



CEO'S CORNER

► A steady view on what matters most.

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The Biggest Disappointments of My Life October 19, 2026

October 7-9 were nostalgic and sentimental days for me, having returned to York, Pennsylvania for my 60th high school reunion. Walking around the downtown in which I spent much of my youth I was confronted with the passage from Thomas Wolfe's *You Can't Go Home Again*, published in 1940:

"You can't go back home to your family, back home to your childhood, back home to romantic love, back home to a young man's dreams of glory and of fame... back home to the old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting, but which are changing all the time—back home to the escapes of time and memory."

My parents are long gone, as is my childhood. I never dreamed of glory and fame, but I had other dreams and aspirations. I did escape through time and memory for a few days, reminiscing with my classmates about growing up as early baby boomers. It was a charmed era for newly minted middle class white kids like us, children of veterans of the 2nd world war. The likes of it will never happen again.

Downtown York was booming when I hung out there as a teenager in the 1960's. Today many of the storefronts on Market and George, the two major cross streets, are abandoned. The locally owned department stores in which we shopped are long gone. The wonderful indoors farmers market, which we went to weekly, is now full of tacky flea market businesses. In place of the beautiful downtown stores are a wine and liquor store, a pawn shop, Family First Health, and the York County History Center, among others. During one early morning walk three homeless men asked me for money, and I gave some to each of them. *"Old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting"*, had disappeared.

As I look back I've lived a life I never expected or could have planned for. I've been blessed with a classic case of John Lennon's lyric, "*Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans.*" I'm eternally grateful for early mentors, that I eventually moved to the Napa Valley, for meeting my wife Meghan, for my children, for my friends, for my homes here and in Costa Rica, for the success of 5T Wealth and all the wonderful people who've trusted us for so many years. But the world that I hoped to be living in today never materialized. I'm frustrated and deeply disappointed that 60 years later racism and homophobia are still rampant throughout the world. Women still struggle for equality. Approximately 626,000 people will die of cancer in the USA this year. The U.S. is at war just as it was when I graduated from high school in 1966.

Across the globe approximately 1.2 billion people live in "*acute multidimensional poverty*", surviving on less than \$3.00 per day. An additional 2.26 billion "*survive just above extreme poverty on between \$4.20 and \$8.30 per day.*" (Source: World Bank) Women are still treated as 2nd class citizens, or worse, in most of the world. They are disproportionately more likely to live in poverty than men, both globally and within the United States. Older women face a significantly higher risk of poverty than older men. Single mothers are among the most economically vulnerable globally and in the United States, facing poverty rates near 25% due to single-earner limitations together with high childcare costs. (Source: Center for American Progress). When was the last time you heard of a man being gang raped by women, while the reverse still happens way too frequently.

At the reunion I learned that many more of my classmates served in the military than I ever knew about. Bear in mind that I went off to college in 1966, moved away from PA in 1971, and have rarely returned. Several served in Vietnam. We talked about that war and its lasting impact on them. We also talked about today's wars, and how disappointed we are that there is still so much conflict in the 21st century. Financial Times reports in its October 16, 2026 issue, "*The International Crisis Group recently counted 65 ongoing conflicts around the world, the highest number since the end of the second world war*"

I don't know about you, but as a teenager and during my college years, I dreamed of a world in which racism and homophobia would someday disappear. I hoped for a world in which we could all live more equitably. I hoped human beings would actually "grow up" and learn that none of our differences were worth going to war over. It all seemed so simple to me, and it still does to this day. We are all humans. We all walk upright! Why don't we treat each other better? Why don't we help each other more to achieve our common desires? I've always believed that most of us want the same things, regardless of our country, race or culture.

Mindful Muse writes, *“Across different cultures, geographies, and generations, fundamental human aspirations remain remarkably consistent. Psychologists, sociologists, and global studies show that underneath surface-level variations, human goal-oriented behaviors stem from a shared pool of core psychological, emotional, and physical needs. They are:*

- 1. Connection and Belonging (to Love and Be Loved)*
- 2. Safety, Security, and Stability*
- 3. Autonomy and Freedom*
- 4. Significance, Purpose and Mastery*
- 5. Self-Actualization and Inner Peace*

If only it was that simple, maybe we would all get along. But it's not! Dr. Steven Reiss's 16 Basic Desires Theory posits that *“meaningful human behavior is driven by 16 distinct evolutionary strivings. Rather than categorizing people into fixed personality boxes, Reiss suggested that every individual experiences all 16 desires differently, based on their personal ranking and prioritization.”*

The 16 evolutionary strivings include: Power, Independence, Curiosity, Acceptance, Order, Saving, Honour, Idealism, Social Contact, Family, Status, Vengeance, Romance, Eating, Physical Exercise, Tranquility. Let's assume that Dr. Reiss list of 16 is correct, and that **“every individual experiences all 16 desires differently”**. Consider that Power, Order, and Vengeance are among them. Those three can explain why my naïve vision/hope for a more equitable and peaceful world has never materialized.

It's easy for me to believe that as the sun rises each morning men like Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, Kim Jong Un, and Donald Trump are focused much more on power, order, and vengeance than they are on idealism, tranquility, honor, families, or anything else. Unfortunately, that's the world we live in during 2026. Four men have more influence over the fate of approximately 8.3 billion people on earth, than at any time since Hitler, Stalin, Hirohito and his generals, Churchill, and Roosevelt influenced the fate of 2.3 billion people. None of the current four prioritize “connection and belonging”, “safety, security, and stability”, “autonomy and freedom”, or “inner peace”.

This brings me to acknowledging my biggest disappointment. In 1966 I would never have believed, and certainly wouldn't have hoped, that we'd be experiencing a growing sense of global insecurity, led by these men. Putin invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Gideon Rachman, reporter for Financial Times writes about that invasion in their current issue, “Over dinner in a Munich hotel, Andrew Shearer, then head of Australia's Office of National Intelligence, recounted a conversation he had just had with Antony Blinken. The two men had been going over Russia's invasion plans when Shearer had turned to the

then US secretary of state and said: **“I can’t believe we’re having this conversation in the 21st century.”**

I can’t say it any better. I can’t believe we are experiencing this in the 21st century. The priorities of these leaders are so unaligned with what I hoped for in the 21st century. For example, our federal government is forecasted to spend approximately \$45 to \$50 billion over the next fiscal year on medical research. \$110 to \$130 billion on education and training. \$620 to \$690 billion on poverty and income support. The forecast for “Core National Defense and Broader Military and Security is \$1.38 to \$1.50 TRILLION for the same period. (Sources: Congressional Budget Office and Bipartisan Policy Center).



While the imbalance of priorities and spending may be getting more extreme, the trend has been the same for years. I can’t help but ask myself how much better off every person on this planet would be if the “great powers” would shift priorities. How about spending \$1.5 trillion (plus whatever Russia, China, and North Korea are spending on defense) on medical research, education, lifting people out of poverty? What a different world it would be.

The problem isn’t just with these four men vying for power and influence. Other “middle leaders”, as they are now referred to, act the same way. The middle east has rarely been without war since I was born. Research Gate reports that there have been 120 “*distinct conflict episodes*” in the middle east since 1945. The bombing rarely stops in the middle east.



(Gaza, 2026)



(Southern Lebanon, 2026)

Google Gemini tells me that the percentage of people living in poverty is actually lower today than it was in the 1950's and 1960's. It also tells me that while *"global violence has surged recently it is still well below that of the 1950's to 1970's"*. Statistically that may all be true, but it doesn't change the fact that we still have way too much poverty, way too many women struggling, racism remains rampant, education is not a priority, way too few people have access to quality health care, all the while there remains plenty of diseases to cure. Our leaders prioritize power, order, and even vengeance over other common desires that would improve the world for everyone. I am so deeply disappointed after 60 years. We could have, should have done so much better.

Sincerely,



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