

A forum to encourage independent thinking

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My First Hero

An Enchanting Sojourn to India

Presidential Debate of 2016

Hitting The Bottom



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Thinking Wildly

Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.

– Margaret Mead

Do not take life too seriously. You will never get out of it alive.

– Elbert Hubbard

People who think they know everything are a great annoyance to those of us who do.

– Isaac Asimov

Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please.

– Mark Twain

No man has a good enough memory to be a successful liar.

– Abraham Lincoln

Too much agreement kills a chat.

– Eldridge Cleaver

Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened.

– Dr. Seuss

When marrying, ask yourself this question: Do you believe that you will be able to converse well with this person into your old age? Everything else in marriage is transitory.

– Friedrich Nietzsche

Kindness in words creates confidence.
Kindness in thinking creates profoundness.
Kindness in giving creates love.

– Lao Tzu

Better a witty fool than a foolish wit.

– William Shakespeare

Life is like a ten speed bicycle. Most of us have gears we never use.

– Charles M. Schulz

An essential aspect of creativity is not being afraid to fail.

– Edwin Land

Editorial



My First Hero

By Musafir

Sherpa Tenzing Norgay was the first person to climb Mount Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary on May 29, 1953. He went up the mountain as a common man, but he returned as a hero – the first hero I ever knew. I was seven years old then. Unlike today’s manufactured heroes, he was not imposed upon me as a role model. He didn’t make statements by wearing ribbons nor was he promoted by any special interest group. He was a mortal figure of supreme significance to me. At the age of seven, I had just started shedding my innocence and started to think on my own. I came to know for the first time that my real mother had died when I was only six months old and the only loving parents I knew until then were, actually, my uncle and aunt.

Growing up with my aunt and uncle was the happiest time of my life. I lived in a village about 100 miles from Mount Everest. On a clear day, one could see the cap of Everest. Ours was a crowded place. We had lots of visitors as both my uncle and aunt were extremely gregarious people. They used to accommodate and feed everyone.

I was a happy child. Everyone in the village loved and protected me. Whenever I needed shoes, I just ran to the village cobbler and got a pair made for myself. My uncle and aunt used to give them grain in return. Watching the jugglers come to the village or listening to the movie songs on the deafening amplifiers of a passing procession were the only entertainment. My friends and I would sneak out of home and jump streams and climb trees. We ran for miles or went to the graveyard in the hope of catching ghosts and then return home to a warm meal. The grains and vegetables came from our farm and the fresh catch from our own pond.

Tenzing came from a large family in a village in Nepal. He was considered a lucky baby as the family crossed many hurdles after his birth. His childhood house was small and crowded. They ate the simplest food, but there was always enough. His family made clothing from the yak wool and hides to keep warm during the winter. He had a very happy childhood until



he came to know that his parents wanted him to become a lama (a Buddhist priest). He believed in *chomolungma* (a Tibetan expression meaning to climb Everest or a mountain so high that no bird could fly over it) and that’s what he did his whole life. Tenzing knew the dangers of climbing Everest. Thousands of Sherpas had perished in helping the mountaineers climb

Everest. Tenzing later took an Indian citizenship. When asked about his nationality, he said, “I was born in the womb of Nepal and brought up in the lap of India. I am both a Nepali and an Indian.

I never met Tenzing in person, but I remember his confident smile and his rugged but kind face. His personality had a unique combination of western squint and eastern immaculateness. After leaving my village, I always felt like a caged bird that had lost its freedom. I thought of Tenzing when yearning for freedom. We had a similar childhood, happy and full of innocence. I left my childhood home and lived at many places because my father had a transferable job. Now I live in the U.S. Although I am an Indian by birth, I am also an American.

Climbing Everest those days was much more dangerous than space travel. Unlike space travel, the climbers were on their own without any guidance.

Continued on page 11

Commentary



Hillary for President?

By Robert Bickmeyer

What is not being said about the 2016 race is Hillary Clinton's insidious insincerity. She continues to receive a free pass to being the Democrat's 2016 choice.

A well known nationally syndicated columnist climbed aboard the Hillary Clinton bandwagon, claiming she is the overwhelming Democratic favorite in the 2016 presidential election. I am strongly against a Hillary Clinton presidency, not because I am anti-women. In fact, early in the 2012 campaign



my two top choices, over Mitt Romney and other guys, were Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann. They had sterling values, values that are disappearing in 21st century America. And when they were verbally attacked in the media they retorted with more courage than any of the other Republican candidates.

Flashback: Hillary Clinton fired from Watergate investigation for 'lying, unethical behavior.'

Jerry Zeifman, a lifelong Democrat, supervised the work of 27-year-old Hillary Rodham on the House Judiciary committee. Hillary got a job working on the investigation at the behest of her former law professor, Burke Marshall, who was also Sen. Ted Kennedy's chief counsel in the Chappaquiddick affair. When the investigation was over, Zeifman fired Hillary from the committee staff and refused to give her a letter of recommendation. Why? Because she was a liar. She was an unethical, dishonest lawyer. She conspired to violate

the Constitution, the rules of the House, the rules of the committee and the rules of confidentiality.

Hillary once told a British audience she was named after Sir Edmund Hillary, but he became famous five years after she was born. Raised in Illinois she told a New York crowd she had always been a Yankees fan. She claimed Chelsea, after jogging, was in a coffee shop near the World Trade Center on 9/11, but escaped injury. Chelsea later admitted she was nowhere near the WTC.

It was on NBC's Meet The Press, March 23, 2008 with a film clip of Hillary speaking about a week earlier. Talking about her trip to Bosnia during her husband's presidency Hillary described her arrival at the airport. Instead of the planned ceremony to greet her they had to run for cover with heads down under sniper fire. She smiled telling the story, as anyone would when reminiscing about a dangerous time with a happy ending. It was another sterling "performance" because photos taken that day and testimony of others who were there proved her story to be just another fabrication.

Hillary denied ever claiming that the raid on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi was sparked by a U.S. made video, but when she received the caskets of the four Americans killed there she blamed their deaths on that "awful internet video." At the Congressional hearing on Benghazi Hillary angrily asked, "What difference does it make now?" Proper action would have prevented four deaths and "now" the families of the four killed would not be in mourning. Where was her compassion? Survivors of Benghazi are forced into silence by the Obama Administration and Hillary's State Department. They were asked or ordered to sign non-disclosure agreements.

Continued on page 11

Humor



The Great Presidential Debate of 2016

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

The average Joe and plain Jane get an opportunity to laugh, smile and smirk every four years at the men and women who would be the president of the United States of America. The puppet shows are also known as presidential debates where the candidates, who are essentially the same, run off at their mouths for a few hours, in order to create the illusion of democracy.

The selected panel (don't know who selects them), also known as moderators run a shock and awe show by asking questions like, "Would you allow your daughter to marry a transgender?" Well, don't blame them. In fact, ignorance resides in the deepest recesses of their brains. Neither the moderators nor the candidates can tell the difference between Bangladesh and Beetlejuice.

Moreover, for average Joe and Plain Jane the real issues are too mundane and real. Who cares about crumbling infrastructure, the Russians taking us for a ride in space or our elected officers serving their campaign donors? All they want is 90 minutes of entertainment. At the end of the show they want to know (especially ladies) who was the better looking guy or gal aka Brad Pitt or Kim Kardashian types.

Here is what to expect in 2016 presidential debate (puppet show).

Domestic Policy

Moderator: "Candidate number 1: Should men be trained in putting down the toilet lid?"

Candidate 1: This is, of course, a matter of prime utmost concern, but no one knows about this issue better than I. Look, I grew up in a family of six kids. Our parents were quite strict about putting down the toilet lid. I remember I was once denied bathroom privileges for a week as a punishment for not putting down the lid. There can't be a better example of character building than that."

Moderator: "Candidate number 2: 'Should the age for consensual sex be dropped to 16?' "

Candidate 2: "Absolutely!" Many of our esteemed colleagues are barred from serving our great nation because they had affairs with underage boys and girls. I tell you, this can become a matter of great national crisis, if the president is removed from the office for having a little shenanigan with a sixteen

year old especially during a period of war. This will threaten our national security."

Moderator: "Candidate number 1: Are dogs better companions than cats?"

Candidate 1: "Look, our country is polarized between cat lovers and dog lovers. We must level this chasm, if we want to remain united in the twenty-first century and beyond. We are privileged to have both cats and dogs in our household. Yes, dogs chase cats all the time but is this not an example of unity in diversity? I believe in people of different colors living together despite their differences. This is what our founding fathers envisioned. So, I conclude that both cats and dogs are equal when it comes to companionship."

Moderator: "Candidate number 2! Should the Monday after the Super Bowl be a national holiday?"

Candidate 2: "I'll admit that I feel a little sluggish the morning after the Super Bowl at work. I eat a bit more food during the Super Bowl than I'd normally eat. I also drink more beer than is typical for a Sunday evening and I get to bed much later than I normally would. And my suspicion is that I'm not alone. So, my fellow Americans, let me make a campaign promise to you that I will do everything humanly possible to make the Monday after the Super Bowl as President's Day. I don't think that our departed presidents will mind that even a little bit. After all, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was envisioned by them as our inalienable rights."

Environment

Moderator: "Candidate number 1! Are bananas in true danger of going extinct?"

Candidate 1: "This is an environmental disaster waiting to happen. Failing banana crops mean so much more than just losing your favorite fruit. The entire Banana Republic depends on bananas as a main source of food. Banana Republic will be the first foreign country I'll visit after taking office and

Continued on page 15

Perspective



Saying Goodbye

By Anil Shrivastava

I used to get mild panic attacks while attending funerals, a kind of sensation that'd make me rattle. Well, I seem to have overcome that neurosis. I am either a stronger person or my subconscious has gotten used to it. At my age, funerals have become a kind of routine. I get the news of someone I knew dying almost every month. Death is, alas, an inevitable consequence of life.

While growing up in India, a funeral was not an occasion to dress up in the honor of the deceased. Looking tattered and crying were the most important parts of honoring the dead. It was even customary to hire professional wailers to create an ambience of sadness. The bereavement would go on for thirteen days to a month. The relatives and friends would stay in the crowded house giving free advice in return for free meals. Sorrow would really end soon after they'd leave for their own abodes.

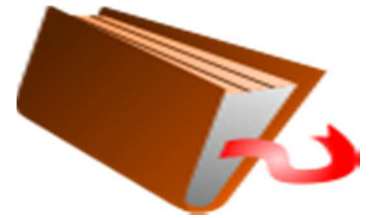
Back in the USA, I always keep a black suit dry cleaned for the occasion. As a matter of fact, since my retirement, marriages and funerals are the only occasions when I dress in suits. I like the custom here better than that in India (other than dressing up in suits). There is a quick closure to the agony of death and life goes on after that. I remember the famous words of Lyndon B Johnson following the assassination of John F Kennedy. He said something to the effect that a great leader has died but a great nation must move on.

The worst part of grief is usually from the second of notification leading up to the funeral. I'd describe this period as 'suspended animation.' There is no closure, no celebration, just sadness. Nothing feels right, we sit in the unshakeable feeling of death, and sometime grudges with God. We wait for the funeral for the angst to be over.

Different people express their grief differently during the period of this 'suspended animation.' While some grieve by crying, screaming or breaking something, I usually feel cold, numb and appear heartless. The last memory I have is from the day of my brother-in-law's funeral. Watching his body pushed into the crematorium was the most painful part for me. I can honestly say, as painful as that was to watch, the amount of closure I received in those few moments was incredible. I know we can never get him back, but in the words of our Hindu scriptures; "In death the only thing that dies is the body, the soul lives on" I was freed from grief. Or perhaps grief freed me.

As much as funerals bring closure to loved ones, I am not comfortable with the idea of visitation. Everyone goes about his or her business while the deceased's body lays in the cascade, stuffed, air brushed and made up. Leaving the dead body helpless and defenseless is disrespectful in my opinion. I definitely will not like any showing of my dead body and will prefer to be cremated soon after death. According to the Hindu tradition, my body should be wrapped in a white sheet. I'd not like anything more than a Hindu (Arya Samaj) prayer as a closure. I'd not trouble my loved ones by taking my ashes to India or performing any rituals such as the one-year ceremony or any other sacrament. The date or the day of my death should not be blacked out for future events, such as marriages, anniversaries, birthdays, etc. I'd not like anyone to speculate about my soul or afterlife. Life should go on as death is a part of living and everyone dies. I am not special

Book Review



Wilson:

By A. Scott Berg

Putnam Publishing Group 2015

Woodrow Wilson, the only U.S. president to earn a PhD was an academician turned politician. He was an intellectual in the real sense; it was not thrust upon him.



Though Wilson was a determined man with courage of conviction, he never hesitated to change his stance in meeting the reality of a situation. Thus he led the nation from isolationism to interventionism and

then to internationalism. In the course of his pursuit of duty, he became a president of many firsts. He was the first U.S. president in office to travel to Europe; the first to have a press conference, first to introduce an income tax, first to address the Congress and established the League of Nations.

In his book about Woodrow Wilson, Berg tries to put Wilson on a pedestal higher than Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt. Berg goes as far as crediting Wilson for laying the foundation for the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the New Frontier, and the Great Society. Berg also tries to play down Wilson's racial biases in his book.

Wilson became a seasoned fighter winning battles as president of Princeton. His experience in self survival helped him win the favor of New Jersey boss James Smith Jr. who helped him become his state's governor without having any prior political experience. Wilson's charismatic personality later helped him win Democratic support in the Northeast and West enabling him to win the presidency. As Berg puts it, Wilson was "the least-known important figure in American politics."

Wilson suffered several strokes in the prime of his life. He still functioned. His most enduring test came after his beloved wife, Ellen's death while he was entering the Great War (WWI). Berg's portrayal of Wilson is superb. I now know the details of many known and little known facets of our 28th president's life.

—Reviewed by Musafir

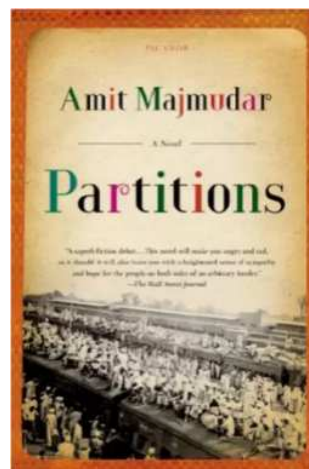
Partitions: A Novel

By: Amit Majmudar

Macmillan Publishers

Partitions by Majmudar was recommended to me by a friend. It's a powerful novel and I am glad that I read it. Majmudar has painted the agony of the victims of the 1947 India Pakistan division in a vivid color using words. Majmudar has very effectively described his agony through four main characters of his novel. Two Hindu boys manage to reach Delhi by foot. A Sikh girl dares to defy the odds and runs from the clutches of rapists. A Muslim doctor, who is the central character of the novel finds himself in the role of a healer.

Majmudar has conveyed his message about senseless human suffering very effectively. His message that no religious group is immune to a tragedy of this scale is very clear to his readers. He is a brilliant writer and I recommend this book to all the readers of TheThink Club.



—Reviewed by

Musafir

Travelogue



The Cashmere Scarf

By Roop Raj

(Roop Raj is a news anchor and reporter at WJBK Fox 2 in Detroit)

Traveling to another country is an adventure so exciting that one can get giddy on flights making friends with strangers or just anticipation of it. I was that giddy guy who recently boarded a flight from New Jersey to New Delhi.

India, probably, mystifies Americans more than any other eastern country on the map. We say “namaste” to show our cultural subtleness. We have adopted transcendental meditation yoga, nonviolence and the concept of *karma* among many other eclectic arrays of Indian phenomena now popular in the West. However, it may come as a surprise to us that the yoga craze that we witness here is not a rage among the younger generation in India. In fact, unlike in America, going to the yoga centers in India is more about being trendy. My cousins talked about this as we were sipping *masala chai* (spiced tea) in an upscale café in a fashionable district of Gurgaon, a suburb of New Delhi.



The main stretch of restaurants and bars sits shoulder to shoulder along a boardwalk with shiny floor tiles and embedded lights. Gurgaon, which was basically a cluster of farmlands not long ago, has changed into a world class metropolis. The entertainment district glows with Krispy Kreme Donuts and Dunkin Donuts neon signs.

They seem to compete side by side with local fancy kebab eateries and wine bars. All of this sits under hovering skyscrapers asleep at night except for the brightly lit monikers of the headquarters nestled inside.

India, the world’s largest democracy baffled and intrigued me as it does to the most westerners depicted in movies like “The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.”

The middle class in India is growing as fast as the appetite for American fast food. But as quickly as one can order a mutton burger under the Golden Arches, he or she cannot ignore noticing “the other side” piercing through the glass walls. The local shopkeepers conduct business and sleep under the same shanty tin roofs with their families during the night.

The outskirts of the bustling Gurgaon is so close to the skyscrapers that one can sense the aroma of oil and incense invading the surroundings. India has the fastest growing middle class in the world. They get their veggies and fresh meats from these poor store-keepers located on narrow lanes abuzz with people on the prowl for bargains. They are the same people who’d not mind spending \$600 on Dior sunglasses or \$5 on a cup of latte in a posh area. Bargaining is not only a part of life in India, it’s an art. It’s interesting to watch how both sides haggle to arrive at a breakeven point. In my opinion, this skill should be taught in Economics 101. The real mystery is how these two seemingly competing worlds aren’t competing at all. They are living symbiotically together and unified. The same Rupee that passes through the hands of the man selling zucchini, onions and turmeric also sails into the high-rise hotels just a quarter of a mile away.

Continued on page 12

Current Affairs



Hitting The Bottom By: Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

After conquering bosoms and buttocks, American popular culture is now reaching for a new low. Should Hollywood have its way, bathroom activities will soon become a spectator's game. Kim Kardashian, the trail blazer of American *mode de vie*, just bought *Torre di Bagni Oro* (translation: the Golden Toilet). The rumor is that she will soon post a selfie of Kanye West and herself taking load off on the golden throne.

Not to be outdone, Marlon Wayne just circulated a toilet photo with his son that was first published on TMI. Some folks are expecting president Obama to personally congratulate Marlon for his show of courage. Those old hats resisting the toilet culture are bound to go down the drain.

It's really incredible how hard Hollywood is working to promote the toilet culture. In case you missed it, Lena Dunham (HBO 'Girls') appeared on the Golden Globes sitting in a bathroom stall, eating cake.

Jennifer Lawrence said this on the Late Show with Letterman, "I thought I had an ulcer, and it turns out it was a fulcer," Lawrence told Letterman. "I just had this really bad pain for, like, three weeks, and you can only s@&# your pants so many times a day before you have to go to the emergency room, before you're like, 'I need to go to the hospital.'"

Hollywood seems to be saying, "It's just another liberation movement to rid the human bondage. No one can put a lid on it. If you are upset, just wipe that frown off your face."

"Hey we aimed high and landed on the moon; now there is nowhere to go except hitting the rock bottom. Yeah, baby, yeah," exclaimed Mike Myers of Austin Powers' fame.

It's time for us to get on our knees and give thanks to Hollywood for including gross toilet scenes in almost every movie. In case you missed to smell them, let me name some movies you ought to watch again. *The Godfather*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Jurassic Park*, *Bridesmaids*, *There Is Something about Mary*, *Scream 2*, and *Wedding Crashers* should be a good source for the novices.

The good news is that the effort by Hollywood seems to work again. Families are accepting toilet jokes and do look forward to toilet talks in movies and advertisements. The big corporations are cashing on this nouveau réalité by introducing potty talk in corporate advertisements.

A Kmart spot, in which customers happily proclaimed that they "ship their pants," ran on cable networks and garnered more than 32 million viewers on YouTube. Cottonelle aired a campaign for flushable wipes where an interviewer asked strangers, "How do you wipe your bum?" A certain toilet cleaner brand flashes dirty toilet on TV screens and no one seems to mind that anymore. I'd say, "That's progress."

I can see how our eager academia will adopt the new toilet culture in the near future. One of my friends, a teacher, who is an *early adopter* explains cash flow to his students as the movement money makes as it disappears down the toilet. "

I wish I could flush down my fears, but I can't, because they'd clog up the toilet. Ah, but that's life, no?"

Point

Obama's Achievements Are Not Many

By Bala Prasad

During an U.S. president's term in office, especially when it is two terms, many decisions are made, Economic and otherwise with which degree as an individual. Of course no decision by anybody on anything, can please everybody.

Here I am going to dwell only on three instances that affects or will affect most of us directly, or indirectly.

Lets start with the economy of health care. The idea might have noble goals to provide health care for everybody, but this goal is being achieved by passing on the cost to smaller group, some of which are rich enough to afford, but others will still have to choose between health care, and our amenities of life. For the younger generation, the choice is between good housing, good food, and good education for childcare and healthcare. If they don't choose the latter, They might face disaster. A lot of people are willing to take that chance. So we have therefore transferred a bad situation from one group of people, to another. And the new group, the young working people cannot be subsidized for the expenses beyond their capability for the simple that they are doing well in life. Two facts that must not be forgotten in this regards – rich people are fine no matter what the law and health care cost and the law and health care cost and inability to pay them is the commonest reason for bankruptcy in America.

In spite of all the shortcomings of the so called "Obama Care" economic and otherwise, I am in full support of it for only one reason. This is the first step towards national health care that I fully support it should be noted that the first president to envision national health care was Theodore Roosevelt, more than 100 years ago. In the intervening years, any President of their best intentions and efforts achieved nothing.

My next contention is the economic policies that involved bailing out of big corporations, like General Motors, City Corp., and others. In a capitalistic society that prizes it on free market, a business should rise and fall on its own merit. If they have squandered there chances to be pleased and not benefit from their mistakes. When a citizen cannot afford mortgage payment on this house or for whatever reason when was it that the government steps in to pickup the tap, and the gall of then G.M. president to show up in Washington in a private plain to beg for the charity.

Again, while I believe in the principle I have outlined, there is also something called prudence. While I believe all these companies would have survived in one form or another. Prudence required for democratic president not to add upheaval of the time.

Finally the action or inaction on social security will affect millions over the years. Since it was signed in law by president Franklin Delano Roosevelt on August 14th, 1935, it has changed the scenery of life for poor and sick Americans. Usually they go hand and hand. Before the social security came along there were 2000, poor houses in America where poor and old folks just want to survive, for the only crime of being old and poor. Social security benefits were primarily for their benefit and survival. Now the likes of Warren perot and Ross perot are drawing these benefits. Granted they perhaps give much more in charitable contribution, but that's not the point. Most people who get social security benefit need it just to survive it. Some need it to improve their quality of life. A third group whose household income is quarter million dollars or more a year, does not need it for any reason. For this group the social security benefits should be rewarded to poor and deserving Americans. Who has to decide whether to buy food or medicine? Presidents' lack of leadership to resolve this situation amicably is disheartening

Counterpoint

Obama's Accomplishments Are Many

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Obama's accomplishments are many and follies are few. Of course, like any other leader in history, he is not perfect and has to be responsive to onslaughts against him. That's called political finessing. He has been largely criticized and maligned by his opponents for doing so. Here is a list of many of Mr. Obama's accomplishments as President.

For the starters, the economy under Obama has maintained a steady growth. The latest job numbers show that a respectable 223,000 new jobs are being created almost every month driving the unemployment rate down to 5.4%, the lowest since March 2008. The current unemployment rate is down by half from the peak of 9.9%. Under the leadership of President Obama, April 2015 was the 62nd straight month of job increases, the longest uninterrupted job growth in recent history.

Let's examine President Obama's amazing success in shrinking the deficit. He inherited a \$1.4 trillion deficit in 2009 from President Bush which he gradually reduced by nearly 2/3, (the 2015 projected deficit is \$ 564 billion). 2015 is the sixth consecutive year of a decreasing deficit. It has fallen to 3.1% of GDP from over 9% of GDP at the end of Bush's term.

"History will eventually show that Obama inherited the Great Recession and resuscitated the economy," the historian Douglas Brinkley is quoted as saying. "He's going to be seen as much more centrist and even friendly to business." In this telling, Obama deserves credit on several counts. The stimulus and other rapid action ended the nosedive and brought the economy back from the brink. Banking reform, passed in 2010, set the stage for healthier growth. The federal budget deficit ballooned in the short-term as a result of spending to fight the recession, but is narrowing on schedule now. Meanwhile, he successfully pushed health care reform, a major long-term structural reform that deficit hawks had been begging for. Yes, the Federal Reserve deserves plenty of credit for keeping the recovery on track -- but that, too, redounds to Obama's credit given his string of successful appointments to the Fed.

Mr. Obama withdrew from Iraq and is winding down our presence in Afghanistan. This is bound to stop our economic bleeding. Overall, Mr. Obama has done more than any recent president to uplift the American economy and we should give credit where credit is due.

Continued from page 3

My First Hero

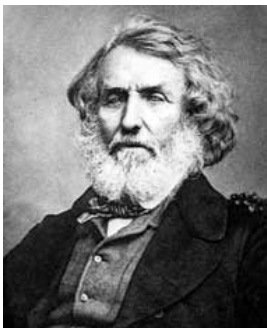
They had to face deadly avalanches and blinding blizzards. They spent nights on sheets of ice in sub-zero temperatures. Every step taken could mean death. If they slipped on the sharp pointed icy slopes, they could slide hundreds of feet before regaining a foothold. At times they would be in a free fall, flying headfirst down the mountain. But Tenzing didn't care. He only dreamed of *chomolungma*.

Tenzing had three lives. The first was as a child in Nepal in the village of Solo Khumbu. The second, lasting twenty years, was as a porter and mountain man. The third began on the day he came back from the top of Everest.

Like Tenzing I also have lived three lives. My childhood was as described above. The next twenty years were terrible. I was removed from the loving home of my uncle and aunt. Although I was provided a better material comfort in my father's home, the emotional comfort was lacking. Tenzing had to lead a tough life in Darjeeling, India as he had to compete against many famous *sherpas*, who had already made their names in the world of mountaineering. Tenzing saw trains and automobiles for the first time in his life.

I too was like a new *Sherpa* in my father's home. I saw many modern amenities for the first time and was often compared to more sophisticated relatives and children of the friends of the family. I had to prove my worth. Tenzing's life and struggle inspired me and gave me the needed jolt.

As for the third phase of my life, I still have to climb my brand of the Everest. My *chomolungma* is to be a good writer. Tenzing had no formal training in mountaineering. I am an engineer by profession. English is my second language. I have to face the avalanche in the form of rejections, blizzard in the form of competition and falling rocks in the form of meager resources. But my first hero taught me that I should pursue my passion for the love of *chomolungma*. I have to keep climbing and not worry about coming down to mortal glory.



Colonel Sir George Everest (July 4, 1790 — December 1, 1866) was a Welsh surveyor and geographer, and the Surveyor General of India from 1830 through 1843.

Everest was largely responsible for completing the section of the Great Trigonometric Survey of India along the meridian arc from

southern India extending north to Nepal, a distance of

about 2,400 kilometres (1,500 mi). This survey was started by William Lambton in 1806 and it lasted for several decades.

In 1865, Mount Everest was named in his honor in the English language despite his objections by the Royal Geographical Society. This enormous peak was surveyed by Everest's successor, Andrew Scott Waugh, in his role as the Surveyor-General of India.

Everest was born in Gwernvale Manor, just west of Crickhowell in Powys, Wales, in 1790, and he was baptised in Greenwich.

Commissioned into the Royal Artillery, in 1818, Lt. Everest was appointed as assistant to Colonel William Lambton, who had started the Great Trigonometrical Survey of the subcontinent in 1806. On Lambton's death in 1823, Everest succeeded to the post of superintendent of the survey, and in 1830 he was appointed as the Surveyor-General of India.

Everest retired in 1843 and he returned to live in the United Kingdom, where he became a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was dubbed a knight in 1861, and in 1862 he was elected as the vice-president of the Royal Geographical Society. Everest died in London in 1866[2] and is buried in St Andrew's Church, Hove, near Brighton.

Continued from page 4

Hillary for President?

If you are a stay-at-home mom she's not your kind of gal. A career woman (with a law firm in Little Rock) she appeared on "60 Minutes" during her husband's 1992 campaign where she spoke negatively about women who spend time in the kitchen baking cookies. In her zeal to attract votes she makes frequent sympathetic references to "the children." Hillary expects us to forget she is pro-abortion, the killing of children in their mother's womb.

"We just can't trust the American people to make those types of choices. Government has to make choices for people." No, it was not President Putin of communist Russia who said that. It was Hillary Clinton. She also said, "I am a fan of the social policies that you find in Europe."

When Bill O'Reilly interviewed Hillary she was 45 minutes late. When she finally showed up she didn't even mention being late. Her Secret Service men said she is almost always late. She obviously has disdain for others of lesser import.

"The most important thing to succeed is sincerity. If you can fake that you've got it made." Comedian George Burns said that. Hillary practices it.

Continued from page 8

The Cashmere Scarf

The storekeepers know that they may never step foot in those marble lined, chandelier lit lobbies of hotels nearby, but they seem reconciled about those far away dreams. That can be a lesson for all of us. Ideally, we should all be that way; immune to greed and not having a victim mentality at the same time. One should be satisfied knowing that we are responsible for performing our *karma*. The reward is in God's hand. This is an essential part of the Indian culture. The dream here is not to achieve wealth tomorrow but to feed the kids tonight and hope that they may, one day, live a better life than their parents. Nothing wrong with that dream!

This duality of two lives in India is mysterious to me. But I was fascinated by something else that I found mystifying. It happened as I was buying a scarf. Not just any scarf, I wanted to buy a *cashmere* scarf for my wife as a souvenir from my trip 8,000 miles away. After all, the very word, cashmere is Indian ... derived from the dangerous and religiously divisive land called Kashmir where the sheep produce these exotic wools.

I was looking for the scarf that'd blend eastern and western designs together. I was searching for duality. India is the very place that defines duality. I went to a store where bright red garments hung on smooth wooden rods. A marble table sat in the center of the store. Each piece I rejected fell on the table then was picked delicately going around the arm of the storekeeper. Satisfaction, not price was the only thing this guy seemed to care about. Within five minutes the marble table was drenched in a sea of orange, red, gold, argyle, paisley colors. Unfortunately, I did not find what I was looking for. With a deep sigh, the storekeeper smiled, nodded his head and said, "come, I will take you where there are scarfs your American wife will like..." The "no nod" was actually a common cultural nuance that meant, "let me help you."

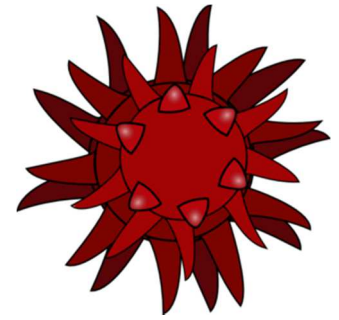
We walked across the street to another scarf shop. Crossing the street was an adventure in itself. Dodging cattle, kids and cars, the daunting 15 foot journey to cross the road was harrowing enough to feel as though I deserved a medal or maybe a discount on a cashmere scarf.

We walked through a creaking door. The store owner accompanying me held it open and let me go ahead of him. The store smelled the same as the other one: like mothballs, incense and, cashmere wools. Yes, as I discovered, there was such thing as the smell of cashmere. The man belted out loudly in Hindi to the owner of the store something he believed would be incomprehensible to me. I look Indian but, apparently, my mannerism is more like that of an American. My guide from across the street was unaware that I had enough speaking and comprehending ability of Hindi to grasp their conversation. His words baffled me. He said, "please help this young man find a scarf for his wife. He couldn't find anything of his liking in my store. I thought, maybe, your store would be more akin to his taste. He's a good man, so take care of him," he said in Hindi.

As I fought off the emotion and a strange sensation in my head, I asked if they were business partners or relatives. In broken English that sounded more like a lullaby he said, "No sir...he is my competitor. But what good would I be if I served you wrong. I want you to have what you need and not just make money out of you."

Exhausted and emotionally charged from the trip, a tear formed deep in the wells of my eyes. "Thank you sir. You are a good man" I said with a smile. I noticed how different my accent was and so were my volume and tone. We tend to yell as Americans. It's a part of our nature ... to want to be heard. I was touched at this man's sense of ethics. I was mystified. I thanked him as he walked away shaking his head as if to say 'no.' He faded away through the creaky aluminum doors of his competitor. I suddenly wished that I had liked something in the sea of cashmere across the street. I paid 2,400 Rupees for a cashmere scarf that blended the best of both eastern and western styles. That's \$40 in our currency. I hung on tight to the beauty of the black and red eastern fabric ... the part that said we are all one, the part that weaved the needs of our own to the needs of others, and the part that's satisfied with its *karma*. It's a beautiful scarf. It's a beautiful duality. It's a beautiful mystery.

Lifestyle



The Different Strains of Flu Virus

By Niru Prasad

Dr. Niru Prasad MD

The fearsome strains of flu viruses are so contagious that we all should be very aware of the incoming pathogens. The viruses affect individuals of all ages starting from childhood to senior citizens, and can have debilitating effects on a person's health. Influenza (seasonal flu) is the commonly known virus affecting individuals; however, there are many different types of pathogens of which we should be aware. Provided below is a list of these emerging pathogens:

Seasonal flu

Influenza is often confused with a common cold. The difference between the two is that the common cold lasts between 2 and 5 days with symptoms that include cough, runny nose, and sore throat. However, with influenza one also develops fever, chills, muscle aches, headaches, and general weakness and fatigue. Influenza will normally last about one week and will resolve itself. It is recommended that individuals of all ages get the flu vaccine before the season starts unless contraindicated.

H1N1 flu:

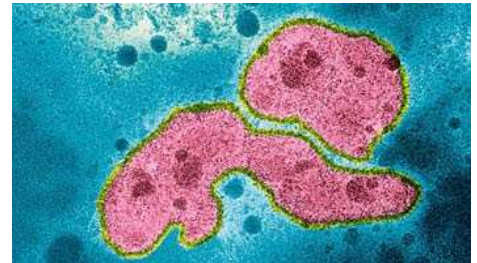
H1N1 flu virus, previously known as swine flu, has affected approximately 60 million people in the United States



since its emergence in 2009. Rate of infection has been decreased with use of trivalent and quadrivalent vaccines.

Avian flu

Avian flu (H5N1) is a strain of bird flu that has had a devastating impact on populations



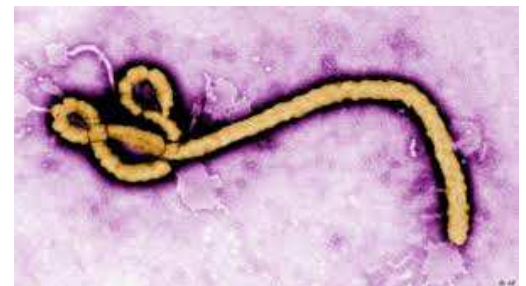
within Asian and the Middle East since 2003. Birds infected with this virus spread it to human populations by carrying the virus into the surrounding environment. Pigs are intermediate hosts of the virus, with which humans can come in contact.

Variant flu

The strain of virus called H3N2v can be spread within state fairs as there are many pigs. Humans can get infected by eating raw or undercooked pig meat, or improper hygiene. Researchers are in the process of developing vaccines to fight this virus.

Ebola Virus

Ebola virus was first reported in West Africa, reaching American



soil in August of 2014 when infected healthcare providers were sent home for treatment. Ebola virus is a serious disease characterized by vomiting, and

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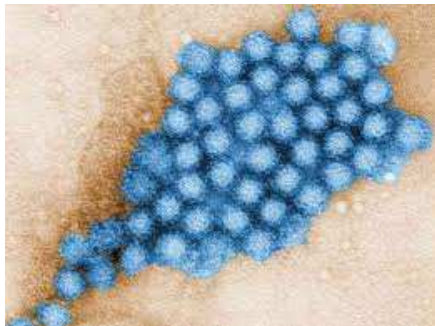
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Flu Virus

potential internal and external bleeding. Risk of exposure is low unless there is direct contact with bodily fluids of the affected individual.

Norovirus

The norovirus, unrelated to influenza, is a stomach flu virus characterized by vomiting and diarrhea.



It was reported from cruise lines in the early part of 2014. One can contract the virus by eating contaminated food, or exposure from an infected individual.

MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

MERS is a respiratory illness first reported in 2012 in Saudi Arabia.



According to research, humans can

contract the virus from airborne exposure, by contact with camels, or by eating undercooked camel meat. Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Cases in the United States are limited.

West Nile Virus

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause one in five people to develop fever, rash, headache or joint pain. According to data collection by the CDC, the states of California and Tennessee have contained the highest number of cases. To protect yourself against this virus, wear insect repellent containing DEET, minimize exposure to standing water, and keep screen windows or close doors.

Chikungunya

The chikungunya virus was first reported in the Caribbean in 2013. Individuals were contracting the virus from tiger mosquitos in those areas.



Protection from insect bites is a strong defense against this virus.

In summary there are different strains of flu viruses that can affect the human body and can have tremendous impacts on human health and populations. You can take preventative measures such as visiting your health care provider on a regular basis, getting vaccinated, reducing risk of exposure, and taking care of your health by proper nutrition, exercise, and sleep.

For more information, please visit the Center for Disease Control website: www.cdc.gov

Continued from page

I left my heart

It's just a short ride over to Alcatraz Island, which is the notorious prison that housed such infamous prisoners as Al Capone, George "Machine Gun" Kelly and Robert Stroud, the Birdman of Alcatraz. When he was transferred from Leavenworth prison, he was not allowed to take any of his beloved birds. Possessing an IQ of 134, he was nevertheless a violent sociopath. The tour of Alcatraz recounted the stories of prisoners looking out across the water at the city tantalizingly close, and at night if the wind right, the sounds of free people.

On a particularly beautiful day some of our group ascended the hill to the Coit tower. At the top of the hill from the base of the tower we could be gorgeous views of the city in all directions. The Golden Gate Bridge was in the distance, and the Bay Bridge to Treasure Island was closer. In another direction were buildings of the city on another steep hill.

In four days we could only scratch the surface of all there is to see and do in this enchanting city.

Tony Bennett sang, "I left my heart in San Francisco." Now I understand what he meant.

Continued from page 5

Humor – Debate 2016

I'll appoint Mrs. Dole as our ambassador to this neglected republic. Of course, I take this matter very seriously."

Moderator: "Candidate number 2! Are we interfering with nature by going to the daylight saving time?"

Candidate 2: "I can prove that the daylight saving time is destroying the environment and is the major cause of global warming. We have daylight savings time for six months a year. This is too much for the environment to cope with. Look, for six months of the year, we have an extra hour of hot afternoon sun. This extra hour of sunshine is evaporating all the moisture from our land causing draught in California. I promise to remove the day light saving time ritual, if I become the president."

Moderator: "Candidate 1! "Would you agree to paint the White House in black to absorb heat during the winter?"

Candidate 1: "Hey look! I will do everything to save energy. Other than saving the environment, what better way is there to promote race relations? When it comes to killing two birds with one stone, you can always count me in. Ha Ha Ha!"

Moderator: "Candidate number 2! Have you ever kissed a monkey?"

Candidate 2: "I do it every time I get a chance, especially when I visit Asia. It is a proven fact that giving love to animals saves the environment. Not many of us know that October 4 is World Animal Day. I promise to set an example for our fellow citizens by kissing monkeys on that day. I believe in "Walk the talk not talk the walk."

Foreign Policy

Moderator: "Candidate number 1! Can you keep an eye on Castro from Florida?"

Candidate 1: "Look, I am from Florida and I can see Cuba from my window. I'll make it clear to Castro, "Don't mess around, or you're going to feel my flexibility, because I got a phone and I got a pen and, I can dial real fast and poke you with my pen."

Moderator: "Candidate number 2! Should Russia be admitted into NATO?"

Candidate 2: "As much as I may differ with Mr. Putin's ideology, I support his statement, "NATO should either disband or admit Russia." We are

spending unholy sum of money to protect our European allies from Russia. It's time for the Russians to take responsibility and share the cost."

Moderator: "Thank you both the candidates for your time. Before you leave, here is the final question for the evening. Candidate 1, you'll go first and Candidate 2, you will answer the same question after Candidate two is done answering. "

Here is your final question. "**What is your plan for providing equality and protection to LGBT group?"**

Candidate 1: "My fellow Americans! Gay marriage is the gravest challenge facing our nation. Gay marriage will define us as a nation. In my opinion this is an issue that looms large upon us. Legalizing gay marriage in all 50 states and amending our constitution to end this controversy will be the priority of my administration. No one can appreciate this crisis better than I can. My own wife is a lesbian and I tell you, I can feel her pain. Fellow Americans, if you elect me to the office, I'll present you with the first lesbian First Lady. "

"I have a message for the ultra conservatives, "If marriage is for pro-creation, then impotents like me who can't have kids shouldn't be allowed to be married. Think about this and make a wise decision. God bless our LGBT community and God bless America!"

Candidate 2: "Dear Americans! My actions speak louder than words. If you remember, I was caught red-handed having sex with a gay man at a rest stop. That day was a life changing moment for me. I realized that I was a bi-sexual. I am not ashamed of it anymore because having shame will not get me in the White House. Let me also reveal a secret today. My mother was actually my father. Should there be a Hall of Fame for LGBTs, I'd be its first inductee."

"Gays and lesbians have a right to marry in their own clan. We must punish all the homophobes. I promise to prosecute them. They can run but they cannot hide. My fellow Americans, don't fear; I am here. May God bless our community and our great nation!"

American Scene



I Left My Heart ...

By David Beagan

I'm convinced that the best way to get to know a city is to walk it. In San Francisco, walking presents a special challenge. The streets can be quite steep. It even takes extra energy walking down a steep sidewalk. It was this steepness that required Lombard Street, billed as the most crooked street in America, to be built with its steep curves because early cars could not be trusted to stop if going straight down. Cars brakes improved, but tradition kept the street in its crooked state to this day. Beautiful flowers now fill in the space between the curves. Even on a Thursday a small crowd was gathered at the foot of the street and taking pictures and climbing the steps to photograph the flowers and cars traveling down. You can only drive down Lombard Street.

An interesting fact we discovered, San Francisco has more dogs than children. Perhaps it's because of the high cost of living there. Our first night at a restaurant we asked the waiter how many people the \$16 pizza would serve. We were told it serves one. San Francisco is expensive.

The beautiful Victorian homes could cost 1.2 million dollars -- per floor! By setting up separate living spaces on each floor, more people can take advantage of living in these gorgeous houses. Some of the Victorian homes are called painted ladies, only some, because the house must feature four different colors to be called a painted lady.

Unless you are in very good shape, you will get worn out walking the streets. The next best thing is to take a tour bus around the city. These have two seating decks, the top one open, where you are elevated ten feet in the air with a special perspective. The bus comes with a tour guide to both inform you and entertain you. We bought a three day pass and so we could use the bus to get around the city. From the city we were taken to Golden Gate Park. This beautiful park has exotic trees, Eucalyptus, Redwoods, and Monterey Cypress and is actually larger than New York's Central park -- 175 acres larger. Originally the land that the park sits on was wand dunes and was thought by many to be impossible to make into a park. Animal manure being plentiful in the late 1800s was sewn into the soil and various trees were tested to

see if they would grow. Almost all the trees in the park were brought in from the outside. Dutch-style windmills were built to pull water from underground aquifers to give life to the park. Two of them have been restored and can still be seen.

All of the park is accessible -- no keep off the lawn signs -- and visitors are free to set up a barbecue and bring beer or wine anywhere. This liberal attitude seemed to prevail throughout the city. People there seemed very civilized and conducted themselves well. I didn't hardly any trash on the streets, I rarely saw a police car and saw no police walking around. Yet I saw no one being disorderly or threatening. Crossing the street at a busy intersection with a four-way stop, I caught a driver's eye, he motioned me to go, but I wasn't ready to cross so I motioned him to proceed and he waved thanks. Drivers and pedestrians seemed to travel in harmony.

San Francisco is a peninsula with only a land border to the south. To the North there is the Golden Gate Bridge. This beautiful bridge was completed in the spring of 1937 -- without loss of life according to one of our guides. The builder would not accept the presumed fact that a life would be lost for every million dollars spent on bridge construction. Safety nets were positioned below the work areas, saving many lives. These men who were saved by the nets organized a group called the Half Way to Hell Club. In fact no lives were lost during bridge construction. But the sad irony is that the bridge is the world's second most popular for suicides. Anyone jumping from the bridge will fall nearly 250 feet impacting the water at 75 miles per hour, usually fatal. We were told of one story where a boy jumped after being dared by his friends and did survive.

Another interesting fact, when the city was nearly destroyed by an earthquake in 1906, fires were burning out of control. Water lines were severed and firefighters used dynamite to level homes to create a firebreak. Debate continues as to whether was actually successful in containing the fire.

Continued on page 14

Mental Exercise

By David Beagan



Who's the Engineer?

Back when passenger trains were popular there was a crew of a brakeman, fireman, and engineer. Their names, not in order, were Smith, Jones, and Robinson. Coincidentally, three passengers had those same three surnames. So let's refer to the crew members with just their last name and the passengers with Mr. and their last name. A crewman is Jones, a passenger is Mr. Jones. Your task is to tell the name of the brakeman given these facts:

Mr. Robinson lived in Detroit.

The brakeman lived halfway between Chicago and Detroit.

Mr. Jones earned \$2,000 a year.

Smith beat the fireman at billiards.

The brakeman's next-door neighbor, one of the passengers, earned exactly three times as much as the brakeman.

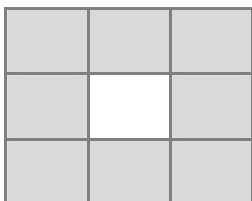
The passenger who lived in Chicago had the same name as the brakeman.

In Time

There is something that is always at the end of today. It is also always at the beginning of yesterday.

Square Neighbors

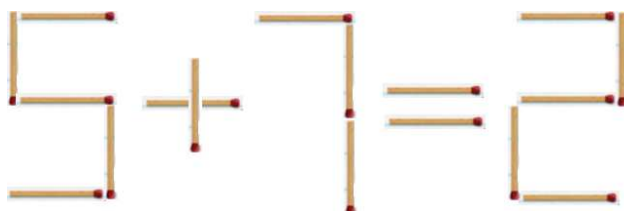
Here we have eight squares with each square sharing two edges with another square:



Can you arrange six squares so each of the six squares shares an edge with four other neighboring squares?

Match Math

Move just one match and make the following equation true.



By Analogy

Given the relationship between these two words

Vaccination : disease

Which one of the following lines best expresses an analogy to this relationship?

Aspirin : headache

Studying : learning

Physician : patient

Trial : judgment

Freezing : spoilage

Who's in Back?

Jane and Margo are standing in a single file line. Margo is standing behind Jane. And Jane is standing behind Margo. How is this possible?

Answers

Who's the Engineer?

Here's one approach to the solution. First thing figure out the brakeman's neighbor. It is not Mr. Robinson since he lives in Detroit. So it's either Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones. We know Mr. Jones makes exactly \$2,000, which cannot be evenly divided by 3, Mr. Jones is not the brakeman's neighbor. Therefore Mr. Smith is the brakeman's neighbor who lives halfway between Chicago and Detroit.

We know that a passenger lives in Chicago with the same name as the brakeman. This must be Mr. Jones because he is the only passenger whose hometown is yet unknown. This means the brakeman is Jones.

Smith, now we know, cannot be the brakeman, and can't be the fireman, since he can't beat himself at billiards. Therefore we conclude Smith is the engineer.

In Time

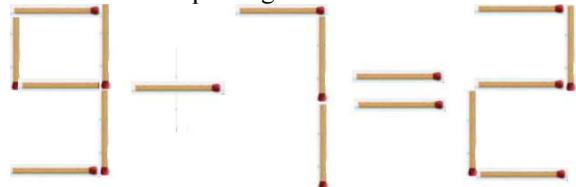
It is the letter "y".

Square neighbors

Arrange the squares to form a cube.

Match Math

Move a match on the plus sign to the 5 to turn it into a 9.



By Analogy

The last one.

Vaccination prevents disease

And so

Freezing prevents spoilage.

Who's in Back?

Jane and Margo are standing back to back.

Publisher's Desk



The Supreme Court

By Bala Prasad

Since the recent decision of the United States Supreme Court in favor of same sex marriage on a 5-4 vote, encouraging minds wonder about the finality of this decision.

Supreme Court rulings, contrary to popular beliefs, do not become the law of the land by being so. Congress subsequently has to pass it by majority by both houses, and later, signed by the president, for it to become the law of the land. However, it becomes the guiding force, once the court has spoken.

Can the Supreme Court decision ever be reversed? Yes, it can be, and has been done about 200 times since the day of the institution was set in 1789, our first chief justice being the honorable John Jay. How can the decision of this court be changed? There are three ways a subsequent Supreme Court decision can overrule the previous judgment; if the judgment is based on law – congress can pass new law; or if the judgment is based on the constitution, there could be a constitutional amendment.

Most of the decisions of the Supreme Court, or their reversal are not exciting, even though it eventually affects us directly or indirectly. Some of the decisions are 100 years old. I have picked some reversal of Supreme Court decisions in recent days.

In the 1950's McCarthyism's red scare forced public officials, including teachers, to confirm their loyalties to the U.S. and deny any affiliation with the communist party. But this violated another state law. However, in the 1960's the Supreme Court reversed this decision.

The famous case of our time was the one in 1967, when the court decided that it was not illegal for inter-racial couples to live together, and thus overturned the previous ruling that had been on books for 80 years.

In 1949, the Supreme Court found no fault with police search of private property without a court order, but only 12 years later found these searches and seizures without a warrant became illegal.

Supreme Court decisions are neither infallible nor irrevocable, but most of the time it remains the guiding force for all time. Some decisions of recent days that are applauded by some, and abhorred by others are about civil rights, civil liberties, and crime. They include integrated schools and neighborhoods, the right to abortion and capital punishment. More recent are the rulings on controlled substance including marijuana and now the rulings on same sex marriage. Whether we agree with them or not, we must abide by them. No doubt more decision will come our way, some to our liking and some not, but that is life.

Sincerely,

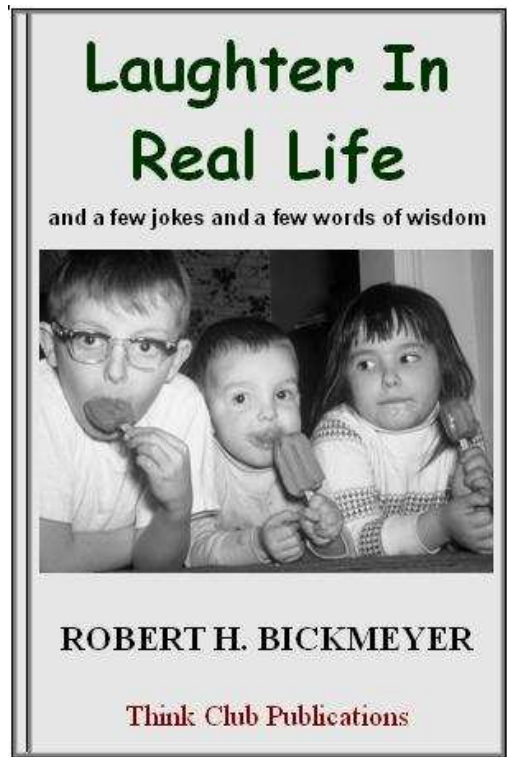
Bala Prasad

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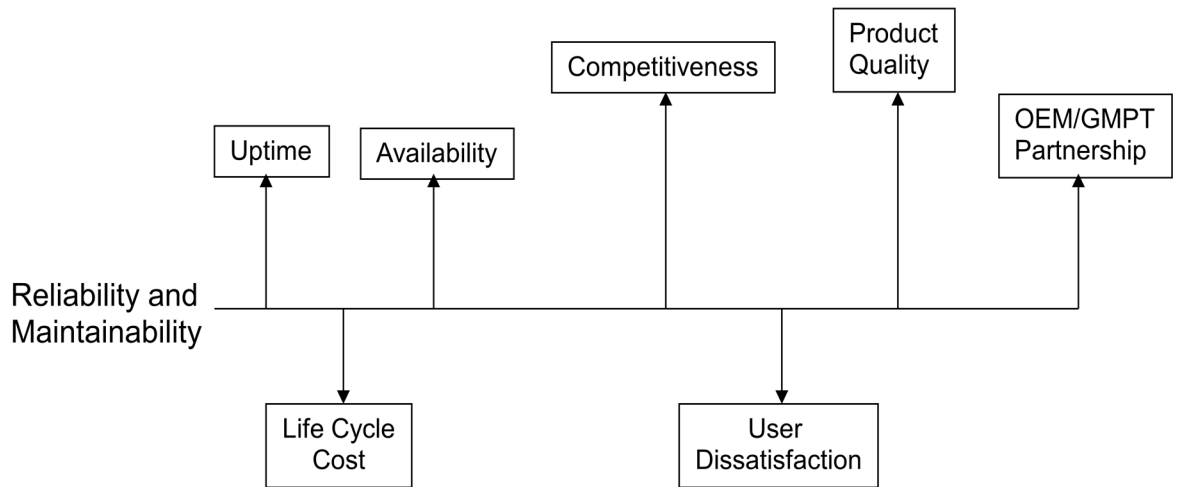
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