



When you're not worrying about one thing or another, what do you think about . . . maybe on your way to work or coming home? When you're pulling weeds or putting dishes away? Taking a shower? How about when taking those first sips of coffee in the morning?

Are your stray thoughts random or is there a pattern, a theme, maybe an underlying story? While you're thinking about thinking, here are a dozen thoughts that kicked around in my head recently. Let me know if you think I've gone off the rails with any of them . . . but please go finish drying off first. And enjoy that coffee.

- **Drained.** My first cup in the morning is such a treat and the entire experience goes by so quickly that I'm thinking extraterrestrials may be at work, covertly diverting some of the brew into their space pod thermoses. Skipping the milk or cream makes the coffee taste bitter to me and seems to slow everything down, perhaps keeping them at bay. Should we try to verify the existence of extraterrestrials at dairy farms or ice cream stands? How about at a Cremora factory? (I like that science fair type concoction in coffee, too.)

- **And now on our stage...** Every generation has its all-time favorite performers. Maybe even every cohort, here defined as people born close enough together in time to have been (theoretically) able to go to high school together. Each one of these cohorts might like to put forward the best they've got for a time capsule and maybe a competition. For my cohort, I'd go with Linda Ronstadt for best vocalist and include "Lush Life," recorded with the great Nelson Riddle and his orchestra, in the capsule. The best song therein might be the luscious "Skylark," sung by the most versatile songstress who was ever recorded, belting it out of the park in rock, on Broadway, and with standards. In comedy, it would be easy –Robin Williams and Billy

Coffee Crooks, Free Towels, Pricey Nuts...and a Riddle

Written by Jack Sparacino
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Crystal. Actor? No contest whatsoever; it's the incomparable Meryl Streep. But to make it more objective, how about the nominators focus on a cohort other than their own. I'll sign up for people born 1900-05 so we can include the fabulous Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey. And hey, who wouldn't want to peek at the final list of encapsulees?

- **Still got it.** For those of us who sometimes wonder whether we'll ever have another "greatest generation," there are plenty of brave and selfless men and women in uniform today and loads of young talent out there, e.g., as seen on NBC's "The Voice." Many of these kids are flat out fabulous. One girl, Treeva Gibson, was a singing dynamo at only 16. Yikes!

- **Free for all.** Have laundry detergent makers thought about bringing back towels that come with the soap? In 1956 a king size box of Breeze sold with a "free" Cannon Mills bath towel. Maybe anyone who believes the price of the towel wasn't built into the cost of the soap needs some "free" advice to the contrary. But I love the slightly greedy idea of free towels. On the other hand, if they were clean, how come you needed the detergent in the first place? And by the way, is there any such thing as a truly free promotional gift? Let's conduct a survey and find out, maybe offer swell prizes to the participants (uh-oh, there we go again).

- **Shell shocked.** Since California is rapidly running out of water, why are farmers still allowed to keep growing almonds without any limits? California farmers will reap a record 2.1 billion pounds of almonds this year, the USDA [estimates](#), about three times as much as they did in 2000. Land devoted to growing almonds has more than doubled since 1996 to 860,000 acres. And how about this: total crop value has roughly quintupled since 1996 to nearly \$5B. But it takes 1.1 gallons of water to produce a *single almond* and 10% of CA's water goes to growing almonds. Yet a recent USDA survey indicates that three quarters of the state's almond farmers intend to *expand* their almond acreage.
Oy
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- **Young and flat.** People who believe the Earth is flat or less than 10,000 years old, and there are perhaps 30 million "young earth" folks, have the equivalent of a brain injury which handicaps any aspirations they might have about pursuing a career in science. But these people also have guts. A very bright boy who recently competed on Lifetime's "Child Genius" openly rejected "the big bang theory" and appeared to believe that the Earth is 6,000 years old,

taking his biblical teachings literally. Brave kid, if demonstrably wrong, as the earth is actually about 4.5 *billion* years old. (Even Pat Robertson said it's nonsense to think that the Earth is only 6,000 years old—and he never saw some of the stuff in the back of our refrigerator.) This boy performed extremely well against stiff competition and nearly won. Good for him.

- **Windfalls.** This 'Young Earth' error is equivalent to believing that you have \$250 in your checking account when in reality you have \$187.5 million. A rather pleasant surprise?

- **Black in time.** Men over 55 who dye their hair black might as well just wear a hat that says "I'm a liar." Okay, maybe that's too harsh. How about "truthiness deficient"? Alright, maybe it really is their natural color (uh-huh) and we just go with "genetic mutation at work"?

- **Eating their words.** People doing food commercials should only get paid if they actually eat whatever is featured in the ad. This business of taking 'air bites' makes it look like the actors either don't really like the product they are endorsing (cereal, yogurt, you name it) or... what, they're already full? Of what? Maybe they need to wear that liar hat, too.

- **Changeups.** As long as the English language is famous for being fluid, how about we retire eight words and phrases all at once and hold a party: like a roller coaster, awesome, save up to (whatever) %, selfie, so I'm like, hashtag, twerking, and synergy.

- **Smarty pants.** It's been fun to get Jeopardy questions right when none of the contestants knew the answers. But it's more fun to struggle to get something right. More game show enthusiasts should check out the wonderfully goofy "Idiotest" on Game Show Network and see how smart they still feel.

- **Just don't drive.** Can there really be a broad market for smart watches? Who says we need the power of NASA on our wrist? I'll bet wearing one raises your blood pressure *and* geekofile score. And makes for hazardous driving.

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OK, there they are, whew. I'm tired and thirsty. Maybe there's something good in the fridge less than a million years old that would go with some more coffee. And maybe it's smart to keep using a drip brewer and save *up to 75%* compared to the cost of using K-Cups. Oops, there we go again. Gotta regain my synergy and get with the hashtaggy program.

That would be, like, awesome.

Jack Sparacino earned a Ph.D. in psychology from The University of Chicago and later worked as a post-doctoral research fellow at Ohio State University in the business school. He is retired from United Technologies Corporation, Sikorsky Aircraft division and lives with his wife Jane and their two Yorkies on Saint Helena Island. He tries his best to catch a lot of fish, especially when sons Jack and Greg visit, stay off ladders, read only great books and write clearly. Sometimes he succeeds.