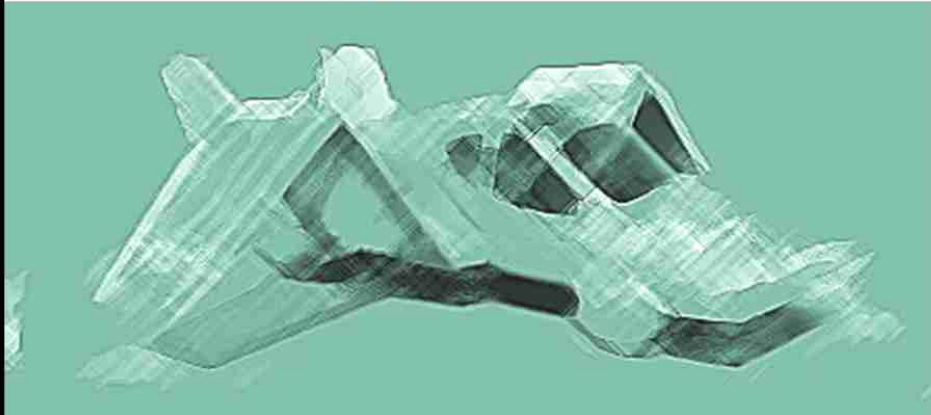


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IMPACT TIMES

Volume 2: Issue 6:
Summer 2009



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REENGINEERING INGENUITY— For centuries, theologians, philosophers, politicians, historians, and scientists have been unsuccessful in solving the greatest riddle of our time. Who or what created us? Despite our technological know-how and acquired wisdom, a unifying answer to the above question remains as mysterious as who built the Egyptian Sphinx. Although we may not reach the same conclusion as to how we came into being, we can at least agree on one basic principal—ingenuity. Do you know that a spoonful of soil in the rain forest may contain over a billions bacteria? What do you think will happen to them when the rain stops and the soil dries out? The answer is obvious, most will cease to exist, and a few may live to see another day if they have the ability to withstand, adapt or escape their harsh environment. While the true face of the enigmatic force that created us and our universe remains hidden behind the vaulted universe, its footprints are identifiable and athand.

The human population is expanding at a startling rate. China, with over a billion people, is in a mode of population control. Even with her strict implementation of the one child policy, the law of nature still defies the law of man. Her population continues to expand at an alarming rate. A renowned scientist once wrote that humans are creatures with “selfish genes.” These genes ensure not only our survival, but also the survival of our offspring. Thus, two dominant forces remain at war. The pivot point remains undefined as the pendulum swings left, pushing for propagation, and right, pushing for control.

So what are we to do if our population continues to expand, our resources continue to dwindle, and our needs continue to grow? What is America supposed to do as her citizens multiply, her streets crowded, her farmlands diminished, her forests dwindling, and her reserves emptying out? We certainly can’t stop reproducing. It is against our nature. But we can be creative in meeting some of our growing demands. The future may look brighter than we think.

We are at an expedited pace of reengineering technologies and our being. With our facts in check, when will we be able to move freely in the air or on land without our planes, our cars or our boats? It may be sooner than we think. We are living in a new era of medical research and technological innovation. Hybrid cars, alternative fuels, and nano-technology will shape the way we drive, work, and play. Vertical farms will one day occupy buildings and skyscrapers, and flying cars will occupy our airspace. A limited number are already in production. If we are moving at this rate, pretty soon we’ll be able to grow wings and fly. Impossible? Think again. If we can clone sheep, create babies from petri dishes, change gender, and transplant body parts from human to human and from animal to human, why would it be impossible to genetically engineer babies with wings? It’s not a matter of whether we can do it but when. Someday, we may even develop gills and swim freely among the dolphins and whales. By then, do we still call ourselves human or something else?

Richard Quan
Managing Editor, Impact Times

AMERICAN INNOVATION: ALIVE AND WELL IN THE 21ST CENTURY— Forty-seven years ago, John F. Kennedy challenged America to put a man on the moon and America responded. That the first lunar landing took place a mere sixty-five years after the Wright brothers' first successful flight and forty-one years after Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic in Spirit of St. Louis only makes this feat more remarkable.

Today, President Obama faces the challenge of melding the automotive industry with the environmental lobby, state governors, and Congress, in the hope of providing a solution, through innovation, to the issues of energy and climate change, while nursing back to health an ailing American economy.

Obama recently stated that he is committed to working with Congress and the automotive industry to meet one goal: leading the world in building the next generation of clean cars.

We are at a crossroads where the future of this country's automobile industry is concerned. What happens over the coming months will have a lasting impact on this industry as well as the global economy.

Key to the survival of Detroit and the Midwest, as well as to a healthier economy, is a thorough understanding of how we got here.

Make no mistake, the automotive industry, its greed, is largely to blame for its current predicament.

Sixty years ago, after World War II, General Motors, Standard Oil and Firestone Tires were brought before Congress on conspiracy charges. They were found guilty of creating dummy companies that bought up mass transit systems that had served many major cities so well for so long, to tear up the tracks and sell the trolleys to South American cities, where today many still transport people to and from work.

Guilty, and fined one dollar.

After the war, the automotive industry led America into a new era: a car in every driveway; and when that wasn't enough, two cars in every garage. What was good for the automobile industry was good for America. Even while, thirty years later, cities like Los Angeles, stuck in gridlock, began to clamor for a mass transit system to alleviate the congestion on their freeways.

Fact: a horse and buggy traveled faster in LA in 1911 than does a car during rush hour traffic today.

The ad agencies continue to sell automobiles on the glamour of luxury and horsepower big ger is better and faster more advantageous. Ads show sports cars boasting two hundred horses under the hood zipping through city streets empty of traffic while in reality these same two hundred horses merely consume more gas while they sit idling in bumper-to-bumper traffic. Glamorous women sell luxury cars on the premise that it's important, when the owner turns on the car, the car returns the favor.

Engineers in Detroit first claimed they could not improve on the efficiency of the internal combustion engine; then they told us they had the technology but it would be too costly to the consumer. I wonder how costly had they, thirty years ago, funneled profits into new technologies rather than to lining the pockets of executives who sat on their hands until they had no alternative but to ask Congress for a bailout.

Opponents of Obama state the government has no place in the private sector, that they should stay out of industry, even as they should stay out of the financial industry.

I have no answers, but I'm open to all suggestions for a solution.

Some of Obama's rhetoric smells like socialism, and for the first time in my life I'm wondering if that's so terrible. Wall Street couldn't police itself, gave in to greed, just as the automobile industry did. If an industry can't be trusted to have ethics, what is the alternative but to appoint a watchdog?

The old ways failed. We have what amounts to a clean slate. Will American ingenuity and innovation take over, or will greed hold sway?

Stay tuned...

J. Conrad Guest
Contributing Editor, Impact Times

THE PLEASURES AND PERILS OF ADOPTING A PEN NAME: George Sand was a girl. I'm not saying that to be mean, he was literally a she, a woman writer with a male nom de plume, just like George Eliot. The Georgie-Girls, O. Henry, C. S. Forester, Lewis Carroll, George Orwell, Ellery Queen, Voltaire, Dr. Seuss, Ayn Rand, Molière, Mark Twain, and even Lemony Snicket: all of them have names full-o'-baloney, just like mine. There are as many reasons for a writer to adopt a pen name as there are writers with them, the practice so historically commonplace it is safe to call it a literary tradition, like the couplet or eschewing adverbs, but my own 21st century experience with a pen name has made me ponder anew what it must have been like for all who forged this path before me. First, let's be clear: a pen name is not an alias. Yes, there may be a slight to healthy desire to deceive, granted, but not for criminal intent. Indeed, the real crime regarding the Georgie-Girls was that 19th century Europe required they do book-jacket drag in order to be taken seriously. Others, like poet Lucila de María del Perpetuo Socorro Godoy Alcayaga, who became Gabriela Mistral, probably adopted one so her name would fit on a book spine. Yet I've experienced more than my fair share of jaundiced-eyed, who-did-you-murder looks from friends and family, because from their perspective I'm not being me, and that makes them uncomfortable.

"What are you ashamed of?"

"What are you hiding?"

The simple truth is pen names are practical; such was the case with mine. Before I became Aurelio, I had spent over 25 years making animated feature films with singing animals, anthropomorphized household objects, and needy princesses with a penchant for ball gowns. When I announced to friends and family that I was writing a book, the conversations went like this:

"Oh, a children's book!"

"No. It's a novel. No pictures, just words."

"No pictures...?"

"It's adult fiction."

"Adult fiction...? Porno...???"

Sure, it's only natural to assume that someone who drew cute, cherub-cheeked toons for a living would write and illustrate children's books, as many of my animation colleagues do, but when, even after lengthy explanations of what my writing actually is and hopes to be, I continued to be asked, and repeatedly: "How's that kid's book goin'?"

Something drastic had to be done. What if agents and publishers respond like this? Could the literary community take me seriously if they judged me with these same limited preconceptions? I couldn't risk that. And what of the public? Any potential reader expecting a children's book would be disappointed and adult readers might stay away, assuming my work was for children. I wanted my writing to be judged on its own merits, to live free or die on its own. I needed a clean slate, so after a bit of brainstorming, Aurelio O'Brien was born. This being the 21st century, I immediately Googled "Aurelio O'Brien," as there would be no point in taking a pen name only to find I'd inadvertently started down the path to identity theft. But nothing came up. I figured if the Great Google Search Engine in the Ether didn't know him, Aurelio was free to be whoever I wanted. I registered the name as a DBA, just to be on the safe side, and started constructing my new career. It was far easier than I anticipated, and a whole lot of fun. I networked and blogged and joined MySpace, Facebook, and LiveJournal as Aurelio. I made new friends who knew nothing of my creator-of-kiddie-pabulum past.

At long last, I had adult conversations about literature, about my work, was asked my opinions, as a writer rather than toonster, and I loved it. The more I became Aurelio O'Brien, the more Aurelio O'Brien became me. And he is me, minus the past that didn't fit his world, and I was genuinely surprised how creatively freeing being him became. By removing my outward impediments I had also apparently removed some inward ones I didn't realize I had. My writing flowed easier and my confidence surged. Meanwhile, those who know the other me still squirm and huff, convinced there is something nefarious in the whole thing. One of them recently outed me on her blog, and I still get the occasional friend who refuses to use my pen name even when speaking of my literary work. That many of the greatest authors throughout history, Nobel Prize winners, and Dear Abby had pen names means nothing to them. It used to bother me, but not anymore, not now that I am Aurelio O'Brien. I Googled myself again the other day. More than a dozen pages of links came up, and if the Great Google Search Engine in the Ether now says I am somebody, who are they to argue?

AURELIO O'BRIEN is a writer and an artist. He spent over 25 years as an artist, animator, designer, and storyteller in Hollywood, working in the field of Feature Animation. He is the author of *EVE*, a science fiction novel. CONTACT: aurelio@evethenovel.com.

Dear God,

I look around and see hatred in people's eyes
I cannot begin to imagine how my friend's parents felt when
they learned that their babies died.
I remember a time of peace and glory.
Since the war has begun,
these memories of happiness seem like a fairy tale story.
I go to bed terrified at night wondering why
So many people could be so full of hate;
No one seems to want to call to you God
they never want to breathe your name until it is too late.
Just the other day I watched one of my best friends die.
I held him in my arms and watched him slowly slip away,
I hate that we had to go to war; I hated watching my friends' lives slip away.
I do not know how much longer I can take this God,
I do not know if I can handle the pain,
I need you to protect me, I need your love to make me feel sane.
I pray every night that this war will be over, I pray that
I will one day be able to go home,
I wish that I never had to come over here,
At least I know that I have your love so that I will never be alone.
Please God, I beg you, watch over us always,
I know that this battle is in your hands
and that it will be over when you chose it to be that way.
I know that you have shed your share of tears, just as I have too,
I hope that this war will be over soon
because I am to the point that I do not know what to do.
I will only ask you one more thing before I say good night,
Please let my family know that I am ok and that I am strong because I am fighting to make everything for them
right.

In your precious name I pray,
Your loving faithful servant

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This poem is dedicated to the men and women who are fighting for all of us. Please keep them
in your prayers. Pray that they will return soon. God bless our soldiers and our country.

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NOTHING COULD BE MORE OVERWHELMING than the crushing weights of regret from not living up to one's potential. Living on the wheel of fortune; existing by chance, achieving nothing. Time slowly passes away, taking with it dreams and ambitions, leaving despair at a time we so desperately need a sense of closure and reflection, the twilight years when everything physical begins to fail. The agonizing realization that time is running out, no more spring times to plow and plant, a distant glare, full of anger.

Goals are vital to overcoming the weight of regret. Early on, we must teach our children and those in our care to choose carefully their respective goals and ambitions, both in business and in spiritual matters. A solid foundation, upon which all else is supported, is vital to success. Early on, when school is the most pressing time constraint, ample time is available for a rock solid foundation to be built in whatever area is deemed vital. Whether spiritual matters or laying down the beginnings of a business plan, time and energy is already in place, along with a belief that anything is possible, nothing is too outlandish. As time moves forward, time constraints become more obstructive to fresh starts. His first job after school, her the first date, marriage, children, a thirty year mortgage. Each progression makes time more valuable, and so elusive. Goals are replaced with priorities and getaways, designed to help escape this cycle of fear, and ultimately regret. Disguised as a reward, it's more of a quick fix, like eating to relieve stress, only to cause more stress from weight gain and poor health.

Foundations can be built a piece at a time, an hour a day, step by step. The old saying "An apple a day" holds true, but eating all seven on the last day doesn't have the same result. You may get a sour belly, and you'll lose your taste for the very apple that will make you well, solidify your future, and build good habits that will last a lifetime. A year out is not a long time to wait for a slow, meticulous base to rise up, but time looks much different to a teenager than someone in their twilight.

Nothing requires more care and attention to detail than the foundation. On a waterfront home at the beach, pylons are driven deep into the sand, a solid footing that will cost \$25K or more. Once placed, the foundation must sit for two weeks, ensuring it will stand firm against the next storm to blow through. More attention is given to this critical step than any other. Nothing will survive above if the foundation is weak below. Standing tall and beautiful during good times, the first storm will topple what others thought could not be breached. "Who built this house? Why did it fail when others around it survived? What was the difference? Why did he collapse during his personal storm?"

Once in place a solid foundation can be built upon, and rebuilt on after storms, sometimes bigger and better than the original. The key is a solid benchmark, unshakable, and unmovable, no matter what may blow through.

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by M. Sandi Aigoro

IT IS ALMOST NEVER COOL to say “God” or discuss religion at work. Corporate protocol dictates that religion and politics are off limits. It may be okay to discuss sex, gender, nationality and race, yet this is not the case regarding religion or spirituality. However, if corporations forbid references to God, then how will moral and ethical standards be set? Who will keep the workforce accountable for their actions toward others and the company? The law has failed to prevent abuse in the workplace. It is difficult to prove. This begs the question: by adding God to the bottom line, are companies any more likely reach their goals or desired profit margin?

The Chick-Fil-A Example

According to Hoovers, Chick-Fil-A is a company with 50,000 employees, 1,400 restaurants in nearly 40 states. It is closed Sundays. Who would have ever thought that Chick-Fil-A, a company founded in deep religious beliefs, by putting God in their bottom line could result in a company becoming one of the largest fast food chains in the nation with sales topping \$2.6 billion in 2007? On the contrary, Starbucks has closed over 600 stores in the U.S. and profits fell 28% in early 2008. KFC and McDonalds are tampering with their food services, trying to improve profits by adding healthier choices, while Chick-Fil-A maintained a steady, profitable growth rate.

The Moral Imperative

It makes sense for a company to promote high moral and ethical values for a number of reasons.

- (1) Employee retention increases when employees feel valued and have a sense of work-life balance.
- (2) When employers are sensitive to and value their employees’ beliefs, unions become much less important because employees feel they are treated and paid fairly. Additionally, the strategy of “Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you,” focuses employee attention on an important ideal: accountability to do the right thing for the company and its customers. It allows both salaried and non-salaried employees to feel more valued, and to participate in the universal plan by honoring a value system that includes God in the equation. By adding God to the bottom line, companies create better work life balance, which reduces lawsuits, increases productivity and minimizes theft, cost of insurance claims and sick days.

That Day of Rest

Medical science has proven that a substantial number of Americans are sleep deprived, overweight and stressed. Even non-believers should not object to observing the Golden Rule or having an extra day to rest to spend time with family, catch up on personal planning and allowing time to de-stress. Moreover, in omitting the principles of God from the bottom line, companies must develop business models which would inevitably incorporate some forms of the Golden Rule but could miss capturing its true essence, one of which is to respect the company’s assets as you would your own. Before Chick-Fil-A, everyone believed that food service providers had to be open seven days a week, and many 24/7 in order to produce profits. What if Chick-fil-A’s CEO, S. Truett Cathy, had not insisted on maintaining his Baptist values when deciding his business model? What if he had never challenged the decisions that excluded God from the bottom line equation? Would it be prudent for employers to consider the importance to their bottom line by adopting a “God-based strategy” like Chick-Fil-A’s and acknowledge God’s Golden Rule?

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Darkness like a warm blanket, subdues your emotions and cradles your form.

It's uncertainty, brings a sense of tranquility to your racing mind, that's now stopped in it's racks.

The lovely emptiness, the transparent nothingness, the long solitude, it is.

Until light finds it's way back after a game of hide and seek, it seems.

It's crazy to think we choose to function most, in the light.

The racing, tracing and bracing we choose.

Maybe we should stay in the darkness for a little while longer.

Would this make life's complications easier?

After awhile we will say, 'I was late today, couldn't see what time it was', and 'I can't enjoy the brilliant colors of my flowers.'

Yes!

We'll begin to blame the darkness, like we once blamed the light.

We always look to place blames on those things that help us more than hurt us.

We always add extra shelves, never once, do we look at ourselves.

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