

Imagining Possible Futures 2030 When Driving Forces Interact



SCENARIO D STORY CONTRIBUTION BY CONVERSATION 2012 PARTICIPANT



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MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

Marv Baldwin

Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation 2012*



PARTICIPANT BIO

Marv Baldwin

CEO, Foods Resource Bank

Marv Baldwin has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Foods Resource Bank (FRB) since February 1, 2005.

“In Marv Baldwin our search committee has found just the individual FRB needs to make our Christian response to world hunger achieve its growth potential,” said Susan Ryan, past chairperson of FRB’s board of directors and chair of the search committee. “He is a young man of vision and strong spiritual values. At age 39 he has the leadership ability, integrity, energy, business experience, and passion to drive FRB’s impact on world hunger for many years.”

FRB, a faith-based non-profit organization, funds overseas food security programs (“helping people from the world’s poorest villages feed themselves”) from the sale of crops raised by U.S. community growing projects. Smallholder farmers and their families move toward food independence with dignity, while American volunteers, motivated by a desire to help others, discover that working together for a greater purpose enriches life in their own communities. Marv’s initial experience with FRB was as a growing project leader.

Prior to joining FRB, Marv Baldwin was a district sales manager for Nalco Company’s water treatment technology, where he excelled in achieving organizational goals and proved himself a skilled leader and team-builder. He is a dedicated volunteer himself, and knows how to motivate others to do the same. Wherever he and his family have lived, they have been fully involved in local church life and community-improvement projects. While living in California, Tennessee, and Illinois, Marv spearheaded fundraising and community outreach efforts—whether to build a new church or restore an old one, whether to rebuild a child development center or organize community growing projects for FRB. He views his assignment with FRB as an opportunity to do more of the same, but with national and worldwide impact.

A graduate of Hope College in Holland, Michigan, Marv resides in Western Springs, Illinois, with his wife Amy and their three children.

This is Marv’s fourth *GHC Conversation*.

A fictional story...

Missed Opportunity?

Marv Baldwin

January 30, 2030

Budd considered many things that morning as he waited in his office for security to escort him out. He thought the news seemed much the same as it had for so many years. Sure, new names, new faces, but it was largely the same. After more than two decades of delivering the news over radio, television, and the internet Budd was both jaded and on his way to early, forced retirement.

Budd couldn't be sure what the truth was anymore. He'd taken this path early on trying to uncover the truth and do his part to seek justice through his reporting and writing. What was the truth? In the early years he thought he knew, he assumed his desire for equality and justice for all could and should win the day... now, he wasn't so sure.

Back in 2008, Budd was a young man from an upper middle class family who knew that his life was an opportunity to make a difference for others. He would use his position to make a difference, he would not be bought. He saw so many go down the path of accumulation and materialism in the face of worldwide unrest, hunger, and poverty. It bothered him and at a level he knew things ought to be different.

In the early part of his career, Budd was thrust into the big housing bubble aftermath and economic malaise of 2008-2010. At the time he couldn't understand what everyone was so upset about. He figured he was too young prior to 2008 to really understand just how good things were. Back in the day, as he was told, a person could get a home loan with nothing down, and even get some cash back to buy a flat screen - he laughed thinking about those ancient flat screens and how people used to worship them.

Budd realized now in 2030, at the age of 49, that although he had never been more confused, he felt both frustration toward the establishment and a real hope pouring forth from communities all around the world, making a difference locally, despite increasingly out of touch organizations and institutions. Sure there were a few organizations that seemed to get it, but most were just trying to ensure the deck chairs were perfectly lined up... prior to the sinking....

The good news is that many people at a local level could see how lost big organizations and institutions had become. The problem was there just wasn't much anyone could do about it. Budd harkened back to the discussions in 2009 about "too big to fail" and realized in hindsight the breadth of that problem beyond banking....

As George entered his office with that "I told you so" look on his face, Budd recalled George's prophetic words about the increased need for workers in Europe and N America by 2030, and now the flip that most people had made to not only embrace immigrant workers, but for some specialty jobs to even pay a bonus for coming to work in the first place. Ironically, Budd's digging for the truth to bring about justice for people in difficult situations and to help those less fortunate had not only sealed his fate at CNNMS-FOX news but now, his job was going to go to a young woman who had grown up in a difficult situation in the DRC. The network believed that Philomene would be so grateful for the good job that she would just fall in line but Budd knew better. Philomene had known war, famine, rape and injustice and knew that speaking up against the status quo was critical to creating justice. Philomene would soon be "reassigned" as well. Budd thought it almost funny that his work to bring forth the truth had actually offered someone else a chance...

George was there to offer his condolences, in a sense. George had long been one who spoke his mind and spent much of his time thinking, writing and reporting about the future. George and Fred, the other key person in the metrics office, had both predicted some interesting stuff back around 2010. George's predictions about Turkey, Mexico and Japan rising certainly seemed to be coming true and the re-emergence of Russia for a time and now gone again gave him some real credibility. Fred's discussions about population growth slowing and halting due to women's education and the ability to access birth control was amazingly accurate. All the Malthusian predictions about population growth, once again, debunked. With a world population at 8.3 billion now, it seemed likely that as the population topped nine billion in about 20 more years it could conceivably begin contracting. Wow, what a mental shift we will have to make at that point in time!

George came forward, shook my hand and wished me well. I picked up my personal items and as I looked up noticed the official CNNMS-FOX escorts to see me to the door. I thought it a bit odd that George had come to see me off, although I was appreciative that he had stopped by. I knew others would be reluctant to jeopardize their role even though there was a rumor that the network was going to need it's third bailout to keep the doors open. The network had been careful reporting about the current administration. I was fairly certain the bailout would shore up the status quo for at least a few more years.

Suddenly in my mind I was recalling a brief conversation with my neighbor Daniel. He had accosted me one day as I arrived home several weeks ago. He was all fired up about a new "unofficial" community group in the neighborhood that was beginning to publish the patterns that large institutions and corporations were using to keep people in line through what Daniel called level 1 thinking. He and I had had enough conversations over the years that he knew that although I worked for an entrenched big organization, he said he could tell I had the capacity for what he called level 2 thinking. As I thought about George's visit to say goodbye, I realized that he had also been able to suspend his reactive state to avoid me knowing that as a key member of the metric team, he could apply some new measures

to anyone who gave him a hard time. George had commented many times that his love of predicting the future and being candid about it was only due to his position in the "metric bunker"... lots of measurement folks in big organizations have long term contracts. It's ironic that CEO's and other Execs in their desire to grab more control through measurement, in most cases, have created a powerful and misleading rudder in their own organizations.

As I was escorted down the long hallway toward the elevator I was struck by the glass walled offices and cubes which were a facade to transparency. As we neared the elevator, I thought about many things. Mostly I thought about how the establishment, big businesses, government and large philanthropic organizations missed opportunities that could have been embraced 20 years ago in so many areas of our society and world. I considered how different it might have been had big organizations and institutions taken the time to learn from grassroots organizations. Clearly, local efforts in all sectors were going well but local effort was a threat to the establishment, thus two sides had formed. For people like me who saw the value of both large, well-run organizations, and grassroots efforts blended together, the thought of where we are versus where we could be is defeating.

As the elevator doors opened, I realized that Jane Jacobs who was recently promoted, was also being escorted out! Then it hit me, a promotion out of the metrics department, although freeing, was often the kiss of death. Jane gave me a look that showed her peace about the situation. Jane had long been predicting a coming dark age, where culture comes to an end ... in a sense we were seeing that end but also a new beginning of sorts ... just as Jane had said. With our escorts, we all entered the elevator together and joined Alaric, the head of security. It was rumored that he was denied a promotion recently that everyone thought he would get. Although his normal look was serious, there was a certain darkness that he carried today which gave me the creeps. I had a moment of panic as I imagined what unthinkable torture might lay before me. I gained my senses realizing that my mind was reacting to his mood in combination with my viewing of Mission Impossible 20 last night starring Justin Bieber, yeah who would have guessed it! I calmed myself as we went past the 14th floor. My reaction reminded me of a recent story our health editor did on escalating anxiety and depression levels in our society. Much of the story revolved around the advanced treatments which are supposedly available to everyone. Health care may still be a right but like the Snapped Up food security system, as soon as you're honest about what's going on in your life, you may be denied.

From 14 down through 7 we passed the centralized admission offices for the Ivy League. I looked over at Jane recalling her comments about how our education system had become more of a credential production facility. Word on the street was that people with advanced degrees were often thought to have been programmed by "the system" and thus many people were "simplifying" their resumes so they could blend in with grassroots society.

As I was escorted toward the doors, I again noticed the "Tebow for President 2032" and "Chelsea Clinton for President 2032," it seems a bit early for that. I thought about my recent proposal to do the story on the tip I had received about Rove, Ploeff and Axelrod working together to ensure a status quo situation. I had a great title for the story "The Rise and Fall of the Republicrat Party." I recalled back to 2012 when it was reported that Hungary's constitution was rewritten in a way that the ruling party could never be removed from office. At that time it appeared we had two parties, but ultimately people have discovered over time that there are in fact two groups. The two groups are not separated by democrats and republicans rather, those groups are divided into those in the status quo and those who aren't.

... My mind wondered as I thought about the challenge of an aging country and legal system ... those who originally made the laws did so with a deep knowledge and ownership in our case ... both of balancing democracy and republic as well as taking into account human nature and all that can go wrong without some structure and rules. Here approximately 250 years after our founding, our country is led by people who have inherited the laws ... which has eroded ownership... just like we often see in business's and philanthropy... nepotism in its various forms can create some serious problems...

Suddenly, I was outside ... sensing both relief and panic.

"What now?" I thought. I began walking... looking around at the buildings. I decided to call home. Sutton would certainly be supportive, but in a sense, this loss of work fulfilled one of her biggest nightmares. How would I say it? For the moment I didn't need to worry about it as my communicator service had been cut off... Should have thought of that... Guessing my access to ecash will also be frozen for a while... Should be a challenge getting home... Funny time to be hungry... Might as well try the ecash chip... As I waved my hand across the scanner to pay for the panini, the sign said "contact bank for further information." "Damn, I knew it!" All of a sudden a guy said "here you go" and waved his hand, "thank you JK" said the scanner. "Thank you JK" I said. "So you finally pushed the envelope past the status quo did you?" I looked at him in disbelief realizing the stories I had heard were true. "Yeah, we knew it was a matter of time for you... George called earlier and we figured you might be here once your finances got cut off. Here, want to call Sutton?" Now I was freaking out inside yet trying to be calm on the outside. We were joined by two other guys, Eckardt and Brian. They were all smiling kindly. I took a deep breath and we began walking together.

They in turn began to share stories of things I had only heard rumors about... Groups of people working together locally, often clandestinely to improve their communities. They told me stories of people teaching each other agriculture, health practices, technology, humanities and art. They spoke about the new underground railroad in a sense helping people move to freedom... "no more status quo sheeple" they said and then nodded. Oh it is not easy for people in many ways but many have realized the lack of living they had been

doing in our professionalized, corporate, linear thinking, marketing oriented society... Millions have realized that economics is only a piece of the puzzle and far too many people, especially those who have political and economic power are trapped by their own resources. The energy and creativity released by this realization, they said, was empowering a whole new way... New networks were taking the place of dated institutions, people were using their skills and abilities to invest in the future of communities, people were doing things to grow food locally, finding ways to help people access medical care from uncredentialed experts, and educating one another in small groups and one on one mentoring. The lack of institutional efficiency was certainly made up for by the energy, creativity and ownership exhibited by so many people in so many ways.

I asked why with the majority of people working to be "off the grid" in a sense that our leadership has not turned over too? Their answer was simply... Duostat rather than monostat. In other words, people in the status quo will do anything in their power to maintain that control. Many are not even conscious of their level 1 drive to do it. They are reacting to their primal instincts, their desires to keep things constant in an ever changing world, their desire to create their "own space " or "own thing" in a world where we are all connected, and they are reacting to their immediate needs rather than working to delay gratification... for the betterment of all.

... I thought back to the many conversations I have had with farmers over the years... many U.S. farmers told me how our revered ag sector in the U.S. was slowly slipping away. As with so many other sectors, consolidation had led to a depersonalization of what had once been a family and community effort.

Surely I had thought that the many upstart farms and community gardens were making a big difference, and now I was hearing first-hand the difference it is making! ... but the conflict created between local efforts and macro level policy solutions are making long term success a battle of wills. I even recall hearing a story that some supposed "persons of interest" (a more pc way of implying one might have terror connections) have been detained in a suburb of Chicago because they were trying to grow their own food to become independent from the system. They went so far as to raise chickens against their local village's ordinance. I'm sure the charges won't stick but I'm not surprised the concentrated control of institutional power has led to trumped up charges about terrorism in order to keep people in line. Yet another effect from our desire for security over freedom from 911.

My hope that those who are working toward grassroots solutions in the midst of all this struggle are strengthened and encouraged. Ironically, lasting strength is often only built through difficulty and suffering.

Had the Philanthropic community embraced this grassroots path in 2010, who knows where we might be today. There existed the potential of working together, blending both systemic, corporate, institutional solutions with grassroots, organic, messy, solutions and approaches. In fact, with a growing world population and geopolitical issues, it appears that sort of blending would be preferable....

Society as a whole missed the chance to broadly embrace organizational, community and individual assets, gifts, and viewpoints. Many, in fact most, philanthropists who had and have the financial wherewithal to think long-term; to see the oneness of all of us; and to embrace complexity, took the "road more traveled" - that of separateness and the facade of simplicity - and ultimately missed the chance to be the catalyst for change we most needed.

Fred Pearce wrote *The Coming Population Crash and Our Planet's Surprising Future*

Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo wrote *Poor Economics*

George Freidman wrote *The Next 100 Years*

Brian Taylor wrote *Becoming Christ*

Henri Nouwen wrote *With Burning Hearts* and has written many other books

Parker Palmer has written a number of books and articles

Jiddu Kirschnamurti wrote *Total Freedom*

Eckhart Tolle wrote *the Power of Now*

Richard Rohr wrote *On the Threshold of Transformation*

Rick Hanson wrote *Buddha's Brain*

Tim Feirress wrote *the Four Hour Body*

Daniel Kahneman wrote *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

Thomas Merton wrote *Contemplative Prayer*

Diane Winston wrote *Fully Present: The Science, Art and Practice of Mindfulness*

Nassim Nicholas Taleb wrote *Foiled by Randomness*

Jason Saul wrote *The End Fundraising*

? wrote *the Cloud of Unknowing*

Jane Jacobs wrote *Dark Age Ahead*