegal Aliens Immediately

The following article appeared in the September 24 issue of the Beaufort Gazette (Beaufort, South Carolina).

Special Visas Encourage Immigrants to Report Violence
By Juliana Barbassa, The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — For years, Laura Teresa Leon Sanchez says, she was beaten, raped and robbed by her boyfriend. If she tried to leave, he threatened to have her deported.

"I was a ghost. I was nothing," said the Mexico City native who was living in the United States illegally. "He would say, 'I'll call immigration, and just like this, you'll be gone.'"

Sanchez eventually got help from authorities — along with a special visa offered by the government to encourage illegal immigrants to report violent crime.

Created in 2000, the "U" visa program was on hold until rules for its implementation were adopted in 2007. Now the government is approving thousands of requests.

Records from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service show that 4,400 visas were issued this fiscal year — up from just 52 last year.

The effort is consistent with the new priorities of federal immigration agencies under the Obama administration.

"It's certainly a sea change," said Mary Giovagnoli, director of the Immigration Policy Center in Washington. "The sensitivity toward people who through no fault of their own are in dire straights is enhanced now."

About 13,000 applications are still pending. Half of those are awaiting more information from the applicant, and half are in a backlog that immigration officials are pushing to resolve.

Some immigrants never apply because they fear police or worry that they might face deportation.

"There's nothing worse than knowing someone is exposed to violence, and to hear them say they don't want to live with that violence. but they're too afraid to speak out," said O'Malley, district attorney for Alameda County, which includes San Francisco Bay.

"We've seen too many immigrant women who have either acquiesced or stayed silent because they're afraid to go to the government because of their status."

Immigration officials have also reached out to law enforcement, attorneys and advocates to spread the word about the program.

Before a U visa is approved, police, prosecutors or a judge must certify that the applicant has cooperated in arresting or prosecuting the alleged attacker. Immigrants may do so without fearing deportation.

[End of article.]

The woman, Laura Teresa Leon Sanchez, is a criminal illegal invader of our country. She should not be given a visa, but should be punished for her crime, and then deported. It is clear that being repeatedly beaten, raped and robbed is of no consequence to her, or she would return to Mexico — her boyfriend would hardly consider emigrating to that poor country, and she would no longer be subject to his abuse. But year after year, as easy as this could be done, she has not. She reminds me of the masochistic dentist played by Bill Murray in the movie *The Little Shop of Horrors*. Since there is such a simple solution to her problem, it is pretty clear that she

craves violent sex. She should be charged with the crime of illegal immigration and punished for that crime. In fact, she should also be charged with the crime of aiding and abetting her boyfriend in the harboring of an illegal alien. Since repeated beatings and rapes have no effect on her – she perversely seems to enjoy them – public shaming, such as caning or lashing, would be too good for her.

Instead of rewarding Sanchez for turning her boyfriend in, if we are going to engage in the distasteful practice of rewarding criminals for cooperation we should consider amnesty for his crime of harboring an illegal alien if he testifies against her in her deportation trial. Her crime is far more destructive of our society than hers. Illegal immigration has added tens of millions of people to our country, destroying our living space, environment, and culture. While his crimes against this illegal alien are disgusting, they are not at all in the same league as hers. Sanchez is a criminal – a treacherous saboteur/spy – who is destroying our society and nation. She should be punished most severely, and deported.

The September 19 issue of the Beaufort Gazette contained the following article.

NC Community Colleges to Enroll Illegal Immigrants
By Gary D. Robertson, The Associated Press

Raleigh, N.C. – North Carolina’s community college system voted Friday to admit illegal immigrants at its campuses next year, a move unlikely to bring an immediate surge in undocumented students given a requirement that they pay higher tuition.

The State Board of Community Colleges approved the rules, which according to proponents will provide clarity after four previous policy changes on the topic since 2001.

A no-admission policy, with some rare exceptions, has been in place since May, 2008, but Friday’s vote will open more opportunities for Latino residents to succeed, an advocate said.

“We are thrilled with the decision,” said Marco Zarate, president of the North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals. “We believe that education is something that is probably one of the few things that once you have it, nobody can take it away from you.”

The changes are designed to focus on children who entered the country illegally with their parents and didn’t make the decision to come to America, said Stuart Fountain, chairman of the policy committee that recommended the policy to the full board.

“These children cannot be held in limbo until the federal government decided what to do with immigration,” Fountain said. “While in high school they have adopted American culture and they’ve learned to speak English.”

[End of article.]

Fountain’s logic is that since these students got a free education in the US and learned to speak English they deserve to be allowed to attend community colleges in the United States. This is absurd. These people are illegal invaders of our country. They are destroying our space, environment and culture. If their parents smuggled them into our country, they should be tracked down and severely punished, and the children immediately deported to their country of origin. If they have been awarded citizenship since coming here, they should be stripped of it.

As soon as these illegal aliens enroll, they should be rounded up and deported.

Lester Brown's *Plan B 4.0*

Today (26 September 2009) I received a copy of Lester Brown's latest revision to *Plan B 4.0* (W. W. Norton, 2009). It is a nice summary of the global situation. Unfortunately, it is as unrealistic as previous editions about solving this problem. In this edition, Brown now emphasizes that the major problem is population growth, and he admits that a major factor is that that global petroleum production will soon start to decline. He admits that the global population will never reach the 9.2 billion projected by United Nations demographers (World Population Projections Median Variant). He suggests aiming to "stabilize" world population at 8 billion or lower.

Plan B 4.0 is another example of "hand-wringing" over the destruction of the biosphere by large human numbers and industrial activity, and raising false hopes that human population can be maintained at high levels. It is a shame that Brown does not spend his time and effort in searching for realistic long-term-sustainable solutions to the problem, instead of suggesting ridiculous programs to attempt to keep human population at unsustainable and highly destructive levels for as long as possible.