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Some hits and misses in my history lesson

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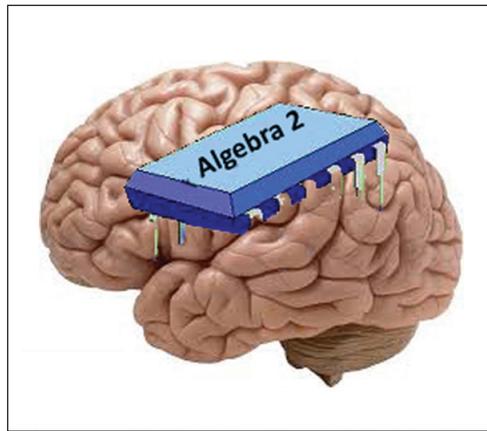


I recently was given the privilege and honor of speaking to a bunch of middle school students at one of our local facilities. The topic was "Real Men Read," a new experiment in motivating young people to devote more time to reading for pleasure.

Being the showman that I am, I wanted to impress on them the importance of reading books about history, a subject that always has fascinated me. I had planned to use the famous quote by George Santayana ("Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.") but didn't have the time to get into that. My purpose was to show how things have changed just in my lifetime and how fascinating it might be to go back even further for a deeper understanding of things such as the original formulation of our country.

To make a graphic point, I brought with me an old big black dial telephone that I kept hidden in my suitcase. I simulated a telephone ringing with my iPhone and then reached into my suitcase to drag out this big ugly heavy phone and asked the teacher if I could plug it into the wall so I could receive my call.

The teacher of course saw the humor in this and recalled having a similar phone herself. The kids probably thought I was somewhat nuts and didn't seem to appreciate my message. I told them how this dial phone, in my time was quite an advancement from



Why go to school when you can insert a memory chip in the brain?

my original phone which had no dial and required reaching an operator and telling her to whom you wish to speak, that is if one of the other three parties sharing your line were not talking at the same time.

I told them of people who had what were called "private" lines. These were the elite, the Lexus and Mercedes people of their day. Again this didn't seem to be making much of an impact.

I went even further back to the founding of our country and made reference to a book written by James Michener describing the efforts that went into creating our Constitution and hence our nation. I told how the delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, in order to get instructions from their home territories would travel by horse for four or five days in each direction to complete their assigned tasks. Wouldn't it have been nice if they had their own cell phones back in 1774?

I offered my own predictions of things to come in the future and made reference to a book put out by Popular Mechanics magazine titled *The Wonderful Future That Never Was*. It was full of predictions made some years ago, some of which came true, many of which have yet to be realized.

I offered my own idea which frightened the teacher for a few moments. My idea was that sometime in the future we might actually be able to insert a memory chip into children's brains with all the information that they might gain in school and save the cost in time and money of actually going to school.

My theory is based on the fact that the brain is well known as an electronic device transmitting billions of signals back and forth to its various parts. Why not access some of these connections with a memory chip and save the rest of the brain for random and creative thoughts? This pleased some of the students thinking that perhaps they might not have to go to school after a while. Who knows?

I used as an illustration the famous Dick Tracy wrist radio that my generation all grew up reading about. Of course no one ever dreamed of actually having such a fantastic device. Imagine explaining this to a class full of kids with iPhones, iPads, and who knows what else. Had someone told me about these things when I was 9 or 10 years old, I surely would have looked on them as some kind of nutcase or a dreamer like me.

Read more from Ernie at www.sochin.com or reach him by email at community@sochin.com.