

Top Winnie, Around Town, The Ring



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"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FTC-only RSS feed available [here](#).

In this column, we will come to the conclusion of the Winnies, with perhaps the most impactful event in the bumbling of our statistis. We will also explore a distinct shift in the geographical composition of America over the last 10 US censuses. And then we will add further fuel to the fire that will temper the question of: Are we a collective animal or are we amazingly intricate individuals?

The Top Winnie - The Yalta Conference

About ten weeks ago, I began enumerating for you what I thought were ten really bad US foreign policy SNAFUs. I collated my list as a parody of an awards program, calling the (what's the opposite of) awards the Winnies after that grand misguided missile of international roguery, Winston Churchill. And now I have come at last to the grandest *faux pas* of all, in my view. The Yalta Conference. I don't really expect many to share my view, mostly because Yalta has sunk into the mists of forgetfulness for so many, both by the deliberate spin of the Roosevelt crowd and its accidental subtlety in among some very bombastic events of the time, such as FDR's death in the following 60 days, victory over Germany and the nuclear attack on Japan in the same year.

But Yalta is the one that sticks with me, and I have become something of a Yalta aficionado in the last 5 years. Most modern history books may have a paragraph or two covering this Big Three Summit, but they usually focus on the partitioning of Germany and Berlin, perhaps touching on the double dealing done to Poland, and likely ending with a few remarks on FDR's poor health and some apologetic remarks about the less than optimum accords reached at Yalta.

The actual results arising after Yalta were a complete capitulation by FDR on the Iron Curtain rapidly enclosing Eastern Europe including the rape of the Polish people, the

continuing enslavement, imprisonment, and butchering of the USSR's own population, the Cold War, nuclear proliferation, the United Nations with its absurd Security Council arrangement, and the undermining of the Chinese Nationalist government in the eventual favor of Mao and Red China.

I will not be so bold as to detail all of these but I will point you toward two books that changed the way the world looks to me.

The first is a mid-50s, amazing work of research, edited by Richard F. Fenno, *The Yalta Conference*. In this very potent 112 pages, Fenno assembles a selection of documents mostly contemporaneous with the period. In his introduction, Professor Fenno states that he has no designs on persuading us toward a conclusion, he just presents the documents for the reader's analysis. I likewise invite your rational analysis.

The second comes from the pen of Charles L. Mee, bearing the title "Playing God: Seven Fateful Moments When Great Men Met to Change the World." Only one of these fateful moments arises in World War II, and the moment Mee chooses is the Yalta Conference.

Whether we will ever know all the facts of Yalta is unlikely, but we do know now that a substantial portion of Eastern Europe and most of Asia were bound in totalitarian states dwarfing Hitler's designs for half a century thereafter. We also have information, with a degree of certainty, that the Big Three negotiators, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt went to Yalta with separate secret agenda, none of which had much to do with freedom, peace, legitimacy, mercy, or self-determination by the common people of the world.

More Town, Less Country

Several columns back, I wrote about an analysis of the 2010 census in which it was reported that over half of Americans live in less than five percent of the nation's counties. I had thought that I would get hold of those numbers to crunch them some more, but in the meantime, I encountered another number that highlighted the first number in a stark way. As I was watching Ken Burns' "Prohibition," I learned that the urban/rural mix of inhabitants of the USA was vastly different in 1920 than in 2010 — in the former time, one of every two lived in the rural areas of the country, whereas at the most recent census, one of seven lives in what could even generously be called farmland (I suspect that the number of actual farmers is substantially smaller).

So I abandoned my scholarly plan to do number crunching for three reasons. One, if statistics are cited in detail, then the conversation becomes a stilted quibble about the technicalities of statistics — another rearing of that ugly American attribute of minding process over product (a future column, I am guessing). Second, if statistics are cited even in general, it is too easy to forget what may be happening thereby. In our culture we see showy Sign A and dismiss altogether the possibility of subtle Sign B — an example would

be the purported increase of crime in the 60s, which in truth was an increase in collecting statistics on crime. And third, statistics can never show causality. Stats can only show correlation. For example, there is nothing in the data examined that explains why we are far more urban now than we were at the beginning of prohibition.

Disclaimer: I am not “soft” on crime, but I am extremely hard on dysinformation, hypocrisy, and those who would too happily make everything a crime.

I suspect that the numbers hide some more important matters about causes, effects, and impacts. The lunacy of numbers is seen in the curiosity that a 0% reduction, in the rural number in that ratio matches a 600% increase, roundly, in the urban number. (Seriously folks, I am not running for office on the crest of this tide of flight to the cities.) Politicians were making a big deal over flight from the cities only a few decades ago. This is an irrelevance caused by playing fast and loose with numbers meant to show something entirely apart. Politicians and voters alike might do well to shun statistics and derivative percentages altogether.

What is really going on? It is my studied view that people are concentrating in urban areas to have more access to government services. I don't know whether the family farm was destroyed as the center of the American experience on purpose or not, but I am aware that starting with FDR, the federal government began to initiate programs that escalated the slide from small farming to industrial agriculture. Furthermore, the very nature of our economy now is distribution (unfortunately, mostly government controlled distribution). It is entirely natural that humanity will cluster around resources. The history of our economy shows the country reshaping itself, over and over, to take advantage of the location of resources. But the location of resources now, in large part thanks to government, has far less to do with where resources are found in nature than to do with where industry and politics allow them to be accessed.

Therefore, I see the urbanization of America as part of the frightening surrender to central control and central planning.

You Cannot Un-ring a Life

I remember when I first pieced together the enormity of individuality. The very first artifact I created on the World Wide Web, in the 90s, was entitled the *Ring of Ciaragain* (Gaelic for Carigan*) — it was a list of all the home towns I had lived in through my life to that point. I soon saw that it was astronomically unlikely that two people would have a shared list of that type. Even my sister, who was born in the same place as I, diverged from that path when she was 18 and I was 19. And I know that there are some who live in the same place for a lifetime, but in our sector of the world that group is becoming vanishingly small.

In any event, *where* is a strong determinant of *who* you are. I have lived in at least 20

different places that I called home for a while — places as disparate as Chattanooga, Louisville, Boston, New York, Chicago, Denver, Lexington, Cincinnati, and so forth, but also in waysides like Springfield, Waddy, Liberty, Bowling Green, Charleston, Frankfort, Lawrenceburg, Knoxville, Bardstown, London, Chaplin, Salvisa, and more. I do not feel boastful in asking anybody who can match that list to come forward. It is what it is. Most of those places had more than a little impact on my life, mostly good I am happy to say. I could write columns, or novellas, or an encyclopedia about every one of them. And furthermore, I was in each of those locations in a personal situation, with a specific address for a specific time. If anyone should have an identical set of vicinities, I defy him or her to claim also identity of space and time.

Of course the odds that any two people will be born with the same genetic composition are beyond our knowing, but even if we were all identical twins it would not be long before we each embarked on our solo journey.

Lots of other factors work to make us every one different. Home school versus public school is not the only variant in humans, even in the realm of education. Each person gets different amounts and different levels of knowledge from the same experience, but very seldom do people even have the same experience as others.

Who? Who are you, and how many different roles have you played, and with whom else?

What? What were the circumstances?

When? When did you do certain things and in what order?

Where? Where were you, and from where did your acquaintances come? When you lived in a place, what were your relationships to the smaller places within? For example, I didn't really live inside of Louisville; I lived first in Okaloma then in St. Mathews, both suburbs of Louisville.

Why? Why did your parents meet, and more so why did you meet all of those whom you met? And why did you choose those particular paths to follow?

How? How did you take the actions you took? And how many things did you encounter? And how much were you moved by the wonders along the way? And how amazing were the consequences?

* Yes, dear reader, my real name is Carigan.

We have looked at one of the major, but little known, “hinges” (a nod to Dan Carlin) of history, we examined a population trend which may have sneaked up on us while perhaps

bringing our moths closer to the flame of ill-intended statism, and then we have seen the likelihood that as collective as we may get, as abandoned by our “leaders” as we may be, the fact that each of us is nonetheless an entirely distinct individual, as odd as a fingerprint, cannot be changed.