



MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

May is picnic month! Saturday, May 13th, networking beginning around 2:00 PM and eat around 4:00 PM.

Lane Garret's home
8502 E. Cactus Wren Road
Scottsdale, AZ

RSVP to vaughn@nakota-software.com

Directions: From east loop 101, take the Indian Bend Road exit and head west. Turn left (south) at 86th street, then right (west) on Cactus Wren Road. Lane's home is on the NE corner of 85th and Cactus Wren. From Scottsdale Road, turn East on Indian Bend Rd. Cross over Hayden Rd., continue east on Indian Bend Rd. and turn south on 84th St. which dead-ends into Cactus Wren. Go left on Cactus Wren one block.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Vaughn Treude

A few years ago I worked as a contract programmer at American Express, where I briefly shared an office with a fellow of

Indian extraction. As with many places, there were numerous Indian-born engineers, and in their conversations they would often switch back and forth between English and their native tongue (in this case it was Tamil – I asked them, of course.) Knowing that in India, practically every state has its own language, I wondered how this was possible. Why would it be that so many Indian engineers come from the same part of the country?

If you look at a map of India, you'll see that Bangalore – the Silicon Valley of India – is located in the state of Karantaka, near the southern edge. It's only a few kilometers away from the border of Tamilnadu, perhaps explaining why I had so many Tamil-speaking coworkers. But why did Bangalore, once an unknown backwater city, become such a high-technology hot spot?

Shikha Dalmia answers that question in an article in the June 2006 issue of *Reason*, entitled "What Detroit Can Learn From Bangalore." (Dalmia is an Indian-born journalist who lives in the Detroit area.) In the article, she contrasts the failed economic policies of Detroit with the successes of Bangalore. Most of us know how Detroit went wrong – high taxes, burdensome regulations, government corruption, and excessively powerful

unions. Excluding perhaps that last item, Bangalore has traveled the opposite road, from being heavily taxed, regulated, and corrupt to having a relatively free market. These policies are what made India's IT revolution possible.

Bangalore couldn't have done it without a dramatic shift in the socialistic policies of the Indian central government that happened in the early 1990's. At that time India gave the states a lot of responsibility to set their own policies, and Karnataka took an aggressive pro-growth stance. One thing many Americans don't realize is that there was once a severe shortage of engineering schools in India. The government schools were inadequate and private colleges could only be opened with their permission. Naturally, few new colleges opened – except in the south, where the states made it a matter of policy. Thus the people of southern India got an advantage over their northern neighbors.

Dalmia admits that the policies of Karnataka were not all free-market. IT companies have been given special consideration, while other businesses suffer under a much greater burden of taxation, licensing, and bribery. Tax money has been used to benefit the high tech firms while schools, roads, and other infrastructure suffer (especially in Bangalore's poorest areas.) Worst of all, the city has used eminent domain to seize land from poor farmers and sell it to high-tech firms at a fraction of its market value.

But in general, the story has been a happy one, because even Bangalore's poorest have benefited from the money brought in IT. Now if only someone could convince the

Brahmins in Washington to let us spend our money here, rather than sending it overseas, we might be able to keep some of our high-tech jobs here in the Silicon Desert.

Vaughn Treude

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

by Clark Jones

Some of you may recall my prediction of “cars that will drive themselves”. (I've seen a lot of eyes rolled at that prediction.) I recently saw a Nova episode that presented a report on the 2005 DARPA “Grand Challenge”, a “race” for autonomous vehicles. (You remember DARPA – the folks who, despite the claims of Al Gore, were actually responsible for the creation of the Internet). The race was actually held in Oct. 2005, and included both an obstacle course, and 20 of the 43 vehicles entered were then allowed to run the 132 mile main course, defined by a DARPA-supplied list of 2900 GPS waypoints, competing for a \$2million prize.

This was the second year that the race was run. The first time, no vehicles made it much past the seven mile mark. This year, however, there were five vehicles which actually completed the course, so it was probably the last running of the race. The winner was a vehicle entered by a team from Stanford. Although the intent is to develop a vehicle that can be used to transport materials to and on the battlefield (the show mentioned that it's the military's

intent to have 1/3 of all of their vehicles able to run autonomously within 10 years), I would remind you that one of the major reasons that we have the advanced chips we do today is that back in the 1960s the military (especially the Air Force) “drove” the development. Many other technologies were “driven” by the needs of the military, and are now “household standards”. (Microwave ovens immediately come to mind.) The military doesn't really have to worry too much about PITLA members suing them for what happens on the battlefield, and, as Nova pointed out, had this been in place a few years ago, the Jessica Lynch episode would not have happened.

Since the last installment of this column, I've had doubly bad luck. On April 11th, I was making a right turn into a parking lot

when someone rear-ended me. I wasn't hurt, beyond a bruise from the shoulder belt, but the car wasn't drivable, and spent three weeks in the body shop. Then, on April 29th, as I was turning right to get onto the “on ramp” in my pickup, I was rear-ended again. (Fortunately, though, the truck is still drivable, but it is going to have to spend a week in the body shop. I was completely unhurt.) It had been over 25 years since I'd been in an accident, then to have two in less than three weeks, neither of which were my fault, and neither of which I could do anything to avoid, is very frustrating! (For what it's worth, the winning vehicle in the Grand Challenge didn't run into a single obstacle.)

See you at the picnic!

Clark Jones

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