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Issue: # 029

June 11, 2012

Greetings!

Yesterday was my birthday. I turned 54.

In my family we celebrate "birth-weeks". So it was quite a week.

I am grateful to have made it through another year of life, and I am profoundly touched by the many well-wishes I received. Thanks to all.

OK, enough about me. We've got some important ground to cover. And some of it deals with birthdays. Let's get started!

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood



A Key To Building Relationships

I have always been an advocate for reading good books. The benefits of doing so are legion - one of them being the ideas one can glean from the reading of good books.

More than 30 years ago a mentor of mine by the name of Donald W. Atkinson urged me to read several books he recommended. One of those books was the old Dale Carnegie classic, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. I read the book and one of the many ideas I took away from that reading was the power of remembering people's birthdays. I became hooked on the idea and immediately set out to create a system to help me remember the birthdays of key people in my life, be they friends, relatives, work associates, colleagues, or other key connections.

My method consisted of a simple spreadsheet that had the dates of the birthdays in the far left column, followed by the name of the person in the next column. Along the top and going across to the right, I labeled those column headings with the years, (1978 through 2012 and beyond). Then under each year, I place a mark indicating if I remembered to acknowledge a given person's birthday that year.



Obtaining a person's birthday is not all that hard. When I meet someone and decide I wish to acknowledge their birthday, I simply pay attention during the course of a conversation I am having with them for an opportune time to ask them when their birthday is. They invariably tell me the date without any trouble, and I simply make a mental note of it. Then I write it down as soon as I have a free moment to do so. Once I log the new date and contact person into my birthday spreadsheet, it's there for me to act on when the time comes.

Each Sunday as I plan my week, I also make it a point to open up that birthday log and review any upcoming birthdays I wish to acknowledge for the week. I also plan out how I will acknowledge them. In some cases, a simple acknowledgement on Facebook or via email is enough. In other cases, a phone call might be more apropos. Still, in other cases, mailing a greeting card with a hand-written note is in order. And other times sending a gift would be the right move. Sometimes I might call the person a week or two in advance and let them know I am aware of their upcoming birthday and would be honored to treat them to lunch or dinner.

In virtually every case the person is touched at being remembered. I can tell you that this practice has enhanced my relationships.

I should also point out that the list is fluid. It changes. Not only do new names go on the list from time to time, old names get removed for a wide variety of reasons - reasons that only you can decide. I have 88 names on my list at the present time, though there have been times that number was over 100. I should also add that occasionally

I blow it and fail to acknowledge a birthday I intended to acknowledge, but other times, if I catch the mistake early enough (i.e., within a few days) I still reach out to that person with a belated birthday wish. They are still moved and impressed.

As I mentioned above, yesterday was my birthday. I notice that some people really love their birthday while others try to downplay their birthday. I fall more in the first camp. I'm not sure why others fall in the second. Perhaps they don't want to appear to be guilty of seeking accolades. Or perhaps the notion of growing older bothers them. Or maybe they simply are uncomfortable with the limelight.

Whatever the reasoning, I suspect most of them use such posturing as a façade to mask their real feelings. I suspect most people are touched when their birthdays are acknowledged in some way, even if their public reaction is one of shyness or self-effacing modesty.

And one last thing: I don't recommend you acknowledge or celebrate others' birthdays with ulterior motives (such as courting business favors, etc.) Most people can see through such duplicity. Instead, acknowledge people's birthdays simply because you wish to contribute to the celebration of their humanness, their life, and their spirit. Doing so will make this world a better place and will make your own relationships with others more fruitful and more pleasant.

(Note: if you would like to try your hand at using my simple system, it is available for purchase for a ridiculously small fee. See the Shameless Plug column below.)

The Left Goes Marching On, Part 2

Ever wonder how Leftists really stack up on patriotism? Most Leftists would be incensed by my even raising the question (i.e., how dare I challenge their patriotism!) But a spokesman from the Liberal Left, Bill Press, decided to show his true colors when he shared his views of our nation's National Anthem.

Here are a few of [his comments](#) (paraphrased in some cases):

- "There is so much wrong with it, I don't know where to start."

- "It's a major crusade of mine to get rid of the Star Spangled Banner."
- It's just stupid.
- "I am embarrassed every time I hear it."
- Our National Anthem is "an abomination."

Responding to the lyric, "The land of the free and the home of the brave," Press asks, "Are we the only ones who are brave on the planet? I mean, all the brave people live here."

I'm actually pleased to hear this because it is refreshingly rare that we get a Leftist who doesn't keep his cards close to his vest in terms of the Leftist proclivity to systematically destroy the foundational traditions that make America what it is -- a shining city on a hill.

* * * * *

Ever wonder how California is doing economically, thanks to many years of Democratic policies? One of the nation's premier demographers, Joel Kotkin, and a Democrat himself, was interviewed several weeks ago by the [Wall Street Journal](#) to answer this question. His findings don't look too promising:

- California's fastest growing entity is not high-tech business, it's government.
- Nearly 4,000,000 more people have left California in the last two decades than have come from other states. By contrast, in the 1980s, 100,000 more Americans were settling in California each year than were leaving.
- Democratic insistence on Cap-and-Trade law AB32 will raise the cost of energy and drive out manufacturing jobs without making even a dent in global carbon emissions.
- California's electricity prices are already 50% higher than the national average.
- While the state is on the verge of bankruptcy, Democrats, led by Governor Brown, are insisting on a \$100 billion bullet train project.
- California has the 48th-worst business tax climate in



the nation. This may explain why Apple just announced that it's building a \$304 million campus in Austin, Texas, not in California. That's 3,600 jobs going to Texas that could have gone to California. Likewise, eBay is sending 1,000 new jobs to Texas, and Facebook is also sending more jobs to the Lone Star state as well.

- California's income tax laws are also bizarre: millionaires pay a top rate of 10.3%, the third highest in the country, but middle-class workers who earn more than \$48,000 pay a top rate of 9.3%, which is higher than what millionaires pay in 47 states. And California's Democrats want to raise taxes even more.
- Democrat lawmakers allow about 40% of Californians to not pay any income tax.
- Democrat lawmakers have enabled 25% of Californians to be on Medicare.

* * * * *

In a related story, another Leftist entity that is crippling California is the California Teachers Association. In a recent article published in City Journal, we learn the following (and you can read the entire article by [clicking here](#)):

- The CTA is a political behemoth that blocks meaningful education reform, protects failing and even criminal educators, and inflates teacher pay and benefits to unsustainable levels.
- The CTA boasts that it has launched more than 170 strikes since 1975.
- In 2010, the CTA spent more than \$210 million over the previous decade on political campaigning -- more than any other donor in the state. In fact, the CTA outspent the pharmaceutical industry, the oil industry, and the tobacco industry combined.
- And which political party is the beneficiary of such campaign expenditures? The Democrats. The union has become the biggest single donor to the California Democratic Party. But the Republican Party wasn't left out entirely. From 2003 to 2012, the CTA contributed an average of about \$800 each year to Republican causes. By contrast, the CTA contributed about \$101 million to Democrats during that same ten year time frame. But at least Republicans got something -- something like a waitress receiving a tip of 8 pennies.
- The CTA also funds a wide array of Leftist causes

unrelated to education, with the goal of spreading around enough cash to prevent dissent from the Left. For instance, the CTA was the single biggest financial opponent of Proposition 8, the controversial 2008 proposal to ban gay marriage, ponying up \$1.3 million to fight an initiative that eventually won 52.2 percent of the vote.

Perhaps one can understand why I, as a college professor, have decided not to join the teacher's union -- a group which still takes money out of my paycheck each month in spite of my not having joined.

Shameless Plug: Birthday Log

For those of you who would like to adopt the system I use for remembering the birthdays of key people in your life, I will save you the headache of trying to reinvent the wheel by offering my own system for the embarrassingly small fee of \$3.00.

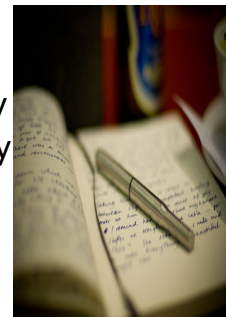
If you want it, [click here](#), pay the \$3.00 using your credit or debit card, then you can download the tool. I actually provide you with two of them: one is a sample providing a sort of visual tutorial on how I use it (with fictitious names) and the other is your master copy to use any way you wish.

Would this help you get organized so you can begin strengthening your key relationships?

Then what are you waiting for?! [Click here](#) and make it happen!

From Ara's Journal

I heard a lot of grisly stories in the news media this week. I tried to avoid them, as this wasn't a week I wished to be sullied by the news of sick individuals doing what they do. But it was hard to avoid the sickest of the sick - a pervert by the name of Luka Magnotta who committed a heinous act of murder, filmed it, and posted it online for other perverts to view.



I don't really know or care what animates such monsters. They will one day answer to God and I leave it to Him to

do what He will with them. I do wonder, even worry, if some in society may get focused on all the wrong things in dealing with the aftermath of such mayhem. I worry that some want to understand monsters such as Magnotta, or write books about them, or make movies of their deeds, or otherwise glorify their debauchery. I worry that such researchers cheapen the lives of their victims. I sense that we all become a little coarser as a result.

There is micro-evil, and there is macro-evil. Micro-evil occurs when twisted degenerates such as Magnotta do their thing. Macro-evil occurs when society becomes so corrupt that it loses its capacity to be shocked by micro-evil - when societies' values start to shift slightly, and become more tolerant of such depravity.

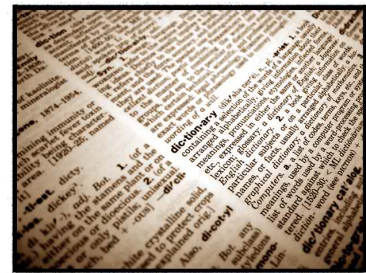
I am far more concerned with macro-evil than with micro-evil.

The World of Words

Building Your Power of Expression

Kaleidoscopic, adj.

Pronunciation: kəˌlɪdəˈskæpɪk



Meaning: This word is derived from an amusing little toy known as a kaleidoscope, which is a tubular contraption resembling a small hand-held telescope containing mirrors and pieces of colored glass or paper, whose reflections produce changing patterns that are visible through an eyehole when the tube is rotated. When used as an adjective, our term here refers to something that has the quality of changing colors, form, pattern, etc. It could also refer to the rapid changes taking place or a situation rich with variety or even complexity.

Usage:

- *He spent years of his life on a kaleidoscopic array of drugs.*
- *The sound system used by The Who when they performed at Winterland was matched by a laser light show that was both kaleidoscopic and mesmerizing.*
- *The autumn colors of Lake Louise are simply kaleidoscopic.*

Subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" is now complete and has been sent out. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

For more information on my work, follow me on Twitter ("Ara Norwood"), or on Facebook (keyword "Leadership Development Systems") or via my website: www.aranorwood.com

Sincerely,

Ara Norwood
Leadership Development Systems