



Where have our priorities gone?

As this has been a hot summer, it brought back memories of my childhood. I remember being excited at going to the Nall Hills Country Club in Overland Park, Kansas. We would be bouncing in the car at the prospect of spending the whole day there. Nall Hills was equipped with three pools, a baby pool, which contrary to the rumor spread in 3rd grade I never relieved myself in, a medium pool, and the granddaddy of them all, the “big” pool. On one particular occasion I got brave enough to venture into the large pool, gradually making my way to the diving boards. First the low dive with a few routine cannon balls, and dives. After proving myself I nervously made my way in line with all the grown-up teenagers. This was brave on my part as the teenagers would spend their afternoon doing the classic “can-opener” off the high dive, seeing who could soak the lifeguard babe with the biggest splash. So I was an intruder, interloper, thus creating a slight breach of etiquette. Therefore I had better make my time on the high dive worth while. As I stood there, on top looking down, beneath me a panoramic view of all the pools, in the distance the tennis and volleyball courts and the loud speakers blaring out a popular hit of the day, “Joy to the World,” “Bad, Bad Leroy Brown,” or the latest Tony Orlando hit. I felt as if I could see the whole world from there and needed to act accordingly. What would it be; cannon ball; too simple; can-opener; too predictable; a head first dive; at my age? I resolved to prove my worth, to let the world know (or at least the teenagers griping in the line below me) that I belonged on the high dive, and of course to impress the lifeguard babe impatiently watching as I stood there.

I planted my feet; arms pointed straight up, bent the knees and pushed off...panic. As I lifted off the fear of actually diving hit me, I desperately tried to change form

in mid air. I grabbed my knees, pulled them in for a routine and safe cannon ball, but ended up falling head first curled up like a ball.

What does this story have to do with anything? Not much really, but at least I tried, I took my chance and did not back away and simply sit at the edge of the pool with the rest of my friends and watch the “big kids” take all the glory.

This leads us to our theme of priorities and America sitting on the sidelines watching the world go by.

Where have our priorities gone?

What should America do? Sometimes the most obvious plan of action to take should be the simplest plan. When presented with a choice you would hope that we have instilled the proper values and have our priorities in order so that when the time comes we as a country do not have to regret anything.

The current headline is the pending deadline for raising the debt ceiling. What does this mean? Well the best way to explain it would be similar to if someone say, making \$30,000 per year was maxed out on their credit card of \$150,000. (I know, you are saying how realistic is it for someone making \$30k per year to have a \$150k of credit card debt? Well the same can be asked on a national level. How realistic is it for Washington to spend trillions of dollars it does not have?) They will call their credit card company and ask them to increase their limit to \$250k. Only in this case they wouldn't actually have to call any company since in our world it would be Congress OKing itself to spend more money it does not have. So in this case this person would simply inform the credit card company that they have raised their limit and go on spending.

Well why on earth would someone keep spending money they do not have? Why wouldn't they, if they know all they have to do is service the debt and not really pay off this debt.

This has to end eventually, you ask, and it can't go on forever. Over time, simply paying interest on this debt will be burdensome and put a strain on any budget and economy. What happens when the bill is actually due?

Well, you get Greece. I don't mean to be harsh on the Greeks. I myself would spend my summers in my father's home town on the island of Crete right off the water. It was pure paradise, and the rumors that I was wearing a Speedo bathing suit in the early 80's are just that; rumors!

Greece has spent itself to the point where simply servicing its debt is too great a burden. Paying off the debt is not in the foreseeable future. This is what happens when the government is used as a spending vehicle for all the masses. There were times when American ingenuity and know-how would pull us out of tough times. Now it appears that the Federal Reserve and Washington simply have to print money to make everything better.

It seems that everything about America has changed. Remember the days of the great American car? There were times when any number of models of cars would turn heads, fly down the street and people would dream of some day having a long white Cadillac that would stretch from one end of the block to the other.



Mery



Ain't that America

Who can forget the Camaro Z28, Chevelle, or Mustang back in the day? Granted I never owned one of these cars; rather when I was old enough to drive I had to settle for my parents green Oldsmobile Custom Cruiser station wagon. Don't laugh, on Saturday's the car was packed with coeds and it had an 8-track player! So there! AC/DC and the Rolling Stones would be blaring regularly.

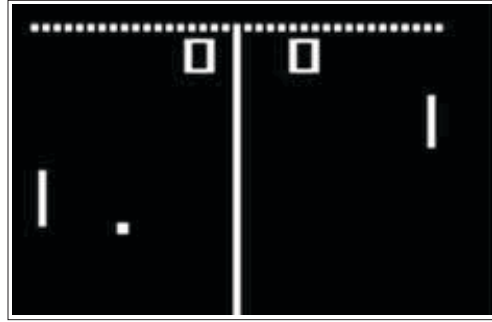
I can just imagine a remake of the movie American Graffiti with today's cars. I can see it now, a Chevy Volt and Ford Fiesta cruising the strip.



American Graffiti 2...can you imagine?

These choices or priorities, or lack of them, has changed drastically over time. As I look upon my youth and think of the things I cherished compared to what is available today, I am amazed.

I could be frozen in front of a TV for hours playing Pong or the more difficult hockey version. Today a video game is old news after a few months and the choices are endless.



Hours of fun

My boys love their Sketcher shoes that light up and want a new pair every month. When I was a youth in the 70's I yearned



Saturday night memories

for a new pair of Jox by Thom McCann. Those sleek blue suede beauties with the slash emblem would keep me up at night. How cool would I look in the summer with my knee high striped socks flying down the street on my purple Sears bicycle with a banana seat? I maybe got a new pair once a year depending on how fast I grew. This was a particularly hard lesson. Invariably a 7 year old will get his blue suede beauties stained, and regardless how late he stays up at night spraying suede guard on the shoe and washing it with water the stains will not go away and may actually make things worse. No, you don't get new shoes when



Every kids' dream

this happens, you simply move on.

Priorities are different now it appears, but it shouldn't be that difficult.

Let's take a look at some examples and see what the right thing to do is:

- **The Department of Justice** has held hearings and is investigating whether NCAA college football should have a playoff system rather than the current bowl structure. What an injustice...money well spent!!

- **Washington will spend \$2.5 billion** training Chinese prostitutes to drink more responsibly on the job. This may not be enough for a population of over a billion people.

- **Congress recently gave** Alaska Airlines \$500k to paint a Chinook salmon on a Boeing 737. Trout fishermen in the 49th state are furious.

- **Homeland Security** purchases include 63-inch plasma TVs, iPods, and a \$230 beer brewing kit. I feel safer already.

- **The year is 1986**, and I have a choice of studying for my Calculus exam or my fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha, the Pikes, was having a beach mixer with one of the many sororities on campus. I can honestly say even twenty five years later that it was one of the best mixer's I ever attended. I of course was decked out in my neon Ocean Pacific bathing suit along with my Miami Vice turquoise tank top, and Ray Bans hanging around my neck.

I understand that times change and the 70's were a long time ago, but perhaps our priorities were better suited and we appreciated things more and relied more on ourselves to get by. So I look fondly back at a time when Jeremiah was a bullfrog, Fonzie was cool, and Elvis was still the King!

Lord almighty, we're burning a hole where we lay...