Lessons Learned
LESSONS LEARNED

Gary Miller
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I love to read. Whether it is fiction, history, or memoir, there are lessons to be learned from every author. I’ve posted lessons from my own reading on my blog over the years under the headline “A Lesson from . . . “. Here is a collection of 20 posts and the lessons I learned. I may add to the collection in the months ahead. Meanwhile, I hope these suggest some good reading.

–Gary Miller
July 20, 2013 — I’m reading David McCullough’s fine John Adams (2001), a biography of our second President. In it, he describes when Adams was sent to Paris during the Revolution to help negotiate peace. Adams invited his son, John Quincy Adams, to go with him. John Quincy was reluctant, wanting instead to prepare for his entry into college. However, Abigail Adams encouraged him to go, likening his travels to, as McCullough reports it, “a river that increases its volume the farther it flows from its source.” (p. 226). She goes on to tell her son:

These are the times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life, or the repose of a pacific station, that great characters are formed. The
habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. Great necessities call out great virtues. When a mind is raised, and animated by scenes that engage the heart, then those qualities which would otherwise lay dormant, wake into life and form the character of the hero and the statesman.” (ibid.)

Of course, John Quincy Adams went on to become President himself.

Abigail Adams’ advice suggests education itself should actively engage the learner in problems that give the learner experience in “contending with difficulties.” The large, passive lecture—be it in a campus lecture hall or a MOOC—does little to give students the opportunity to experience knowledge directly as a solution to a problem. Both on campus and online we should encourage a problem-centered, inquiry-oriented approach to instruction that actively engages the student in confronting problems, seeking out information to inform action, and then applying knowledge to solve the problem, in the process identifying principles that can be generalized from the specific problem.

Technology gives us the means to offer this kind of learning at the scale we need in order to properly meet the needs of our students and the society in which they live.

Reference:
September 6, 2016 — Back in 1919, at the end of the first World War, Jane Addams published an article called “Americanization” in the Publications of the American Sociological Society. She focused on the different ways in which the idea of “Americanization” was perceived before the War and after it. Before the war, she wrote, “Americanism was then regarded as a great cultural task, and we eagerly sought to invent new instruments and methods with which to undertake it. We believed that America could be best understood by the immigrants if we ourselves, Americans, made some sort of a connection with their past history and experiences” (The Jane Addams Reader, p. 244).
However, after the war, she notes, “there is no doubt that one finds in the United States the same manifestation of the world-wide tendency toward national dogmatism, the exaltation of blind patriotism above intelligent citizenship . . .” (p. 245).

There is a lesson here for our times, when our national politics on almost every front (including, still today, immigration) has become weighed down by dogmatism, leaving us little space to find the middle path that makes democracy work. As Addams herself noted,

“When we confound doctrines with people, it shows that we understand neither one nor the other. Many men, not otherwise stupid, when they consider a doctrine detestable, failing to understand that changes can be made only by enlightening people, feel that they suppress the doctrine itself when they denounce and punish its adherents” (p. 246).

Too often, these days, our elected representatives feel themselves morally bound to adhere strictly to a dogmatic vision, either the one they campaigned on or the one held by the people who funded their elections. As a result, we have seen a virtual paralysis of government. American democracy is performed through argument and discussion, but ultimately achieved through negotiation and compromise–finding a common ground on which we can all agree to work together as a community.

As a first step, we need to ask our elected representatives to see their colleagues not as adherents to a different dogma, but as fellow citizens. In turn, they need to educate the public–and lobbyists–that their job is to advance the total community, not just their partisans.
One place where that job can be engaged is in the news media. Too often, as has been said before in this blog, the news media serve to reinforce the differences in dogma rather than to help viewers find the middle ground where good policy can be developed.

We just began a new four-year political cycle. Let’s hope that Congress and the Administration can find a middle path and that the news media, rather than simply inviting the dogmatic extremists to butt heads on every issue, will foster a fair analysis that will help everyone educate themselves about what can truly be done to find common ground solutions.

Reference:
April 19, 2016 — I am reading James Traub’s new biography *John Quincy Adams: Militant Spirit*. It is interesting for many reasons, not the least of which is how it illuminates a critical time in American history that is often overlooked. It was a time when the American experiment was still delicate, due both to internal differences among the states and our increasingly important role with the colonial powers of England, France, and Spain as we defined our continental scope.

Adams, who had served as our representative to France, Russia, and England as early as the 1790s and as Secretary of State under Monroe, had a unique perspective on the nation’s international affairs—one
that is still important today. Discussing the competition between Adams and Henry Clay in the Monroe administration, Traub writes:

For Adams, Clay’s views smacked of a dangerous unreality, a commitment to principle in the absence or history, politics, national habit, and character. Like Burke, Adams reasoned from what men did, not from what they wished they did or imagined they might have done in an ideal setting. A foreign policy based on a priori assumptions about the world rather than a rigorous understanding of men and nations was bound to overreach and lead to grief.

It is a timely lesson for the 2016 Presidential campaign. Both parties are being challenged by outsiders whose views can easily be said to smack of a “dangerous unreality.” Republican Donald Trump’s “Make America Great Again” campaign makes bold statements about bringing jobs home again, about building a wall to keep out immigrants, and about defeating international extremist terrorism. However, he has no real plans, only what amounts, in the end, to a marketing campaign. The Democrats have Independent Senator Bernie Sanders, who campaigns for democratic socialist ideals—free education, universal health care, etc.—but with little explanation of how he will pursue his ideals or ensure that they are sustainable.

Like them or not, these are candidates who lack the political skills to sustain their vision into reality. Trump has no political leadership experience, and it is questionable whether his financial deal-making experience would have any value in statecraft. Sanders has always operated as an outsider; it is difficult to know
whether he could become a team-builder who could create the majority needed to fulfill his ideals.

The lesson from John Quincy Adams is that we must be very cautious about giving power to people who propose to govern on “a priori assumptions about the world.” We need leaders who are experienced in political leadership, not outsiders who have only their marketing skills or ideals to offer.

Reference:

May 10, 2018 — I just finished reading The Memory of Old Jack, Wendell Berry’s 1974 novel that traces the experiences of an old farmer in Port William, Kentucky, the site of many Berry novels about life in an agrarian community. At the end, he has this to say about how farming communities have changed over the past century:

Wheeler has been thinking about them and about the troubles that probably lie ahead of them: an
increasing scarcity of labor as more and more of the country people move to the cities; the consequent necessity for further mechanization of the farms; the consequent need of the farmers for more land and more capital in order to survive; the consequent further departure of the labor force from the country; the increasing difficulty of preserving an agricultural economy favorable to small farmers as political power flows from the country to the cities. (p. 163)

Much has happened since Berry published this in 1974, nearly half a century ago. Many of the consequences that he identified have come to fruition as the Industrial Revolution has given way to the Information Revolution and the growth of a global information society. In 2014, Berry observed this in an essay called “Our Deserted Country”:

By now nearly all of the land-using population have left their farms and home places to be industrially or professionally employed, or unemployed, and to be entirely dependent on the ways and the products of industrialism. Or they have remained, as “farmers,” to pilot enormous machines over thousands of acres continuously in annual row crops such as soybeans and corn. (Our Only World, p. 111)

It is a fact of life in the Information Society that we are now globally connected. One consequence has been to make more tenuous our ties to truly local communities. Yes, those fields of soybeans are meant to be sold in great numbers to China and elsewhere around the world. Yes, our industries require workers who live in or near our industrial cities. In the process, though,
we have lost that sense of identity—our intimate familiarity—with our immediate surroundings. Even those of us whose forebears were coal miners and mill workers—who have not had the multi-generational familial relationship to the land that Berry cherishes—are increasingly aware of the problem. It is one reason why we flock to weekly farmers’ markets and to “farm to table” restaurants.

In *Our Only World*, Berry notes that “if the land and the people are ever to be saved, they will be saved by local people enacting together a proper respect for themselves and their places. They can do this only in ways that are neighborly, convivial, and generous, but also and in the smallest details, practical and economic” (p.63). He goes on to lay out a dozen “suggestions” for how to achieve this:

1. Reject the idea that “the ultimate reality is political” and, thus, that solutions must be political.
2. Avoid “standardized industrial solutions” unless they are based in an understanding of the uniqueness of every place.
3. Replace ideals of competition, consumption, globalism, corporate profitability, mechanical efficiency, technological change, and upward mobility with reverence, humility, affection, familiarity, neighborliness, corporation, thrift, appropriateness, and local loyalty.
4. Understand that the solution to big problems may best be found in individual families, and local communities.
5. Understand the importance of subsistence economies.
6. Rethink the structure and cost of higher education, so that debt does not take young people away from their communities.
7. Ensure that local communities know how much of the land is locally owned and available for local needs and uses.
8. Understand and act on the local need for local products.
9. Have local conversations about how best to meet local needs.
10. Understand the implications of “labor-saving” technologies that, in fact are “people-replacing” technologies. Ensure that land-using economies are led by skilled and careful workers.
11. Make sure that local people who do the actual work are supported.
12. Confront social prejudice against people who work the land.

Berry makes important points about how to sustain agrarian communities. At the same time, however, I would argue that it is important to keep in mind that we have, indeed, entered a new era. While family farms are one key to strengthening small, rural communities, we need to acknowledge that jobs in coal mining and factories on which many small communities were built are not coming back. Most communities need to attract new jobs. In many cases, the supply chains for these jobs will be tied to the new global, multi-cultural society that has developed around information society. To succeed, we need to educate our young people for the work of the future so that they can create a new sense of community—one that recognizes the importance of local
culture in a context that the economy will support in the future. The challenge is to build true and sustainable local cultures that also embrace and maintain bridges to the emerging global culture and economy. It is a challenge for our schools and for local and state governments and for individual citizens as we live our daily lives.

Reference:
March 27, 2018 — This month, the book group at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church read *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, an author and journalist whose career has ranged from serving as national correspondent for *The Atlantic* to writing the Black Panther comic book series that has become a major motion picture. Coates is African-American, and *Between the World and Me* is his account—told through a series of letters to his son—of the experience of being black in American society. The book won the National Book Award for Nonfiction and was a finalist for a Pulitzer.
The book is an eye-opener. While I have read other books about the African-American experience, this was the first time that I had experienced an author speaking directly, intimately, and at length about the many facets of being black in American society. A powerful writer, he brings home the intensity of that experience, which comes into sharp focus when a good friend is gunned down by a policeman.

*Between the World and Me* contains many references to people who go about their lives, in Coates’ words, “as if they were white.” His point is that race is socially manufactured, that Europeans and European-Americans justified their enslavement of Africans by creating the idea that there are separate races. In other words, they created the idea of “black” as an inferior race and, in the process, created the idea of “white” as a superior race. “Difference in hue and hair,” he writes, “is old. But the belief in the preeminence of hue and hair, the notion that these factors can correctly organize a society and that they signify deeper attributes, which are indelible—this is the new idea at the heart of these new people who have been brought up hopelessly, tragically, deceitfully, to believe that they are white” (p. 7).

His comments reminded me of a discussion during the planning of an international conference in Canada a few years back. The discussion centered around the U.S. ideal of a “melting pot” versus the Canadian ideal of a social “mosaic” in which each individual brings his/her own unique characteristics to society. During the Book Group discussion, I noted the common rule of thumb that it usually takes three generations for an immigrant family to fully blend into the general U.S. population—to fully melt in the pot. At that point, people tend to
privatize their historical roots and live publicly simply as unhyphenated Americans. Perhaps Coates has a similar idea in mind when he says to his son, “You can no more be black like I am black than I could be black like your grandfather was” (p. 39). Each generation lives in a somewhat different context that defines how they see themselves and how they are seen. Irish-Americans and Italian-Americans—despite rough, often violent resistance to their ancestors when they first arrived—fully blend into the crowd after a few generations and use their hyphen as a point of familial pride, not as a public label. But clearly, the value that Americans place on the idea of race as a differentiator of power has made that difficult for African-Americans. As Coates writes, “There will surely always be people with straight hair and blue eyes, as there have been for all history. But some of these straight-haired people with blue eyes have been ‘black,’ and this points to the great difference between their world and ours.”

It remains true that racial distinctions both flow from and reinforce the fact that “whites” enslaved “blacks,” creating a lasting social disparity between the two groups. In the long run, we need to eliminate these artificial distinctions. However, it may be worth noting that it has only been two generations—since the black rights movement of the 1960s—that African-Americans have gained their full rights as citizens in the U.S. Clearly, racism still exists, but, increasingly, it is recognized for what it is.

It has been good in recent months to see the melting pot ideal increasingly featured in television advertising. It is not just that black families are more visible as representatives of the purchasing public, but that mixed
race couples and mixed-race families are now often seen as models. It is a sign that the mosaic, if not yet the melting pot, is at work. Perhaps Generation Z—the third generation since the civil rights achievements of the 1960s—who have already begun to step up for social change in light of school shootings, is the generation that will see the end to this struggle. It is an ambitious dream, but one worth the effort. It remains for all of us to embrace all varieties of American as our neighbors, our friends, our extended family. The recent shooting death of Stephon Clark is a haunting reminder of how far we have to go; the news coverage of this tragedy, though, may be a sign that we are nearing a point where racism—and race, generally—is no longer an acceptable excuse for the misuse of power.

Reference:
July 7, 2014 — In The Writing Life, Annie Dillard writes:

There is no shortage of good days. It is good lives that are hard to come by. A life of good days lived in the senses is not enough. The life of sensation is the life of greed; it requires more and more. The life of the spirit requires less and less; time is ample and its passage sweet. Who would call a day spent reading a good day? But a life spent reading – that is a good life.

She is, of course, talking about the routine of the creative life—the need for consistency and habits of work through
which the writer can create works of astonishing power. It made me reflect on the difference between being a tourist—living a life of good days experienced through the senses—versus residing in a place and coming to know and participate in its true spirit. It is what has driven us to vacation every year in the same small town in Maine and, after retirement, to remain in the community where I had been a student, a professional, a husband, a parent, and a grandparent. A community, as Wendell Berry points out, is a set of local inter-relationships.

But—perhaps because of my own habits—her words also made me reflect on what we do in higher education. So much of our undergraduate curriculum, it seems, is tourism. We visit history era by era. We read the modern American writers, then move on to the English writers of the 18th century and travel on to the American Romantics, stopping by Mark Twain along the way. We take a river tour of chemistry, physics, and biology without leaving the boat. We read about sociology. We read about psychology. We get through math. At the end, we return home from a journey of good days and find that nothing has changed, but that the mailbox is full of bills to pay.

The challenge for college and university educators is how to help students turn a journey of good days into a good life. Education—especially the general education core—cannot be just about gathering knowledge like so many mementos. It must be about helping students learn to integrate knowledge into their lives as members of a community. This is especially an issue as we move further into the Information Revolution. In response to the Industrial Revolution, higher education transformed the classical liberal arts curriculum—which focused on
“the discipline and furniture of the mind” (according to
the Yale faculty back in the 1820s)—by greatly expanding
the subjects studied, adding the social sciences and
laboratory sciences, for instance. However, there was
still a focus on “the canon” in most disciplines. A
generation into the Information Revolution, we now can
easily see that our students are confronted with a maze
of information. The challenge is to help students develop
the skills of finding information, evaluating that
information, turning it into useful knowledge, and then
applying that to the problems facing them and their
communities.

One can argue that this has always been the end goal of
general education, but, in an Information Society, these
are essential life skills, not the by-products of education.
The test of a modern general education curriculum must
be that we produce good citizens, not just experienced
tourists.

Reference:
Perennial, 1990.
September 2, 2014 — August 31 marked the anniversary of Emerson’s “The American Scholar” speech, in which he laid out the ideals of transcendentalism. Here is what *The Writer’s Almanac* had to say about the speech:

It was on this day in 1837 that Ralph Waldo Emerson (books by this author) delivered a speech titled “The American Scholar” to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard University. The speech was the first time he explained his transcendentalist philosophy in front of a large public audience. He said that scholars had become too obsessed with ideas of the past, that they...
were bookworms rather than thinkers. He told the audience to break from the past, to pay attention to the present, and to create their own new, unique ideas.

He said: “Life is our dictionary … This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it … Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds.”

The speech was published that same year. It made Emerson famous, and it brought the ideas of Transcendentalism to young men like Henry David Thoreau. Oliver Wendell Holmes later praised Emerson’s “The American Scholar” as the “intellectual Declaration of Independence.”

Emerson gave this speech as America was still discovering itself, only two generations after the Revolution and in the first generation of the Industrial Revolution. At the same time, the first American scholars were returning from Europe, after earning their doctorates at the new research universities in Germany. They became academic leaders here at home and, in the process, helped to invent the American college and university as we know it today—as a community dedicated to the threefold mission of research, teaching and service. It was a time for looking forward and, as Emerson argued, a time for scholars to be actively engaged in the world. “The true scholar,” he said, “grudges every opportunity of action past by, as a loss of power. “

Emerson’s challenge is especially important to today’s generation of scholars and higher education administrators—and public policy makers whose decisions will affect the future of higher education for
the coming generations. This issue was the focus of a previous post on my blog, “Building the Future of Public Higher Education.” Here are some additional thoughts inspired by Emerson’s speech:

First, a reminder that, in the 177 years since Emerson’s speech, the world has changed. The Industrial Revolution is over; we are living through an Information Revolution that is raising issues that are new to society. Some are the residue of the industrial period. Other are unintended consequences of how we have conducted society since the new era began in the 1950s. Many of these issues are global in nature. Some examples: reduced grain production in the face of increased need for food, international disease outbreaks, a globally dispersed business supply chain, the growing likelihood of environmental disaster, the rise of social media and virtual communities.

These challenges affect all three of the core missions of higher education: research, teaching, and engagement. Here is a thought on the research role stimulated by Emerson’s speech:

The ideal of academic freedom, inherent in Emerson’s philosophy, has been with us for a long time now. Today, that ideal is being challenged by the increasing power of corporations in our public life, along with the decreasing state government investment in public education. Many of the issues that we are facing as a society are unforeseen consequences of innovation in the corporate sector or have the potential to undermine corporate investments, which suggests that corporations will be unlikely to fund research in these arenas. How we maintain (or, perhaps, recover) independence of academic research in this environment is a critical strategy question.
One strategy is for educators to band together to create a community that can raise money from new sources. This can happen at the discipline level—creating interdisciplinary communities that combine academic expertise and attract new funding—or at the institutional level. With that in mind, a strategy might be for a family of institutions, perhaps through their national association, to identify critical societal issues for which interdisciplinary research is needed and then to hold a series of national/international conferences on that issue in order to create new research ideas and, ultimately, to attract foundations to the new research agenda.

Given the importance of globalization in today’s environment, another strategy would be to create international venues that bring faculty together to share ideas and develop synergies. The Worldwide University Network is a good example of this and how it can stimulate new teaching as well as new research.

It is critical that public colleges and universities actively seek out ways to ensure that faculty have the academic freedom needed to tackle the issues facing our society and to turn their research into new teaching and new service to society.
A LESSON
FROM DELIA
EPHRON

July 22, 2014 — Here is what Delia Ephron says about writing in her new book, *Sister Mother Husband Dog*:

“Our job as writers, as we begin that journey, is to figure out what we can do. Only do what you can do. It’s a rule I live by. Among other things, it means I can have novels heavier on dialog than description. But more important, if you only do what you can do, you never have to worry that someone else is doing it. It keeps you from competing. It keeps you looking inside for what’s true rather than outside for what’s popular. Ideally. Your writing is your fingerprint.”
She adds in the next paragraph, “It’s our job in life to come to some understanding of our own identity, and being a writer makes that easier.” (p. 13).

I read it on a beautiful morning, as I struggled with some of my own writing. “Only do what you can do” is a good writing mantra. Write to become yourself, not to imitate someone else.

Thanks, Delia.

Reference:
July 9, 2013 — I am reading Walter Isaacson’s biography, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*. In it, there is this paragraph that I find to be very important for Americans today:

“Tocqueville came to the conclusion that there was an inherent struggle in America between two opposing impulses: the spirit of rugged individualism versus the conflicting spirit of community and association building. Franklin would have disagreed. A fundamental aspect of Franklin’s life, and of the American society he helped
to create, was that individualism and communitarianism, so seemingly contradictory, were interwoven. The frontier attracted barn-raising pioneers who were ruggedly individualistic as well as fiercely supportive of their community. Franklin was the epitome of this admixture of self-reliance and civic involvement, and what he exemplified became part of the American character” (p. 103).

It strikes me that what Tocqueville called “inherent struggle” is the yin and yang of American society. The opposites are, in fact, just as Franklin saw them: two aspects that, taken singly, are in opposition but that, taken together, define the American character. Throughout our history, it has been this kind of civic individualism that has allowed Americans to solve problems and to innovate to create a better society. It is what allowed us to be not just a nation of immigrants, but a nation of immigrants who created a unique culture.

Today, in our politics and in our culture more generally, we are ignoring the unity that these apparent opposites allow us. We are focused on the yin and the yang—the sun and the shadow—rather than on the mountain they define. We need a Franklin to remind us that, as he wrote, “The good men may do separately is small compared with what they may do collectively.”

Reference:
June 20, 2018 — Like many Americans, I have spent much of the past 18 months trying to understand what is happening in the United States since the reins of government were turned over to Donald Trump and his collaborators in the Republican Party. We have gone from laughing at their gaffes, staring wide-eyed at their lies (even as it became clear that the lies were intentional and not simply the products of ignorance or naivete), and bowing our heads in anger and shame at their treatment of others, whether they be fellow citizens suffering in the wake of Puerto Rico’s hurricanes or Hispanic families seeking refuge from turmoil in their homelands. This week’s “no tolerance” policy that separates migrant
families, putting thousands of children into make-shift concentration camps, has marked a new low, not just for Trump and his gang, but for our country as a whole. As we sink further into the mire of racial hate and economic war, we need to turn away from the spectacle and look for solutions. We need to ask what it will take for our country to regain its honor.

While one Gallup Poll reported this week that Trump’s popularity rose to 45%—on a par with other presidents at this point in their first administration—CNN’s new poll showed him at 39%, down from 41% in May. That suggests (although we have no idea what the current humanitarian crisis over separating children from migrant parents may do) that Trump’s popularity with the base population that elected him is holding fast. Looking ahead, it is almost impossible to imagine how to respond to Trump without knowing more about the underlying issues that drive his core support and what is needed to lead us to the changes that, very obviously, are needed.

Thomas Friedman’s 2016 book, Thank You for Being Late, explores some dimensions of the problems that we don’t hear about on the nightly news. Friedman describes two kinds of change: technological and social. Technological change evolves rapidly, doubling its power and reach every few years. Imagine, for instance, what has happened technologically in the two decades since the first web browser was launched in 1995 and compare that innovation with today’s cloud computing! It is difficult, Friedman notes, to capture “the transformational nature of what has been created.” The result, he says, is “a tremendous release of energy into the hands of human beings to compete, design, think,
imagine, connect, and collaborate with anyone anywhere” (p. 83). This same force has greatly multiplied the power of one person to change society, but it is also amplifying what Friedman calls “the power of many.” “Human beings,” he reports, “as a collective are not just a part of nature; they have become a force of nature—a force that is disturbing and changing the climate and our planet’s ecosystems at a pace and scope never before seen in human history” (p. 87). However, Friedman also notes that social change takes place at a much slower pace than technological change. At some point, the speed of technological change outpaces our ability to adapt to it, creating social disruption and leaving some people behind as others race to catch up.

It forces the question: Where do people whose training and experience are with the technology and industrial models of the older technology fit into this new world? That is a question that is critical for people who work in mining and traditional industrial communities around the nation. Most of these people are descended from people who came to the United States from northern Europe in the 19th and early 20th century. They have been told by political opportunists that new immigrants challenge their right to good jobs. However, the real problem is that those jobs are no longer available to anyone. Change has created a new working environment for everyone.

Friedman acknowledges that the gap between the pace of technological change and that of social change is a cause of serious concern and anxiety, especially in the political realm. “It is time,” he concludes, “to redouble our efforts to close that anxiety gap with imagination and
innovation and not scare tactics and simplistic solutions that will not work” (p. 202).

Part of the solution is a societal commitment to lifelong education that will help all members of society to keep pace with technological change so that they can continue to thrive in a rapidly evolving environment. We need to acknowledge that, even with a commitment to universal K-14 education, this only prepares students to find their skills. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that, as Friedman notes, an undergraduate degree today simply prepares a grad for his/her first job. Education must become a lifelong resource to help people adjust their careers to changing circumstances and then to an active role in the community after retirement.

Beyond that, Friedman argues that, in order to keep pace with technology-related change, we need to innovate “in everything other than technology.” He writes:

“It is reimagining and redesigning your society’s workplace, politics, geopolitics, ethics, and community—in ways that will enable more citizens on more days in more ways to keep pace with how these accelerations are reshaping their lives and generate more stability as we shoot through these rapids” (p. 199).

At the end of the day, the issue is not returning to a long-lost past but learning to innovate as individuals and communities to create a new social environment that can prosper in a world in which humans—and their technology—are a force of nature.

Reference:
August 9, 2012 — Below are the “Instructions for Life” by the Dalai Lama—“20 Ways to Get Good Karma.” They are worth keeping posted on your bulletin board or inside your medicine cabinet or on your refrigerator. I especially like the last two.

1. Take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
2. When you lose, don’t lose the lesson.
3. Follow the three R’s:
   – Respect for self,
– Respect for others and
– Responsibility for all your actions.
4. Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.
5. Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly.
6. Don’t let a little dispute injure a great relationship.
7. When you realize you’ve made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.
8. Spend some time alone every day.
9. Open your arms to change, but don’t let go of your values.
10. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
11. Live a good, honorable life. Then when you get older and think back, you’ll be able to enjoy it a second time.
12. A loving atmosphere in your home is the foundation for your life.
13. In disagreements with loved ones, deal only with the current situation. Don’t bring up the past.
14. Share your knowledge. It is a way to achieve immortality.
15. Be gentle with the earth.
16. Once a year, go someplace you’ve never been before.
17. Remember that the best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other.
LESSONS LEARNED

18. Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.
19. If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.
20. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.
May 17, 2015 — In May 1891, Pope Leo XIII opened a new chapter in the mission of the Catholic Church when he issued an open letter entitled *Rerum Novarum—Of New Things*. The letter dealt with the Church’s position on an issue of increasing global concern: the dangers of unregulated Capitalism. Much of the Western world was still in the throes of the Industrial Revolution. Capitalism was in full flower, and other beliefs—the labor movement, Socialism, Communism—were developing in response to it. The letter addressed the responsibilities of Capitalists to the larger community.

Under the banner, “The Rights and Responsibilities of Capital and Labor,” the Pope noted:
... some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class: for the ancient workingmen’s guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organization took their place. Public institutions and the laws set aside the ancient religion. Hence, by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. The mischief has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the Church, is nevertheless, under a different guise, but with like injustice, still practiced by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added that the hiring of labor and the conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself.

The Pope argued that the remedy proposed by the new Socialist movement—to renounce private property—was not ethical, as it “would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community” and that “Socialists, therefore, by endeavoring to transfer the possessions of individuals to the community at large, strike at the interests of every wage-earner, since they would deprive him of the liberty of disposing of his wages, and thereby of all hope and possibility of increasing his resources and of bettering his condition in life.”

Instead, the Pope called for a regulated approach to Capitalism that protected the worker and the Capitalist. He wrote, “... the first thing of all to secure is to save unfortunate working people from the cruelty of men of
greed, who use human beings as mere instruments for money-making. It is neither just nor human so to grind men down with excessive labor as to stupefy their minds and wear out their bodies.” He added, “… wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice.” He argued that unions were a proper mechanism for ensuring that workers receive proper compensation and conditions for their work, comparing them to medieval guilds.

One hundred and twenty-four years later, the Pope’s words continue to ring true. The Information Revolution and the resulting globalization of capitalism have pretty much destroyed the ideal of community in many industries. No longer do bosses and workers live in the same physical community, dependent one another for services outside the workplace. At the same time, globalization—in the form of a global business supply chain—has diminished the impact of community on workers themselves. In the process, greed becomes less tangible when the boss never even sees his workers and the workers have no relationship with their bosses outside work, not even a shared culture.

For centuries, greed has been a “deadly sin” in the Christian community. It was Christ, after all, who said that it is easier to put a camel through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven. The issue goes well beyond money. It speaks to our respect for each other across social classes, for sure, but also across significant cultural divides in this new global economy. What Pope
Leo XIII did 124 years ago set a new direction for the Catholic Church at the height of the Industrial Revolution. The question for today is whether we can re-invigorate the *Rerum Novarum* as both an individual morality and a societal ethic that will guide us through the dangerous waters in what has yet to take shape as a new social order.
July 12, 2018 — In New Seeds of Contemplation, Thomas Merton wrote about solitude and community in a way that seems especially relevant given our current political climate:

“There is actually no more dangerous solitude than that of the man who is lost in a crowd, who does not know he is alone and who does not function as a person in a community. . . Where men live huddled together without true communication, there seems to be greater sharing, and a more genuine communication. But this is not communication, only immersion in the general meaninglessness of countless slogans and cliches repeated over and over again so that in the end one listens
without hearing and responds without thinking. The constant din of empty words and machine noises, the endless booming of loudspeakers end by making true communication and true communion almost impossible. Each individual in the mass is insulated by thick layers of insensitivity. He doesn’t care, he doesn’t hear, he doesn’t think.” (p. 56)

We need to awaken from our “dangerous solitude” of party loyalty and nationalism and rediscover our sense of community—to rediscover what it means to be a citizen in a diverse democracy and what it means to be a democratic nation in a world beset by the storm of global change. The time is now.

Reference:

February 16, 2015 — In The Republic of the Imagination, Azar Nafisi (who also wrote Reading Lolita in Tehran) had this observation about the process of reading literature:

“Stories are not mere flights of fantasy or instruments of political power and control. They link us to our past, provide us with critical insight into the present and enable us to envision our lives not just as they are but as they should be or might become. Imaginative knowledge is not something you have today and discard tomorrow. It is a way of perceiving the world and relating to it. Primo Levi once said, ‘I write in order to rejoin the community
of mankind.’ Reading is a private act, but it joins us across continents and time” (p. 3).

Her statement captures very concisely how we should envision and practice teaching literature—not just stories, but all of literature—as part of a general education curriculum. Too often, in our “breadth versus depth” approach to building a curriculum, humanities content of all sorts is simply presented as part of an introduction to the discipline. General education courses in literature may cover a broader timespan than their upper-division counterparts, but instructors tend to presents the works themselves much the same as they would in a professional studies course. What Nafisi gives us is a set of objectives for how we should present literature (and, I believe many more of the humanities disciplines) in a proper general education curriculum. The emphasis is on using literature to help students achieve insights into their own culture and to empower them to relate more effectively to the world in which they live. Ideally, this is best achieved by courses that avoid the artificial barriers that researchers have created between literature and philosophy, literature and history, literature and the social sciences, etc.

In my 1988 book, *The Meaning of General Education*, I reviewed several major curriculum innovations in the 20th century to demonstrate the differences between general education and liberal education, between general education and interdisciplinarity, and between general education and a prescribed curriculum—all common ways of thinking about general education from within the academy. Instead, the innovations of the last century suggested, general education “begins with the individual
and his or her relationship to society, rather than knowledge, as its organizing goal” (p. 188).

As Nafisi notes, “If we need fiction today, it is not because we need to escape from reality; it is because we need to return to it with eyes that are refreshed, or, as Tolstoy would have it, ‘clean-washed.’” (p.33)

Higher education today has become extremely focused on professional/vocational studies. A true general education is desperately needed to produce graduates who are able to function—as citizens, as parents, and as professionals—in a global information society that is more diverse and more fragile than we have ever seen.

Reference:
October 3, 2014 — In Tom Wolfe’s 2000 essay collection, *Hooking Up*, he describes the impact of science on our understanding of human behavior. He quotes Frederich Nietzsche’s famous “God is dead” as one example of how science—and social philosophy—killed our reverence for the unknown. Wolfe goes on to explore the impact of Nietzsche’s statement on our own culture at the turn of the new millennium. Writing in 1882 during a time of relative peace in Europe, Nietzsche warned: “The story I have to tell is the history of the next two centuries.” What Nietzsche predicted, Wolfe notes, is that “...
twentieth century would be a century of ‘wars such as have never happened on earth,’ wars catastrophic beyond all imagining” (p. 98). The reason:

Because human beings would no longer have a god to turn to, to absolve them of their guilt; but they would still be racked by guilt, since guilt is an impulse instilled in children when they are very young, before the age of reason. As a result, people would loathe not only one another, but themselves.” (ibid.)

What happened, of course, was the Twentieth Century, a century of two World Wars, revolutions in Russia and China, the Korean War, ideological wars in Vietnam and the Middle East, revolutions and counter-revolutions in Africa and Latin America, not to mention the so-called Cold War. Turns out Nietzsche was right about that.

But Nietzsche had a vision for the 21st century, too. In *The Will to Power*, he predicted that this century—our century—would see “the total eclipse of all values,” based on the rise of what Wolfe describes as “barbaric nationalistic brotherhoods.” “Nobody,” wrote Nietzsche, “should be surprised when . . . brotherhoods with the aim of robbery and exploitation of the nonbelievers . . . appear the arena of the future.”

Certainly, the Nazis and Marxists of the 20th century met Nietzsche’s description, but Nietzsche’s vision is very descriptive of what has happened so far in this century. Al Qaeda (which attacked New York the year after the publication of Wolfe’s essay) is just one example. In the past few months, we’ve seen the example of ISIS’s “convert or die” attacks in Syria and Iraq, Russian ethnic nationalism in the Ukraine, Boko Haram kidnappings of
girls in Nigeria, just to name the most obvious examples. And, we are only fourteen years into this century!

According to Nietzsche, we can expect more. As Wolfe paraphrases Nietzsche, we are entering “a frantic period of ‘revaluation,’ in which people would try to find new systems of values to replace the osteoporotic skeletons of the old.”

So, what does this mean for our generation? If, in the 21st century, ISIS is something we can expect more as typical than as an aberration, what strategies must we develop to maintain our own culture?

Well, for one thing, it means that conflicts with “barbaric nationalistic brotherhoods” will not be war as our grandparents knew it. This is not government-versus-government inter-national warfare. It is likely that no peace treaties, no territorial redistributions, no economic collaborations will settle differences and make our enemies friends and allies. In fact, while these brotherhoods are often violent, war itself, as we typically think of it, may not be a practical solution. As the Middle East has demonstrated over the past century of European intervention, the methods of war—invasion, occupation, destruction of community, etc.—only leave increased bitterness behind. There is no government to accept defeat, no way for the participants to accept the new “normal” after war. For that matter, there is no way to judge success.

What, then, can we do in the face of ISIS and other nationalistic brotherhoods?

First, of course, nations need to take action against violence against those who cannot protect themselves. This is best seen not as “war” in the traditional sense, but police action against nongovernmental criminal
organizations. The goal should be to stop the violence and bring the guilty to justice. The process may look like war, but we need to have a different mindset about what we are doing.

While these police actions are needed, there is much more to be done beyond that in order to address the underlying problems. This requires a true coalition of interested and affected nations and other organizations, committed to a long-term engagement to seek both political and social solutions to the underlying issues that led to radicalism. It recognizes that these radical brotherhoods are not driven by territory or commercial gain alone, but by a deep loss of identity—a loss of control over their culture, their religion, and their sense of being part of a self-sustaining community. This, as Nietzsche wrote, leads to a radical “revaluation” as the groups try to find a new identity. Without these steps, we will simply see a vicious cycle of police actions with no end in sight.

There is a theory of social development called the “expanding communities” model. It works at both the individual level and the societal level. The individual level works something like this: Early on, young people identify most with their immediate family. As they grow, they begin to identify with a broader community—the neighborhood. Being a member of a neighborhood becomes their public identity, and the family becomes a more personal, private identity. As they grow older, youngsters may see their membership in their school as their public identity and privatize their neighborhood identity; then they move on to their profession as their public identity and privatize their identity as alumni. So it goes. The same sort of thing works at the societal level, but in broader historical terms that define the
individual’s relationship to society itself. Early in history, individuals identified with their family or tribe. Over time, they formed villages containing multiple tribes; their tribal membership became a private identity as they became publicly members of their village. Then, perhaps, they identified with their religion, with their country, or with their region, etc.

The question today for many people—it seems to be a particular problem in the Middle East but also in the Russian ethnic areas of the former Soviet Union—is that civilization change—a combination of colonialism, political revolution, international commerce, and the global information society, to name a few—has taken away their public identity, leaving them with the ghosts of private identities but with nothing else to give them a place in society. This is the ultimate source of ISIS.

The challenge, then, is to help all people find an identity that allows them to be productive members of the new global society that has arisen around them but that does not yet include them. This is a task that requires involvement of many different parties, first, to understand the problem and, second, to seek cultural—and eventually political and economic—solutions.

The current ISIS phenomenon is a good case. Over the past two centuries, the culture of the Middle East has been undermined by all sorts of internal and external influences, from Napoleonic invasions to British colonialism to the commercial exploitation of the region’s oil reserves and the creation of a Jewish state, displacing millions of Palestinians. Prior to Western involvement, the Middle East had achieved a tenuous stability through the overlapping influence of three
distinct forces: several Islamic sects, cultural/ethnic groupings, and political/military realms. Each had its own area of influence that, often, overlapped with but did not coincide with political borders. The experience of the past century has upset these balances by putting the emphasis on political/economic boundaries.

There is little that the United States or other Western powers can do to address this imbalance on their own. It requires an open discussion among Middle Eastern states, religious and cultural leaders, economists, and other governmental and nongovernmental organizations whose activities have an impact on the issues. It is a good example of why we need a vibrant United Nations. We need to accept the reality that we are living, essentially, between civilizations. Western civilization as many of us understand it ended with the two world wars of the last century. We are now living in a global economy that is still developing and has yet to take on recognizable form as a civilization. Nietzsche’s warning is still valid. We need to find a new standard—a new god, if you will—that will give us a moral compass in these new waters.

Reference:
April 15, 2018 — OERs—Open Educational Resources—are a hot topic these days among educational technologists. They first came to international attention when a small group of educators, meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, called on educators to join a “worldwide effort to make education both more accessible and more effective.” The Cape Town Declaration has since been signed by more than 2,500 institutions around the world. As a step toward a more open educational environment, the declaration calls on institutions to release their resources openly. These open educational resources should be freely shared
through open licenses which facilitate use, revision, translation, improvement and sharing by anyone. Resources should be published in formats that facilitate both use and editing, and that accommodate a diversity of technical platforms. Whenever possible, they should also be available in formats that are accessible to people with disabilities and people who do not yet have access to the Internet.

This week, I came across a much earlier example of an OER. In his book The Written Word (Random House, 2017), Martin Puchner examines the impact of the written word across history, from the cuneiform-based Tales of Gilgamesh to the social impact of the Harry Potter books. After reading about the history of writing over four thousand years, I was taken aback when Puchner got to the American colonies in 1776. In those days, broadsides (single folio-sized pages printed on one side) and pamphlets—three folio-sized pages folded twice to produce a 48-page booklet—were an inexpensive way to distribute information.

By 1776, some 400 pamphlets on various subjects had been published in the colonies. That year, about six months before the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin helped Thomas Paine to produce another one. It was called Common Sense. Franklin printed a first run of 100. However, Paine did something revolutionary. As Puchner describes it, “he not only forwent all royalties but also renounced his copyright, giving any printer the right to publish the pamphlet” (p. 219). As a result, they sold 153,000 copies of Common Sense in the first year alone, becoming, as David McCullough would observe in his history 1776 (Simon
and Schuster, 2005), “more widely read than anything yet published in America” (p. 250).

In July, the Declaration of Independence would be distributed as a broadside on a single folio page. Puchner notes, “As the cheapest vehicles for spreading new ideas, broadsides and pamphlets had contributed to the climate of democratic unrest among the colonists” (ibid.)

In December 1776, as the Revolution became a difficult military campaign, Paine wrote *The Crisis*, the first in a series of pamphlets known as *The American Crisis*. George Washington ordered it to be read to the troops at Valley Forge. It begins, “These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.” As Jill Lepore reports in *The New Yorker*, John Adams later wrote of Paine, “Without the pen of the author of *Common Sense*, the sword of Washington would have been raised in vain.”

**Reference:**


November 11, 2015 — In this political year, immigration has become a global concern. The combination of civil war and ideological revolt in the Middle East has created a massive migration of families from Syria and elsewhere to Europe and, to a lesser degree, North America. Meanwhile, in the U.S. presidential campaigns—which have been underway well before the first primary elections next year—candidates on both sides, but especially conservatives, have made illegal immigration a major campaign issue. One, Donald Trump, has promised to build a wall between the United States and Mexico and to round up and deport some 12 million immigrants. In a Republican “debate” on November 10,
he cited Dwight Eisenhower’s deportation of a million immigrants in the 1950s. The next morning’s Washington Post noted that the number may have been closer to 250,000 and that Trump failed to note that many were left to die in the Mexican deserts.

In his 1966 book, America and Americans, John Steinbeck noted that immigration has been an issue for the country since its earliest days. He noted that the first European immigrants “worked for it, fought for it, and died for it. They stole and cheated and double-crossed for it.” In the process, “every single man in our emerging country was out for himself against all others—for his safety, his profit, his future.” This became part of our culture, “yet in one or two, certainly not more than three generations, each ethnic group has clicked into place in the union without losing the pluribus.”

“From the first,” he wrote, “we have treated our minorities abominably, the way the old boys do the new kids in school. All that was required to release this mechanism of oppression and sadism was that the newcomers be meek, poor, weak in numbers, and unprotected.” He adds that this may be one reason why ethnic minorities blended into the American mainstream culture so quickly. However, Steinbeck also notes that, as new ethnic groups settled in, something happened:

“Despite the anger, the contempt, the jealousy, the self-imposed ghettos and segregation, something was loose in this land called America. Its people were Americans. The new generations wanted to be Americans more than they wanted to be Poles or Germans or Hungarians or Italians or British. They wanted this and they did it. America was not planned; it became.”

Steinbeck called this chapter “E Pluribus Unum”—out
of many, one. He noted that, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, most Americans are easily recognized as Americans when they travel overseas. “Somewhere,” he wrote, “there is an American look. I don’t know what it is, and foreigners cannot describe it, but it is there.”

This season’s political gambit is to use illegal immigration as a rallying point for voters who feel they have lost power. It reminds me of how the Nazis used Jews to taunt Germans dispossessed by their country’s treatment after World War I. Given that we are on the brink of what may well be a global migration, fueled by civil strife, religious intolerance and, ultimately, climate change that will wipe out coastal communities, I would rather take my lesson from Steinbeck. “E Pluribus Unum,” he wrote, “is a fact.”

Reference:
September 3, 2016 — I just finished reading *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance. It is an amazing book and, I think, an important one.

I had imagined that *Hillbilly Elegy* would be a kind of social culture study of the Scots-Irish who came to the U.S. and settled in Kentucky and other parts of Appalachia. However, I was surprised—and then delighted—to see that it was not that. Instead, it was a very personal memoir by Vance, who grew up as part of a hillbilly clan who had migrated from Kentucky to the steel mill town of Middletown, Ohio.

What hit me first was Vance’s personal story. Like him, I grew up in a fractured family without a father and with
few male role models, but with a nearby extended family. My mother, my brother, and I lived with my grandparents in a little one-bedroom house that had been meant as a temporary residence, but which had been the family’s home for a couple of decades already when I was born. My grandmother’s brothers and sisters had all bought lots up and down the same street when the local farmer decided to sub-divide, so I was rarely out of earshot of a relative. Down the street was my best friend, whose aunt had married my uncle. It was all family. We were also poor—in the midst of an otherwise healthy middle-class neighborhood—something we didn’t talk about. So, it was rewarding to see someone else talk honestly and in detail about growing up in a similarly complex environment.

Vance, who escaped the poverty of his youth to go to Ohio State and then Yale Law School, gives us an insight into the inner workings of this group of Americans—descendants of Scots-Irish immigrants who came to the U.S. in the early 1800s and settled in the coal mining area of Kentucky and whose descendants migrated to the coal and steel towns of what is now known as the Rust Belt. The strong multi-generational family culture, the willingness to fight “outsiders” who threaten that culture, and the traps that tend to keep them from more fully integrating into society are all explored as Vance tells his own story.

Vance also takes time to analyze the white working-class culture. He notes that the decline of the blue-collar economy has increased cynicism about the position of working people in American society, but that “there was something almost spiritual about the cynicism of the community at large, something that went much deeper
than a short-term recession” (p. 188). Herein lies one timely lesson of Vance’s memoir. It is a culture, he observes, that feels increasingly isolated from the core of an American society that has rejected a commitment to its working people. “If Mamaw’s God was the United States of America,” he writes, “then many people in my community were losing something akin to a religion. The tie that bound them to their neighbors, that inspired them in the way my patriotism has always inspired me, had seemingly vanished” (p. 190).

Vance asserts that the news media and conservative politicians have encouraged working people to look not to themselves but to government to blame for their inability to succeed in today’s economy. “There is,” he writes, citing a Pew Economic Mobility Project study, “no group of Americans more pessimistic than working-class whites” (p. 194).

That pessimism is very likely—and ironically—what has drawn working white men and women to the radical right-wing views expressed by Donald Trump and the “alt.right.” In the mid-twentieth century, labor unions had given steelworkers, miners, and many other occupations a level of financial and social stability that they had never seen. The very term “redneck” comes from the red bandanas of pro-union coal miners in West Virginia. The 21st century, however, has seen a weakening of the labor movement as corporations take jobs out of the country in order to avoid reasonable wages for American workers. Government has chosen not to fight the corporations, leaving workers without support. While it is very strange that workers would turn to one of the most opportunistic corporate leaders in this
election, they clearly hear his pitch, however insincere it may be.

The question for all of us must be: how can we provide real opportunities for working people to succeed in the new global information society that has sprung up around us? This was the message of Bernie Sanders. Elements of that remain alive in Hillary Clinton’s campaign.

Politics aside, what should we do? Some thoughts:

* We need to move beyond the current Affordable Care Act to a true national health system that guarantees all citizens access to medical services. The issue should not be to make health insurance more easily accessible; it should be to make access to health care a right of citizenship.

* We need to tax corporations that move jobs overseas or that move corporate operations out of the country in order to avoid taxes. Corporations that benefit from the American economy must contribute to its health, pure and simple.

* We need a minimum wage that allows anyone who works full time to be able to support his/her family.

* We need to explore a modern counterpart to the Civilian Conservation Corps to ensure that all Americans have access to work that feeds their families and contributes to the community. The military must not be the only refuge for people who cannot find employment. This might also serve as part of a “year of service” expectation for young people between the time they leave school and when they become full-time workers or move on to college.

* Finally, we need to make some level of postsecondary education available as a right of all citizens. This may
be a two-year period that would allow someone to gain a license or an associate degree or make a start toward a baccalaureate degree. Today’s economy requires that workers have greater training. Ensuring that our workforce is prepared for the economy is, ultimately, a national security issue.

These solutions are reminiscent of FDR. The key, as I read the implications of *Hillbilly Elegy*, is to empower people rather than put them on the dole. Underneath it all is the need for government—“of the people, by the people, for the people”—to respect the needs of citizens rather than cater to corporations. It is a “build up,” rather than “trickle down” approach to creating a healthy economy.

**Reference:**

May 20, 2016 — The big event in State College this week was the 55th annual book sale by the Penn State chapter of the American Association of University Women. It has been an annual event for our family since the 1970s, when the sale was held in the HUB ballroom on campus. Even when we lived in Maryland, we came back for the sale, which has since moved to the Snider Agricultural Arena on the edge of campus, past the football stadium.

This year, my prized find was *My Mother's Music*, Paul West’s memoir of growing up in England. Paul was my mentor as I worked on my baccalaureate and master’s in English in the late sixties and early seventies. He introduced me to the magical realism of Garcia-Marquez
and Cortazar, Malcolm Lowry’s mix of autobiography and symbolism, and other modern writers who helped me understand what the magic of writing fiction was all about.

In *My Mother’s Music*, Paul tells of life with his mother in the 1930s and during World War II. Trained as a classical pianist, Mildred West had given up pursuing a musical career in favor of marriage and raising two children in Derbyshire, giving piano lessons and playing for her own satisfaction. But as he describes it, Mildred gave Paul a gift by equating words to music. He writes, “I was finally forgiven for not having made my boyhood’s music with her, not at the piano anyway; but we certainly succumbed together to the music of words.”

Paul attributes his own very personal style to his mother’s idea of “all art aspiring to the condition of music.” His distinctive style made him a star in his own right. Paul became known internationally for his playful use of language to build a world that resonated with layers of meaning when seen simultaneously from different perspectives. As he wrote in the memoir, “A lost analogy is two universes wounded.”

Paul and his wife Diane Ackerman, herself a Penn State grad who has become internationally respected nature writer (most recently, *The Human Age*), eventually left Penn State for Ithaca, New York. A few years back he suffered a stroke. She wrote about it in *100 Names for Love*, a powerful memoir of their life together and his recovery of the creative process after the stroke. Paul died this past October. I will miss him, but am glad to have his words—his own music—to keep me company.
This is where you can add appendices or other back matter.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Gary E. Miller is Executive Director Emeritus of the Penn State World Campus. Prior to his retirement, he served as Associate Vice President for Outreach and Executive Director of Continuing and Distance Education and was the founding Executive Director of Penn State World Campus, the University’s online distance education program. He earlier served as Executive Director of the International University Consortium and Associate Vice President at the University of Maryland University College. He is the co-author Leading the E-Learning Transformation of Higher Education (Stylus Press, 2013) and numerous journal articles and book chapters on distance education and the undergraduate curriculum. In March 2004, he was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame. He has been recognized with the 2004 Wedemeyer Award from the University of Wisconsin and The American Journal of Distance Education, the 2007 Irving Award from the American Distance Education Consortium, the 2008 Distinguished Service Award from the National University Telecommunications Network, and the 2009 Prize of Excellence from the International Council for Open and
Distance Education for his contributions to the field. In 2010, he was named a Fellow of the Online Learning Consortium.