Eleven Years After

I was mulling over possibilities for the title of this column when the British rock band named Ten Years After (of the Woodstock “I’m Going Home” fame) crossed my mind. Actually it has been exactly eleven years since I took over the editorial reins of this magazine from my predecessor, Jan Talbot. What has happened not only within the Society but outside of it during these years? Let me begin with the home front. Our two daughters have grown up with one finishing her master’s and the other entering college as a freshman this past year. So my wife and I are quasi-empty nesters now—“quasi” because our older daughter has come back to live with us at home.

Much has changed in the world outside. The city where we live (Arlington, Texas) and the greater Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex are quite unrecognizable from eleven years ago. There seem to be more people and more cars everywhere; to keep up with this growth; infrastructure (new roads, mega shopping malls, huge stadia and the like) continues to be built. Perhaps the most drastic changes have occurred in the vehicles that we use in our everyday life: personal digital assistants for communication and entertainment, flat-screen TVs, global positioning systems, etc. Our vehicles have become increasingly “smart” and fitted with advanced sensors for everything from fluid levels to service/safety alerts. In fact, I (like most others) have not checked the engine lubricant, radiator fluid, or the battery electrolyte levels in years. The prices of gasoline and fuel have fluctuated wildly and gone up and often enough to remind us once more (as if the oil embargo in the 1970s wasn’t enough!) that fossil fuels are not inexhaustible and energy security is a key issue of strategic import. Global warming, greenhouse gases, sustainability, and climate change have joined the lexicon of words in drawing room conversations, and hybrid motor vehicles have become commonplace.

Country-wide many events have been cataclysmic and have had repercussions beyond the borders. We have seen a steady erosion of jobs, and manufacturing has shifted abroad although in some sectors (e.g., auto), the traffic has also flowed in the opposite direction with foreign companies setting up assembly in the U.S. The Internet continues to spawn new industry behemoths (think Google) and upstarts. Social networking also has become big business thanks to the Web. On the other hand, homeland security has taken on a more sinister meaning and it all came to a head that fateful day in September 2001. Airline travel has never been the same again, not just here in the U.S., but in the rest of the world as well. The economy took a beating with the sub-prime home loan fiasco and Wall Street’s travel has never been the same again, not just here in the U.S., but in the rest of the world as well. The economy took a beating with the sub-prime home loan fiasco and Wall Street’s
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