

Merry Christmas

Friends & Relatives,

This letter was difficult to write. So much happened in the past year that affected us immediately and profoundly, yet, I sincerely believe that events in the near term will impact us even more. At any rate, I gave it my best shot. 1994 in review:

912 perished when the ferry Estonia sank off of Sweden and 132 died in the crash of US Air flight 437. 23 were killed on bus #5 by a Hamas suicide bomber in the Gaza Strip.

2 feet of rain fell in Italy in one day killing 74. Texas saw the worst flooding in a century and a wicked freeze hit the northeastern US killing 100. Once again, man proves to be no match for Mother Nature.

180,000 perished in Rwanda and Zaire in two months and *two million* people, a quarter of the population, fled the country. This will be the standard by which future tragedies are measured. Meanwhile, NATO and the UN lost all credibility with their indecisive policies in the Bosnian civil war. There are serious lessons to be learned here, the future holds more local conflicts like these, not less.

50,000 fled Cuba and Haiti. 29,000 ended up at Guantanamo Bay at an initial cost of \$100 million plus \$20 million a month since. Saddam Hussein embarrassed the US in a game of chicken. Messer's Clinton & Christopher's foreign policy was dictated primarily by strategically insignificant dictators...he who does not study the past is condemned to repeat it.

They caught "Carlos the Jackal". It took me back to younger days when Illich Ramirez Sanchez (alias Carlos) and his type of terrorism were so prevalent in the Middle East and Europe.

The Democrats lost majority control of the US Senate & House of Representatives. Proposition 187 passed in California making the states 1.3 million illegal aliens ineligible for state funded education, health care, and public services. I was offended when other nations criticized the measure, burned American flags, and essentially ignored our national sovereignty.

Richard M. Nixon died.

40 million in the US were on welfare at a cost of \$46 billion. Republicans are now leaning toward a five year cap on welfare and the abolition of these work discouraging entitlements.

1.3 million people were in prison and now, more than ever, inmates are suing the state for being denied peanut butter sandwiches and the right to sacrifice animals. Civil libertarians believe that separation from society is punishment; while this may be true for normal people, *it is not* for felons. These criminals are given more attention and access to services in jail than they ever get on the streets. Take away the TV, the gym, the game room, the turkey on Thanksgiving, and the personal lawyers. Lock them up, 20 to a cold hard cell with one meal a day and a trip to the courtyard once a month. I submit that if you make prison hell, it will be a deterrent. It works in every other country. In Singapore, a boy was caned and a man was hanged; there is no drug or vandalism problem there.

Rodney King was awarded \$3.8 million for "loss of future earnings" while his lawyers billed the federal government \$4.4 million for their troubles, including time spent at social functions and on the Donahue show. The lawyers made out this convicted felon to be some sort of a civil rights leader and got rich in the process.

There were *fourteen thousand* attorneys in the Valdez lawsuit against Exxon. Enough.

A new planet, a black hole, and the Top quark were found. Shoemaker-Levy 9 hit Jupiter.

Okay, I know this isn't very cheery for a Christmas letter. So, looking forward:

The outlook for the US is excellent. The economy is strong, world markets are opening up, and the Silicon Valley is on fire. Standards for the data super highway are being developed and a fiber optic network is being laid across the country by allegiances of companies that don't want to be left out. The ordinary telephone, PC, TV, and Fax are beginning their transformation into a single unit that will make US businesses more efficient, effective, and competitive.

We're leading the world in high speed microprocessors, fiber optics, networking equipment, data compression & transmission systems, and programming & entertainment services...all are prerequisites for the information explosion that promises to dwarf the computer revolution of the 80's. Other nations will once again associate our people and products with quality and strength.

It is within our grasp to change the world as we did with the airplane, the light bulb, the telephone, and the PC. The future we'll make for ourselves won't come easy, we're at a critical point where, in order to maintain our technological advantage, we must promote education, R&D, capital spending, business exports, and reduce the federal budget deficit.

The New Year is upon us and the future is near. We're approaching the turn of the century when the Julian calendar will roll all four digits over for the first time in a millennium.

The biggest change for myself in 1994 was my return to the work force. I've left the business world and am now an electrical engineer at TRW in Sunnyvale, CA. I'm at a new address:

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Bernard Shaw said: "The unreasonable man expects the world to adapt around him while the reasonable man adapts to the world around him". Americans are the most innovative people I've ever met, we are the best; maintaining such an attitude is a prerequisite for success.

There is not one person who will receive this letter who does not have the conviction, determination, vision, and persistence to effect enormous change. Remember: the cowards never start, the weak die on the way, only the strong survive.

Have a Merry Christmas and a successful 1995

Mark A. Cottrell