

# Inquiring Minds: Notes from Dec-Jan of 2012-3

“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.” Abraham Lincoln #21

Mission Past Issues: #1 #2 #3 #4 #5 #6 #7 #8 #9 #10 #11 #12 #13, #14 #15 #16 #17 #18 #19 #20 Comment

DECIPHERING AMERICA'S MOST FAMOUS SPEECH  
One of my most memorable teaching units evolved when I was teaching 7-8 grade Computer Literacy students footnoting on a word processor. I had the students type in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and then we discussed, and they footnoted, each word or phrase they did not know.

For example, *Four score and seven years ago* defined this meaning of *score* to be 20. So four score and seven years, means  $4 \times 20 + 7$  or 87 years from the time of the speech was delivered in 1863. A little more arithmetic revealed that  $1863 \text{ minus } 87 = 1776$ , a landmark date, but not for 7-8 graders. This led to a discussion of the Declaration of Independence, its poetry and power to shape the nation. Their ignorance fueled my passion, and my passion won them over. This was more than creating footnotes; this was important information. For extra credit 90% of the students memorized the first paragraph. One student (from Russia, no less) memorized the entire address by the next day--a feat which took me a week to do some two score years before!

Another theme of this is the interconnectedness of history, math, civics, and vocabulary. Almost every student in the

class earned an A on the project which included my orally quizzing each on the history, the vocabulary, and the meaning of the speech.

At the end of the year I held an assembly for all past Computer Literacy classes to meet hear a guest speaker in the library. There I stood, transformed into my hero, who lamented the pain of war, and took questions from those students present who knew enough to be interested. I sensed it would be memorable.

Now, some ten years later, I fondly look back on those days when we both transformed each other in the process of learning at its best. The passion remains.

## FROM TIME: BABY BOOM AND FINANCIAL DOOM

“The facts are hard to dispute. In 1900, 1 in 25 Americans was over the age of 65. In 2030, just 18 years from now, 1 in 5 Americans will be over 65. We will be a nation that looks like Florida. Because we have a large array of programs that provide guaranteed benefits to the elderly, this has huge budgetary implications. In 1960 there were about five working Americans for every retiree. By 2025, there will be just over two workers per retiree. In 1975 Social Security, Medicare



Yours Truly as Abe in 2003

and Medicaid made up 25% of federal spending. Today they add up to a whopping 40%. And within a decade, these programs will take up over half of all federal outlays.”

--from Fared Zakaria, Dec. 24, *Time*  
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2131536,00.html#ixzz2FcSjXJGV>

## ROE VS WADE STRUGGLES

Strange how things come together at times. This week's cover story of *Time* is about the erosion of Roe vs Wade ever since that 1973 historic ruling.

I had just watched a segment on the film *Freakonomics* which talked about the sudden 30% drop in crime in the states in late 1980's and 1990's. This was 15 or so years after Roe vs Wade sought an end to unwanted pregnancies and children raised in environments which produced more crime. Upon further research, I found this was just one of many theories for this drop in crime. (See that latest 6 reasons in the [Christian Science Monitor](#), even though the public perception of the rate is higher.)

The same week I met a lady who worked as an attorney for Planned Parenthood for San Mateo and bordering counties. She said those counties counseled some 530,000 people during 2011, more than any state in the nation.



*I agree with President Obama who writes to clarify his thoughts. --Joe*