



Thayer's

Wild Bunch V

By J E Ted Thayer

Thayer's Wild Bunch V

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PREFACE

January 1, 2018

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J E Ted Thayer | 01-01-2018

THIS Book ...

is a compilation of The Wild Bunch commentaries published via email broadcast and on Facebook pretty much every Monday and Thursday as well as occasionally on the TedThayer.com website in 2018.

As I stated in the original *Wild Bunch*, I love to write, so I save most of my stuff. This exercise became an easy way to write some history and keep it safe. It's interesting to see how facts and opinions change over time.

Each pair of chapters represents a week's offering without the website banner shown above. On June 16th of 2016 we switched to two weekly columns because it was nearing the close of another election cycle. We'll keep it at two per week and see how it goes. So, how do you think 2018 will turn out? Stay tuned, boys and girls.

It's gonna be a great ride!

Happy New Year!

Monday, January 1, 2018

SSI v. Medicare

Last month Social Security recipients got their notice of benefits for 2018. It says there will be a 2% increase in Social Security benefits. However, Medicare Part B premiums, which are taken off the top, will increase by more than 2%, essentially negating the SSI increase for many people.

Fortunately, there is a hold-harmless clause in the law relating to increases in Medicare premiums ... which means that the Medicare increase can be no more than the difference between the 2018 and 2017 Social Security benefits. My Medicare increase was low enough that I saw a net increase of seven dollars in the combined benefits. My wife, on the other hand - for the second year in a row - saw a net decrease in her benefit of one dollar due to rounding, barely meeting the hold-harmless provision.

Between the two of us, our combined increase in monthly SSI benefits minus Medicare premiums amounts to a whopping six dollars! Claudette's Medicare premium went up by \$20, an increase of 13% for 2018. Mine went up by \$27, a 20% increase over 2017.

What's got to be hard for many Social Security beneficiaries is that their checks are not keeping up with the cost of living. We've seen basic increases in rent, natural gas, gasoline, electricity, television service, telephone, internet service, food and taxes. And that doesn't take into account a 25% increase in Medicare Supplement and other insurance premiums. I figure our real inflation rate since January 2017 has been

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something like 12% overall, hardly compensated by the government's piddly 2% increase in the basic benefit.

It seems to me that something is wrong about the way the government calculates the CPI (Consumer Price Index). So far this year, the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is up a little over 3%, on track for 4% in 2018. That's an incredible change in economic growth. But, we won't be seeing the benefits of that growth until the new tax structure kicks in next year.

Meanwhile, a significant number of older folks are finding work as Greeters at Wal Mart as a way to supplement their income, thus offsetting the inability of the Social Security Administration to keep up with the real CPI.

Improvise - Adapt - Overcome. Semper Fi.

Thursday, January 4, 2018

Who'da Thunk It?

Wul, pilgrim, here we are in the middle of the first week of January 2018! Who'da thunk it? What can we look forward to (hope for) this year? Let's see ...

First, chew on these tidbits from *Kim Strassel* in Monday's *Wall Street Journal*:

Let 2018 be the year of civil-service reform - a root-and-branch overhaul of the government itself. Call it *Operation Drain the Swamp*.

When Candidate Trump first referred to “the swamp,” he was talking about the bog of Beltway lobbyists and “establishment” politicians. But *President Trump*'s first year in office has revealed that the real swamp is the unchecked power of those who actually run Washington: the two million members of the federal bureaucracy.

It's a federal workforce whose pay and benefits are completely out of whack with the private sector. A 2011 *American Enterprise Institute* study found federal employees receive wages 14% higher than what similar workers in the private sector earn. Factor in benefits and the compensation premium leaps to 61%. Nice, huh?

Civil-service reform's bipartisan appeal means it has a shot in the Senate. The *Chuck Schumers* and *Elizabeth Warrens* will fight for their federal union buddies. But will [they be able to] defend the *CFPB*, the majority of whose employees take home six-figure

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salaries, when the median personal income in the U.S. is about \$31,000?

Washington is now home to a bureaucratic elite, fantastically paid and protected, divorced from economic reality, and self-invested in thwarting conservative policy efforts. Let's drain the swamp, or at least make it smaller.

Second, Social Security (our subject line Monday) and its monitory limitations caused me to go look for more information on the subject. It turns out that there has been serious discussion about eliminating the limit on FICA earnings above \$127,200 and removing the limitation on FICA contributions above \$7,886.40. The current levels are not realistic. The Dems will scream because it hurts middle-income workers and therefore hurts the party politically ... but they'll go for it because it soaks the rich! Republicans will go for it because it makes sense for the government to apply best management and accounting practices and principles for a change. The problem is that Congress, ever mindful of the age-old political requirement to squander the Treasury, will be tempted to use the "windfall" to "buy down" the current \$20 Trillion deficit.

Third - I think this year could also be a turning point for morality. Not because a whole bunch of men have been accused of sexual improprieties, but rather because women have risen to the ages-old challenge that although men may have contributed their sisters' ribs, God is the One who gave them the strength to have children! It's not about subservience or dominance. It's about strength of character! In other words ... any woman who can bear childbirth will put up with just about anything to make things right for herself and family - except for nasty old men misbehaving! This year women are going to tire of the incessant droning from the MSM about

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men who can't keep their hands to themselves and their tally-whackers in their pants! There will come a day when the boys and girls will again remember how nice it was just to be together in unison and harmony - where she's the one who holds the rolling-pin!

Other subjects that could use some improvement include: The Country's Infrastructure, Immigration Law (including a permanent fix for DACA), HealthCare, Fake News and the looming 2018 Election Cycle.

Improvise - Adapt - Overcome. Semper Fi.

Monday, January 8, 2018

The Biggest Threat

It wasn't that long ago that our government began seriously looking at the consequences of an attack on America's electrical infrastructure. Late in 2016 a desktop computer at one of the utilities in Vermont was hacked. **USA Today** put it this way, "Dec 30, 2016 - Malware linked to a Russian hacking group was found Friday on a **Burlington Electric Department** computer not connected to the grid."

September 6, 2017 **Andy Greenburg** at **WIRED.com** wrote, "Security firm **Symantec** is warning that a series of recent hacker attacks not only compromised energy companies in the US and Europe but also resulted in the intruders gaining hands-on access to power grid operations - enough control that they could have induced blackouts on American soil at will. Symantec on Wednesday revealed a new campaign of attacks by a group it is calling **Dragonfly 2.0**, which it says targeted dozens of energy companies in the spring and summer of this year. In more than 20 cases, Symantec says the hackers successfully gained access to the target companies' networks. And at a handful of US power firms and at least one company in Turkey - none of which Symantec will name - their forensic analysis found that the hackers obtained what they call operational access ..."

One of the things I discovered as a business owner in the '70s was how long it took to get things done when the government was involved. Licensing, inspections, you name it - time is money in small business, so you can imagine the amount of cash the government "money-suckers" extracted from my operation with their incessant foot-dragging. Mind you, this was the '70s and the government was just getting started on oppressive regulations, what with the **Jimmy Carter**

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Recession, Gas shortages and the EPA just getting off the ground.

In the '80s I became one of the managers at a technical development operation, the *University Instrument Shop*, at the **University of Arizona**, charged with helping Principal Investigators do their research. I had qualified for the job by virtue of equivalency to a Masters/PHD in Electrical Engineering and a PHD/Masters in Business Management.

One of the first things the boss wanted was a computer system that could interact with the (DEC10) University Data Center via (300 baud) PaxLine. We had two Altairs - one a rack-mount, the other a desk-mount, predecessors to the Apple 1 and the IBM-PC. My job was to obtain an operating system (CPM), create printer drivers and a system of labor time and inventory control. What a challenge! There we were, right on the cusp of technical innovation using non-main-frame computers! Using computers was supposed to reduce the amount of time it took to do work and to reduce the amount of paperwork involved. Yeah, well ... Programming computers to be in charge of paperwork is like putting vampires in charge of the blood bank!

We created something else ... computer crashes ... usually caused by thunderstorm-related power failures. Which created the question: How often do you back up your data? So much for saving paper. Of course, it took more time to handle the paperwork than it had before computers came into the picture. However, the real problem we discovered is something few have considered until recently. If there is a major power failure that shuts down the electronic infrastructure longer than it can maintain itself independently, what happens to all that data and how do we do business?

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I've seen chain stores shut down because of power failures. They don't know how to do business on paper! A few employees can add using a pencil and paper, but very few know how to make change! Then, there's the problem of fuel delivery when electric gas pumps don't work. Keeping perishables cool is an enormous problem. Lack of heating and cooling could pose a major threat to the health and safety of many people. And transportation systems across the country don't work very well without electricity for communications and controls.

I contend that the greatest threat to our country is *not terrorism* and certainly *not Climate Change!* Rather, I'm telling you there can be certain devastation of American commerce, infrastructure, public health and safety, and the country's banking system caused by a protracted *nation-wide power failure*. Such a major catastrophe could be precipitated by electro-magnetic pulses (**EMPs**) caused by nuclear weapons fired from some offshore country. It could be caused by the very real threat of Dragonfly's recent infrastructure hacking. The fact is - *it could happen!*

Have Emergency Services across America developed plans to handle large-scale outages for protracted periods of time? Are there Intergovernmental Agreements in place to make implementation of services provided under a broad area plan in place? Has Law Enforcement created a master plan to maintain order and keep people safe? Are the school systems and large public buildings in the loop? Is there a plan in place that coordinates Police and Fire Departments, Sheriff's Offices, State Police, the National Guard, City, County, State and Federal health and welfare systems, Hospitals and the Emergency Broadcast System with Local, County, State and National Emergency Management Agencies? And, exactly how do they plan to communicate?

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Certainly there are plans and systems in place. I know this to be true because I served on the **Gila County (AZ) Local Emergency Planning Commission** (LEPC 1999-2004) charged with planning workable strategies for emergencies.

What I don't know is if there are wide-spread coordinated plans all across the country to handle something as devastating as a long nation-wide power failure. A bunch of really smart people needs to be working on this issue because *it could happen!*

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Monday, January 11, 2018

What Is It About 77?

I was born in Red Bluff, California on January 11th, 1941 - 77 years ago today. My dad was a Cat-skinner (Caterpillar Tractor Driver) at nearby Shasta Dam, a job he also held at the Giant Boulder (Hoover) Dam between Arizona and Nevada in the '30s. My mom had been among the first teachers at the one-room Orme Ranch School near Mayer, Arizona. The brand of the ranch was (sideways) (>| Quarter-Circle-V-Bar. I think the two of them met when she decided to take swimming lessons from him at Northern Arizona Normal School in Flagstaff, which became Arizona State College. They both attended the College (now NAU.)

I have a brother Bill, who is 74, and a sister Amanda, who is 70. That makes me the eldest surviving member of our Thayer clan. Holy Crap! Both brother Bill and sister Mandy were born in Tucson - Bill while my dad was on TDY for training early during WWII and Mandy when he was the Director of Recreation at the South Tucson VA Hospital after the war. Our dad died November 30th of 1988 at 82 years of age. Our mom passed away in April of 2013. She was 97. (She probably would have made 100 if it wasn't for the fall and broken hip. Aunt Mary made it one day past 100 and mom was bound and determined to beat that record. The Hance side of the family is peppered with ancient survivors!)

The thing is - I'm supposed to be confronting old age and preparing for my demise. The fact is I don't think of it very often ... all the proper paperwork is done and I'm at peace with myself and my family. True ... I could croak at any moment, but as the song goes "Que Sera, Sera" - what will be, will be. My doctor told me I probably won't know when my time comes because I have a condition called dysrhythmia. My

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heart skips a beat every few minutes. I don't remember not having the condition. I always thought it was because I was very athletic - football, track, swimming - and I never paid that much attention to it. And I still don't unless I'm in bed in the twilight zone, feeling the faint pulse in my fingertips. The doctor said my brain would not get enough Oxygen one night and I just wouldn't wake up. Be that as it may ... it won't be painful and I can thank God for that good fortune.

So, what's the deal about 77? Damned if I know! I look forward to kickin' around until I'm in my early hundreds, at least! More Golf and pumping iron are probably in my future. That, and humble thanks to the Great Architect of the Universe for a great life so far.

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Monday, January 15, 2018 - MLK Day

What Next?

Back in Mid December, Claudette and I received our annual Notice of Benefits from the Social Security Administration. Us old geezers were informed that we would be getting a two percent COLA (cost of living increase) in our benefits. We were also informed how much our Medicare Part B premiums would be increasing. I told y'all about this new year's day.

Part B premiums are taken off the top of Social Security payments - off the top, mind you. My Medicare took all but seven dollars of my two percent "raise." Somehow, Claudette's Medicare premium takes not only her Social Security "raise", but also an extra buck ... for the second year in a row! I'm getting a seven dollar COLA after all is said and done. She is getting a net decrease of a dollar. But that's for the second year in a row.

The Congress, in its wisdom (when Medicare was created and payment of premiums from Social Security payments were authorized as part of the deal) created a "hold harmless" clause in the law that guaranteed that nobody receiving Social Security benefits would ever receive a net payment any year less than the previous year. Well, troops ... that's a bunch of bureaucratic balogna. Two years in a row, Claudette's net Social Security benefit has dropped by one dollar per month.

Well, I set about making things right to get her benefit back where it was supposed to be. President Trump has railed that government is too oppressive and clogged with un-needed rules and regulations - and he's demanded that for each new regulation there be two eliminated. So far, the record shows that, actually, twenty-one regulations have been removed for

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each new one. Wow! Unfortunately, it hasn't made much of a difference to those of us out here in the sticks!

I sent an email to Social Security based on their assurances that they could help. What I got back a couple weeks later was a note that they were too busy to handle the problem by email, so I should call the 800 number. I did that ... and after fifteen minutes of gobledogook, I finally got the affirmative word from the sexy voice of the artificial intelligence: "Your estimated wait time is one hour and fifteen minutes."

Not one to wait as directed, I took up the cause with my US Senator's office. John McCain is one of my heroes. Had I not chosen to drop out of college in 1959, I would have finished the Marine Corps Platoon Leaders Course, gone to Pensacola Florida to learn to fly jets, and probably would have been shot down over Viet Nam and become a Hanoi Hilton prison-mate of Senator McCain. So, I figured an email/contact with McCain's office could bear fruit. It took a couple weeks for my request for help to work its way through the system, but it did. Finally. I got a 'phone call last week and we agreed to do business/casework by email.

The first email asked me to fill out a form and send it in with my electronic signature. That I did, and it was followed up with a request for an explanation of the problem. (That was Claudette's reduction in Social Security benefit two years in a row,) Redundant because the original request for assistance included that information! So, I shipped an email meeting that requirement, which was followed by a need for Claudette to fill out a form for herself. I have her Power of Attorney (and she has mine) so I emailed my Power off to Arizona's McCain Offices. What I got back was a statement to the effect that Social Security doesn't recognize Powers of Attorney. Just great! Over a piddly twelve dollars a year? Pheh!

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So, I had Claudette sign a blank piece of paper, created a digital signature using my scanner and photo editor, filled out a form for her and attached her signature to it - just like I had done for my own required Privacy Consent form. This bureaucratic exercise began last Monday. When it will end depends entirely on what kind of rigamarole and red tape can be amended to this nonsense! We're talking twenty-four dollars, here - about what the Indians were paid in junk jewelry for Long Island!

Paperwork does little more than clog things up, slow them down and increase the cost of government. At this point I have little hope for a quick (if any) solution because, to my knowledge, we haven't even tapped the Social Security Administration or Medicare! Just at Arizona's minimum wage, I'm betting we've already cost the taxpayers at least \$5.00. What a wonderous way to cut expenses and red tape!

I'll let you know how this adventure turns out, troops.

Improvise - Adapt - Overcome. Semper Fi.

Thursday, January 18, 2018

Can Dems Win AZ 2018?

Arizona is going to be a hotbed of political chicanery this year. The southwest state has always been a place where elections are fraught with ... you name it: trickery, deception, deceit, duplicity, dishonesty, subterfuge, fraud, skullduggery and other evil synonyms. The Valentine State is also a place where strange things have happened because of politics.

The main street in **Show Low** today is called the *Deuce of Clubs* (the lowest card in a standard card deck). Show Low was named by settler **Corydon E. Cooley** the winner of his neighbor **Marion Clark's** land when they played Seven-up to determine who would move away to keep the peace. The two played the game and as the last hand was coming to an end, Clark said "*You show low, you win.*" Cooley turned over the deuce of clubs. These days, whenever there is a runoff for mayor of Show Low, instead of a runoff election the issue is settled by the two opponents drawing from a deck of cards until one draws the deuce of clubs. That person becomes the mayor for the next term.

Then there were the politicians indicted in February of 1991 on charges of bribery, money laundering and filing false election statements. The **AZScam** scandal felled three Republican and two Democrat Representatives, and two Democrat Senators. Representative **Sue Laybe**, accused of taking more than \$10,000 in cash, said, "*This is a political indictment hatched for political reasons.*" That wasn't all of it though ... also indicted were **George Stragalas III**, one-time executive director of the **Arizona Democratic Party**; **Shiree Foster**, a staff assistant at the **Arizona Chamber of Commerce**; **Ernie Hoffman** and **Rich Scheffel**, independent lobbyists; **David Horwitz**, a lobbyist for the **American**

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Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; and David Manley, chairman of the Maricopa County Democratic Party.

During that time, it was common knowledge that Arizona Legislators were carrying paper bags full of cash around with them. Many, whose homes were elsewhere in the state, rather than rent, would stay with friends or relatives in the Phoenix metro area during the week and go home on the weekends. The per diem food, lodging and mileage paid them by the state was laundered into cash which was easy to carry in small paper bags. A little of that cash would go to supplement the food budget of the people with which they stayed. Arizona State Legislators received a \$15,000 salary plus \$35 a day per diem. If they lived out of Maricopa county they received \$60 per diem per day for regular and special sessions and \$10 a day after that. The total received in per diem for food, lodging and mileage by the end of a Legislative Session was always a tidy sum. Before 1981 Legislators receive a \$6,000 salary. Their pay was raised to \$24,000 by voter approval in 1998. The custom of carrying bagged cash pretty much stopped after the AZScam debacle.

Evan Meacham was elected Arizona's governor in November 1986 in a fractured, three-way race. On taking office, one of his first acts was to rescind the state's **Martin Luther King Jr.** holiday, a move that inflamed racial tensions and prompted public protests. Within six months, a recall drive was under way to give Meacham the boot. In January 1988, a grand jury indicted him and his brother on charges stemming from an investigation into campaign-finance violations and fraud. The Arizona Legislature, however, made the recall effort moot by impeaching him.

Governor **J. Fife Symington III** was forced to resign two years after a federal jury convicted him on bank- and wire-

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fraud charges. During his first term, which began in 1991 he was investigated and cleared of any involvement with the failed **Southwest Savings & Loan** scandal, and he went on to win re-election in 1994. However, on September 4, 1997, he was indicted on 21 federal counts ranging from fraud to extortion to perjury. His conviction was overturned on appeal in 1999, and President **Bill Clinton** pardoned him in 2001.

Rick Renzi, a Republican member of the US House of Representatives, from Arizona's 1st Congressional District, was convicted on Federal criminal charges of fraud, racketeering and public corruption for his involvement in a questionable land-swap deal. Renzi was accused of embezzling insurance premiums to fund his political campaigns and using his power as a lawmaker to force changes in a proposed federal land swap to benefit a business associate. He was sentenced to three years in prison in June of 2013. The sentence was upheld by the **9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals**. His legal team filed with the **U S Supreme Court**. But, the SCOTUS declined Monday a week ago to hear Renzi's appeal that sought to question the process of how he was prosecuted. He served a three year sentence and was released from prison in January of 2017.

More recently, according to the **New Times**: Sheriff **Joe Arpaio**, had been involved in more than two dozen controversies involving everything from bad jail conditions to abuse of power, improper clearance of cases, failure to investigate rape cases, feuds with judges, misuse of funds, racial profiling, and even staging a failed assassination attempt. In July, United States District Judge **Susan R. Bolton** found the 85-year-old Arpaio guilty of criminal contempt of court, a misdemeanor punishable by six months in jail. Arpaio was convicted of violating a court order to stop racially profiling Latinos, but President **Donald Trump** pardoned him before the scheduled sentencing. Arpaio, who

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billed himself as "The Toughest Sheriff in America", served as Maricopa County's top Law Enforcement Officer for the 24 years between 1993 and 2016, when he was voted out of office.

U.S. Representative **Martha McSally** (R), former Air Force combat pilot, said Friday she will run against Arpaio, who threw his hat in the ring last week for the US Senate seat being abandoned by **Jeff Flake** (R). Contenders also include Representative **Kyrsten Sinema**, a centrist Democrat, and **Kelli Ward**, a conservative Republican and former Arizona state senator. Polls have McSally favored over second choice Arpaio. One thing's for sure: Odds are 3:1 (75/25) that Flake's Senate seat will go to a woman.

So, here are how the numbers worked out as of October 1st: There are 3,665,316 registered voters in Arizona, comprised of 1,289,893 Independents & "Others", 1,268,748 Republicans and 1,106,675 Democrats. Historically, voter turnout in Arizona for mid-term elections has run around 30% over the last two decades. What has changed nation-wide, as well as in Arizona, is the number of Independent voters, which has grown to exceed the registration in either of the other two parties.

Democrat organizers from all over the country are gearing up to change Arizona from Red to Blue. They will do whatever it takes to put Democrat Kyrsten Sinema in Flake's Senate seat. While national Democrat (**DNC**) fund-raising efforts have collected less than half that of the **RNC** this year, the Dems have been working on grass-roots organizing at the state and local levels, registering armies of new Democrats across the country. If you do the math you'll see that to catch the GOP in Arizona, Democrats will need to register 48,622 new voters - that's just to pull even with the Republicans - 54,966 to match

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the number of Independents. And then they'll have to turn out more than 30%. That, my friends, is one heck of a tall order!

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Monday, January 22, 2018

About the EAS System

A little over a week ago, a Hawaiian Emergency Systems employee, during shift change, accidentally hit the "Alert" button on the system computer and set off a thirty-eight minute island-wide panic. It took that long for the folks in charge to figure out that it was a false alarm and call it off. The degree of ignorance shown by that exercise is almost incomprehensible until you stop to contemplate who was involved. State-level employees and elected officials with no specific responsibility had to figure out what to do under extreme pressure. Well, they screwed up!

The fact is that the only outfit that can issue an alert of that nature is the US Military stationed in that area. They are the ones who detect missile launches and calculate trajectories to determine where a missile could land. They are the ones who would activate the Emergency Alert System, which would distribute the alert exactly the same way it happened the other day. The EAS is about as automatic as it gets ... but it's only as good as the information being disseminated.

Local EAS alert tests happen weekly all over America. You hear them on local radio and TV and most local cable channels. Regional test alerts are held more-or-less monthly. And there have been a number of National EAS tests in the past few years. One of the great success stories about the EAS is the Amber Alert. Do doubt about it. The delivery system works.

This from a September 2006 Homeland Security report: "From the air raid warning and plane spotting activities of the Office of Civil Defense in the 1940s, to the film strips and backyard shelters of the 1950s, to today's allhazards

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preparedness programs led by the Department of Homeland Security, Federal strategies to enhance the nation's preparedness for disaster and attack have evolved over the course of the 20th century and into the 21st."

Unfortunately, who pushes the "GO" button is not certain. Is there an heirarchy? Who is in charge? Hawaii shows that an incoming missile is definitely the perview of the military. EAS is meant to be a mitigating factor when it comes to all kinds of life-threatening emergencies. But somebody has to be in charge at every level - local, regional, state, national, law-enforcement and military. Who is it that calls the shot at each level? And when? Isn't it curious that the EAS was never instituted during the fires that devastated Santa Rosa California and the Wine Country around it?

I alluded to this problem in my January 8th column. Each of the local, regional, state and national Emergency Management Agencies must have contingencies for every imaginable scenario - fire, flood, chemical spill, electrical grid failure, earthquake, typhoon, tornado, hurricane, volcano, plane and train crashes, incoming missiles ... and the list goes on forever!

But the root cause of the problem in making the system work has not changed since the beginnings of the Civil Defense system. The root cause drills down to nobody really knows who's in charge! Somehow, Doctor Strangelove comes to mind.

It seems just like they say: ***The more things change, the more they stay the same!***

Improvise - Adapt - Overcome. Semper Fi.

Thursday, January 25, 2018

Sunsweet Prunes

My wife Claudette and I met in 1961 in Gilroy, California, the garlic capitol of the world. There are two things about Gilroy that few people are aware of ... first, it's the last place you have clear skys before hitting the massive wall of smog generated by the San Francisco bay area - which magically appears just south of San Jose, between Morgan Hill and Gilroy. Second it's the reason Sunsweet prunes used to have such a unique taste.

The smog speaks for itself. Pack people, cars, trucks, trains and planes tightly in an area and their emissions will create smog, no matter what you do to mitigate it.

The unique taste of Sunsweet Prunes is the result (or used to be) of garlic fumes in the air! You see, the Sunsweet plant in Gilroy air-dried their prunes on big racks out in the open. This allowed Gilroy's unique atmosphere to permeate into the flesh of the drying prunes. It was just a tiny bit of Gilroy's "air polution" that made Sunsweet Prunes so tasty.

Mind you this was back in the day ... the '60s. I was the local D.J. spinning *black bisquits labeled for listening* at the time. The great songs of that time included Etta James' classic version of the WWII hit *At Last*, the Harmonicats' version of *Peg O' My Heart*, *Tossin' and Turnin'* by Bobby Lewis, Patsy Cline's *I Fall to Pieces*, Roy Orbison's monster *Cryin'*, *Raindrops* by Dee Clark, the Shirelles' *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow* and Brook Benton's fabulous *Bowl Weevil Song*.

This was a time when I became acquainted with a pretty local farm girl whose dad allowed me to go to his dairy and skim a gallon of cream off the top of the monster milk tanks for 50

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cents and never accepted payment. This was a time when the Portuguese radio program host made sausage and stashed it under the counter in the radio station! Eeeeew! It really reeked - but damn - it was goo-oo-ood!

This was the place where my bride and I met and fell in love and eventually married. I have a special place in my heart for stinky ol' Gilroy, California.

Last week I bought a canister of Sunsweet Prunes. Oh, be still, my heart! I was so looking forward to chomping out a few of those Gilroy-cured babies. Guess what? The label says, "AMAZIN PRUNES FROM CHILE." No mention of Gilroy or California! Aaaaarrggh! But, that's not all, Prune fans. The container was only HALF FULL!

Somehow ... Ernest Lawrence Thayer's "Casey at the Bat" comes to mind. I don't know why, but it does. Sunsweet's prune demise could be as big a strike-out as the mighty Casey's!

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Monday, January 29, 2018

Feelings

Last year I worked ever so slowly on my second book, a compendium of stories gathered from around the neighborhood and out of my head. So far, *¿Quién Sabe? Mas Historias de un Hombre Viejo (More Old Man's Stories)* contains four stories about our human senses - hearing, seeing, smelling and tasting. That leaves one more: Feeling or touch. Here we go ...

Feeling can be broken into two parts - that which one feels with the heart, gut, or mind ... and that which one feels with one's body, skin, muscles or bones.

First, let's deal with the body. It's unlikely that you recall the difference between the comfort of your mother's womb and the cold, bright, loud delivery room. Those had to be some kinda scary feelings! But, I can remember the touch of my mama's lips on the nape of my neck when I was little. Can you? Remember getting the bottom of your little feet tickled? How 'bout the first time you stubbed your toe? Wow!

How many of us remember when mom said, "Don't touch that burner - it will hurt you." How many of us just HAD to put our little fingers on that burner? Remember the feeling? Yowww! It hurt! It burnt! And it broke your mama's heart. Maybe those were some of your first feelings. (Well, the ones you can remember, anyway.)

Three things: I stepped on a board with a rusty nail in it. That hurt. Squeezed the picture wound to make it bleed. That hurt, too. Went to the doctor, who checked it out, treated it, put a band-aid on it and gave me a Tetanus Shot. Ouch! That

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Tetanus Shot ached for what seemed like a week. Odds are you've probably been there and done that ...

I have three scars on me from lacerations. One on my left arm from playing with a razor-blade, one on my right arm from playing with an axe, and one on my left shin, just above the ankle, from tripping over barbed wire. None was as gruesome as it may sound! I recall that none of them hurt as much as cutting one's finger with a kitchen knife. Instead, each of the lacerations was clean and just stung - yes, stung like an insect bite. Just lucky, I guess.

Before I got old I was six-foot-five. I've shrunk some since, but the same thing happens as when I was taller: I bang my head on things. I live in a Park Model mobile home. It has a six foot by six foot sliding glass door as the entrance. It took me about two years to learn to duck going in and out of that damned thing! Back in the late fifties, when I was in high school, I used to bang my head on the cafeteria automatic door-closer all the time because they propped the doors open at lunch time. By the time I was a Senior, there were no bruises or scrapes on my head - but I was beginning to go bald. Speaking of entrances ... Ford and Chevy brought us the wrap-around windshield, making entering and leaving the car a chore for us tall people - banging our heads on the street-side edge that dratted window. As a result of banging into things with my head over the years, I can grow hair almost anywhere except the top of my head!

Next, let's work on the other feelings - heartbreak, fear, panic, loathing, joy, love, ecstasy, gut feelings and premonitions.

Heartbreak - usually involves loss ... you and your lover break up, your pet dies, or you loose a family member to age and infirmity. Maybe you witness a car or airplane crash where nobody survives. Heartbreaking.

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The crashes or pending disasters like that create *fear* in everyone. Fear is what makes people want to turn away or run.

Many people go into full-out *panic* mode when disaster hits. Panic usually results when it seems there is no way out of a situation. It creates a kind of paralysis of both mind and body.

One of the worst human feelings is *loathing*. This is hatred so deep that a person could actually fly into a rage and take the life of another living thing.

Just the opposite is *joy*! I call it abject happiness - glee, if you will. It's the feeling that something has happened or is happening that makes you feel all warm and giggly and wonderful all over.

Love is such a special feeling that poets have written volumes on it and have scarcely scratched the surface. I guess love is a feeling of attachment, or of belonging or of preference. I love my wife and family. And I love chocolate-mint ice-cream!

Now, *ecstasy* is an order of magnitude greater than joy! Ecstasy is the feeling of being completely overcome with joy and happiness.

All of us have had *gut feelings* before. Gut feelings are almost like *premonitions*, but not quite as strange. Let's say that your car has almost bald tires on it and you have to drive across town some six or eight miles. You have this gut feeling that you're gonna have a flat before you get home. Different is the premonition that you're gonna have a flat just before you get to your destination across town, and sure enough - as you're pulling into that parking lot - BAM! Your gut feeling was telling you that it might be a good idea to get new tires

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on the way across town. The premonition was a view into the future that predicted the outcome.

Feelings set us humans apart from each other and from the animals. I wonder what kind of feelings nature's creatures experience. Your pets, I'm pretty sure, experience love and happiness and fear and trepedation. But what about that little Praying Mantis lurking out there on the porch? And what about that fly he's stalking? I'd rather not go their either!

And then there was *Feelings* , **Morris Albert's** monster hit from 2006 that was nominated for **Grammy Award** Song of the Year. <https://youtu.be/CyBcHUe4WeQ> YouTube. Enjoy!

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Thursday, February 1, 2018

Worse Than I Thought

The lead line in my January 18th column went like this: "*Arizona is going to be a hotbed of political chicanery this year.*" Well, according to an old friend, it's worse than that. He's a law officer and I trust his word. **Dan** posted the following on Facebook a week ago:

"Here is why the Democrats are fighting to keep illegal immigrants in the United States. I have a good friend that came across the border and got her citizenship. While she was going through the procedures for her citizenship she was told over and over that [if] she registered to vote she could only register Democrat. How I learned this - she told me that she wanted to vote for Trump, but she couldn't because she was Democrat. She did not know she could register Republican. She was told she couldn't. So there is part of the immigration procedures from the Democrats. This is what I was told from her."

Peggy posted the following comment:

"I have heard this before, thanks, Dan for confirming it with a person that has gone through it. Very eye opening as to why the big push from the Dems for so many immigrants."

Jeri followed with this:

"Wow that needs to be public knowledge. When I first registered to vote my Dad said I was Democrat that the GOP was just for rich folks that didn't care about

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the country. One of the only times my dad was wrong."

Earlier, Dan had posted this:

"What I see with these Dreamers, [is] they stand out in the street with their signs demanding that the United States give them citizenship. Their signs [are] demeaning [to]the President, the very one [who would] sign the bill authorizing it. They don't even realize where they are ..., instead of carrying the United States Flag, they carry around the Mexican flag. They need to know at the bottom of that [DACA] bill there [are] two boxes to check, Approved and Veto. They act out on the street that they don't want approval, [but] they disapprove [of] President Trump. [It's shameful] the way they act and demand, when they aren't even citizens - they are illegals. [A] normal person wouldn't give them [anything]. Just sayin."

Followed by:

"... you know that I am not a racist, my granddaughter is black and I have two grandsons that are Mexican. I call it like I see it - and they are all over TV. And I am not a bastard I have a father. The truth hurts."

A recently confirmed fact is that illegal immigrants in Arizona commit crimes at more than twice the rate of other residents. The **Washington Times** reported last week that, according to the **Crime Prevention Research Center**, illegal immigrants between ages 15 and 35 account for 3 percent of Arizona's population but make up approximately 8 percent of the prison population. And the crimes of which illegals were convicted tended to be more serious. Contributor **John Lott** noted, "*The type of person who goes through the process to*

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legally immigrate in the United States appears to be very law-abiding [in comparison to] even the U.S.-born population."

Is it possible that my friend Dan misunderstood? Maybe. Perhaps his good friend wanted to vote in the Republican **Primary** but was registered as a Democrat. That would explain it. But if she wasn't informed that she could vote for Trump in the November **General** Election, there was definitely skulduggery afoot.

While I was growing up my family didn't speak much about politics. Mom was a public school teacher and Pop was employed by the City. In those positions, back in the day, you didn't talk much about politics. This was back when civil discourse didn't include religion or politics. All I knew as a youngster was what Jeri's dad told her. Republicans were for the rich folks and Democrats were for the unions and poor folks.

Those of you who've been reading the column for some time know that I served on the Pima County Republican Central Committee in Tucson. After moving here to Globe I became a Democrat. (Gila County Democrats are more conservative than Tucson Republicans!) After a while, I worked my way up to Vice-Chair of the Gila County Democrat Party, a position I held for nine years. In the over a quarter-century that Claudette and I have lived here, never ever - not even once - have I heard a story like Dan related. Never!

Take my word - this year's election cycle in Arizona is gonna be one for the books!

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Monday, February 5, 2018

Rich v. Poor

A little more than a week ago House Minority Leader **Nancy Pelosi** and former DNC Chair **Debbie Wasserman-Schultz** quoted the same liberal talking point in response to American corporations handing out bonus checks for their employees as a result of reductions caused by the new tax law. At a Town Hall held at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, both Pelosi and Schultz complained that the middle class gets crumbs while corporate executives have banquets.

The **Washington Examiner** put it this way January 26th:

"When **Home Depot** announced a onetime \$1,000 bonus in the fourth quarter, Pelosi wasn't impressed. *'There's a little mouse trap who's got a little piece of cheese on there and there's a mouse about to take it,'* Pelosi said Thursday, bizarrely describing her favorite cartoon, *'and that's called the middle class.'*

"And around it are fat cats, they look a lot like elephants but anyway," Pelosi continued. *'And that's the thing. Get this little thing and we get this big bonanza. You get the crumb, we get the banquet.'*

"What Pelosi doesn't understand, is that for a middle class family, \$1,000 can balance a check book, make a mortgage payment, or put a dent in a semester's tuition. What Pelosi dismisses as crumbs, normal people see as welcome windfall. What Pelosi risks with that line is a permanent rebranding that bumps Marie Antoinette off of history's list of the most unfeeling leaders." [*Let them eat cake!*]

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What House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Representative Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, Senator **Elizabeth Warren** and Senate Minority Leader **Chuck Schumer** (the *uber*-left of the Democrat Party) don't understand is that the rank and file aren't being fooled by their divisive rhetoric. In a modern capitalist society like ours, there has to be a bunch of "fat cats" owning businesses that employ "the middle class" - generally paying them in proportion to their experience and skills. That pay can range from minimum hourly wages to salaries running into the high six-figures. The same goes for the "crumbs" paid out as bonuses or raises.

What the supposedly highly educated, liberal Democrat members of our Congress don't understand is that the progressive American tax system takes in proportion to net income, and it returns/refunds in similar proportion. In other words, the richest among us get soaked while the poorest among us pay little or nothing. In fact, there are low-income folks who get cash refunds as a result of child tax credits provided as subsidies by the government. Our government's policies have made it so the non-working poor - those having no taxable income - can receive subsidies totaling almost as much as an average American middle-class worker earns!

Compared to the rest of the World, America's capitalist system does a pretty good job of caring for its people, no matter their income or station in life, provided they are willing to take advantage of those benefits. Let's face it ... it's their choice - crumbs or banquets!

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Thursday, February 8, 2018

No Change at Safeway

Other than a tiny neighborhood store, a raft of gas stations, Circle Ks and Dollar Stores, and part of a WalMart Superstore, there are only two big markets here in Globe-Miami Arizona - Fry's in the Midland City area and a Safeway kitty-corner from the Post Office in Globe.

I have a little tin container that I carry around in the car. It's an Altoids breath-mint container and it will hold more than five dollars-worth of quarters. I feed the quarters to the machines in the laundromat. So, I collect the quarters from my shopping change and put the rest of the change in the little donation containers you see at check-out stands. This is important information that you need to know - I'm always on a quest for quarters!

Now, to the story: Fry's stock is driven, not by management, but rather by brains at corporate. Corporate provides the layout specifications and what products are to be stocked where and in what quantities. Sometimes they do crazy things.

For instance, you'll find six cans of Aunt Penny's Hollandaise Sauce hiding behind a hanger sign in the aisle with Italian food - yes, Italian!

The best selling hot wings on earth are TGI Friday's Buffalo style, but Fry's only stocks the TGI Friday's Honey-Mustard style. Over in Claypool, WalMart stocks both styles. Bet you know where I buy my hot wings!

We used to buy canned peach halves at Fry's, but they discontinued them in favor of sliced peaches. When I asked

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about it, a cashier went looking for peach halves and came back empty-handed! The manager said corporate just discontinued stocking them.

We have a recipe for boiled peach halves with cinnamon that goes with a scrambled eggs and bacon breakfast. Sliced peaches don't make it in the aesthetics department, so I was dispatched to Safeway to get peach halves.

Safeway's got nothing on Fry's when it comes to crazy stuff! Peach halves were on sale, so I got a bunch of them. When I paid for them the cashier gave me a dollar and the automatic change machine spit out a quarter, four dimes and a few pennies. I held out three dimes and asked her if I could have a quarter and a nickel. She said, - I swear to God - "Sorry, sir. We aren't allowed to make change from the drawer." Now, where did that dollar come from?

I had some other shopping to do at Fry's and I shared the Safeway change story with my cashier. She was incredulous! She said that was the stupidest thing she'd ever heard! When I gave her two dimes and a nickel from the change machine, she gave me back a quarter. Ah, yes ... one more for the Altoids container! Naturally, the moral of the story is if you need change, don't ask a cashier at Safeway. You can get it at Customer Service ... or at Fry's!

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Monday, February 12, 2018

DACA

Over the last couple of months Congressional Democrats have managed to dig themselves into a huge hole ... and kept digging! When none of the Dems in the Senate voted for the first Continuing Resolution to keep the government operating, it caused what many called the "Schumer Shutdown" - closing many government offices and providing no paychecks for employees for three days. The effect was not as horrible as feared because the shutdown was over a weekend and the following Monday. **Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer** finally gave in and let enough of his people vote to pass a Bill to keep the government running. To pass, the Bill needed a 60 vote Super-Majority rather than a simple majority.

Wikipedia says, "There are three types of appropriations bills: regular appropriations bills, continuing resolutions, and supplemental appropriations bills. Regular appropriations bills are the twelve standard bills that cover the funding for the federal government for one fiscal year and that are supposed to be enacted into law by October 1. If Congress has not enacted the regular appropriations bills by the time, it can pass a continuing resolution, which continues the pre-existing appropriations at the same levels as the previous fiscal year (or with minor modifications) for a set amount of time. The third type of appropriations bills are supplemental appropriations bills, which add additional funding above and beyond what was originally appropriated at the beginning of the fiscal year. Supplemental appropriations bills can be used for things like disaster relief."

Republicans constitute a simple majority of 51 in the Senate, but **Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell** wouldn't

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invoke the "Nuclear Option" which would allow a simple majority to pass legislation like he did to approve appointments of Supreme Court Judges. Even **President Donald Trump** has called for the Nuclear Option to force Democrats in the Senate to act in a more bi-partisan way. Instead, Schumer caved in to the backlash from Middle America. As a result he became the recipient of ferocious attacks from the far left of the Democrat party. They were so upset that unruly crowds showed up at Schumer's home, demonstrating and pledging to keep him awake all night with their noise.

Schumer was caught in his own catch-22 ... by not allowing his people to pass the CR he created tremendous bad feelings across the country - not only among Republicans, but also among a broad cross-section of Dems and Independents. TV ads over the weekend shouted, "Democrats would rather support illegal aliens than fund our military!" **CNBC** posted a report that "Trump accused Democrats of 'turning down services and security for citizens in favor of services and security for non-citizens,' meaning the undocumented young people who were brought to this country as children by their parents ..."

The old saying goes, "When you find yourself in a hole, quit digging!" Schumer's mistake was not replacing the shovel with a ladder. By letting his Democrats vote for a three-week CR, he set the stage for an even more acrimonious fight in the Congress over DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) instead of an actual budget for the remainder of FY-2017-18. Last week the CR they finally passed expired before the House could approve a new one based on compromises in the Senate. What resulted was one of the shortest government shutdowns in history - a matter of a few hours went by before they passed the new CR, which will expire on March 23rd. Because House Leaders promised to take up DACA this week

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over Rand Paul's objections, the Bill included \$300 billion in new funding over the next two years, much of it for the military. Paul was furious because, he claimed, it would create a trillion-dollar budget deficit next year.

But really, the whole deal is about DACA. **CNBC:** "Senate Democrats are seeking a permanent fix for some 800,000 undocumented young people who were shielded from deportation under Obama-era DACA [Executive Order] rules until last fall, when President Donald Trump canceled the DACA program." Because of Trump's own Executive Order, DACA permits will expire March 5th. The President encouraged a compromise that would allow an additional million undocumented youngsters to apply for DACA protection, hoping that would draw more young people out of the shadows, where they have been living in fear of being deported.

The House and Senate minorities wanted DACA legislation adopted as separate part of any future budget agreement - they got what they wanted as a compromise to keep the government funded. They want permanent Green Cards for DACA kids going to college, being gainfully employed or serving in the American military. The President wants funding for the Border Wall promised during the election, an end to the immigrant lottery, and an end to "chain migration" in trade for permanent permits and a "path to US Citizenship" for up to 1.8 million DACA kids.

The spectre of young people defacing public and private property, disrupting the peace, participating in unruly demonstrations, flaunting Mexican Flags and carrying placards condemning the President doesn't sit well with a vast majority of Americans. Becoming a Naturalized US Citizen requires a working knowledge of how our government works, passing a test about those workings and the US Constitution,

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becoming fluent in the written and spoken English language, obtaining gainful employment, assimilating into American society and professing an unswerving allegiance to the United States of America. Nothing more - nothing less.

The line has been drawn. Dreamers who won't join our continuing American quest for civil Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness will meet with a huge surprise. They will not be welcome here anymore. The question remains ... will Schumer blink again?

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Thursday, February 15, 2018

It was a Hard Crash!

I had both my February 15th and 19th columns all done and ready to go when it happened. It was a hard crash. I had installed Windows 10 in my computer late last year and it had been giving me grief - doing the ol' BSOD (Blue Screen Of Death) somewhat regularly. I'm pretty good at backing stuff up, but this time it wasn't good enough! The damned thing wiped out my new Operating System, taking with it everything stashed on there for the last two weeks!

I think it was the small Solid State Drive that had the problem. (I had already had my 500GB SSD take a dump. But ... I reloaded Win 10 on the 250GB SSD and got things going again. But that left me with two columns and no data! Rats!

Well, I have all weekend to cough up some goodies (as if there weren't any!) Wish me luck.

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Monday, February 19, 2018

I'll Be Everywhere ...

Last week I watched what may be the greatest American movie of all time. It was probably the twelfth or fifteenth time I've seen it - but it never seems to get old, even though it was released in 1940, the year before I was born!. The movie is the celebrated Hollywood film version of **John Steinbeck's** prize-winning novel, starring **Henry Fonda** and directed by **John Ford**.

Quoting intermittently from **Wikipedia**: "The **Grapes of Wrath** is an American realist novel published in 1939 and written by John Steinbeck ..." Frequently read in American high school and college book classes, it "won the **National Book Award** and **Pulitzer Prize** for fiction, and it was cited prominently when Steinbeck was awarded the **Nobel Prize** in 1962."

"Set during the Great Depression, [both the movie and] the the novel focuses on the Joads, a poor family of tenant farmers driven from their Oklahoma home by drought, economic hardship, agricultural industry changes, and bank foreclosures forcing tenant farmers out of work ...

"The narrative begins just after **Tom Joad** [played by Henry Fonda] is paroled from McAlester prison, where he had been imprisoned after being convicted of homicide. On his return to his home near Sallis, Oklahoma, Tom meets former preacher **Jim Casy**, whom he remembers from his childhood, and the two travel together. When they arrive at Tom's childhood farm home, they find it deserted. Disconcerted and confused, Tom and Casy meet their old neighbor, **Muley Graves**, who tells them the family has gone to stay at Uncle

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John Joad's home nearby. Graves tells them that the banks have evicted all the farmers, but he refuses to leave the area.

"The next morning, Tom and Casy go to Uncle John's. Tom finds his family loading their remaining possessions into a Hudson Motor Car Company sedan converted to a truck; with their crops destroyed by the Dust Bowl, the family has defaulted on their bank loans, and their farm has been repossessed. Consequently, the Joads see no option but to seek work in California, described in handbills as fruitful and offering high pay.

"The Joads put everything they have into making the journey. Although leaving Oklahoma would violate his parole, Tom decides it is worth the risk, and invites Casy to join him and his family."

At the end of the movie, Tom has run into trouble with the law, is afraid his life is in grave danger, and is preparing to be on his way elsewhere. To ease his mother's fears he recites this cosmic sילוquy that has gone down in history as one of the most classic presentations of the way America's working man looks at life and its relation to the hereafter:

"Well ... maybe it's like Casy said.

"A fella ain't got a soul of its own ... jus' ... a little piece of a big soul ... the one big soul that belongs ta everybody. And ... an' it don't matter.

"I'll be all around in the dark. I'll be everywhere - wherever you can look.

"Wherever there's a fight so hungry people can eat - I'll be there. Wherever there's a cop beatin' up a guy - I'll be there. I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad. I'll be in the way kids laugh when ... they're hungry and know supper is ready.

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"And when the people are eatin' the stuff they raise 'n' ... livin' in the houses they build ... I'll be there, too.

"Just somethin' I been thinkin' about ..."

I was just thinkin', too ... last September, I wrote the following:

We know from **Genesis** that *"In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. And the Earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."* And when God said *"Let there be light"* there WAS light - the **Big Bang**, if you will. And there we were ... BANG! ... just like that - flying away into deep space at the speed of light, collecting in groups and clusters, creating the stars and the planets and their moons!

Our physical bodies are microcosms of the Universe that God created. Our mental processes operate by the same principles of physics that apply everywhere in the Universe. This is why we never really die - why we are always present, even after the death and subsequent decomposition of our physical being - this is why people believe in ghosts or spirits. We are everywhere in the Universe. As the Universe expands infinitely away from the original location of the Big Bang, a finite number of us remain to make up its part and parcel, spreading at the speed of light across time and space ... it follows that God is everywhere.

We are the Universe. We are the World. We are the children. We are everywhere. Tom Joad was right on the money when he said, *"I'll be everywhere - wherever you can look."*

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Thursday, February 22, 2018

Guns Are Us

Kids from the Parkland, Florida School, where 17 of them lost their lives to a deranged killer, went to their state Capitol yesterday, rallying to get their state legislators' attention. They did a wonderful thing for their country. The young people who spoke were motivated and positive. They showed clearly that our kids know how things work. They understand politics. They understand history. And they know how to make things happen.

They spoke from both sides of the aisle - conservative and liberal - and they pleaded that state and federal legislators quit the partisan squabbling and make the laws governing the sale of firearms much more effective. And they came with specific ideas for change. They want no person under 18 to be able to buy an AR-15, have sales of assault rifles banned altogether, and nobody under 21 should be able to buy a handgun. They want nobody with mental problems to ever be able to purchase a firearm of any sort. And they asked that the background check system be improved.

One young man lectured that the second amendment was created so the nation would have a standing Militia to keep its people safe - but that we no longer need a Militia because we have the most powerful military in the world.

The youngsters spoke up for responsible gun owners of all ages and a couple condemned the National Rifle Association and politicians who would accept donations from it. However, all of the young people who spoke were of the same mind ... kids need to feel safe in school and action to make that happen needs to be taken now - not in a week or a month or a year, but right now.

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Parkland can be proud of its kids. They showed greater savvy than most elected officials.

Also, yesterday ... President Trump hosted a "listening session" to hear from survivors of the Parkland shooting, their parents and representatives of several school districts, seeking suggestions on how to bring this scourge to an abrupt halt. One school administrator from Washington, DC explained how - in one of the roughest sections of the city - his kids are safer at school than on the streets ... they adopted the way the TSA screens airline passengers - with metal detectors, baggage x-rays and greeters. Improvements to background checks, age limits, and types of firearms and accessories were also scrutinized during the Presidential hearing.

There are few politicians as loved as Southern Arizona's Gabby Giffords, the one who was shot in the head January 8th, 2011 at a rally in Northwest Tucson. Giffords, a three term 8th District Congresswoman, managed not only to survive the shooting but also to come back from her injuries to a full life with her astronaut husband Mark Kelly. The prominent Democrat, under the banner of the National Democrat Party, sent out several pleas of late. Unfortunately, they only demonstrated why the DNC will have a hard row to hoe this election cycle. To quote:

Friend --

I know politicians fear the gun lobby.

But I also know that fear cannot compare to what those innocent children in Florida felt as the gunshots rang out, bullets flew through the halls of their school, and their teachers and classmates were gunned down.

That fear is nothing compared to what parents must have felt

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waiting in the parking lot of the high school waiting for news about their children.

Our nation's schools should be the safest spaces in our communities. They should not be the place of horror. And while I wish that the scenes from earlier this week were unthinkable or unimaginable, they are not.

We have seen them before, and we will see them again... unless our elected leaders show the courage to act -- the courage to finally take on the gun lobby.

But that will only happen when politicians realize they have more to fear from all of us together than they do from the gun lobby. And that starts with making our voices heard:

Sign my pledge: "I promise that I will Vote Courage in November and support candidates who will stand up to the gun lobby and take action to make our communities safer from gun violence."

For a long time I bought into the fiction that after a horrific shooting, there is a required period of silence -- where we aren't supposed to act. I know people felt that way after I was shot, as well.

But the truth is, the only one who benefits from that waiting period is the gun lobby -- which is why their defenders offer little more than "thoughts and prayers" for the families and condemnations for anyone who demands that our communities deserve more.

In 2018, I am going to work tirelessly to ensure we elect a Congress that is willing to stand up to the gun lobby. And I know the Democratic National Committee will do the same.

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Add your name. Pledge to Vote Courage in 2018:

<https://my.democrats.org/Take-the-Pledge>

Every day we fail to take action, we choose this fate. We tolerate politicians who fail to acknowledge this crisis and vote against our safety. We let our gun violence epidemic continue day after deadly day.

This cycle has to end. And it will end... with us.

All my best,

Gabby Giffords

Unfortunately, as they are prone to do, the ultra-liberal DNC leadership roped another beloved politician into pleading for support (in the form of a pledge backed by a monetary contribution) for a cause that, unlike the kids from Parkland, Florida, presents no solution to stop or reduce mass shootings in our country. Instead, it's the old Buck 'n' Wing - "Stand up to the gun lobby." There is no DNC proposition presented on exactly how to do that. The DNC just continues shooting itself in the foot by creating yet another divisive non-issue.

The Parkland kids and parents get it, though. As Linda Ellerbee used to say, "And, so it goes ..."

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Saturday, February 24, 2018

TIME Magazine Extra

TIME Magazine has published a magazine this week devoted entirely to photos and stories about the Opioid scourge killing some 64,000 people every year in America. I want you to visit the TIME site and read it/look at it. Please.



[The Opioid Diaries: Inside the Epidemic That's Ravaging America](#)

Photographer James Nachtwey traveled across America to capture the devastating toll of opioid addiction
time.com

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Monday, February 26, 2018

Break Time for DACA

The US Senate couldn't agree on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (**DACA**) so they went on a ten day break. They had voted on each of four Bills that tried to address the problem created by an Executive Order from former President **Barack Obama**. According to **Heritage.org**, "*In March 2011, Obama said that with 'respect to the notion that I can just suspend deportations through **executive order**, that's just not the case.'* In May 2011, he acknowledged that he couldn't '*just bypass Congress and change [immigration] law myself. ... That's not how a democracy works.*'" Meanwhile, DACA kids demonstrated at the Capitol, urging the Senate to do something.

As I published last week, the course is set for the DACA ship: "*They want permanent Green Cards for DACA kids going to college, being gainfully employed or serving in the American military. The President wants funding for the Border Wall promised during the election, an end to the immigrant lottery, and an end to 'chain migration' in trade for permanent permits and a 'path to US Citizenship' for up to 1.8 million DACA kids.*" The Senate couldn't find a way to put those four requirements together in a single Bill that would pass muster.

There are only two sticking points (as opposed to talking points) in the DACA quandary. A path to citizenship is seen as **Amnesty** by Conservative Republicans. Funding **The Wall** is seen by the Democrats as an unacceptable way to restrict immigration to America. They don't seem to be able to reach compromise on either issue. The Senate was unable to collect the required sixty votes to invoke cloture to cut off debate and pass a Bill ... any Bill. The only solution was suggested by the

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President a while back - get rid of the Super-Majority requirement and let the majority agree to pass some Bills.

Earlier this year, **President Trump** issued an Executive Order that brings DACA to a halt on March 5th. That Order has been held in abeyance until the Courts have decided whether it can go forward. Two **Federal Courts** have issued Restraining Orders and the **Supreme Court** has discussed considering the issue - probably in June. Meanwhile DACA kids are left dangling.

The House is supposedly taking up the DACA discussion as it hammers together an **Omnibus Bill** to fund the Government through September 30th (the end of FY 2017-18). **The Sticky Wicket** is this: Conservative Republicans want DACA considered as a separate Bill and Liberal Democrats demand that DACA be included in the Omnibus Bill. On February 23rd, the President tweeted, "For those of you who are still interested, the Democrats have totally forgotten about DACA. Not a lot of interest on this subject from them!" Followed Saturday by, "Dems are no longer talking DACA! 'Out of sight, out of mind,' they say. DACA beneficiaries should not be happy. Nancy Pelosi truly doesn't care about them. Republicans stand ready to make a deal!"

Meanwhile, the Continuing Resolution to fund the Government, passed earlier this month, will expire on March 23rd. There have been five CRs this year. If Congress can't agree to pass the Omnibus Bill, there could be a sixth CR or a third shut-down. Good luck wid dat!

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Thursday, March 1, 2018

Black Valentine

The day we celebrated Arizona's birthday this year, America received a Black Valentine that took the lives of seventeen people, mostly high school students, and it was unceremoniously delivered to Parkland, Florida.

The heinous crime was allegedly committed by a disturbed young man who had been enrolled in the **Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School's JROTC** program. **Nikolas Cruz**, 19, told police he was responsible for the shooting and added that he hid extra ammunition in his backpack and shot students in the hallways and on school grounds. The school's assistant football coach, its athletic director, a geography teacher and cross-country coach as well as 14 students were killed with an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle. At least another 14 were injured and transported to area hospitals. Cruz, who had fled on foot, was stopped by a police officer in Coral Springs - two miles from the school - and was taken into custody without incident. He was charged with 17 counts of pre-meditated murder.

The coach, who was also a security guard, received no help from the School Resource Officer, who stayed outside the freshman building where the attack took place. Sheriff's Deputy **Scot Peterson**, 54, was outside for "upwards of four minutes" while students were gunned down inside. At a news conference the Sheriff said, "What I saw [in a video of the scene] was a deputy arrive ... take up a position and he never went in." Ninth grade English teacher **Felicia Burgin** said the criticism of Peterson is unfair. Peterson wouldn't have stood a chance against the gunman in hallways that were filled with students at the time. "There is no one that is going to tell you a negative thing about Deputy Peterson," she said. Peterson,

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who stayed on his radio during the shooting, was suspended from duty without pay and subsequently retired. There remains the question of whether he was waiting for back-up or not. After the Sheriff came under extreme scrutiny late last week and early this week, it turns out that three more of his deputies crouched behind their squad car doors to avoid being shot by Cruz, who they thought at the time was out on the school grounds.

Three of Cruz' JROTC classmates were killed in the shooting - all were shielding other students when they died. Fifteen-year-old **Peter Wang** was called a hero. A White House petition was circulated calling for him to be buried with full military honors. Wang, **Alaina Petty**, 14, and **Martin Duque**, also 14, were posthumously honored by the U.S. Army with the ROTC Medal for Heroism at their funerals. Wang was buried in his JROTC Blues uniform. On February 20th, he was awarded a posthumous admission to the United States Military Academy at **West Point**.

President Trump held a "listening session" February 21st that lasted nearly an hour-and-a-half with affected Parkland kids, family members and teachers. Singled out by the media were the stories told by two people at the session. The first was a traumatized teen who watched helplessly as friends were gunned down. The other was **Andrew Pollack** who lost his daughter **Meadow Pollack** to the shooter just outside the school grounds. Referring to the **University of Texas** tower shooting that took 17 lives in August of 1966, he shouted passionately. "Should have been one school shooting and we should have fixed it! And I'm pissed because my daughter I'm not going to see again." Pollack angrily exclaimed, "This stuff has to stop!"

Mr. Trump met the next day with state and local officials to discuss school safety and floated the idea that "you can't hire

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enough security guards” but teachers could carry concealed weapons and “nobody would know who they are.” Teachers could go through “rigorous training” and could get “a little bit of a bonus.” He stressed that many teachers have military and law enforcement backgrounds, so implementing such a plan would not be difficult. There was a lot of push-back from Liberals, Teachers' Unions and the media about the President's suggestion.

Later, Trump tweeted **@realDonaldTrump** Feb 22, "I will be strongly pushing Comprehensive Background Checks with an emphasis on Mental Health. Raise age to 21 and end sale of Bump Stocks! Congress is in a mood to finally do something on this issue - I hope!" The National Rifle Association doesn't like raising the age of legal purchase to 21 and NRA Chief Wayne LaPierre said as much last weekend.

From my vantage point, it appears that "the fix" is not one thing, but rather, a number of them. Enhancing the **Background Check** system and including mental health in its data can be done administratively. Raising the age one can purchase a firearm without parental permission might be another, if mandated by the Congress. I would say the age 21 issue should be tempered to include a few exceptions: If a person has served in the military and been honorably discharged, age should be of no concern and a parental sign-off should not be necessary, just a DD-214; and if a person is married and has reached the state's statutory age of majority, that should be an exception to the age 21 requirement, also. The **ATF** already has the responsibility for regulating Bump Stocks and can easily tighten up on them under the President's direction.

"Hardening" schools across the country is another story altogether. The first question I ran across on **Facebook** was

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"Where is the money supposed to come from? Many low-paid teachers are never reimbursed for classroom supplies they pay for out-of-pocket. And many states have rolled back increases in funding for education. Is Congress going to underwrite the cost of ridding the country of 'Gun-Free' schools?" This, in my estimation, is an issue for state legislatures and individual school districts to address. Putting employees at risk should be a decision made as closely to those individuals as possible - and with their input.

President Trump had a bi-partisan meeting yesterday with House and Senate Leaders and the purveyors of a number of Bills in the hopper to do something about gun safety. When they were done with the publicly broadcast meeting, they parted in agreement to try to consolidate the Bills into one comprehensive batch of changes to the way guns are handled in America. Yesterday afternoon even Chuck Schumer came out in favor of the way Trump pushed for solutions.

All of the above is so much water under the bridge because, in my opinion, it's just so much political blather. When you come right down to it, it's like the elephant in the room - or the forest full of trees - we recognize neither the elephant nor the forest! As I see it, the biggest chore our country has, as it relates to all kinds of violence and unacceptable misbehavior, is to somehow induce in our children a healthy respect for authority at a very young age. And that's a tall order because today's Millennial and Gen-X moms and dads don't know how!

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Monday, March 5, 2018

Guns & Abortion

Last week a couple of my Facebook friends got into a discussion about Guns and Abortion. Craig said "I'm not sure how people can support individual rights on the one hand yet want to limit them on the other hand." Scott blamed today's controversies on the Republicans. And it appeared to me that Craig concurred. So, I wrote the following [with editing since]:

Craig and Scott, you're both mistaken. Both of these issues are non-partisan, although, both Republicans and Democrats scrap over them all the time. Back in the day (when I was a Republican) the GOP platform was a very Conservative pro-choice and the Dems (and Liberals) were anti-abortion. Now it's all golly-wompus upside-down - Republicans are pro-life and the Dems are pro-choice.

Was it Republicans who brought the issue of abortion to the Supreme Court? No. It was Texas resident Norma McCorvey who, under the pseudonym Jane Roe, sued Dallas County District Attorney Henry Wade, a Democrat, in 1970. Roe v Wade made it all the way to the SCOTUS and on January 22nd, 1973 the High Court recognized (7-2) that the constitutional right to privacy extends to a woman's right to make her own personal medical decisions - including the decision to have an abortion without interference from politicians.

That ruling has withstood the test of time (and many court tests) over the last 45 years. McCorvey was a Republican and the ruling was handed down by a Republican-dominated (Conservative) Court ... but she changed her stance (not her Party) in 1995 after being baptized in a back-yard swimming

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pool by Rev. Philip "Flip" Benham, the head of the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue. Although they banged heads over the issue for a long period of time, they became good friends. McCorvey hardened her conservative roots over time, and in 2008 she endorsed Ron Paul for President. She passed away in February of last year from complications of heart disease.

Although today's SCOTUS leans Conservative (5-4), it's doubtful that it would overturn Roe v Wade in the future, even with the change in stance by the Republican Party.

When I was a leader in the Gila County Dem Party some years ago I had no stance on abortion. The Party was in transition and I believed that no man (or political entity) has any business telling a woman how to make her own medical decisions. I guess that was a pro-choice stance, although I've never been in favor of abortion. I believe McCorvey thought the about the same at the time.

When it comes to guns and gun rights, I'm a staunch Conservative. The Second Amendment was penned to assure that America would always have a standing Army to protect it and its families. The Supreme Court has consistently ruled over the years that government (at all levels) has the right to place limits on the purchase of certain types of weapons (aka military) not in common use. *Common use* is the operative phrase that, incidentally, includes America's best-selling firearm, the AR-15 semi-automatic shoulder weapon.

Back in June of 2013 Pew Research published the following: "More than a third of Americans say they or someone in their household owns a gun." Today, there are by various estimates of anywhere from 270 million to 310 million guns in the United States - close to one firearm for every man, woman and child.

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Pew's 2017 report includes this: "Gun ownership is more common among men than women, and white men are particularly likely to be gun owners. Among those who live in rural areas, 46% say they are gun owners, compared with 28% of those who live in the suburbs and 19% in urban areas. There are also significant differences across parties, with Republican and Republican-leaning independents more than twice as likely as Democrats and those who lean Democratic to say they own a gun (44% vs. 20%)." I never thought of gun ownership as a partisan issue - not as a Republican, nor as a Democrat and certainly not today as an NPD.

So, boys, I don't believe your arguments hold water because the vast majority of Americans could care less about political stances on either issue. Perhaps because, when you come right down to it, they are individual issues and, therefore, none of our collective business!

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Thursday, March 8, 2018

Yellow Journalism

I read three newsmagazines every day: The **DrudgeReport**, **WND** and **RealClearPolitics**. Each provides links to news stories in both conservative and liberal newspapers such as The Wall Street Journal and the New York Times. There are also links to the CNN and Fox news sites. Also on my radar is access to almost any subject on **Wikipedia**, **Snopes** and **Google**. This way I can understand the many sides of just about any issue and how a story is being reported by the Mainstream Media. Also explored are the many interesting yet untold stories that don't make national or international news. A few things have become clear (at least to me) in the way the news is delivered to the people of America. Let me elaborate.

"Yellow" journalism flourishes across our country. By this I mean that many of today's wordsmiths craft the slant of a story based on their own social and political biases and beliefs. A local newspaper allowed this kind of journalism to be published on its front page a couple of weeks ago. Although I'm not naming the paper, its editor or the author, perhaps you'll understand what I'm talking about here after you've read it.

"Jess Bolinger tendered his resignation as Globe Regional Justice Court Judge. Bollinger gave notice to Gila County on February 1; his resignation will be effective February 28.

"Calls have been made to the Bureau of Alcohol and Firearms to substantiate a source's claim the the ATF pulled Bolinger's firearms license because of alleged illegal gun sales.

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"It has been reported that Bolinger's pawn shop, Globe Gun & Pawn has been closed for several weeks. A hand-written sign taped on the door says, 'Business is Closed.'

"It is not yet known if Bolinger's resignation is related to his pawn shop closing or if the ATF has pulled his firearms license, but I will continue to monitor this situation and bring you more as it..."

The way the story is reported, the reader gets the impression that Bolinger was forced to resign because, allegedly, he did something wrong. Such is not the case.

"*Calls have been made*" does not confirm the allegation of illegal gun sales. "*A source's claim*" is nonsense unless the source is named as well as the result of calls, answered or not returned. Without the name or position of an individual, claims are inconclusive at best.

"*It has been reported*" also gives no named source of the "*closed for several weeks*" claim.

"*It is not yet known*" is a phoney statement meant to plant a seed. This phrase is linked to an either/or choice that only goes to reinforce the readers' misunderstanding that Bolinger did a bad thing. He did not.

The fact is that Bolinger turned 67 earlier this year and did his homework on retirement. He learned that the sooner he retired the sooner he'd be making about a hundred bucks a month more than he was making as the JP. So, he decided to retire.

The claim about the pawn shop closing has nothing to do with ATF. An elderly lady operated the shop for Bolinger when he was the JP. About a year ago, her husband became deathly ill

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and she could not work because she was caring for him. He passed away about a month later. She never came back to work and couldn't be replaced. Bolinger decided to close then ... not a few weeks ago. He has since sold or auctioned off the majority of his stock.

It is true that the federal **Gun Control Act** (GCA) requires that people engaged in the sale of firearms be licensed by the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives** (ATF). Federal firearms licensees (FFL) are critical partners in promoting public safety. Although I have no first-hand information on the subject, I know that Bolinger has not given up his FFL and will not do so unless or until he has sold his personal holdings. (Let me say here that Jess is retired now and might want something to do ... could that be operating a pawn shop?)

You should be able to understand by now ... how words can be twisted to make something completely innocent appear to be on the verge of criminality. This chicken-sh*t technique is used by many in the mainstream media - and at least one local reporter - to cast people of otherwise good character in a bad light. This is exactly why both print and electronic news is no longer trusted by a majority of Americans.

According to the **Knight Foundation**, "Results of the 2017 Gallup/Knight Foundation Survey on Trust, Media and Democracy show that most Americans believe it is now harder to be well-informed and to determine which news is accurate. They increasingly perceive the media as biased and struggle to identify objective news sources. They believe the media continue to have a critical role in our democracy but are not very positive about how the media are fulfilling that role." All it would take - I think - is for editors to require journalists to report their sources. In other words ... no sources - no story.

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This story hurts me a lot. It pains me to say that a well read and well received newspaper would allow a reporter with a personal grudge against an extended family of upstanding character and service peddle unverified information that holds them in a bad light. I have to fault the publisher for not knowing of the vendetta that has been going on for more than a decade. And that hurts.

In my opinion, there is little difference between Yellow Journalism and Yellow Snow!

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Monday, March 12, 2018

Hey, Yo! Negotiate This!

President Trump has held several meetings with political operatives from the US House and Senate over the last month or so, making liberals and the mainstream media crazy. The fourteen-year host of **The Apprentice** is an accomplished host and expert at leading meetings of minds. The man can charm the pants off the crustiest politicians and find common ground where anybody else could find nothing but acrimony. President Donald John Trump is perhaps the best negotiator on the planet. That must be true ... he wrote the book on it! *The Art Of The Deal*. In the book's opening lines he observes, "I don't do it for the money. I've got enough, much more than I'll ever need. I do it to do it. Deals are my art form."

In the book, Trump crowed about his negotiating prowess. "A new 727 sells for approximately \$30 million. A G-4, which is one-fourth the size, goes for about \$18 million ... I offered \$5 million, which was obviously ridiculously low. They countered at \$10 million, and at that point I knew I had a great deal, regardless of how the negotiation ended." That's how he does it.

Negotiation is the art of offering to pay something like a third of the asking price of something and settling for just over half. The only hitch is you've got to be talking with someone who is authorized to negotiate. Go into a Safeway store and try to negotiate the price of a quart of 2% milk. Now, that ain't gonna happen. But there are grocery store managers that may negotiate the price of a case of quarts because they know a certain percentage of stock will outlive its "sell by" date and have to be discarded and written off. (By the way ... a third off for milk won't work.)

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Same goes for cars. Want a new car? Just drop into your favorite dealership! (Now that's a humongus mistake!) Start at the dealership having the worst reputation - nice cars are one thing, but the care and feeding of one involving a crummy factory maintenance shop can be something else again!

Check out the stock and see if you can find one that meets your needs and, without discounts, your pocket-book. The price is posted on the car. Make the salesperson a proposition. (Oh, c'mon! We can be politically correct here!) Include any factory discounts and any amount you think you can get for your trade-in - if any - and say you have a budget of thus-and-so in your monthly spending plan. There will be a counter-offer not much different from the original. That's when you take your leave. Seriously. Just go! Leave! Bail! It's not Rude. It's sales!

Go visit the other dealerships. Do the same routine. And take notes. When you've exhausted all the options, review your notes. Then go back to the dealer that offered the best deal. We're not done yet. Unless you're paying cash, you need to negotiate the payments. (Forget about how many years/months are involved.) Ask yourself what you can afford. (Here's a point where you can actually reduce your monthly spending if you're sharp!) Make a proposal about twenty-five percent less than they want - and stick to it. If they want \$325 a month ... offer \$225. And settle for \$265 a month. They want to sell a car and make as much money as possible on the sale. You, on the other hand want to buy a car with as little out-of-pocket expenses as possible up front and monthly. The dealer and the banker will make the sale for you.

Once you've got 'em pinned down, go back to the next best offer. And scam them with the offer you just negotiated. You'd be surprised what kind of deal you can make with just

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a little time playing the dealerships and the banks off against each other!

Perhaps now you have a working knowledge of how the big guys do it. All you need is good credit and the ability to walk away, Just remember the **Cub Scout** Motto. **Do Your Best.**

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Thursday, March 15, 2018

Media Hype Continues

A little over a week ago the **New York Times** reported, "Texans voted on Tuesday in primary elections marked by widespread infighting. Democrats have been clamoring to flip three congressional seats in districts that Hillary Clinton won in 2016. But in recent weeks, establishment Democrats have had to grapple with progressive candidates, and far-right Republicans have set their sights and advertising dollars on moderate Republicans."

Over the last few weeks, the mainstream media has been reporting that Democrats are ramping up for big wins in Congressional races across the country. As usual of late, the media is blowing up, out of all proportion, the premise that if Dems can get their voters to turn out at the polls they'll win elections. Last week the MSM was crowing about the Yuuuge increase in registered Democrats in Texas and how that will make the difference in the 2018 elections.

Well, overall in Texas, the number of voters who actually turned out was incredible! Some 1,037,054 people voted Democrat in the U.S.Senate race while 1,541,281 voted Republican. The GOP winner with 99% reporting was **Ted Cruz** with 1,315,468. Democrat **Beto O'rourke** garnered 641,129 votes - less than half of the amount Cruz got. There are 15,249,541 registered voters in Texas. Texas doesn't register voters by political party ... they can vote in whatever primary they want - but just one! 2,578,335 voted in Texas - roughly 16% of those registered.

In the race for Governor, Democrats **Lupe Valdez** and **Andrew White** will spar in a runoff election in the Spring. Between them they got 714,953 votes. Meanwhile,

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Republican incumbent Governor **Greg Abbott** collected some 1,390,236 votes, almost double the top two Dems.

So, that begs the question: Where were those throngs of newly registered Democrats? Were they voting for Republicans? Or just staying home with the other 84% of registered voters? There's a 1984 **Alabama** song, "*If you're gonna play in Texas, you gotta have a fiddle in the band.*"

As I see it, the **DNC** has dropped the ball. They claim to have their ground game in super shape with thousands of organizers and volunteers "working hard" to turn out the vote. But apparently, that doesn't play in Texas.

There's a difference in approach between the two parties. Take fund-raising, for instance. I'm on the email donor lists of both Parties and get at least three requests per day - every day - for small donations. The Dems want between a dollar minimum to whatever you can afford. The GOP asks for \$3.00 to \$500.00. Is it any wonder the **RNC** is outperforming the **DNC** in fundraising? (There's an old sales saying: "*If you don't ask for what you want, you're not going to get it.*") The GOP is outperforming the Dems because it asks for three times as much! There's also a Biblical saying: "*Ask and ye shall receive.*"

BloombergPolitics reported late in January:

"The Republican National Committee said it raised \$132.5 million during the first year of Donald Trump's presidency, a record in a non-election year. The Democratic National Committee reported \$65.1 million.

"As of Dec. 31, the RNC said it had \$38.8 million in the bank. That's almost six times more than the \$6.5 million reported by the DNC. The RNC also reported zero debt, while the DNC owes \$6.1 million."

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Not that it's a fact, but it looks as if Democrats don't know how to handle money and the GOP seems to be quite adept at it. I won't say that's probably why our National Debt is in the tens of Trillions of dollars. *You* might say that ... but, *I* certainly wouldn't!

It won't be until next Tuesday that we'll know for certain who won the Pennsylvania-18 election. Around 600 out of 226 thousand some-odd ballots cast separated the two candidates ... and there are over-seas military, more absentee, contested and provisional ballots left to be counted before the election is finally called officially. They said it would be a nail-biter!

According to all the well-meaning Mainstream Media pundits and so-called experts, the Democrats are headed for a massive takeover of the House - and perhaps the Senate. All they have to do is motivate their registered voters to go to the polls.

Lamb ran as a blue-dog Democrat - a conservative - and may have pulled it off! I can't say it from a fully-educated position, but I believe that Republican voters like what they have - and the direction our economy is going - so they will turn out in droves to protect their holdings. When push comes to shove in the ballot boxes, I'm predicting a shift toward the right - again - in November. In the house, the GOP should hold its majority. In the Senate, I'm looking for the GOP to maintain its majority or, at the very least keep it at 50 Republicans, 48 Democrats and 2 Independents.

That all remains to be seen.

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Monday, March 19, 2018

Home of B Movies

Back in the day there was a lot of money made from the "B" movies. These were low-budget films aimed at broad audiences that would pay to see an adventure pitting a good guy against the forces of evil. Viewers knew what was coming next, no matter the plot. It was formula film. There was always a fierce villain, a shrieking maiden and a hero coming to save the day!

There seems to be an analogy to those days happening right before our eyes today. It's called television news. All the parts are there: A fierce villain like **Donald Trump**, **Chuck Schumer**, **Charles Manson** or **Ted Bundy**; a shrieking maiden in the form of **DACA kids**, **Nancy Pelosi**, **#MeToo** ladies or holders of **401k** retirement accounts; and an American hero like **Joe Biden**, **Joe the Plumber** (Sam Wurzelbacher), **Bill Gates** or US Airways Captain "**Sully**" **Sullenberger**.

It really doesn't matter who the players happen to be ... you can count on them being on the small screen day after day, ad infinitum, presented by the same video "journalists" on CNN, MSNBC, FNC, CNBC, ABC and CBS. And the scenario is always the same.

TV News viewers today have the same deal as they used to have at the movies - they know what's coming up. Tune in Rachel Maddow on MSNBC and you can always count on her picking on the villainous Donald Trump. Whoever has the first-out-of-the-shute exclusive story on a Friday can count on it lasting the weekend and well into Monday's news cycle. Lazy journalists won't dig for a better story so viewers have to watch the same ol' same all weekend and then have it for

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breakfast on Monday. And, it's all "B" grade stuff, which is what makes it so maddening!

Wouldn't you love it if a big plane crashed into a power plant, there was massive flooding in the Mojave desert, a monster gas explosion in downtown Portland, 2000 people stranded in a white-out snowstorm in the middle of nowhere and a plague spreading in someplace like New Jersey? On a Friday! Wow!

'Round the clock coverage with news crews on site with blow-by-blow commentary from passers-by and the truck driver who just happened to see the whole thing! Even with all that going on, you can count on the reports being boring and continuous "B" grade.

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Thursday, March 22, 2018

Today's Word: Pragmatism

A piece published by conservative columnist **Charles Krauthammer** caught my eye the other day. It was about why he appreciates President **Donald J Trump**. Now, hold on, my more liberal friends. This is good stuff! (I try to give you the REALLY good stuff.) Some excerpts from it:

"Definition: A pragmatist is someone who is practical and focused on reaching a goal. A pragmatist usually has a straightforward, matter-of-fact approach and doesn't let emotion distract him or her.

"I neither view nor do I believe Trump views himself as a conservative. It [is] my opinion that Trump is a pragmatist. He sees a problem and understands it must be fixed. He doesn't see the problem as liberal or conservative, he sees it only as a problem. That is a quality that should be admired and applauded, not condemned. But I get ahead of myself.

"Viewing problems from a Liberal perspective has resulted in the creation of more problems, more entitlement programs, more victims, more government, more political correctness, and more attacks on the working class in all economic strata.

"Viewing things according to the so-called Republican conservative perspective has brought continued spending and globalism to the detriment of American interests and well being, denial of what the real problems are, weak, ineffective, milquetoast, leadership that amounts to Barney Fife Deputy Sheriff, appeasement oriented and afraid of its own

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shadow. In brief, it has brought liberal ideology with a pachyderm as a mascot juxtaposed to the ass of the Democrat Party.

"Immigration isn't a Republican problem, it isn't a Liberal problem, it is a problem that threatens the very fabric and infrastructure of America. It demands a pragmatic approach not an approach that is intended to appease one group or another.

"Successful businessmen ... like Trump who have weathered the changing tides of economic reality understand what is necessary to make business work, and they, unlike both sides of the political aisle, know that if something doesn't work, you don't continue trying to make it work hoping that at some point it will.

"As a pragmatist, Donald Trump hasn't made wild pie-in-the-sky promises of a cell phone in every pocket, free college tuition, and a \$15 hour minimum wage for working the drive-through at Carl's Hamburgers.

"You may not like Donald Trump, but I suspect that the reason some people do not like him is because:

"(1) he is antithetical to the "good old boy" method of brokering backroom deals that fatten the coffers of politicians;

"(2) they are unaccustomed to hearing a president speak who is unencumbered by the financial shackles of those who he owes vis-a-vis donations;

"(3) he is someone who is free of idiomatic political ideology;

"(4) he says what he is thinking, is unapologetic for his outspoken thoughts, speaks very straightforward

Thayer's Wild Bunch V

using everyday language that can be understood by all (and is offensive to some who dislike him anyway) making him a great communicator, for the most part, does what he says he will do and;

"(5) he is someone who understands that it takes more than hollow promises and political correctness to make America great again.

"I submit that a pragmatist is just what America needs right now. People are quick to confuse and despise confidence as arrogance, but that is common among those who have never accomplished anything in their lives.

"Donald Trump put his total financial empire at risk in running for president and certainly did not need or possibly even want the job; that says it all. He wants success for the U.S. and her citizens because he loves his country!"

Dr. Krauthammer was paralyzed from the waist down from a swimming accident during his first year in medical school and in the many years since has earned the admiration of his peers and a reputation as a great practitioner of logic and common sense. After recovering from the trauma of his accident, he returned to med school and went on to graduate from **Harvard School of Medicine** to become an MD in Psychology. He eventually abandoned his medical practice and turned to political commentary. The man knows that of which he speaks. His own pragmatism has made him a shining example, for anyone with doubts or disabilities, of what any individual can accomplish. Today he writes political columns for the **Washington Post** and the **Weekly Standard** and appears regularly on **Fox News**.

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Last August Krauthammer disappeared from his panel post on **Special Report** with **Bret Baier**. He sent Baier - a good friend - a note in mid-February updating his condition after serious surgery. "Things are progressing steadily slower than I would like, but steadily," the Krauthammer message said. "Still I wish I could give you - and myself - a better idea of when this marathon ends. I am sure it is strange for your viewers that a regular panelist should disappear for months without warning and without any real explanation. After my surgery, there were serious complications that took several months to stabilize," the message continued. "My improvement has finally allowed me to concentrate on intensive rehabilitation to recover my strength and stamina. This too is progressing well but as usual is intense and slow. Nonetheless, I am determined to make it back. I've got to - I can't let you guys have all the fun."

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Monday, March 26, 2018

Blood of the Lamb

Connor Lamb won the special election earlier this month for the Pennsylvania District 18 House Seat by 627 votes. There remained about 375 uncounted provisional, military and overseas ballots to be counted after the final election count was reported, not enough to change the results. However, Lamb will have to run again later this year in the mid-term election for the new court-reorganized Congressional District.

Lamb's win pointed the way for Dems to win House and Senate seats. Unfortunately, most of the Democrat base along the Left and East coasts is not enamored of Lamb's conservatism. He won for two reasons. First, he's a well-spoken, very attractive man with an un-mistakable air of confidence. Second, his campaign focused on the very things that won the same area of the state for President **Donald Trump**.

In Illinois last Tuesday the battle lines were drawn again. Seven-term Democratic Congressman **Dan Lipinski** faced off with new-comer **Marie Newman**, whose liberal views and major endorsements created a mind-bending race, testing how strong Chicago's political influence has spread. Today, it appears that voters in Illinois are comfortable with the status-quo. Lipinski , leading by 2.4% (some 2124 votes), floated across the finish line like a true blue dog, leaving the Left to curse the darkness surrounding the old Liberal face of the Democrat Party. The Lipinski Primary win virtually guarantees him re-election in his District in November because Republican challenger, **Arthur Jones**, is a neo-Nazi Holocaust denier disavowed by the GOP.

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The **Bernie Sanders** and **Hillary Clinton** factions of the Democrat Party want no part of any Trump-like platform. As I pointed out last week, using quotes from **Charles Krauthammer**, Trump is a pragmatist. That scares the dickens out of today's Democrats because he's not a Conservative and he's not a Liberal. Instead, he concentrates on solving problems.

Democrat Lamb won in PA-18 because he effectively emulated the qualities that won Trump the election in 2016. And Connor Lamb was a far better candidate than Republican Rick Saccone. It's hard to imagine the Left Wing of the Democrat Party supporting candidates that espouse such pseudo-conservative pragmatism as Lamb so effectively displayed. Furthermore, where are the Dems going to find the new candidates that can attract majority votes. In other words, where can they expect to find the new blood of the Lamb?

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Thursday, March 29, 2018

Boot Camp

A little over a week ago I posted the basis of this story on Facebook.

I believe Marine Corps Boot Camp is the best way to fix [our drug] problem. I'll tell you why:

The main thing during the first week or so of Marine Corps Boot Camp is uncertainty - nobody but the Drill Instructor knows what comes next. It's scary! You learn what it takes to keep the DI happy. You start to learn how to work in concert with others. And while a universal hatred of your DI is slowly shared with your peers, you develop a tremendous amount of confidence. By the time you finish Boot Camp, you realize that the DI is not a monster to be hated, but rather a respected Brother Marine who inculcated in you how to be a motivated, confident, responsible individual as well as a team player.

A Marine Platoon becomes like one big monster, capable of doing whatever the "team" needs to make happen. This is called *esprit d' corps* - literally, "the spirit of the body." Not much can stop it and it grows in each individual until it's permanently instilled in each as one. This is what Boot Camp is all about: *ex multis - unum*. From the many - one. Each Boot finishes with a single mind that blends with his/her peers. That's why the Corps' Motto is *Semper Fideles* - Always Faithful. At this point in time, nothing is more important to the Boot Camp graduate than the ability to accomplish any task - as a group or individually. That's why *Semper Fi* is unique to Marines - fidelity to one's Brothers goes without saying. And that's why we proclaim, "Once a Marine - always a Marine."

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There is something universal to be said about *the self-contained unit* - a single Marine. A druggie who completes Marine Corps Boot Camp won't need drugs for the rest of his/her life! I say, instead of prison, give them Boot Camp! I don't know very many screwed-up Marines - some have problems with PTSD, but very few. That's because they were trained to take care of themselves as a group and as individuals - collective units and self-contained units.

Back in the day the courts used to give young offenders a choice: Go to jail or join the Marines. Others were partial to the Navy or the Army or the Air Force. The whole idea worked then and it can work now: Young folks who can't behave need to be taught. Boot Camp is the answer.

Today, prison doesn't cut it. So, how great it would be to meet some squared-away druggies, given the choice at a very difficult second chance in life - instead of continuing living as a sick criminal. I say send them to MCRD San Diego, CA or Parris Island, SC instead of prison! Some might actually want to enlist after getting clean.

I'll leave you to enjoy two Marine Corps videos from YouTube:

The lady DIs at Parris Island on day one -
https://youtu.be/LVeY_RxsvJ4 3:14

And the bad-ass dudes at San Diego -
<https://youtu.be/XkfOebBYm-U> 1:05:15

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Sunday, April 1, 2018

Happy Easter

My wife Claudette and I were chatting about the meaning of Easter last night. We talked about how the Bible says things happened back then (depending on which version you were reading.) But we agreed that the story was pretty much the same no matter which one you read.

The whole deal is about Jesus giving up his life so that all of us - no matter how vile - would be forgiven our sins when we finally stood in our place in line at the Pearly Gates. Can you understand that? Jesus Christ, the son of God, went through all that nonsense and pain and degradation, knowing that he would be crucified and die so that all of us then, and here in the future, and forever will be forgiven of our sins, no matter how gruesome, now and forever - and have place in heaven with the Holy Trinity.

Now, you gotta admit, that's some heavy stuff!

There are parts of Christianity that believe all that is true ... but only if you believe that Christ is the only living God ... and that if you believe in Him you're saved from the fires of Hell. Others have different ways of portraying the death of Jesus Christ as the salvation of humanity forever. The fact is that all Christians and most Jews celebrate Easter as the reason humanity survives.

Today, let's all remember why we're here and thank God for it. Happy Easter, my friends.

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Monday, April 2, 2018

Marbles in the Overhead

There's been a lot of goofy talk about guns and gun control for the last month or so. It's been making me crazy! So crazy that I'm pitching a handful of marbles in the overhead to get the good Captain's attention.

Would someone kindly tell me what keeping our kids safe in school has to do with gun control? **LA Times** writer **Curtis Lee** wrote in January that "489 people were killed in unintentional shootings in the U.S. in 2015, the most recent year for which data is available. That was down from 824 deaths in 1999, according to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**" A misleading statistic from **CNN** claims that "about 1500 people are accidentally killed by firearms every year." When you throw in school shootings the count doesn't rise significantly. This doesn't compare at all with the carnage that happens on America's streets, roads, highways and Interstate Highways. The **National Safety Council** estimated that 40,100 people were killed in 2017 accidents. So why the big deal about gun control to keep our kids safe at school?

So, here it is, troops ... Kids in our schools need to feel safe from:

- * Bullies
- * Gangs
- * Lunch-money thieves
- * Knives
- * Baseball Bats
- * Sexual predators* Stolen pistols, BB Guns and Pellet Guns
- * Explosives, and caustic liquids
- * Swords* Long guns

In that order, mind you!

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How come, compared to all that, there's this big rush to change gun laws? Why can't we protect our kids (at whatever grade level) the same way we protect our malls and grocery stores, our airports and bus stations, our concert venues and sports facilities? When are our elected officials going to start paying attention to common sense instead of the loudest squeaker of the wheels?

A recent **Fox News** poll shows a majority of people support a number of gun control measures. The poll - unveiled on **Fox News Sunday** on Palm Sunday - shows 53 percent of the people interviewed say "protecting citizens from gun violence" is more important than "protecting the rights of citizens to own guns."

The breakdown for support on individual gun control measures is as follows:

91% support universal background checks, "including those buying at gun shows, private sales."

84% support mandatory mental health checks on "all gun buyers."

72% support raising the minimum legal age to 21.

69% support putting armed guards in schools.

60% support a ban on "assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons."

37% support the proposal touted by the President to have teachers and school officials armed.

According to the poll, a majority of people consider it important for Congress to pass gun control legislation. However, 43% say it's "not at all" likely that they will actually get it done.

The Fox poll shows clearly that a majority of the people interviewed have no clue about the reasons the founding fathers included the Second Amendment to the U S

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Constitution. Let me reiterate from an earlier column: "*The Second Amendment was penned to assure that America would always have a standing Army to protect it and its families. The Supreme Court has consistently ruled over the years that government (at all levels) has the right to place limits on the purchase of certain types of weapons (aka military) not in common use. Common use is the operative phrase that, incidentally, includes [one of] America's best-selling firearms, the AR-15 semi-automatic shoulder weapon.*"

Whoever it was at Fox News that suggested outlawing semi-automatic *weapons* is misinformed. Most of the handguns sold these days are semi-automatic - like the **Glock** 9mm and the **Walther** 22LR. These are the weapons that protect their carriers at home. These are the center of the on-going battle for open- and concealed-carry laws - like those in Florida and Arizona that have been largely responsible for over-all reductions in violent crime in those and other states as well. That's mainly true because the crooks can't tell who's packin' any more!

I'm all for background checks that include mental health, an "age of majority" provision except for written parental or spousal permission, armed SROs (school resource officers), trained and certified school staff concealed carriers, nation-wide open- and concealed-carry reciprocity, and outlawing the sale of automatic military weapons to civilians.

I would include semi-automatic military weapons except that the **M1 Garand** 30 calibre semi-automatic shoulder weapon is not only a revered classic left over from the Korean War but also a great deer rifle. Also included in that class would be the notorious **AK-47**, developed in the Soviet Union by **Mikhail Kalashnikov**, and the **AR-15** made in America by **Anderson, Smith & Wesson, Armalite, Daniel, Colt, Rock River** and **Sig Sauer**.

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Texas Attorney General **Ken Paxton** wrote the following for **The Hill** on March 24th:

"Texas allows school districts to approve 'marshals' or 'guardians' as the last line of defense against a shooter. Under this program, faculty members volunteer to keep a firearm within reach in case the unthinkable happens. They undergo mental health screenings and rigorous firearm safety training - in some cases they are held to a higher standard than police officers.

"In an active shooter situation, law enforcement takes roughly three minutes to respond on a good day (through no fault of their own). It's disturbing to consider the damage that can be inflicted in that amount of time. Only school marshals - who, contrary to the media portrayal, represent a select few trained and capable staff members - can deliver response times measured in seconds rather than minutes.

"Coverage in the aftermath of Parkland has focused disproportionately on the AR-15. The gun has been established as a symbol of mass shootings, a device designed for wanton destruction. What use, we are repeatedly asked, could private citizens have for an AR-15? Texans like myself have been frustrated by this collective amnesia. On November 5, 2017, a private citizen heroically stopped the fleeing shooter of the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs using an AR-15.

"Those willing to kill the innocent in cold blood will hardly be hindered by a new gun regulation. ... it defies logic that they will respect a gun law. It stands to reason, therefore, that schools should be made a hard target, just like airports, stadiums and government buildings. ... student safety shouldn't have to hinge on the intractable gridlock of Washington politics.

"A sign outside of **Argyle High School**, which has opted into the program, reads "*Please be aware that the staff at Argyle are armed and may use whatever force is necessary to protect our students.*" Is a would-be shooter more likely to

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target such a school or a "gun-free zone?" The answer is obvious."

David Unsworth wrote the following in the **Washington Examiner** last Tuesday:

"Heart disease kills an estimated 614,348 per year. Cancer comes in second at 591,699 deaths per year. Chronic lower respiratory diseases (including emphysema, bronchitis, and asthma) are third, at 147,101 people a year. Accidents kill about 136,000 per year. Strokes kill 133,033 ...

"Needless to say, these figures vastly exceed the death toll from school shootings, mass shootings, and gun violence in general. A typical year in the US usually records 33,000 gun-related deaths, two-thirds of which are suicides. The 12,000 gun-related homicides a year are, unsurprisingly, heavily concentrated in inner-city neighborhoods afflicted by drugs, gangs, and crime ...

"So, yes, angry young men who shoot up schools are a serious problem. Yet, the idea that they pose the gravest clear and present danger to the safety of America is preposterous. The American public should really be directing its attention to ensuring that we live healthier lives; not worrying about the astronomical odds of being involved in a school shooting. When it comes to tragically preventable deaths, one can make a compelling case that smoking, soft drinks, refined sugars, fast food, processed food, office work, and Netflix are far more dangerous to our well-being than guns or school shooters. Our public policy should be driven by data and facts, not opinions and hysteria."

Look, people, I'm out of marbles ... hope you have some of your own to send to Washington!

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Thursday, April 5, 2018

Show Me Your Budget

They were all cranky about the Omnibus Bill a while back. And President Trump was about as cranky as he could be in public, considering all the three- and four-letter words he could use.

This is what I want to hear very soon from my President to the Congress:

"I want a complete 2018-19 one-year budget assembled under Regular Order before the end of September - with all the bells and whistles - like you guys are supposed to do every year ... not a Continuing Resolution. You need to get off your butts and do your job! Take this to the bank: I will not sign another Continuing Resolution and I will not sign another Omnibus Bill. This country is supposed to run like a business ... and it's time we made that happen again. If you send me anything other than a for-real, in-the-trenches, American budget for 2018-19, I will veto it. That will shutter this government and you people will take the heat until you've created a real honest-to-goodness Budget for the United States of America."

The first year a President is in office the country operates under the previous year's budget. President Trump's first year was under the Obama 2016-17 budget - or rather the series of Congressional Continuing Resolutions. The last full budget was the 2007-08 Bill. 2008-09 was passed by the Congress in April of 2009 after a series of Continuing Resolutions. There has not been a budget created by the Congress since.

But, according to **Pew Research**, "in the four decades since the current system for budgeting and spending tax dollars has been in effect, Congress has managed to pass all its required

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appropriations measures on time only four times: in fiscal 1977 (the first full fiscal year under the current system), 1989, 1995 and 1997.

"The 'standard' appropriations process, as laid out in the **1974 Congressional Budget Act**, goes like this: After the president submits his budget proposal, the House and Senate adopt their own budget resolution. While it doesn't have the force of law, the budget resolution sets out the overall spending framework for the coming fiscal year and serves to guide lawmakers as they address specific tax and spending decisions.

"Next, Congress is supposed to pass a series of separate bills funding various agencies and activities of the federal government. (For the past decade, the number of spending bills has stood at 12, one for each subcommittee of the House and Senate appropriations committees.) The deadline for doing that is Oct. 1, when the new fiscal year starts. But since 1997, Congress has never passed more than a third of its regular appropriations bills on time, and usually has done considerably less than that: For instance, for six straight years (fiscal 2011 through 2016), not a single spending bill was passed by Oct. 1.

"And rather than pass stand-alone spending bills as it's supposed to, Congress has increasingly used omnibus bills (which bundle several appropriations measures into a single, giant law) and full-year CRs to resolve annual spending disputes. The first such omnibus measure was passed in 1950 as a one-off experiment, and omnibus spending bills were used a couple of times in the mid-1980s. However, they've become much more frequent in the past two decades: In each of the past seven fiscal years, in fact, all or nearly all of the regular appropriations bills were combined into such after-deadline package deals.

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"If a deadline passes without either a new set of spending bills or another CR to fund the government, operations considered nonessential would be forced to shut down. In a lengthy shutdown, as occurred in October 2013, applications for things like drilling permits, small-business loans and export licenses might not be processed; museums and national parks might have to close; government statistical reports could be delayed; and hundreds of thousands of federal workers could be furloughed. (During the 2013 shutdown, some 800,000 federal workers were furloughed while 1.3 million others had to stay on the job without knowing when they'd be paid.) But mail would still be delivered, Social Security payments would be made, and workers deemed essential to protecting life or property (such as air traffic controllers and personnel at veterans' hospitals) would still get paid."

President Trump and the OMB submitted the FY2018-19 Budget Request and Analysis to the Congress on February 12th. On Easter Sunday April 1st (April Fool's Day) the Senate Budget Committee was to submit its "concurrent resolution," a precursor to Congress's budget resolution. I can't say for sure, but I'd bet money they were fashionably late rather than early! April 15th is the deadline for Congress to pass its budget resolution to guide decision-making for the twelve appropriation subcommittees, which begin hearings on specific proposals that can last into the summer. Is there any chance at all that this bunch of ne'er-do-wells will Git-R-Done by September 30th? That, my friends, remains to be seen ...

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Monday, April 9, 2018

Who Cares?

One thing I learned as a broadcast DeeJay and journalist ... the bottom line is "Who cares?" Perhaps that's why the news media is so screwed up today. They're not asking "Who cares?"

No, really ... do you know anybody who lost sleep because eleven or twelve years ago Donald J. Trump had a fling with some pornstar who, until lately, nobody had ever heard of? Who cares?

Where on earth did the idea come from that the White House is a shambles because the President keeps firing people? This President will not put up with Department Heads, employees and/or advisors who take issue with him publicly or through "leaks" to the MSM. It seems clear that he has been slowly building a very strong team of advisors and Cabinet Members. This guy likes people on his team who will disagree with him, but who understand how to keep those opinions inside the Oval Office. He likes his people to be cut from the same pragmatic cloth as him. Does this mean that, as the MSM has been headlining, Trump's White House is falling apart? I mean, Jeeze! Who cares?

Then, there was the New Orleans Saints Cheerleader squawking a while back about equality - they're sexually discriminating between men and women as football players and cheerleaders. OMG! Really? Is this actually national news on the FOX News Channel? Holy Crap! According to the most trusted news source in 2018, this is primetime news! Oh, hurry! Let's all skittle off and hide in our safe space! Man ... who cares?

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We didn't get to see the story (that finally showed up as an aside in TIME magazine) that goes with 40 school kids and their teachers, along with another 35 or 40 people, who perished in a movie theatre fire in Siberia because the emergency exits were locked and nobody was allowed to try to save them. Yeah, well ... who cares?

Perhaps the Mainstream Media has become jaded because today's journalists were raised with the likes of Trailer Trash Shows by Maury Povich and Jerry Springer and shock jock Howard Stern. They (and their bosses) may actually believe that trashy stories and made-up nonsense actually titillate their audiences when, in reality, it makes them distrust the MSM. But then, who cares?

When you're on the air playing those "black biscuits labeled for listening" you can chit-chat over the music before the singing starts. It's a cool challenge - but you'd better not step on the singer! That was one of the traits of a great DeeJay - being able to perfectly time the chatter right up to the singer. In the middle of my Broadcast career (about a hundred years ago!) somebody figured out that using a stopwatch to time the "entro" of a song and then putting that time, in seconds, on the record or CD label was a great crutch. But the big deal was not so much the chatter or the timing ... it was being able to do all that and have a clear answer for "Who cares?"

I write these twice-a-week pieces because it's fun and challenging. And, perhaps, because I'm one of those old freaks left over from rock 'n' roll radio who really does care. So, who cares? Me.

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Thursday, April 12, 2018

Go Ahead - Make My Day

Guns and gun control have been center-stage for more than a month, now. Municipalities, Counties, States and the Congress have been gnashing their teeth over ways to curtail gun violence. There have been a lot of proposals, including one from a former US Supreme Court Justice suggesting that the Second Amendment be jettisoned.

The number two amendment to the US Constitution guarantees that all citizens have the right to keep and bear arms to protect themselves and their families - AND to assure that the country has the means to defend itself from enemies, both foreign and domestic. The Founding Fathers of our country had the presence of mind to assure that all of its citizens were able to protect themselves from the bad guys that threaten their security. Take the likes of MS-13, the burglar at the door, the thief in the night, the drive-by shooter, the school-ground nutcase with an AR-15, and even the tyranny that could be foisted on the country by an overbearing Government.

There is a **YouTube** video making the rounds that explains in clear and convincing words what elected officials across the country have been doing to us. **Mark Robinson** of Greensboro City, North Carolina spoke during an April 3rd hearing at a meeting of his City Council. They were considering actions to stop gun violence. Robinson was there to represent the majority of residents and he didn't mince words. *"What I want to know is, when are you all going to start standing up for the majority? And here is who the majority is. I'm the majority. I'm a law abiding citizen who's never shot anybody."*

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According to the local CBS affiliate, his comments are racking up millions of views, and he is gaining a national spotlight that he never expected. *"I really didn't. I thought maybe somebody might play it on the local news, and somebody would see me at work and say I saw you on television, but I had no idea it would turn into what it has turned into ..."* Robinson [said] originally he didn't even plan to speak at the meeting, plus he doesn't even own a gun. *"I don't have a lawyer either, but I would hate to wake up tomorrow and find out my right to counsel has been taken away. I'm passionate about the United States constitution."* His voice has meant a lot to people across the country, and their words have meant a lot to him. *"I've never had a chance to make an impact on this many people. I've had people call from all across the country, saying 'thank you,' telling me 'hey, you said what I feel,' and it's just been a very, very humbling experience,"* [he] said.

Here is the link to his remarks on YouTube:
https://youtu.be/vo_X53dNTS8 Enjoy.

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Monday, April 16, 2018

Only Interpretations

I watched an interesting presentation on **Fox Business News** the other day. The contention was that the 2018 mid-term election results will depend entirely on whether more Trump Haters turn out than Trump Lovers. That remains to be seen. There is little doubt that **President Donald Trump** will have an effect on almost all of the elections ... one way or another. There was another contention that the Democrats are going to be more motivated during this election cycle and that Republicans are more difficult to motivate. That, too, remains to be seen.

The thing is this: Both Parties - together - do not represent two-thirds of the electorate. There is this big bunch of Independent voters out there that represents a bigger bloc than either the GOP or the Democrats. So, based on the first premise above, how much of the total electorate hates Trump and how much loves him? Damned if I know! And I don't believe that anybody knows because of the polls. Look at https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/latest_polls/ and then tell me what poll is even close! They're all over the map! Just like before the 2016 elections! They're still sampling the Left and East coast mega-cities and ignoring middle-America. It's Spring in the United States of America and soon we'll be subjected by all the usual balderdash that comes with the bi-annual election cycle. Good grief, Charley Brown, the Primaries are a ways off and the majority of candidates have yet to file their papers. Sure, there are a number of Special Elections between now and the Primaries, but at this point they are just fodder for the Mainstream Media.

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So, who are the Trump Haters? Left-wing Democrats, Occupy Democrats, Progressives, Feminists, tree-huggers and Antifa.

Who are the Trump Lovers? Mainstream Republicans, the newly-employed, small businesses, farmers, growers and folks who work with their hands.

Who are the middle-ground? Independents, rust-belt employees, Union members, miners, manufacturing plant workers and the elderly.

Mind you, these are just my observations based on a brain full of mush! Between the opinions of bunches of on-line magazines, cable news, folks at Fry's and WalMart and over a thousand Facebook friends, my mind is a continual mess trying to sort out the truth. Two people keep me on track, however: **John Lennon**, who said "*The more I see, the less I know for sure.*" And **Friedrich Nietzsche**, who declared "*There are no facts, only interpretations.*"

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