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## Geezers Gone Wild, Part II

by Julian Sereno



Some folks dismayed by President Trump and the current state of affairs in the United States draw parallels to the end times of prior great civilizations: Alcibiades and the decline of Athens, or Sulla, Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus in Rome, when it changed

from a Republic to an Empire.

A different parallel comes to mind when I consider Trump and his Democratic challengers: the last days of the Soviet Union. It wasn't even 40 years ago. Leonid Brezhnev had ruled for 18 years when he died in 1982 at age 76. He was replaced by Yuri Andropov, then 68. He ruled 15 months when he died at age 69. Next up was Konstantin Chernenko, 73, who lasted only 13 months before he joined his Comrades in the Great Politburo in the Sky. A youthful (54) Mikhail Gorbachev took the reigns of power in 1985 and introduced reforms — glasnost and perestroika. When he stepped down in 1991, it was das vedanya USSR.

Now look at our current crop of candidates who have won any delegates: Bernie Sanders is 78, as is Michael Bloomberg. Joe Biden is 77. Elizabeth Warren 70. Only Amy Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg are too young to file for Medicare and Social Security. Bernie, the delegate leader, had a heart attack on the campaign trail but protects the privacy of his medical records with the same zeal as Donald Trump does with his tax returns.

Speaking of President Trump, 73, he took office at 70, the oldest ever to do so for the first time. No one should be surprised at his conduct as president. He wakes in the middle of the night or the early early morning angry and agitated over something he saw on Fox and Friends, Breitbart or Info Wars. Then he unleashes a torrent of tweets, with frequent misspellings. I wonder if his rant about low flow toilets had anything to do with him clogging one in the middle of the night.

He is a curmudgeon who has had his way his whole life. He reads nothing, believes what he wishes and ignores anyone who advises him otherwise. No wonder he's been caught in more than 16,000 lies since becoming president.

There is no reason to believe it will better as he grows older.

Add to our gerontocracy the two most powerful members of Congress, Nancy Pelosi, 79, of the House of Representatives, and Mitch McConnell, 78, of the Senate and you can see the dimensions of the dilemma.

I'm not voting for anyone over 70 in Tuesday's primary. If you want to call me ageist, I offer you Psalm 90, Verse 10:

*The days of our life are 70  
years,  
or perhaps 80 if we are  
strong;  
even then their span is only toil  
and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly  
away.*

Julian Sereno is editor and publisher emeritus of Chatham County Line. He turned 70 a few weeks ago.

## Counterinsurgency Warfare

by Barry Reece



Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates has offered a candid assessment of America's involvement in counterinsurgency warfare. These are wars where the aim is to gain support of the population rather than control of territory. Reflecting on the times we have used military

force since Vietnam, he says we have a perfect record: "We have not gotten it right, not once." The lessons learned from the Vietnam debacle were quickly forgotten.

*Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*, authored by David Galula, provides a systematic

discussion of how to defeat the insurgent while creating trust within the population. He makes it very clear that the counterinsurgent must win the battle for the population while not being too autocratic. Galula was a UN observer in Greece during an insurgent attempt.

Galula states that successful adaptive leaders should be granted more local control. He provides reference's to the U.S. Vietnam war that was evolving at the time his book was completed.

Why do Americans tolerate a national security policy that is based largely on militarism? First, our government does not give citizens accurate information regarding the true cost of war. When the United States departed from Iraq we were told the cost of that war was \$800 billion. Nobel laureate

### Why do Americans tolerate a national security policy that is based largely on militarism?

Joseph Stiglitz and Harvard economist Linda Bilmes conducted a rigorous analysis of the Iraq war and say the true cost was \$3 trillion.

As our national debt continues to expand, we must ask some hard questions about our national security policy.

Dr. Barry Reece is a U.S. Army veteran and an active member of Veterans For Peace, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and Peace Action.

## Little Nico

by Alirio Estevez



Little Nico was eager to meet his mom. He had listened attentively to her musical voice when she sang and read books to him. He wanted to see how she looked. He was scheduled to meet her by the end of August. However, Fate had different plans. Nico's mom, Lili, noticed something was wrong.

Her body was acting in a way that it was not supposed to. She felt afraid for Nico and for herself. It was the 32th week of their pregnancy.

Lili and her husband drove rapidly to the nearest hospital. She was diagnosed with preeclampsia and the doctors said they needed to induce labor in order to save Lili's and Nico's lives. Since this labor would be quite complex, they sent for an ambulance to take her to another hospital that specialized in pregnancy complications and premature delivery. A nurse waited for her at the entrance, helped her move to a wheelchair and gently took her to the Intensive Care Unit. Meanwhile, Nico felt his mother's heart beating faster than usual and wondered what was going on with her and if he could do anything to soothe her. He loved her so much.

The nurse stood by Lili's side all the time, checking her vital signs and administering the medicines prescribed by the doctors. Finally, a team of specialists decided the best solution was for Lili to have a C-section. They proceeded. Several minutes later, a cry made a mother smile. Lili and Nico saw each other in person for the first time after eight months. Unfortunately, this

encounter was brief. Being a premature baby, Nico needed to be in an incubator with several devices to help him survive and mature. Nico just wanted his mom.

After nearly a month in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), Nico's wish came true. His mother was able to lift him, hug him, kiss him. Nico didn't want this moment to end. His father was ecstatic enjoying the scene, waiting patiently for his turn. The warmth of Nico's cheek on his cheek gave his father a jolt of optimism.

Back at home, a hospital nurse visited Nico and his mom every day for a month. She checked Nico and Lili's physical and psychological health conditions. She also assisted and trained both parents on how to attend Nico's needs. Nico loved being with his mother and his father.

Now it was time for Lili and her husband to pay for the medical services. Their total invoice was \$0.00. Did I forget to mention that this real story happened to my brother Marlon, his wife Lili and my nephew Nico? Oh, and that they live in the city of Quebec in Canada? A small detail.

As you may know, every resident and citizen in every Canadian province has health insurance. Healthcare is considered a human right, not a luxury. Unfortunately, a family like my brother's would have a hard

**We need a better health system, a universal healthcare system. A system where everybody is covered, where nobody has to worry if they will be able to pay the medical bills or go bankrupt.**

time paying for this vital service in our country, creating stress and reducing the amount of time dedicated to care for the needs of babies like Nico since families have to come up with plans to pay for the huge bills. In an article in the journal, *Health Affairs* published in January 2020, Dr. Michelle Moniz found that the average woman with private health insurance spent \$4,569 in out-of-pocket costs on a non-complicated labor. Imagine how much an invoice would be for staying one month in a NICU like my Nico did plus a C-section.

We need a better health system, a universal healthcare system. A system where everybody is covered, where nobody has to worry if they will be able to pay the medical bills or go bankrupt. Babies like Nico need and deserve a system that supports their families and allows families to take care of them so they can thrive and

be happy. Babies need to feel the sweet and nurturing embrace of their parents whose only concern is to care for their precious child.

What are we waiting for?

Alirio Estevez is a NC Educator and a volunteer for the Hispanic Liaison and the Chatham Literacy Council. He is a proud immigrant and proud to be an American citizen.