

Know The Past And You Understand The Future.

Climate of the world is changing. It has changed in the past and it will change in the future, of this we are certain. At the same time the Earth's climate is changing other climates are changing as well. These other climates are in the world of information.

In the 1960's and 70's and into the early 80's there were three television networks in the United States. They controlled the airwaves. Whatever they determined to be news was news. Money was everywhere and the networks made a lot of it. Yes there was intense competition between them but the playing field never changed very much. The big three were the only players and they liked it that way and why not who needs a new kid on the block to shake things up? Well that's just what happened in the early 80s with the birth of CNN and the Weather Channel among others. The "big three" saw these changes but they were still very much in command.

As time marched along more and more cable channels began to appear. Channels became more and more targeted as television began to offer viewers more choices. Into the 1990's the trend continued and accelerated as computers began to intrude into the marketplace.

By the mid 1990's the personal computers were getting faster and more usable. The internet had been there awhile but it had yet to be set free. Now by the mid 90's people began to see a new way to get information. This began to affect everything in the media. The most disturbing of the changes to the big three was the shrinking of market share. In television the big add dollar that had been split three ways was now getting hacked up into smaller and smaller pieces as each and every year went by. As the major news groups for each network fought to keep it's market share consultants became more and more important. These consultants had been employed by networks for decades but now their job was to stop the networks market share from dropping any lower. The consultants like Frank Magid and AC Neilson did surveys and found out what viewers wanted to watch.

By the mid 1990's it was weather that was found to be the big hook for national and local news programs. I was a personal witness to this working as an on air meteorologist for a major network owned station. Weather was beginning to get more and more air time. Weather situations that in the past would have been passed over as "normal", were now being elevated to "lead story" status. It was obvious that the consultants were at work, and one could see why. The stations were losing their once lofty place in the land of TV viewers. With the internet, the remote in hand and more and more cable stations there was a whole lot more to watch. The pie was being split into smaller and smaller pieces.

In 1997 and 1998 there was a very large El Nino event in the Pacific Ocean. El Nino is an ocean event that has immense impact on the atmosphere. El Nino warms the waters of the Pacific along the equator. The warming can last for up to two years and the ensuing

warming of the atmosphere changes the weather around the world. Well that's all the news stations, magazines and newspapers needed. Now we had a big weather event that would last for months or years and everything that went wrong with nature could be blamed on El Nino. The late 1990's El Nino was a very large one and had major repercussions on weather around the planet, some good some not. You could be sure you were going to get the negative effects on the news because after all "good news is no news".

When the El Nino ended things had changed. The television stations, the consultants the magazines and other forms of media had learned something about weather. What they learned was that weather events could be tied together to form a much bigger long term story that could be promoted and evolved into a crisis. By developing a weather crisis machine that had "legs" the networks had a new enemy to help them replace the old Soviet Union that had bit the dust a few years earlier. Remember we are talking pre 911 here so there was a hole in the enemy universe that needed to be filled if the networks were going to plug the leak in their market share ship.

Then came 911 and that "crisis" overwhelmed the weather "crisis" for a year or so. However as the months moved along and life in America began to return to normal the networks had a problem. The 911 phenomena had rammed the ratings sky high. The news was back! People were watching in numbers that had not been seen in 20 years. The problem was that time moved along and ratings began to drop back to the old pre 911 levels. How would the consultants get the numbers back up? Well our old friend the weather was still there undaunted by 911. Enter global warming, the new enemy. Global warming was not exactly new. There had been magazine articles dating back to the late 80's warning that humans were adding too much carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere and this could cause long term warming and big problems. But the whole thing never really caught fire until the early 2000's. Part of the reason for this was the need for another crisis. With the shocking impact of 911 mostly gone or fading and the ensuing war in Afghanistan and then Iraq over on the other side of the world there was a void to be filled here in the USA. To fill that hole more and more stories about this global warming thing began to appear. The beauty of the story was that it could be pulled from the right field bullpen at any time the starting pitcher (the daily news stories) began to weaken.

Add to this an ex vice president that was stomping the county with a slide show predicting that the ice caps were going to melt, sea level was going to flood cities, polar bears were dying. That just helped to reinforce the whole storyline. Environmental groups did not let the opportunity to capitalize on the global warming phenomena pass by either. The environmental websites were all ringing the global warming alarm bells louder and louder. After all these organizations are all about saving the planet from ourselves, who better to lead the way to a greener future free from global warming than them? These groups need money to carry out their mission just like other companies do. If you could ring the global alarms loud enough people might feel compelled to donate to these environmental groups to save the planet.

It all came to a head when our former vice president made a movie. It is of course is called "An Inconvenient Truth". The film was truly inspirational, despite the numerous errors, half truths and scientific omissions. It inspired those who do not believe that climate change is caused by human activity to speak up and be heard. I don't think this is what Al had in mind. Thousands of scientists around the world are making their opinions known, mostly through the internet. It has been difficult to get much air time or print space due to the fact that the media is committed to selling the scary story of global warming Armageddon. Remember the way to get the ratings up and sell more newspapers and magazines is to tell a scary story. What's a mass murderer to a newspaper man? A man who sells newspapers of course! Global warming fits the formula very nicely if you can craft the tale properly. Don't get me wrong here, there is nothing wrong with telling a scary story or selling newspapers or getting better ratings, that is business and we all need our businesses to do better. That is called growth and that is the American way.

But what has been lacking from the global warming story is a balanced viewpoint. Without some balance to the global warming story people can't have a proper perspective on the issue. If all you watch is a black and white TV how can you know that the colors give you a better picture. The internet has helped to add some color and balance to the picture. The information revolution that is the internet has allowed scientists to circumvent the usual media highway. And it's beginning to have an effect. People want to know what is really going on with our climate machine. At least those who want to listen and are open minded. And that is most people I believe.

I perform a program about climate change and global warming at various public and private functions. Recently I was picketed by people who seemed to feel that their opinion is the only one that should be heard or viewed. During my program I was continually interrupted by members of this group. Eventually they were quieted by other members of the audience. I thought this behavior curious because after all if they feel so confident that their opinion about what causes climate change is true why would they fear someone who does not agree with them? The answer is because they are not open minded people. If society is going to make informed decisions about this issue they need to know what is real and what is not or questionable. Free speech is a big part of what this county was founded on.

In the end nature itself will show us the answers. There is nothing that we can do about that. The truth is that there has been no rise in global temperature for 10 years. The major players in the climate machine are performing as they have for all of time. The changes in the relatively short term climate (25 to 30 years) have already started and will be self evident. The Pacific Ocean has turned colder again. The sun appears to be going into a quiet period not seen in maybe 200 years, a trend that may continue for several decades. Global cold periods historically have been associated with such quiet sun times.

As always the key to understanding the future is to know the past. We have seen these changes in nature before and we know how the temperature has responded. This is not to say we know everything about how climate works, we don't although some think they do.

An educated person knows that there is always more to learn. There have been years of constant repetition about global warming and who is to blame. This confident tale is told to us over and over again by a news media that does not have all the answers but likes to give the impression that it does. I only hope it's not too late to change the tide before we make very large mistakes.