

TRENDS AND OBSERVATIONS

Growing and shrinking trends

BY RAUNO PERTTU

Our daughter Emily has grown up. Last week, she passed her qualifying exam for her PhD program at Berkeley. This means that, with two or three more years of research, she will finish her degree in biological engineering. On June 14, she will marry Creighton Helms from Medford, now a Coast Guard officer based in San Francisco.

When Emily asked me to consider a father/daughter dance song, the old Harry Belafonte song, "Turn Around," came to mind because it seemed so appropriate. In my mind I still see her and her friends running up and down the basketball court and my wife Jan and I driving the noisy group to and from games and pizza parlors.

My mother, who passed away in January, will be attending the wedding in spirit. With the death of my mother, our last parent, Jan and I became the oldest generation. Emily and our son Kirk are still early in their lives. Jan and I are at a—how do I say this—more mature stage. Although our lives remain insanely busy, it's a time when I increasingly recognize limitations in many forms.

I recently went to the Grants Pass antique street fair and determined that either most of the items for sale weren't really old because I remembered using them when they were new—or perhaps I'm also an antique. Up until she died, my mother told me she still considered herself to be that eighteen-year-old girl of 70 years earlier. I know what she meant. Our internal mirror sees us as that young, energetic person we once were. It's a shock to go to a reunion and see all those old people, and easy to decide that, while they might have aged, I haven't.

Even in my enduring self-image of youth, I often stop to realize the incredible changes that have occurred in my short years. Many have been

for the better. Some have not. I also realize that most problems may have altered their appearance, but remain basically unchanged. Our baby-boom generation thought we could correct the world's problems. That would have been nice.

Still, we've made some progress. Our social progress is reflected in two of the three current presidential candidates being a woman and an African-American. Our scientific advancements and technical progress have been spectacular, and are reflected in our ability to buy everyday products inexpensively that would have been inconceivable a few years back. Our

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progress in medicine also has been spectacular, although an increasing number of people aren't able to afford those benefits.

Forty years ago, our consensus was that much of the world would soon collapse into hunger and poverty. China and India faced imminent starvation and disaster. The collapse didn't happen. Today, our consensus leans toward China and India becoming the dominant economic powers in the world. They are on track to become such, but have many serious problems to solve before our new expectation becomes future reality.

In my youth, the Cold War and its created crises in Cuba, Vietnam, and Eastern Europe were nagging worries. Today, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan are replacement worries. The troubles in Israel and their part of the Middle East have remained consistent.

However, when I pause and

consider the biggest changes in my lifetime, and on future challenges for our children's generation, I focus on broader issues.

The foremost issue remains our growing population. While the world's population has doubled from three billion in 1960 to more than six billion today, our concerns over it have puzzlingly diminished. This growth continues to be a key contributor to many of today's problems and shortages.

For example, as China, India and other poorer nations become middle-class, their increasing resource needs are triggering soaring energy and

this problem of raising the world's standard of living, and of protecting and improving our environment in the face of a growing population, is our children's most difficult task. As an eternal optimist, I also believe it is a solvable task. So far, all the doomsday scenarios of each decade have failed to come to pass, although we have an unending ability to create new doomsday worries.

Another continuing change in the world is one I personally regret, and it is interwoven with that troublesome population trend. When I was young, the world was still a big place. It had seemingly unexplored jungles in Africa and South America. It had mysterious lands with strange customs. It still had wild frontiers in places like Alaska. It was easy to get away to unpopulated, pristine places.

Much of the mystery and adventure have faded from today's world. The jungles are being cut and replaced with farmland. Those once mysterious foreign lands are now the scenes of disaster and conflict on our nightly news. The empty frontier places of my youth now twinkle at night with the lights of new residents in the former wilderness. To me, the world is diminished as a result. Our children and their children, who grow up in this shrunken, homogenized world, probably won't recognize the loss.

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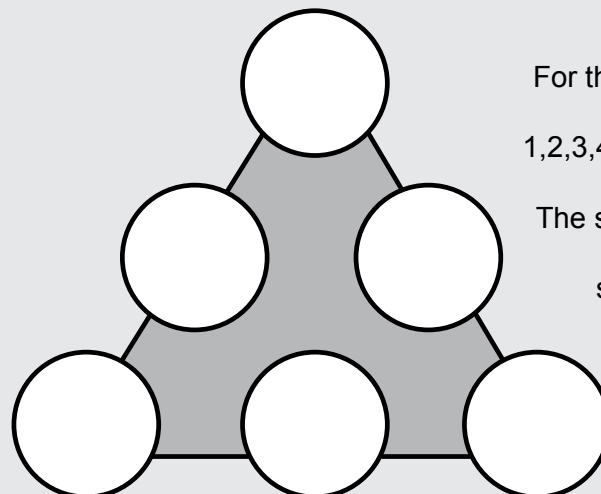
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Brain Teasers

Submitted by Marvin Rosenberg

Test your brain with a MAGIC SQUARE. Fill each of the nine spaces below with numbers one through nine (one number in each space) so that every vertical, horizontal and diagonal adds up to 15.



For this MAGIC TRIANGLE, place the numbers 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 in the circles, one in each circle. The sum of each side of the triangle must be the same number. (hint:12)

Answers on page 21 .
Next issue – How to make a simple kite!