

Minutes Of Past Wrangler Meetings

May 12, 2016

Absentees: Tom Naden, Chick Hodge, Bob Lewis, Dan Hungate, Mac Adams

Treasury's Report: Over \$2,350 in the bank

Guests: Bob Baynham, guest of Al Skinner, Lee Stanton, friend of Dave Eitelbach

Club Business: New officers for next year were voted on: President Jim Marich, Vice President Dan Zak, Secretary Tom Davidson, Treasurer Lowell Ericsson

Member's Moment: Bob Wiley presented the member's moment (even though it was not his turn) and reminded us politely that it should reflect something about ourselves, so that fellow Wranglers will get to know us better. He also encouraged more topics amenable to Wrangling. That said, Bob talked about earthquakes and how a magnitude 7 is ten times the strength of 6, and queried the group as to how many members had an emergency kit.

Evening Wrangle: Mark Haferman. A **Nation's Health Care System** reflects its history, politics, economy, and national values. In some systems, the government is both a provider and a payer. In others, providers are private, but government pays the bills. And, in others, providers and payers are private. Four basic models: Bismarck, Beveridge, National Insurance, & Out of Pocket. U.S. has a hodgepodge, with elements of all four models. Over time, the U.S., in the environment of a democratic and independent free market, has ended up with a hodgepodge of fragmented systems serving separate groups, or classes of people—and vested business interests such as insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, and hospitals. On the other hand, other wealthy, industrialized, countries developed a single universal health care model on the premise it is simpler, cost effective, and fairer to everyone. Attributes of successful functioning systems:

Universal Coverage: Consider as a moral imperative—fairness. Includes *guaranteed issue* and *individual mandate*. No rationing of care, nor refusal for pre-existing conditions. "Cover everybody, but not, necessarily everything". Necessary for proper functioning of the system. Well organized, simple, cost efficient, payment systems.

The U.S. Health Care System: Does not cover everybody. In 2009, 322 million U.S. citizens (45%) were reported not covered by medical insurance because they could not afford it (Reid). [Updated Information, post presentation: Obamacare Enrollment Numbers as of March 16, 2015: Current estimates show the total of newly insured to be 16.4 million bringing the uninsured rate down from a high of 20.3% to 13.2% at the start of the 1st quarter of 2015.](#)

Cost: Whether as a percentage of GDP, or on a per capita basis, we spend roughly twice as much as other rich countries do on health care—due to a complex and extremely fragmented billing and payment system coupled with high administrative costs among for-profit insurance companies.

Quality: We do not have a monopoly on knowledge and capability. Nevertheless, recognize that standards of medical leadership, education, training, research, and innovation in the U.S. are perhaps the most respected and admired as any place in the world. This includes rigorous requirements for continuing medical education and specialty recertification to improve outcomes and safety of both inpatient and outpatient treatment. At various levels: national and state medical societies, specialty groups, large and small medical groups promote quality and cost efficiencies through development of evidenced based guidelines for management of multiple medical conditions and diseases—which are tied to reimbursement and to quality outcome measures & public ratings.

Outcomes: Statistics show the U.S. lags well behind peer nations in various public health statistics with regard to health outcome metrics. This is so, despite spending twice as much as these other nations do on health care. Using sophisticated metrics health care economists, developed a metric to measure the quality of medical care, which supports the but the relatively poor overall rank for life expectancy is due to failure to provide access to regular health care for 45 million (15%) citizens. Assuming the U.S. health care system's low rankings are primarily related to the economic and social impediments of access to medical care for a significant proportion of U.S. citizens. Obamacare (ACA) will favorably impact the nation's quality metrics for future generations. At this point it is unlikely the U.S. would choose to replace, wholesale, our system with a Canadian, British, or German model. Nonetheless, we can learn from these other models and apply useful ideas and techniques to make our system fairer, cheaper, and more effective.

April 14, 2016

Guest: Todd Huttlocker, Emergency Room Specialist from Juno, Alaska. Tom Naden's approved as new member. Bob Fahrer attended his first meeting as an official Wrangler.

Treasurer: \$3040 in the treasury—we should end the year with a balance of about \$1000.

Other Business: Dick Russell asked to address the group with a proposal to attract guests as potential new members. His suggestion was to allow 2 free guests at each meeting. Dave argued that the cost of a guest was probably not the issue as much as a lack of guests to invite. John Strasburger and others gave examples to prove that cost is indeed an issue. Dan Hungate suggested that we waive guest fees when attendance dropped below our Aljoia contract minimum of 20 dinners. Finally, Dave took a straw poll, asking how many members wanted to see some sort of change. At least 10 members so voted. • Jim Abbott's memorial: Sunday, April 24th, from 3:00pm – 5:30pm at the Mercer Island Beach Club.

Dave reported that a nominating committee had met to discuss next year's officer candidates, but had not yet made firm choices. Lowell is willing to continue for one more year as Treasurer. Dave asked volunteers for Secretary, Vice President, or President to contact him directly. He noted that in the absence of volunteers, more serious cajoling will be applied in order to fill out the slate.

Member's Moment: Dam Hungate talked of bird and wildlife sightings that serve as "experience postcards" highlighting enjoyable trips over many years. His long list ranged from a morning swim within 10 feet of an adult moose in Priest Lake, to watching a mother whale teaching her calf to swim off Maui, to surviving a buffalo stampede in Africa while hiding behind a termite mound.

Presentation: Floyd Short talked about "Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty"— dismissing geography, culture, or ignorance of economics as possible factors. The primary determinants are inclusive economic institutions and inclusive political systems. The authors note the difference between countries which evolved after Spanish conquests versus countries which evolved from British colonies. The Spanish set up "extraction economies" which enriched the conquerors by enslaving the inhabitants. Their inhabitants were not included in either economic benefits nor any control of government. Even after independence, many of these countries continued in the same vein under dictators who ran the countries for their own wealth without regard to the people. In contrast, British colonies evolved to provide private property (and thus, a share in economic benefits) and representative government. Floyd's talk provided examples throughout history of countries which fit the "inclusive" model versus countries which fit the "extractive" model, showing general growth and success for the inclusive countries and stagnation or failure for the extractive countries. His final example was modern China which has introduced some degree of free enterprise but is still a political dictatorship. Given the book's premise, Floyd asked if China will succeed or fail. (The book's authors argue that China's government, and therefore its economy, will ultimately fail so long as their political system remains a "non-benevolent" dictatorship.) For Wrangling: Points for Discussion Relevant to the United States—

- 1) Increasing wealth and social inequality
- 2) Impact of unlimited political campaign contributions (Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission)
- 3) Increasing limits on voting rights (e.g., required voter ID, fewer polling places, redrawn voting districts)
- 4) Limitations on labor union membership
- 5) Deregulation of financial institutions (Dodd-Frank Act a recent effort to reverse this trend)
- 6) Widening income gap between company CEOs and lowest paid employees

March 10, 2016

Absentees: Mac Adams, Bill Dowling, Dan Hungate, Dan Zak. Mark Lorbiecki and Chuck Meyer resigned before this meeting

Guests: Manny Garcia & Yogi Agrawal- guests of John Strasburger, Tom Naden- guest of Al Skinner, Robert Fahrer— guest of Lowell Ericsson

Treasurer's report: "We have about \$3500 in the bank!"

Business: Bob Fahrer, candidate for membership, had attended one meeting already so was eligible for a vote. His membership was moved, seconded, unanimously approved. Membership stands at 21 members, 3 emeriti. (Our constitution allows for 24 members and 2 reserve members.) Pres responded to members' concerns re the Wrangler dysfunctional website (www.pswranglers.com) which, hopefully, will be resolved soon!

Members Moment: A recent article in the Economist discusses the malignant impact of talk radio on political discourse. John Strasburger in his member's moment read from a 1960 letter from one of his California cousins, an Episcopal priest, to his father, an attorney in Dallas— about a Dallas talk radio personality who was accusing Protestant leadership in general and an Episcopal priest in San Francisco of being members of the communist party. John's father responded that the talk radio personality in question was an extreme conservative who was anti-Democratic and anti-Republican who "thinks he knows more than the experts regardless of what field you might designate." John's father counseled against a slander or libel suit because it would only further disseminate the objectionable allegations and the public would not remember who won or lost or who was right or wrong.

Presentation: Al Skinner presented highlights from the Colin Woodard's book *American Nations, A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America from "First Nations" to the "Far West"*. Each cultural block had a unique ethnic, social, religious, political, and economic mix which put them at odds with the other blocks. Their origins determined attitudes which persist today and in part explain the problems which divide their peoples in national politics and social decisions. In the brief discussion afterwards, people asked how these separate "nations" affected life in the US. Al pointed out that much of the current polarization in the country can be traced to deeply held beliefs and attitudes that are in conflict among the cultural blocks.

Special Notice: After the talk, Dick Campbell announced that Floyd Short, our recent President, suffered a series of strokes while on a recent trip to California. After hospital treatment, he is now back home at Mirabella.

February 11, 2016

Absentees: Don Vollmer (who resigned), Dan Hungate, Mac Adams, Mark Lorbiecki, Dan Zak, Dave Eitelbach, Dan Hungate, Chuck Meyer, Floyd Short.

Guests: Bob Anderson, acquaintance of Al Skinner, Robert Fahrer, friend of Lowell Ericsson

Treasury's Report: Lowell Ericsson told us that there was over \$4102.12 in the bank.

Member's Moment: Russ Cheetham provided the member's moment with a brief summary of his migration from rural Australia to college in the USA with the encouragement from several mentors. His Deputy Principal in high school suggested he get a university,

which he would become the first in his family to achieve this lofty goal. He got in and finished with a degree in agriculture where he had his second mentor's moment that suggested his post graduate efforts should be in the USA with all the math and English classes he could take to instill logical thinking processes with the skill to communicate them. He came here with Fulbright Scholarship and became a successful contributor to our economy and a member of the Wranglers.

Presentation: Jim Marich gave the thought provoking evening Wrangle. The problem is the USA has the greatest incarceration rate per capita 698/100,000 in the known world. This number includes: 6.9 million adults under supervision, 4.7 mil on parole, 54,000 juveniles . The prison population is disproportionally Poor, Non-white, mentally ill and non-violent drug users. The current system does not rehabilitate; it's considered a training program for advanced criminal behavior. 4.7 On parole, 54,000 juveniles, This number mostly includes the poor, mentally ill, and drug addicted people with a very high percentage of the non-white people. Our system defiantly does rehabilitate the exiting prisoners. Major contributing factors to the high prisoner rate: The 3 strikes law, War on drugs, Longer sentences for the same crime in most other countries, Mental illness not treated before crimes are committed. Governmental correctional institutions cost a lot more than for profit facilities which are lower cost per inmate, more educational, better socialized, less drug abuse, and less violent. To compare the cost per inmate he sighted WA: \$ 65,000 versus KT: \$14,000. Suggestions on how to resolve this inequity while reducing the overall cost were proposed:

1. Give judges more flexibility in three strikes sentencing.
2. No mandatory minimum sentencing
3. Take the comfort and cost out of jail time, put them to work.
4. Decriminalize drug use/possession and go after dealers.
5. Huge increases in public funding of treating mental health

January 14, 2016

Absentees: Bill Dowling, Don Vollmer (resigned), Mac Adams, Mark Lorbiecki, Floyd Short, Bob Wiley.

Guests: Neil Ericsson son of Lowell Ericsson, Tony Nugent, friend of Lowell Ericsson, Lee Stanton, friend of Dave Eitelbach, Mark Madden, friend of Tom Davidson

Treasury's Report: Lowell Ericsson told us that there was over \$2,300 in the bank.

Member's Moment: Bryan Cairns provided the three part member's moment with the surprise ending that both his own father and Mr. Keen helped win the War (WW II) for the allies.

Presentation: Tom Davidson spoke of the Near Future of Transportation in our Cities. He talked about how our traffic has evolved and how it is strangling our cities and creating an enormous burden on society, in the form of lost time, pollution, lost civility and financial and personal injury loss. He went on to explain some of the solutions to the problem. While those solutions include light rail and busses and more car-pooling, the real future lies in autonomous vehicles, and ultimately getting the human driver out of the equation. He briefly introduced the efforts of Google to bring a self-driving car to market and explained how a system centered on self-driving vehicles might work in the future. It involves the sale of "mobility" rather than hardware, and the novel way that software could manage such a business. He emphasized the great safety advantages of such a system and postulated that it would be a big part of creating the public will for change. He left a list of three relevant books on the subject, should anyone want to explore the subject in more depth.

Next Meeting: February 11, 2016, **Member's Moment:** Russ Cheetham, **Speaker:** Jim Marich

December 10, 2015

Absentees: Jim Abbott, Mac Adams, Lowell Ericsson, Chick Hodge, Mark Lorbiecki were all AWOL from the meeting

Guests: Ruth Hansing and Mary Lu Kirchner...and all spouses!

Treasury's Report: Lowell Ericsson gave none.

Member's Moment: James Hinchcliffe, reported that he had been on many airplane flights, but remembered one flight into Anchorage where an intoxicated fellow tried to open the emergency exit door in flight and was taken down in a half Nelson wrestling maneuver and taken off the plane.

Presentation: Bill Dowling gave the evening talk on the health care system in the USA, comparing it to other countries. Cross-national comparisons allow us to track the performance of the U.S. health care system, highlight areas of strength and weakness, and identify factors that may impede or accelerate improvement. This analysis is the latest in a series of Commonwealth Fund cross-national comparisons that use health data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as well as from other sources, to assess U.S. health care system spending, supply, utilization, and prices relative to other countries, as well as a limited set of health outcomes.^{1,2} Thirteen high-income countries are included: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. On measures where data are widely available, the value for the median OECD country is also shown. Almost all data are for years prior to the major insurance provisions of the Affordable Care Act; most are for 2013. Health care spending in the U.S. far exceeds that of other high-income countries, though spending growth has slowed in the U.S. and in most other countries in recent years.³ Even though the U.S. is the only country without a publicly financed universal health system, it still spends more public dollars on health care than all but two of the other countries. Americans have relatively few hospital admissions and physician visits, but are greater users of expensive technologies like magnetic

resonance imaging (MRI) machines. Available cross-national pricing data suggest that prices for health care are notably higher in the U.S., potentially explaining a large part of the higher health spending. In contrast, the U.S. devotes a relatively small share of its economy to social services, such as housing assistance, employment programs, disability benefits, and food security.⁴ Finally, despite its heavy investment in health care, the U.S. sees poorer results on several key health outcome measures.

November 12, 2015

Absentees: Dick Campbell, Don Vollmer (who resigned) and Mac Adams

Guests: Hans Frederickson, guest of Dan Hungate

Treasury's Report: Lowell Ericsson gave none. We all hope there is still money at the bank or if Lowell is day trading, he is doing well with the money.

Member's Moment: Dave Eitelbach spoke of his employment career, starting with Bell in 1972, resigning in December 1981, and then working for Microsoft and noted both companies were fierce monopolists.

Presentation: Dan Hungate gave a talk that he had heard earlier this year given by Ari Kelman, the author of "A Misplaced Massacre, Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek." The talk covered the 150 year old history of a battle at Sand Creek in Colorado, that was initially hailed as a great triumph by the US cavalry over the savage Indians. One segment of the cavalry division, however, refused to participate and said it was a massacre. The story seesawed back and forth for the next century plus until a NPS memorial was established in 2007 that labeled the encounter as a massacre. The ways in which history is portrayed and changes from time to time was the main focus of the wrangling session that followed; Dan added a personal history piece to the story, the fact that the massacre of his great grandfather's brother and his family was one of the precipitating factors that motivated the initial cavalry attack.

October 8, 2015

Absentees: Russ Cheetham, Dave Eitelbach, Chick Hodge, Dan Hungate, Bob Lewis, Mark Lorbiecki, Floyd Short, Bob Wiley. Former Wrangler, Dick Axell, passed away .

Guests: Tom Gialanella

Treasury's Report: Lowell Ericsson gave none. We all hope there is still money at the bank.

Member's Moment: Ben Weyhing was one of many adults and parents that volunteered for at least 12 sessions where the homes were built. The organization that formed to coordinate this ministry was first Homes Without Borders in 1998 and now Doxa a 501c3 in 2005. I did not spend much time in these organizations. The orphanage Casa Hogar de Los Ninos was a creation of Tony Ralph who cooperated and supported with our building mission.

John Strasburger presented: ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Economic inequality in both income and wealth is higher than it has been at anytime since the Great Depression. As a result of the New Deal, the Great Society, the GI Bill, building the interstate highway network, military spending for WWII, Korea and Viet Nam, and the release of pent up demand after the WWII, inequality rapidly declined from 1932 through the 1970s. However, since 1979 economic inequality has rapidly risen (1) with almost all of the gains of income going to the top 10% and especially to the top 0.01%, (2) with middle class wages declining, (3) with increased profits from productivity going almost exclusively to CEOs, (4) with wealth inequality increasing even faster than income inequality, (5) with trust decreasing, (6) with political polarization increasing, (7) with national debt as a percentage of gross domestic product increasing, and (8) with social mobility — the ability to move to a higher economic class — declining. Today, the United States has the highest inequality of the economically advanced countries. WHAT THEN MUST WE DO?: Remedial options include (1) replacing the minimum wage with living wages, (2) raising middle wages by repairing infrastructure, strengthening collective bargaining through workers' councils and representation on boards, (3) limiting CEO wages to a multiple of average wages and facilitating shareholders' resolutions, (4) Increasing income by paying women equally, enforcing labor laws, and improving public transportation, (5) aiding families by free child care and paid sick and family leaves, (6) raising future wages by implementing universal Pre K and tuition free post secondary education, (7) guaranteed public employment at a living wage, (8) universal basic income \$1,000 per month for everyone, (9) national savings bonds at a positive interest rate, and (10) a capital endowment (national "inheritance") to be paid at adulthood. HOW DO WE PAY FOR GOVERNMENTAL OUTLAYS?: Remedial actions by the government could be paid for by (1) adequately taxing corporations based on their business activity in the U.S., (2) increasing taxes paid by the wealthy (3) taxing financial transactions, carbon, marijuana, and political action committees, (4) reducing prison populations, and (5) implementing single payer healthcare.

September 10, 2015

Absentees: Mark Lorbiecki, Al Skinner, Jim Abbott

Guests: Paul Fredlund

Treasury's Report: We have \$1,998.75. Fees for September-December 2015: \$155/member.

Member's Moment: Bob Lewis described growing up on the South end of the Island. He met up with ground-based troops, who set up an artillery base on the south end to protect Boeing-Renton from potential Japanese planes. Bob learned how to take apart (and put back together) M1 rifles. Suddenly, one day all the soldiers were gone and the base was closed.

Presentation: Chick Hodge's presentation on K-12 Education was based on two books, The Smartest Kids in the World: and How They Got That Way, by Amanda Ripley and Every School: One Citizen's Guide to Transforming Education, by Donald P. Nielsen. The Smartest Kids in the World emphasizes the differences between the US and other developed countries. It is largely based on results of a PISA test given to students, in which the US was essentially average in performance. Ripley did considerable research in comparing different countries, and concluded that the amount of money spent on education was not important. Everything depended on what parents, teachers, and students did with these investments. Three of the countries in which the students outperformed US students were Korea, Finland and Poland. The author traveled to these countries and talked with many of the stakeholders in education, and included the experiences and observations of one American exchange student in each of these countries. The reasons for the high performance in these three countries were different in each case. Korea emphasized incredible dedication and time investment by the students; Finland emphasized extreme emphasis on highly qualified teachers; and Poland made a serious effort to completely reform their schools. In addition, Ripley attributed the student performance in the high-performing countries relative to that in the United States to a number of other factors, including: accountability for results and autonomy in methods; significant parental involvement in the academic development of their children; similar content for all students, albeit rates of progress and subject depth keyed to learning capability; standard testing required for graduation; relatively uniform racial makeup and educational culture; absence of athletics as part of the school program; minimal but relevant use of information technology; teacher-student relationships and curriculum content that are more demanding. Every School, by Don Nielsen, emphasizes the characteristics and particularly the weaknesses of U.S. urban school systems, followed by specific recommendations for reform. Nielsen defines the mission of US schools as developing in each student a broad battery of skills: communication skills, math and science skills, citizenship skills, and global skills, together with desirable personal qualities – i.e., a comprehensive mission. Nielsen further emphasizes that the primary responsibility for educating a child rests with the parents, and that governments need to respect that responsibility. The role of the schools is to serve as the primary partner with parents in the total development of the child into a responsible citizen who is self-sufficient and not a burden to society. Don Nielsen's book starts with a description of the current school system in the United States that includes; ineffective growth in funding and staff levels; less-than-relevant certification required for teachers; teacher compensation based on time of service and educational credits, rather than teaching performance; a weak self-selecting process for selection of principals and superintendents; governance by elected and often ineffective school boards; student progress and promotion based on classroom time and age, rather than academic performance and learning levels; and the shortest school year in the developed world. Nielsen next discusses the external factors that have played a major role in making today's school system become less effective by not changing with the times: the factory revolution of World War II, followed by the Information Age; women entering other professions than teaching; the explosive growth of teachers unions; the flight to the suburbs of middle-class families; the increase in poverty levels in urban schools. Nielsen identifies three major areas of change in US schools that must be addressed before other reforms can be sustainable: teaching, leadership, and governance. The teaching profession should be more selective; remove certification or make it more meaningful; allow easier entry of qualified people without an education degree, provide meaningful mentoring for new teachers, provide more paid hours per year as a means of increasing compensation; include incentive compensation for excellence in teaching.. The recommendations that are made for the selection and preparation of teachers can be applied to principals and superintendents. With regard to governance, consideration should be given to replacing elected officials with appointed officials selected by knowledgeable committees, particularly in urban schools. Other reforms that are recommended include: increased hours per year of schooling; achievement-based learning rather than time-based promotion; intelligent use of information technology; intelligent provision for school choice by parents, including consideration of charter schools and vouchers; greater emphasis on early childhood education

June 11, 2015

Members Absent: Chuck Hodge, Mark Lorbiecki, Bob Wiley, Dan Zack

Treasurers Report: Current balance is \$1,980.87.

Next Year's Officers: The slate of officers elected at the May meeting was introduced: **President:** David Eitelbach, **Vice President:** Ben Weyhing, **Secretary:** Dan Zak, **Treasurer** (reelected to a 2nd term): Lowell Ericsson

Member's Moment: Lowell Ericsson reflected on the similarities between himself and his father's physical features and their careers. Lowell's father, born in Sweden and emigrated to the U.S. in 1912, served in the AEF in WW I, after which he moved to St. Paul, MN, graduated from Macalester College and obtained an M.S. in Chemistry at the University of Minnesota. Lowell followed in his father's footsteps with a B.S. in chemistry and graduate studies in biochemistry, retiring from the University of Washington biochemistry department faculty.

Speaker: Russ Cheetham spoke on "**Outlook for the Global Economy**", outlining four themes: 1) Current structure of the global economy. 2) Recent trends and outlook for the global economy. 3) Performance of the U.S. economy and its prospects. 4) Possible future of the global economy. Two decades ago the world's advanced economies accounted for 80% of global GDP; by 2014 this had declined to 60%, the combined economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and Indonesia had increased from 8% to 23%, and in 2014 China replaced the U.S. as the largest economy in the world. The growth of the world economy has slowed compared to the decade

prior to the financial crisis of 2007-08. Inflation is almost non-existent. The International Monetary Fund predicts moderately robust growth in the U.S. for the next several years, continued weak recovery in the Euro area and Japan, and slowdown in growth in China, stemming largely from slowdown in the growth of the labor force in the industrialized countries and China. Geopolitical risks could well affect the economies of Russia and the Middle East. The U.S. economy is improving, evidenced by declining unemployment and lack of price inflation or wage pressure. However, the IMF predicts a slowdown in economic growth by 2020 because of declining growth in the labor force associated with an aging population and decline in population growth; they recommend the U.S. counteract these trends by measures to boost growth, including simplification of the tax code, increased investment in infrastructure, and skills-based immigration reform to boost the labor force. Finally, Cheetham forecasts that by 2030, China will account for about 22% of world output, followed by the U.S. with 13%, India with 11%, Indonesia with 3% and Japan with a little less than 3%; thus four of the five largest economies in the world will be in Asia, and these four countries will account for nearly 40% of global economic production. Considerable consternation was expressed and vigorous debate ensued in the wrangle that followed, including doubt that the U.S. has the political wherewithal to put in place the measures necessary to stimulate the economy.

January 8, 2015

Members Absent: Dick Axell, Russ Cheetham, Bill Duvall, Jim Hinchcliffe, Chuck Hodge, Dan Hungate, Chuck Meyer, John Pehrson.

Guest: Allen Wolf

Treasurer Report: Lowell Ericsson announced a balance of \$ 1,759.76 as of 12/14 and all bills have been paid.

Member's Moment: **Mark Haferman** and his wife visited the small Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan (between China and Tibet) last fall. They took a half day hike from the town at 3000 feet up to the Eagles Nest at 10,000 feet. Mark shared his experiences, knowledge and pictures of this beautiful mountainous region with us. His pictures of the Buddhist temple and the valley below were breathtaking.

Speaker: **Bob Lewis** also took a recent trip with his wife, in this case to the Middle East. Bob gave many details of the long festering relationship between the Nation of Israel and the Palestinians. Their complicated conflict seems to have no hope of a civilized resolution or any chance of peace in the future. Despite the USA spending over 121 billion dollars, mostly to Israel since its formation after World War II, the hopes of peace in this region are at best remote. This battle for the ownership of the land has been in the news daily for over 65 years, so there was a lot of discussion and many views, with the only agreement among the members being that a solution may never be reached until each country wants a settlement.

December 11, 2014

Members Absent: Dick Axell, Bill Duvall, Jim Hinchcliffe, Chick Hodge, Mark Lorbiecki, Chuck Meyer, Bob Wiley

Member's Moment: Given a last minute request to do member's moment, **Tony Ward-Smith** introduced his wife Mary, who shared a seasonal tradition started by her father in the 1990's. Mary's dad lovingly and laboriously made small hand-sized wood character Santas, which he presented to her each year. After Mary lost her dad, Tony surprised her by making a Santa for her, using her dad's tools. Tony and Mary passed around the charming Santas for us to see and appreciate.

Speaker: **Dan Zack** told us that after being married a number of years, he and his wife felt the need to put some renewed effort into their marriage and he was going to share what he learned about LOVE. What was a hard-core scientist going to say about this? It sure captured our attention! Using a highly entertaining PowerPoint presentation, Dan shared the result of his wife's and his research that led them to study communication and work on their relationship. They attended a seminar based on the book "The 5 Languages of Love" by noted author and marriage counselor, Dr. Gary Chapman. Using humorous examples and creative multi-media, Dan shared that the 5 "languages" of love are touch, service (doing something for someone), gifts, time (attention), and words. He successfully emphasized Dr. Chapman's salient points of building, improving and maintaining the power of a successful relationship by discovering what each partner needs in order to feel loved and accepted. Often in the beginning of a relationship, the excitement and newness of the relationship is enough. But as a relationship matures, knowing each other's "love language" (what makes them feel loved and accepted) and knowing and working to use these expressions and expectations for a loving partnership are what keep the relationship fresh and vital. Relationships require work! Dan gave away several copies of Dr. Chapman's book "The Five Love Languages". It looked like there were many starts to new conversations as the meeting ended.

November 13, 2014

President **Floyd Short** opened the meeting; Treasurer **Lowell Erickson** announced a \$ 3,000 balance in our account. **John Strassburger** mentioned the memorial service for **Bill Parker** was well attended. **Bill Duvall** is moving to Mass., to be with family. **Jim Marich** shared a disturbing story about his car being broken into while he attended church, with the subsequent discovery on returning home to find his house had been burgled. It is assumed that personal information in the car gave the crooks enough to find the house and take over \$ 20 K of personal goods. Other business included the suggestion that meeting minutes to be posted soon after the meeting with a request for any corrections sent to the secretary. Most members are paid up. **Al Skinner** suggested we use the term "Emeritus Members" in the future.

Absentees: Mac Adams, Dick Axell, Mark Hafermann, Jim Hinchcliffe, Chick Hodge, Bob Lewis, Mark Lorbiecki, Dan Hungate, Chuck Meyer, Dan Zak

Guests: Levin Lynch

Member's Moment: Don Vollmer recalled his previous talk on a democratic economy and offered another solution to the traditional political party donations. Don also gave us a list of his daily personal goals as a way of committing himself to achieve them by presenting them to us out loud.

Speaker: Lowell Ericsson's topic was "Phishing for Phools" and "The Market for Lemons", both authored by George A. Akerlof. The topic related to the quality of automobiles, financial and insurance products we decide to buy based on imperfect information. Potential solutions and remediation are currently available to the informed consumer through: publications, consumer laws, product liability laws, Federal and State consumer protection agencies and consumer advocates.

October 9, 2014

Former President Mark Lorbiecki opened the meeting on time and immediately began steps to pass our leadership to the new slate of officers. An email from John Strassberger was read to encourage the installation of the updated list of current prospects. Milt Yanicks called for the vote with an unanimous approval by all present. The new officers are as follows: Pres. Floyd Short, V.P. Dave Eitelbach, Sec. Ben Weyhing, Tres. Lowell Ericsson.

Absentees: Bryan Cairns, Russ Cheetum, Bill Wiley, John Strasburger, Dan Hungate, Don Vollmer, Dan Zak, Bill Parker, Dick Axell.

Guests: None.

Treasurer Mark Hafferman reported most members have paid their dues for this half of the year. Mark suggested the approval of the last meetings minutes by a vote of the members present could be simplified by emailing the secretary any corrections and the minutes would be amended. A general agreement followed his suggestion. Al Skinner made a motion that the reference to "Emeritus Members" be called by their original title, no discussion, call for the vote, approved.

Member's Moment: John Pehrson has worked with land use issues in Seattle for the last 14 years logging more than 10,000 hours in meetings on these matters. John's motivation came from his move to Belltown in 2009, which began his relations with the many over-achieving developers trying to build there. John began with the formation of the Belltown Housing and Land Use Committee to review the many proposals brought by those that "worship at the altar of density". A second residence group, the Lake Union Community Alliance, was formed and was mostly successful in presenting an alternative to big money developers. They had a positive impact with limited effect on improving land use, zoning limits applied to buildings and limiting the impact of the huge volume of construction in his area.

Speaker: Tony Ward Smith's presentation posed the question: *College Football, Yes Or No?* He presented a number of pro and con considerations: Pro— Generates Considerable School Spirit, Huge Alum Connection, Massive Money Brought In, Chance for Education, Teaches Life Lesson, Satisfies Aggressive Tendencies... Con— Over-Blown Emphasis (no academic connection!), Off-kilter Economics (i.e.: coaches' pay), Exploits Players (talk of a players' union), Scandal/Crime, Academic Shortcomings (lousy graduation rates), Regular Students Short-Changed. But the most critical issue, Tony suggested, was the growing amount of serious impact injuries, and in particular, direct-hit concussions, and the accumulated damage from being hit too many times in the head. The outcome, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (C.T.E.) is a progressive neurological disorder found in people who have suffered some kind of brain trauma. Evidence of players at high school, college and professional levels being severely and permanently damaged in this way continues to emerge. Still, everyone loves college football! It is a prime focus of every Fall Saturday at hundreds of stadiums and millions of TV sets throughout the country. This, even as more and more parents are beginning to say "I don't want my son to play football!" Milt Yanicks (an obvious exception) related his experiences in the 50s as a UW football player. A vigorous discussion followed, with a suggestion for the U of W should sponsor a cause-of-brain-injuries study.

September 11, 2014

Absentees: Cairnes, Eitelbach, Hungate, Lorbiecki, Strasberger, Wiley, Axell, Campbell, Hinchcliffe, Hodge.

Membership Changes: Doug Sigel resigned his membership. Bill Duval was granted Emeritus status (May, 2014 meeting). Gene

McBrayer bade farewell. Reserve Members Jim Hinchcliffe and Russ Cheetum move to Regular Member status.

Member's Moment: In absentia, Bill Parker sent a written copy of his "Moment" to Al Skinner who recounted a spectacular, but harrowing trip, which Bill, his wife and daughter took in 2002— to Geyser National Park in Kamchatka, Russia. It is a remote mountainous and volcanic region, accessible only by air, or on foot. After walking and viewing the Park, their comfortable new 24 passenger helicopter took off from a lodge located on a ridge near a deep canyon. At 200 to 300 feet in the air, the helicopter lost power and crash landed in bushy trees that cushioned the hard landing. They landed only 30 feet from the edge of the canyon; remarkably missing a disastrous drop of several thousand feet. Back at the lodge they spent the night eating, drinking, and singing with the other passengers, including a group of boisterous German geologists. The next day, they were taken safely back to Petro Paul in an old Russian military helicopter. **Note:** For a spectacular interactive panoramic video go to: www.airpano.com/files/kamchatka-Geyser-Valley/2-2. (View it full screen.)

Speaker: Milt Yanicks: SOREN KIERKEGAARD: STAGES ON LIFE'S WAY. The central theme of Kierkegaard's writings is the meaning of personal existence. His philosophy was not to speculate about mankind, but to reveal man (the person) as he really is. Two questions lurk in his writings: 1) What is the point of a person's life? 2) What sense can be made of human existence? To make readers acutely

conscious of these questions, he creates an image of human life confronted with anguish, absurdity, meaninglessness and despair, all of which he passed through. Is there a corrective to this predicament? What kind of knowledge can transform the existence of a person? Answer: Passion!...of a personal truth that demands commitment, that demands living one's truth. In this state of passion, one has "True Life." Kierkegaard's meaning of despair presents the mode of "not being in the truth." He openly declares his position to be an act of faith. Faith is a way of being! The problem is to live one's faith, as he describes in his spiritual biography, EITHER/OR. In it he describes three stages of life he passed through— the Aesthetic, the Ethical, and the Religious. The biggest Wrangle of the evening was about the Religious stage. Why should it have to be a religious stage to have reached one's Selfhood? At that point the discussion went around in circles.

June 12, 2014

Absentees: Tony Ward-Smith, Russ Cheetham, Don Vollmer, Bill Parker, Ben Weyhing, Dan Hungate, John Pehrson

Member's Moment: **Gene McBrayer** bid the Wranglers farewell due to his now very busy schedule, mainly traveling with his new bride. **Jim Hinchcliffe** spoke of the wonder of "chance meetings" and shared a couple of the more amazing of his, one being seated on a plane next to a famous attorney, and another a visit with the old friend of a politician he was scheduled to meet with.

Speaker: **Mark Lorbiecki's** presentation was his proposal for the elimination of the 17th Amendment. Mark gave the history of the introduction of this Amendment in 1913, and how its pretense was to promote "more democracy", yet how it effectively (and determinatively) intruded upon state autonomy. Mark explained how the previous process of state election of Senators to the Legislature worked well for 124 years (from 1787), and how founding fathers James Madison and George Mason in particular esteemed it as essential politic. Mark showed how the presumed ideal of the Amendment was the prevention of direct individual campaign funding by extremely wealthy interests, yet, in fact, it did open the way for such influence where the old system had indeed limited that. Mark showed how a lack of such private interest funding makes the Legislature more beholden to the state/ how that is the superior and ultimate desire. The issue (a huge one today) is Federal intrusion and over-ruling of locale autonomy, undeniably a source of grief in many state departments throughout the country.

May 8, 2014

Absentees: Bryan Cairns, Russ Cheetham, Dan Hungate, Al Skinner, Dave Eitelbach, Bill Parker, Dick Axell, Chuck Meyer

President Mark Lorbiecki called on all members to consider various upcoming officer positions. **Treasurer Mark Hafferman** reported the current financial status as "solvent". Dick Russell proposed to update the speaker's obligation to notify Aljoja of the number of attendees and guests.

Member's Moment: **Bill Duvall** spoke of the recent event of his wife's death due to cancer, and how, in the midst of that grief he decided to do more traveling, and how by chance he reconnected with a very old friend from the 60's, and they have subsequently become regular traveling companions. Bill expressed the hope that these travels wouldn't affect his status as a 22 year Wrangler's member and hoped for continued association with the group. It was unanimously agreed that Bill be promoted to Emeritus position.

Speaker: **Don Vollmer's** presentation— "How We The People Elect A President"— how the American system of the Electoral College came into existence, how it works –and (as Don feels) it's inherent pitfalls in fair vote representation. Don laid out a tight proposal to alter this system, basically to rely on the popular vote, shorten the election process to 6 months and limit or monitor the amount of money individuals can donate to the parties. No special interest groups funding. Of note were the figures Don gave of private (individual) election donations, from 55% to 75% of the current \$567m tally.

April 10, 2014

Absentees: Mark Lorbiecki, Dan Zak, Chuck Meyer, Dick Russell, Floyd Short, Russ Cheetham, Bill Duvall, Bill Parker

Treas. Mark Hafferman convened the meeting in Pres. Mark Lorbiecki's absence.

Member's Moment: **Chick Hodge** shared his participation as a Board member for the Rainier Valley-based Tennis Outreach Program. Currently President of the Board., he shared various features of the Project— seasonal Tennis Camps, visiting Tennis Pros, special nutrition tutorials, and the Arthur Ashe incentive. Chick, who also lead the design of the current courts at the facility, relays the joy and satisfaction he derives by being part of a program that encourages this sport for primarily underprivileged youth.

Speaker: **Bob Wiley's** Presentation— "A Human Dilemma, What To Do About The Death Penalty?"— "began at the beginning" by reviewing what some believe to be the origin of crime, the biblical account of the murder of Abel by brother Cain. Bob presented murder to the scrutiny of the Wranglers as ostensibly THE offense deserving of the death penalty, murder being the ultimate crime— heinous by comparison to any other -murderers being the "worst of the worst" law offenders. Many points were raised for the group's consideration: The fact that the death penalty may serve as a deterrent to the potential murderer/ it's absence lessens the fear of this severe consequence thus failing to provide this deterrence –(a 26 study by Pepperdine University: capitol punishment is "an enormous deterrent, and that as executions increase, murders in fact decrease"). The expense incurred in incarceration deprives law-abiding citizens of funding that could otherwise benefit society – (the current imbalance of prosecution vs. the defense for the accused murderer: Three defense attorneys appointed to the case exclusively, but only one Prosecuting Attorney. Judgments typically take a long time—10, 20, even 30 years is not uncommon. 2/3 of US Voters are for the death penalty. America is the only Western nation not

to abolish it, yet America has the largest number of murderers – 4.8 murderers per 100,000 US citizens. By comparison (per 100,000) .8 in Germany and Spain, 1.2 in the UK. There were 10,000 US homicides in 2010, 290 in Great Britain. It is the duty of the state to protect citizens, but fails to do so by an unexpedient and biased defense for the criminal. Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterburg: “the current process is punitive to the public”. The cases of mistaken prosecution and punishment were not overlooked –accounts of misjudgments exist and are heart-wrenching. But Bob asserted that now with DNA testing available the number of such regrettable mistakes are drastically reduced. Bob again quoted from the bible, “the murderer must die”, and again in the “city of refuge” passage about the avenger of blood; “you shall not pity him”.

March 13, 2014

Absentees: Gene McBrayer, Floyd Short, John Persohn, John Strasburger, Chick Hodge, Russ Cheetham, Bill Duvall, Dan Zak

Guests: Ben Kirkendall, guest of Dick Campbell. Dick Moller, guest of Doug Sigel

Business: There was a request for final recording of the revised absence allowance policy. Also, the request was made (later in the evening) that the Member's Moment timeframe be made known -as these have tended to go past the approximate 5 minute limit.

Member's Moment: Chuck Meyer. Liberals in general (and those in Wranglers?) misunderstand what conservatives stand for. Chuck outlined the principles that define conservatism and that conservatives believe that the Government's purpose, its only purpose, is to protect the basic, **natural rights** of all men to **live** their lives unimpeded, **free** of the restrictions of a tyrannical government, but living in a secure society where the government protects their rights and their **property**. Natural rights come from natural law.

Speaker: Mark Hafferman's presentation— “The Financial Gap Between The Rich and The Poor”— was based on Hedrick Smith's book *Who Stole the American Dream*. He presented a timeline review of political events and a changing business ethos during the years following the end of World War II, leading to a growing inequality in incomes and financial security between the middle class and business management. During the three decades following World War II, the U.S. enjoyed a shared prosperity accompanied by shared political and economic power between economic groups. A “virtuous circle” of good steady income for a large number of families produced high consumer demand, leading to progressive rounds of business expansion with new plants and jobs, fueling further growth, and a rising standard of living. Business leaders were tuned in on the premise that nurturing their workforce led to better products and business growth over the long term. Corporate management and labor unions were able to reach agreements which worked for both sides. Aided by relatively progressive income taxation, growth of average family income closely matched economic productivity. A pro-business power shift occurred in congress in the late 1970s and with evolving new financial incentives corporate managerial priorities were driven by cost cutting policies most of which dramatically promoted share price and company valuation. Many workers lost jobs due to outsourcing and new technologies. Productivity remained high but remaining employee and worker income stagnated. Cozy relationships between company CEOs and their boards helped to produce dramatic increases in income for management and a segment of stockholders. Extreme wealth was created for some. In the meantime, average income for employees and other workers stagnated. Smith proposes a ten point “Domestic Marshall Plan” through a grassroots movement in an attempt to “revive the moderate center and middle-class power”: 1. A public-private partnership to modernize infrastructure, create jobs, and compete better. 2. Push innovation, science, and high-tech research. 3. Generate a manufacturing renaissance. Government policy to “Buy American”. 4. Make the U.S. Tax Code fairer. 5. Fix the corporate tax code to promote job creation at home. 6. Push China to live up to fair trade to generate four million jobs in the U.S. 7. Save on War and Weapons. 8. Fix housing and protect the safety net. 9. Rebuild the political center. 10. Mobilize the Middle Class. A very lively discussion followed Mark's presentation, with little Wrangling, but much relevant commentary and agreement with the problem. Dick Campbell's guest Mr. Kirkendall added a wealth of information from his well-informed position in this matter. He heads the Mirabella group recently formed (and linked to other such newly-formed groups nationwide) to work for changes as outlined by Author Hendrick Smith, who personally challenged Mirabella seniors last year while speaking there.

February 13, 2014

Absentees: Russ Cheetham, Bill Duvall, Dick Axell, Dave Eitelbach, Mac Adams, Dick Campbell, Bill Parker

Member's Moment: Doug Sigel spoke briefly of his oft-felt awe at the force of man expressed as it was in the Industrial Age/ its evolution to our present era of Technology. The main content of his sharing could be summed up in these statements concerning the influence of science upon philosophy: “even our present ability to blow the world apart seems to pale in comparison to the force of man unleashed in history through the point of a fountain pen”, and “for, is it not true that industry and technology render us mere conveniences, whereas the purveyors of ideas effect the furthest-reaching change?”. The split of truth into two opposing categories at the Enlightenment, by David Hume, Doug proposed, initiated the decline of objective certainty (truth) -the Postmodern expression of that being moral relativism. Cited were several modern statements, including those of CS Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, Viktor Frankl, and pertinent lyrics of the Punk-Rock artist Sting. Nihilism vs transcendence were touched upon, as well as an indictment against the intellect of man gone awry in “the boastful pride of life”. A remedy was offered in a personalized form, that being the submission of one's intellect to the “mind” of the Creator of the Universe (if there be one), and full acceptance of / trust in HIS truth.

Speaker: “The American Revolution From A British Perspective” John Pehrson. having having a 20+ year interest in American history and having recently read eight books on the subject, chose to offer perhaps an oft-overlooked view of “the British side” of things. Of great

interest and relevance, he discussed the context in Britain at the time, by way of a review of the recent-historic events leading to her condition in about 1775. John informed the group that during this period, 1765-1781, Britain was "spread very thin" indeed. Spread thin by the necessary defense of her Imperial holdings in the Caribbean, India, and Africa against other European powers -predominantly France- and her many issues with the American colonies. Also, the effect on the British economy of several wars (most significantly the 7 Years War) in terms of cost and loss of troops was taken into account. Four key American battles, Boston (Bunker Hill), New York, Saratoga, and Yorktown were reviewed in depth, as well as four findings that still seem to have relevance today:

1. This was an unnecessary war, expensive in human life and could have been avoided.
2. This was an unsuccessful war of a Global Superpower vs an Insurgency
3. The British people, parliament and King were not united resulting in some cases to 'gridlock'.
4. The British Global Superpower was spread too thin, over-extended.

The subject was of course dear to all present, (American as well as British), many in the room also being well-read, but this particular look into it was illuminating, and much lively discussion ensued.

January 9, 2014

Absentees: Dick Axell, Don Vollmer, Bill Duvall, Russ Cheetham, Jim Hinchcliffe

President Mark Loribiecki reviewed the earlier discussion concerning changes to the charter as regarding the four-time-miss-and-out rule re attendance. Proposals were made to: institute a prior notice exception rule, add an official leave of absence clause, add a grace clause for extended sickness or other unforeseen difficulty, and others. The unanimous consensus was for grace ...that there should be exceptions to the rule written in, and membership highly valued and none ever unduly excluded. The particulars were referred to the Executive Committee to be instituted and reported to all next meeting.

Member's Moment: Floyd Short spoke of recently attending a talk at his community residence by Hendrick Smith, for 20 years NY Times Bureau Chief to Moscow and Author of "The Russians", "The Power Game", and his most recent "Who Stole the American Dream?" This book deals with the present middle-class disappearance/ extreme wealth-proportion shift. Smith reviews the elements of the former economic stability,— the GI Bill (education opportunity) and good job availability. The profoundest changes began around 1980, resulting in a wealth gap whereby income ratios (employee-to-CEO wage) shifted exponentially. During the postwar "glory years" the income ratio was about 1:20 (a CEO's wage being 20X the average employees). Now it's not uncommon to see that ratio at 1:300. Mr. Smith's solution: Readers should join with others to consider what part they might play in effecting some change to tip the scales and perhaps promote a more widespread equity.

Speaker: Bill Parker's presentation was "Pacifism, Does It Work?" He reviewed many of the great accounts of men of action who chose pacifism rather than aggression to achieve their goals, the most notable being Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela. The mechanics of pacifistic action were discussed. Is it a form of manipulation? Those who have chosen it know that it is, and are aware of other facts resultant such as: 1. "turning the cheek" may mean risking imprisonment or even their life. And 2. though they "act for peace", they are perhaps inadvertently stirring aggression in the opposition (and so there is a question as to the validity in terms of purity of intent?). Other demonstrations of peaceful resistance —such as the 60's "sit-ins" were reviewed, as well as a look at the philosophies of "neutral" nations such as Switzerland. The ideal of a rule of love was discussed in conjunction with mention of Jesus, and Bill lent a sense of the idealist's hope that men might evolve to a regular restraint of what seems an inherent human force as pertaining to disputes or crises. One could sense a deep cry of heart for that love from the Speaker. In the Wrangle that followed, the consensus seeming to be a great admiration for pacifism though also a practical doubt as to its plausibility.

December 13, 2013

Absentees: Chick Hodge, John Pehrson, Bill Duvall, Russ Cheetham

Guests: Art & Ann Green, guests of Gene McBrayer, Tom Adams, son of Mac Adams, Mary Lou Kirchner, guest of Dick Russell, Alice Blohm, guest of Dick Axell, Ginnie Chapelle, guest of Dick Campbell (widows of departed Wranglers.)

Member's Moment: Jim Marich related his appreciation for the Seattle Museum of Flight and the various ways his service as a Docent there has been a blessing to him. Jim's long-standing love of airplanes, including his service as crew member aboard the B-29 qualifies him well to provide a wealth of information to all guests. He meets people from the world round, but especially loves the groups of kids that visit —loves teaching them (and on occasion being taught by them!). He cherishes the rapport between the Museum's 17 active Docents who have become fast friends. Jim is also able to relay to visitors his meetings with famous figures in the history of flight, including Astronauts.

Speaker: Gene McBrayer — World Energy Outlook 2010-2040. Although world population will increase from 7 Billion to 9 Billion people, and world GDP is expected to grow by 140%, total energy demand will grow by only 35% -- reflecting the impact of major energy efficiency improvements. In the past, energy demand grew in "lock step" with GDP growth; now, through continuing efficiency improvements, over 500 quadrillion BTUs will not need to be produced in 2040. Energy demand over the period in the countries of the developed world will be essentially flat, while demand in the developing world will more than double. Electricity demand worldwide will grow by 85%. Coal as the primary fuel for generating electricity will peak by 2025, and natural gas will become the fastest growing, and most economic fuel for electricity generation. Nuclear, solar, and windmills will continue to grow; but, will not be major

contributors by 2040. New technology is opening new supply sources of natural gas and petroleum liquids, particularly in North America, greatly improving energy fuel supplies. While North America imported 20% of its supplies in 2010; we are forecast to be self-sufficient by 2025. For those concerned about increasing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions causing global warming, emissions by 2040 in the developed world will decrease 20%; while CO₂ emissions from the developing world (largely China, India, and Africa) will double, and become 80% of the worldwide total by 2040.

November 14, 2013

Absentees: Dick Axell, Dick Campbell, Mac Adams, Bill Parker, Ben Weyhing, Floyd Short

Business: President Loribiecki reviewed membership rules and asked acceptance of Jim Hinchcliffe as new *reserve* member—voted in unanimously.

Member's Moment: Dan Hungate reported on his 21 day Trek through the Himalayas. His previous trip was in 1989, Dan told of the increase in popularity of Trekking there, the numbers of visitors increasing some 600% since that time. Dan was the eldest Trekker and called a particular three-day portion of the route "Three of the hardest days I've ever experienced". The photos he brought were glorious.

Speaker: Chuck Meyer's presentation was entitled "Anthropogenic Global Warming"

Paleoclimatologists have discovered that the earth warms and cools on 1500 +/- 500 year cycles. We are currently in a warming cycle that started about 1850 as the earth was coming out of the "little ice age". At this time, the earth is about .80 degrees centigrade above 1850, when the temperatures were about 0.25 degrees below average. The net increase to date is about 0.55 degrees C (1 degree F). While many have pointed to the increase in manmade CO₂ as the cause of warming, many scientists disagree. CO₂ is a weak driver of temperature and an increase in CO₂ has always lagged an increase in temperature. Even though there has been a rapid increase in atmospheric CO₂ since 1999, temperatures over the period through 2012 rose only slightly and then have decreased more than they increased. Current climate models do not agree with the modest temperature increase experienced, overstating the increase by more than a factor of 2, and have not predicted the current decrease. Recent studies show a direct correlation between sun spot activity and the temperature of the earth—more sun spots, higher temperature and vice versa. There is evidence we are entering a period of reduced sun spot activity which could result in decreasing temperatures. History shows that there has been a marked and rapid decrease in temperatures when sun spot activity is reduced (e.g. the Wolf Minimum and Maunder Minimum). Many are concerned with the ability of earth's flora and fauna to adapt to changing temperatures, but historical records show that they are remarkably adaptable. During the "mediaeval warming", when temperatures were warmer than now, there were no reported extinctions attributable to warming and agriculture flourished. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to have a rational discussion of the hard science behind climate change and try to avoid the emotional arguments that are generated by misinformation from many who are simply ill-informed.

October 10, 2013

Absentees: Dave Eitelbach, Bill Parker, Floyd Short, Ben Weyhing, Don Vollmer, Gene McBrayer, Mac Adams, Lowell Erickson, Russ Cheetham

Guests: Jim Hinchcliffe, guest of John Strasburger

Business: • President Loribiecki proposed voting on by-law amendments as updated & clarified by John Strasburger –to be submitted to the membership prior to voting. • The possible value of the speaker sending out– in advance— the subject of his forthcoming presentation, with perhaps some outline/ overview was discussed and met with varying opinions. • The group paused to sympathize with member Bob Wiley at the recent loss of his dear beloved wife.

Member's Moment: Al Skinner offered an entertaining "Personal Theology", in the manner of Gilbert & Sullivan entitled "A Model Unitarian".

Speaker: Bill Duvall presented: **POLITICS 2012: How did we get here?** The paper reviewed the makeup of the 61 million Republican voters in 2012, the nature of their districts, the impact of the representatives they elected on the House and the likely changes over the next four years. The very conservative wing of the Party is in control today; they have a libertarian and anti-government outlook and their leaders have the perspective of a minority seeking to rally the like-minded, not build consensus.

Next Meeting: November 14 , 2013. **Member's Moment:** Dan Hungate. **Speaker:** Chuck Meyer

September 12, 2013

Absentees: Dave Eitelbach, Bill Duvall, Dan Hungate, Bill Parker

Guests: Lisa Goldsmith, daughter of Mac Adams.

Member's Moment: John Strasburger offered a book review of "Being Wrong" by Kathryn Schultz. All members were challenged to view and judge two optical illusive handouts John prepared, and subsequently judgments were proven by a third handout which hand-done cutouts superimposed upon the graphic material. The point of interest as related by John was to be sure we're sure, because (perhaps often) ... we're actually wrong. The lesson of humility was mentioned.

Speaker: Chick Hodge gave a presentation replete with charts and graphs entitled: **ECONOMIC DATA, THE FEDERAL RESERVE, AND**

ECONOMIC REFORM. A study of US economic data from 1930 through 2013 showed that: 1) Gross domestic product has increased in inflation-adjusted terms to a per capita level of over \$50K. The per capita public debt level of \$37K and deficit level of \$3K for 2013 are both significant by comparison, and at higher levels than at any time since World War II. 2) Federal government revenues and expenses, when corrected for inflation and population growth, have increased 3.6 and 4.2%, respectively, compared to 1.9% for GDP. The Federal Reserve has a significant impact on our economy via its mandate to control monetary policy. Its Central Bank role is unique in having both private and governmental characteristics and roles. In two books dealing with needed economic reform, Bill Bradley and John Taylor, although from different political parties, agree on the need to get the government deficit and debt under control, and to use the tools of government and the Federal Reserve to promote full employment, reasonable and predictable interest rates, and low levels of inflation.

June 13, 2013

Absentees: Mark Lorbicki, Al Skinner, Gene McBrayer, Floyd Short, Ben Weyhing, Dick Axell and Dick Campbell

Guests: Khalid Riaz, (guest of Lowell Ericsson) and Mark Bowers, (guest of Doug Sigel). Russ Cheetham, who was a guest of Don Vollmer at the May meeting, was given reserve member status and will become a member when the first opening occurs.

President John Strasburger opened the meeting with the issue of electing the officers for the 2013-2014 year. The slate was:

President: Mark Lorbicki, VP: Floyd Short, Secretary: Doug Sigel, Treasurer: Mark Hafferman. All were duly elected, unanimously.

Member's Moment: Bryan Cairns was celebrating his 6th birthday when the Normandy invasion began in WWII. He recounted his impressions as a child in a war zone. Some of his reflections were fearful and some were childlike unawareness of the gravity of the situation. Having been born and raised for his first few years in North Wales, he told of the living conditions and his impressions after moving to the London area with his family. It was a great story. Americans, having never lived in fear of bombing and threat of invasion, should take heed of what war is really about.

Speaker: Doug Sigel gave a talk entitled, "The Mark of Cain, man's propensity to Enslave, Deceive, War and Pillage, and ...the Remedy" The mark placed upon Cain by the Creator as a result of his slaying of his brother in the biblical account, was taken here as a metaphor for man's propensity toward ill self-assertive actions, to varying degrees, against his brother through the ages. The assertion was that the "mark" of Cain is upon us all, irremediably so, whilst man dwells upon the same earth Cain trod, and that the only hope of overcoming this propensity is belief in/obedience to/reliance upon the wisdom of the Creator, rather than man's various philosophies or attempts at social change or restructuring. Excerpts from popular songs were used to highlight sentiment reflective of concerned voices raised as pertaining to this subject. These voices were quotations of famous personalities; Bob Dylan, Emile Coue, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Francis Schaeffer being among them. Biblical quotations included the prophet Jeremiah "The heart of man is deceitful and fickle; who can know what it will produce next". Compounding the question of our relative goodness/badness—and questioning the concept of circumstantial influence—the theme of intimate care by a benevolent Creator was woven throughout. Available relationship with Him was propounded as the highest hope for man (this being portrayed as "vertical" relationship). (Relationship to our fellow man was labeled "horizontal.") Sigel proposed that if the vertical is in line (loving the Creator first, above all things, then goodness in the "horizontal" plane will naturally follow as a matter of course)... "The Remedy"

May 9, 2013

Absentees: Bill Duvall, Dick Axell, Mac Adams and Gene McBrayer

Guests: Russ Cheetham (guest of Don Vollmer) and Tom Naden (guest of Al Skinner)

President John Strasburger explained the nominating procedure for our incoming officers for next year. Those nominated were:

President: Mark Lorbicki, Vice President: (Wine Steward): Floyd Short, Secretary: Doug Sigel, Treasurer: Mark Hafferman

Member's Moment: From 1995 until 2012, **Ben Weyhing** belonged to an organization dedicated to making diabetics live and feel like normal human beings. The organization was formed by a group of nurses who saw the effects of the disease on people who were afflicted. The Lions Club is the major supporter of the organization. Camp Leo is where diabetes victims of all ages can meet and enjoy activities together. This sounds like a very worthwhile venture, and it was obvious that Ben enjoyed his time with them.

Speaker: Floyd Short gave a talk entitled "The Price of Inequality". This was the title of a book by Joseph Stiglitz, a Columbia University Professor of Economics. In addition to Stiglitz's ideas, the talk drew upon "The Great Divergence", a book by Timothy Noah; that title is Paul Krugman's term for the divergence in income and wealth that began in the 1970's and continues to the present. Beginning after WWII, American income deciles rose in parallel until the 1970's. Since then, the incomes of the 50th decile and below have flattened, while the incomes of the top 1% have gained 3.5% year, a cumulative excess over the lower income classes of nearly 150%. At the same time, the share of U.S. income of the top 1% has risen from a steady 8% in the postwar years to the present 24%. The consequences of this widening income and wealth disparity are that the very wealthy now live largely separate lives from the rest: gated communities, children in expensive private schools, practically unlimited spending capacity, vacation trips on private jets and access to investment opportunities unavailable to the average American. Meanwhile, following the housing and financial collapse of 2008, many average Americans have lost their jobs and seen the value of their homes, their main financial asset, decline. Stiglitz's belief is that this occurred because of laws and regulations favoring a shift of wealth from the middle and lower income classes to the wealthy, accompanied by a steady decline in labor unions and the ability of workers to bargain for better wages. This is not sustainable and eventually will lead to

major societal disruption. To repair the damage, Stiglitz proposes that market excesses and disruptions be controlled by improved regulation, that the government invest in education, technology and infrastructure, that the unions be strengthened and that the ordinary citizen be guaranteed adequate economic security.

April 11, 2013

Absentees: Bryan Cairns, Bill Duvall, Lowell Ericsson, Dan Hungate, Chuck Meyer, Bill Parker, Floyd Short, Don Vollmer, Dick Axell and Dick Campbell.

Guest. Milt Yanicks introduced his guest and long time friend Gordan who was born and raised in the area but now lives in California.

Member's Moment. Bob Lewis reported on his recent tour of North Korea and the neurotic and Orwellian nature of its government. One of the interesting facts was that his tour group was warned by their guide that they were prohibited from taking any photographs of Kim Jong Un, the current leader, that cut off (did not show) his arms and legs. However, North Korea does have one or rather several good ideas. Among the accolades showered on its leader are: Superior Person, Dear Leader, Respected Leader, Wise Leader, Brilliant Leader, Unique Leader, Commander-in-Chief, Great Leader, Father of the People, Guiding Sun Ray, Beloved Father, Leader, General, Great General, Beloved and Respected General, Great Leader. Ever-Victorious, Iron-Willed Commander, The Great Sun of Life, Great Sun of the Nation, World Leader of The 21st Century, Peerless Leader, Bright Sun of the 21st Century, Great Sun of the 21st Century, Leader of the 21st Century, Amazing politician, Great Man, Who Descended From Heaven, Glorious General, Who Descended From Heaven, Supreme Leader of the Nation, Invincible and Ever-triumphant General, Great Marshal, Dear Father, Guiding Star of the 21st Century, Great Defender, Savior ; Great Man, Who Is a Man of Deeds; His Excellency. After "extensive" debate it was decided that these titles should be henceforth bestowed on the Wrangler's presidents -- when the current one retires!

Speaker. Jim Marich ill with deep seated walking pneumonia was unable to attend and presented his talk through his avatar, Tony Ward Smith. Jim's talk summarized Scott D. Oki's book *Outrageous Learning, An Education Manifesto*, which discusses the sad state of our K-12 education system and suggests eleven ideas for improvement: **1.** Let local leaders lead; **2.** Great teachers produce better learning outcomes; **3.** The freedom to choose; **4.** Allow more time for education; **5.** Early learning rigor and optional high school; **6.** Muster an army of volunteers; **7.** Abandon standardized curriculum; **8.** Early intervention and specialized instruction; **9.** Spend money as if it were your own; **10.** Plant the seeds of success in life; **11.** Establish a culture of excellence. The extensive wrangle that followed dealt with the difficulty of getting from here to there. The situation is dire; the suggestions for improvement are worthy; but the current vested interests and political intransigence present obvious obstacles to implementation. Oki recognizes this difficulty and is endeavoring to create a groundswell of public involvement through the website www.outrageouslearning.org.

March 14, 2013

Absentees: Dick Campbell, Bill Duvall, Bob Lewis, Chuck Meyer, Gene McBrayer, Floyd Short, John Pehrson.

Guest: Chuck Blumenfeld (Guest of Dan Hungate)

Member's Moment: **Dan Zak** described a business in the U.S.A. There were many unique features in the business described. And the business was the inner workings of emergency departments around the U.S.A.

Speaker: **Dan Hungate** gave a presentation on a voluminous book by Herbert Hoover, describing the politics, maneuvering and intrigue leading up to World War II. Included were the inter-relationships of Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin and many of their underlings. Insights into the various summit meetings of the major participants were revealed as seen by Hoover. Little was known of this intrigue as it was evolving and some of the revelations were astounding, such as Roosevelt's positive view of Josef Stalin. Hoover did not publish his book during his lifetime, possibly because of the potential ramifications. His family made the decision to publish the book well after his death. A good wrangle ensued as might be expected with such a subject.

February 13, 2013

Absentees: Parker, Hodge, Vollmer, Marich, Pehrson and Strasburger.

Guest: Alan Woog, guest of Alfred Skinner, Tim Butler (Dave Eitelbach's brother-in-law), John Platt.

Member's Moment: **Dave Eitelbach** focused on his relationship with his father-in-law, whose career was spent with Hormel and the home of world famous Spam. The most memorable highlight of his younger years spent with his father-in-law and family were the stimulating after-dinner conversations. They would select a topic and everyone present, whether conservative or liberal, would take an active part, always conducted themselves in a civil manner but with voices occasionally rising in an effort to drive home a point.

Speaker: Charter member **Al Skinner** introduced his subject matter with a three-sparrow joke, reminding everyone that a long Wrangler's tradition was to start a presentation with a joke. The joke was well told and even understood by all present and much appreciated. The subject of Al's speech was Plutocracy and Poverty, based primarily on a book Al had recently read. The poverty side of the equation was presented historically, starting in the 19th century, including the public works programs of the 1930s and the start of Social Security, and the Lyndon Johnson initiatives to address problems concerning the poor such as the Head Start Program. It was suggested that supporting the Head Start Program could avoid incurring jail costs that exceeded the cost of the program. On the plutocrat side of the equation, many statistics were cited regarding the gap between rich and poor and the relationship between the amount of that gap and such factors as progressive tax rates, regulations and government policies. A recent statistic cited— there are

84,700 persons in the world with assets of more than 100 million dollars and that 2/3 of them are self-made, highly educated males with engineering degrees. The finance sector and CEOs comprise major components of the super-rich. Wrangling was widespread and vigorous with viewpoints ranging from the left and right sides of the political spectrum (without evidence of extremes on either side). Al was thanked for an excellent presentation and for stimulating our thoughts on an important subject.

January 10, 2013

Absentees: Chuck Meyer, Bill Parker, John Pehrson and Bob Wiley

Guest: Jim Hinchcliff (friend of President John)

Business: A motion was made to admit **Doug Sigal** (proposed by **Dan Zak**) into membership. The motion passed.

There was discussion on a motion to make women eligible for membership. That motion failed. There was discussion on a motion by **Mark Lorbieki** to have a woman present a paper at the December meeting, at which women are included anyway. That motion also failed. All of this discussion raised questions as to the clarity and completeness of the by-laws of the club. **Bryan Cairns** suggested that Pres John appoint a committee to study the by-laws and recommend changes or additions as necessary

Member's Moment: **Lowell Ericsson** invoked the Sphinx in his talk, suggesting 3 Questions the Sphinx might have asked: 1) Where do I come from? , 2) What am I here for? 3) Where am I going? He left the second question to be answered by philosophers, theologians, spiritualists and mystics. The first question has answers from many sources, but the most truthful answers came from scientific investigation epitomized by Charles Darwin. He then sketched a bio of Darwin and a fellow scientist, Alfred Russell Wallace.

(Interestingly, Darwin and Pres. Lincoln shared the exact date and year of birth).

Speaker: **President John** spoke on the state of education in the United States. Until recently, the U.S. was the world's leader in education. We were the first to establish free public primary education for all, regardless of economic status, and the first to extend that entitlement to secondary education (high schools). No child is required to pay to attend school through the 12th grade. That entitlement should be extended through tertiary education (college, junior college, trade school). Until the 1980's, public tertiary education was either free or relatively easy to afford. That is no longer true. With rising tuitions and economic inequality, it has now become increasingly economically onerous to attend college. Two thirds of undergraduates are able to attend only by borrowing substantial sums and are saddled with significant debt when they graduate. Many promising students are deterred from enrolling, and others drop out because of the actual or anticipated financial strain. As a result, our country is not keeping pace with other industrialized nations. From being a world leader in the proportion of adults ages 25 to 34 with postsecondary credentials, the U.S. now ranks 12th. This has resulted in an increase in economic inequality (as the supply of college graduates has not kept up with the demand) and is a threat to our global competitiveness and economic future. If free public education (our first and most successful entitlement) for primary and secondary education was prudent throughout the 20th century, extending it through tertiary education in the 21st century is justified and mandatory. A good wrangle was limited only by the necessity of vacating the premises by 9:PM.

December 13, 2012

Absentees: **Bob Wiley** and **Chuck Meyer**

Guests: Wives, significant others and other guests joined the members for this Holiday Party. There were 54 at the meeting in total.

Members Moment: **Gene McBrayer** gave an account of his feelings at the loss of his wife Fay. They had already suffered the untimely deaths of two children. Gene felt devastated. Then he received a lovely letter from a longtime friend, Nikki, in which she encouraged him and essentially said he would heal as time passed. Nikki had been widowed and knew the feeling. Ultimately, Gene and Nikki fell in love and were married quite recently. Gene's life has taken a happy turn. It was a poignant talk.

Speaker: **Bryan Cairns** gave a very short introductory paper, "A short history of Christmas" as a concession to the Christmas season. Then he gave his main paper, which was in the more usual Wrangler style entitled "America after Meritocracy". The talk was based on a recent book by Christopher Hayes entitled "The Twilight of the Elites" and its review by the New York Times columnist David Brooks. Hayes postulates that the emergence of a powerful meritocratic elite. That is, an elite elevated on the basis of grades, effort and merit is a root cause of much that has negatively impacted life in America over the last 12 years. Hayes admits that at its most basic, the logic of meritocracy is ironclad, putting the most qualified, best equipped people into positions of responsibility. But, he argues, fidelity to the meritocratic model comes with huge costs because of the inequality it produces. He finds evidence of failures caused by meritocratic elites in almost every facet of American life. Brooks takes issue with this view, finding that today's elites preserve their status mainly through ambition and self-discipline. The talk stirred a very vigorous wrangle, which was enjoyed by all. President John then asked all members to present their ideas on the subject through e-mail. Based on the number of e-mails received by your humble secretary, the idea was followed on by a great many members.

November 8, 2012

Absentees: Bob Wiley, Chuck Meyer, Mark Hafermann, John Pehrson and Floyd Short.

Guest: **Dan Zak** introduced his guest **Doug Sigal**.

Member's Moment: **Dick Russell** described the advances in aircraft design and performance with a photo slide depiction of all the aircraft with which he has been associated in a long career in aviation. Dick showed photos of the Stearman Kaydet, the Piper Cub, AT-6

Texan, DC-3, Lockheed Constellation, B-25, B-36, B-52 and the Boeing 747-8, some of which he has flown. He emphasized two major aviation accomplishments in his lifetime: 1) The increase in capacity of commercial airliners and 2) The significant improvement in safety of US commercial aviation. His talk illustrated an interesting, long, and successful career.

Speaker: Ben Weyhing gave a talk on "Danelaw: The Foundation of America's Democracy". In the latter part of the first millennium, the Vikings invaded and began to colonize a large part of what is now Eastern England. They also did the same in parts of Greenland and Iceland. With them came a culture of freemen and land ownership. They resisted government by fiefdom or kingship. They simply wanted to establish self-government and protect land ownership. The land they took was swampy and unproductive and they successfully improved it into agricultural productivity. The laws by which the colonies were governed were known as Danelaw. This established cultural tradition remained mostly unchallenged through the days our ancestors immigrated to America and to some degree to our current thinking. Ben's paper postulated that it was this set of laws and traditions that our forefathers applied to their settlements in America upon arrival in the New England colonies. During the wrangle that followed, it was mentioned that religious persecution was one of the principal reasons for immigration, but Ben said his research gave large credit to the "Danelaw" traditions. Ben admitted that that it would be argued that Danelaw ceased to be a distinct political entity at the time of the Norman invasion and to some extent that is true, but he stated that political recognition is not the only way by which institutions and ideas survive and flourish. For example, William the Conqueror may have ended the political independence of the province, but neither he, nor any of his successors, were willing or able to suppress property rights. In 1066, 14% of Englishmen were property owners, well in line with the rest of Europe, but according to the Doomesday Book, freeholders made up 60% of the Danelaw population. Finally, Ben included a list of the locations from which passengers on Winthrop's fleet originated. While the list encompasses 20 different counties of England, it clearly shows that those of Danelaw origin comprised the vast majority. Point proven? A vigorous wrangle followed.

October 11, 2012

Absentees: Bill Duvall, Mark Lorbiecki, Gene McBrayer and Don Vollmer

Guest: Bob Baynham

Business: **President John** proposed that the dinner menu be left to the determination of the Aljoya chef, rather than being the responsibility of the speaker that evening. The members agreed, and that will be the course (pardon the pun) followed henceforth.

Pres John also noted that we currently have 23 members, so there is an opening for one new member and a couple of reserve members. **Pres John** took a straw poll on the Presidential election. On top of a slip of paper, we were to write the name of the candidate for whom we would vote. On the bottom of the paper we were asked to write the name of the candidate who would win the office. **Mark Hafermann** was asked to tally the vote and report the results as follows: • Who do you plan to vote for? **Obama:** 15 • But whom do you think will win? **Obama:** 14, **Romney:** 1 • Who do you plan to vote for? **Romney:** 7 • But whom do you think will win? **Obama:** 4, **Romney:** 3

Member's Moment: **Milt Yanicks** gave a brief report on his recent trip to Great Britain and Scotland. While he enjoyed the many historic sites, he particularly liked the Cathedral at York as well as Hadrian's Wall, built by the Roman Emperor circa 121 A.D. The British Isles were desired by the Romans because of the great tin deposits, useful in the manufacture of weapons. Milt found the people to be warm and friendly as well.

Speaker: Dave Eitelbach gave a well-researched talk on the global warming issue. Various studies have shown that the earth has been warming over the last millennium, but at an alarmingly increased rate over the last century. Climate models have become more sophisticated and now account for most known natural variations, including those caused by sunspots, volcanoes and ocean currents. All of these models show that mankind's continuous emission of carbon dioxide is the principal cause of the increased rate of warming. But the second part of Dave's talk described an organized effort by a number of corporations and conservative groups to deny the science and discredit the research behind it. The talk spurred a good deal of comment and many questions (as our talks are expected to do), which were expertly handled by Dave. Overall, it was a good presentation and the members enjoyed a good wrangle.

September 13, 2012

Absentees: Bill Duvall, Dan Hungate, Don Vollmer, Milt Yanicks, Dan Zak and Gene McBrayer.

President's note: Since our February meeting falls on Valentine's Day, an alternate date will be chosen and you will be advised.

Member's Moment: **Mark Lorbiecki** told the story of acting in the movie "Top Gun" starring Tom Cruise. Mark was in the Judge Advocate General's Office as an attorney while in the Navy in San Diego. The producer's of the movie wanted a "real" attorney for a small part of the show where one of the pilot's was being tried for destroying an aircraft. Mark was chosen and told us how the whole thing evolved. He will show us pictures to prove he was in the movie, but also asked us to review the movie while looking for his appearance. It was an unusual experience and Mark learned a lot about the flaky people in the business, including Tom Cruise. Mark got Cruise's autograph, but was warned that if he told anyone about it, Cruise would deny having signed it. He claimed he does not give autographs to anyone.

Speaker: Three years ago, **Bob Lewis** and wife, Ann, were part of a group of 24 Americans who went to Iran to tour the country. Lowell Ericsson and his wife were also on the tour. The country is large, with 73 million people and an area equal to the Western 20% of the U.S. Bob recounted their experiences with the general population and said they had no contact with police or government officials,

who did not interfere with them in any way. Iranians are not Arabs. They speak Farsi rather than Arabic, and apparently most of the population speaks English, which they called the language, when asked why it was so prevalent. The country is ruled by, and is predominantly comprised of Shia Muslims. The women are expected to cover their hair and wear clothing that reaches to their ankles, but the younger set appears to be pushing the envelope as far as they can in terms of dress. Western garb is frequently seen. The group had no trouble asking and receiving answers to any questions about government, world affairs, view of Americans, etc. The claim about nuclear enrichment was that it was for civil purposes and not to build bombs. The Americans were allowed to see anything they wished and visited historic sites and ancient ruins, and talk with whomever they wished. The group saw a few Jewish Synagogues, which was unexpected. In short, the visit again tended to prove that where nations clash politically, it is usually the governments that do not see eye to eye. If international relationships were left to the people we might all get along much better.