

Stuff from the Pastor

Have you been watching the Olympics? The events have been great. I wish I knew the words to the song Celine Dion sang during the opening ceremonies. Even without knowing the words I felt the passion and emotion she emoted. I watched the men's basketball team play and I have to say they were tested for a bit, but then they rose to the challenge, and did what they do best. Does the basketball court remind you of your parents' kitchen floor from your youth? Just sayin'. I wish all the athletes success and may they represent their nations well. I went to the winter Olympics in Grenoble, France in 1968. That adventure started while we were supposed to be working on a civics project during my Junior year of high school. Three of us were not doing our project and I just spouted out that the Olympics were going on not too far down the road and wouldn't it be cool if we could go and watch the show. That started our brainstorming and how we could talk our folks into letting us make the trip. We had our plan made. During supper I brought up the subject and to my surprise it was met with positive vibes from my parents. In fact they thought it was a good idea and offered to call Bill and Rolf's parents and get their take on the idea. I was shocked but said nothing. In a matter of a few minutes and two phone calls we were going to the Olympics. The next morning we bought train tickets, picked up the passport security packets Bill's mom made the night before, and we met at the train station with backpacks, sleeping bags and high expectations. I said goodbye to my mom and dad and handed my ticket to my sister to hold as I lifted my backpack into the train car. As we waved goodbye my sister waved with my ticket still in her

hand. Luckily Rolf's dad was there. He spoke perfect German so he called the next train stop. When we stopped there a station representative was waiting for me with a replacement ticket. Wow, what a way to start our adventure. My sister and I laughed at the moment I realized I did not have a ticket. Pure panic, but I got my ticket and we made it to Grenoble. We got lucky and found a place to stay. The Olympic village had many extra dorms that were made available for travelers and tourists. We had a private bedroom to share, and we used the apartment style kitchen, living room, and bathrooms with folks we never saw. Such a great deal. Did I mention these were unfurnished apartments? We dumped our packs and headed out to see the Olympics. We got tickets to a hockey game. After our noses stopped bleeding we enjoyed the game. We got tickets to ski jumping, speed racing and the giant down hill slalom race. We went to the down hill race and it was packed. We plodded up the side of the lower hill past the finish line and waited for the racers to come speeding down the mountain. They did not disappoint. In a heart beat each racer passed us and went under the finish banner and slowed down and sprayed the spectators with snow as they came to a rolling stop. We did see the French hero Jean Claude Killy blur passed us on his way to winning a gold medal. Security was not like it is today. We walked around the venues and were never stopped except at entrances or events. Our last evening there we watched figure skaters do their routines in the middle of the speed racing rink. We saw one lady who was exceptional. We thought it might be Peggy Fleming, the favorite to win a gold medal. When she finished and went into the locker room we took off to find a way to get into the locker room. We waited at the door we asked the

first man to exit if he had a pen so we could get an autograph. He said 'who are you looking for?' We told him that maybe Peggy Fleming was inside and we wanted to meet her. He said "sure, she's my niece, come on in." That is how we met Peggy Fleming and we did each get her autograph. I had that in my wallet for years. Such a thrill. If memory serves me well just a few nights later she won the gold medal for woman's figure skating. Talk about it being a small world. We met another classmate from school who was there with her parents. The trip home was uneventful. We munched on cheese and French baguettes all the way home. No lost tickets on that part of the trip. Nothing like what we did and experienced could be done today. Security and the events creating the need for such things have made life different in today's world. I hope the Olympics in Paris are without outside influences and all the athletes get their deserved moment in the spotlight. Please pray for rain for our area and pray a big prayer for rains to fall upon Northern California.

Be Well, Gary Karschner



Do the Tools Control Us?

by James M. Decker

What is the purpose of a tool? Should we use the tool or should we allow the tool to use us? Should a tool improve our lives or should it control our lives?

Generally, "technology" is the application of scientific

principles to practical purposes. A tool is a device that carries out that practical purpose. They may apply different scientific principles to different purposes, but a hammer and an iPhone are both broadly classified as tools. So, too, is the internet. It was conceived by a broad consortium of scientists over the second half of the 20th century to share computer resources, exchange data, and communicate over long distances. Of course, it has exploded beyond a tool of academics and industry alone. Today, the internet infiltrates every aspect of our lives. For many of us, whether unwittingly or not, much of our life and business is conducted online. When is the last time you lived a full day without any influence by the internet whatsoever? It has been a while.

In an essay last year, I shared Wendell Berry's superb rules for adopting new tools. I will refer you to that essay for the full list, but the rules center around some key questions: does the tool make the job easier? Does the tool make life better? Does the tool negatively impact good things in life, like community, human relationships, and such?

So, how about that internet...how does it fare by that standard?

"Back to the Future" is one of my all-time favorite movie franchises. I rank this trilogy below only "Road House" and "Smokey and the Bandit" on my list of the most rewatchable films ever made. In "Back to the Future Part II," Doc Brown and Marty McFly travel from 1985 into the futuristic year of 2015. As I watched it again for "research," I thought about how the filmmakers portrayed the future as a technological utopia of sorts. Technology seems to revamp every little aspect of life and much of it is positive. Marty puts on a new jacket and discovers that clothes automatically adjust to fit your size. After he got wet, the jacket

automatically dried itself off. Automobiles can hover and fly. In addition to being pretty darn cool, this safely moves traffic overhead, out of the streets and away from pedestrians. Of course, let us not forget the hoverboards. I am annoyed that we are nearly a decade past this movie's setting, and I still do not have a hoverboard.

I am no fan of tech billionaire Peter Thiel, but he got it right in 2013 when he said, "we were promised flying cars and instead we got 140 characters" (meaning Twitter, for those of you blissfully free of that wasteland). Now, I would argue that Thiel and his ilk are the ones who are responsible for the conditions that gave us social media instead of flying cars. There is also a real argument that technological utopianism is fundamentally a dead end. No matter the era it was envisioned, from the earliest such literature in the Middle Ages to Back to the Future, technological utopianism never seems to work out like it was portrayed. I do not think that is mere failure of imagination.

But to tie in Thiel's point with the concerns outlined in Wendell Berry's "The Work of Local Culture," we expanded on the homogenized culture of television by all of us surfing the same websites together, instead of sitting on the porch and sharing stories. Now, we live in a 24-7-365 relationship with social media. If you are disconnected from social media, whether in whole or in part, I salute you. We are among friends here, so I will admit that I am not there yet. Nero fiddled while Rome burned. As for us, we are amusing ourselves and doom scrolling to oblivion as our society decays: our institutions, our economy, our human relationships, and our local culture. All of it is slowly withering as we spend more time in a virtual world. Where do you spend more time each week, talking to your neighbors in person or liking and commenting on social media posts?

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ENTERPRISE Serving Coke County Vol 132, No. 27 Friday, January 10, 2020 Joke County Water Supply Corporation awarded grant

SPECIAL OIL & GAS SECTION We'll have a special section on oil and gas production in just one page. It will include information on the latest equipment, technology, and market trends.

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Saluting the Robert Lee High School Class of 2020. Graduation will be held at the Robert Lee High School on May 15, 2020. The ceremony will be held at 7:00 p.m. The year's activities will be reviewed, and the class will be presented with their diplomas by the guest of honor, the superintendent of schools, Dr. Anne Hood.

Coke & Surrounding Counties HUNTING & FISHING GUIDE Supplement to THE OBSERVER/ENTERPRISE November 6, 2020

Saluting the Blackwell High School Class of 2020

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