Steve Solnick

An Iran dictionary

Four months ago, just at the beginning of his meteoric rise in the polls, President Carter addressed a gathering of families of the Iranian hostages and declared: "We will not allow this [Iran] to become a permanent situation.

Now, over one hundred and thirty days since the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran, there have been few developments to signal an approaching end to the trauma. In fact, the only thing which has precipitated the Iranian nightmare from actually becoming a "permanent situation" is a suitable redefinition of a number of crucial words and phrases which have been in frequent use since November 4. A few examples are in order.

Hostages: The Americans being held in Iran are no longer hostages, they are prisoners. They may have been hostages in November when their captors were demanding the return of the Shah as the price of freedom, but they are now undoubtedly prisoners, being held for a reason nobody seems able to pin down any longer.

Crisis: A crisis is a "crucial time or state; a turning point" according to Webster's. What is happening in Iran ceased to be a "crisis" after about Day 75. When supposedly sane men in our government and the UN can talk of no further developments being expected before May, Iran has ceased to be a "crisis" and become a situation.

Students: The "students" who continue to demand the "extradition" of the Shah, his followers.

They are crowd scenes produced for the benefit of Walter Cronkite and whenever a news camera was spotted. These are not demonstrations.

Extradition: Iran is still demanding that we "extradite" a prisoner who left our country three months ago. When Iran's Foreign Minister was asked how we were expected to do this he replied, "There are ways."

At the same time, I learned what made MIT tick at The Tech, learned to have fun at the radio station (when was the last time you wrote and produced a musical tragedy for radio?), run for UMOC (and lost) and anchored MITV's first newscast (in glorious black and white).

I have a friend who is an engineer at Hewlett-Packard in Palo Alto, California. He pulls down twice what I do, files his own place, and has a pool in his backyard. He is unhappy. I am not. We have discussed this. He thinks it is because he spent all of his time studying while he was here. I disagree. So does my musically talented girlfriend, who found him dull.

I have another friend, also an M-Engineer, whose wife said to me at a recent MIT Club meeting (we had never been before): "I guess you aren't an engineer." "I didn't know you I said. "You aren't dull," was her response.

When I arrived at MIT in 1970, I was not dissimilar to many of you, I wore acne-scarred, sucked to major in computer science, was clean shaved, and had my hair razor cut once a month (OK, the last was something of an affliction). After a year at the newspaper and the radio station, I let my hair grow out, grew a beard, bought blue jeans, quit EE, and wondered in interest at all signs of maturity. A lot of my classmates did not show similar signs for several years. Some still wear white socks today. I am not saying that participation in activities is the only way to grow while you are at MIT. I am saying it is the easiest and fastest way. The presence of people at MIT really divides rather quickly into two groups: those that spend some time on something other than class and those that don't. The ones that don't end up with real regrets later.

My engineering friend (who was an EE student) once said to me: "I didn't learn anything at MIT, the only thing I learned was that the education you get during four years at MIT and in the five years since I left (and there will be those who say I did learn nothing else). I learned that the education you get outside of the classroom is as important as that inside.

As a researcher of mine told me, the long-range predictive value of grades and scores — beyond identifying minimal aptitudes like literacy — is zilch!"

This way comes as quite a shock to professors and pre-law types, but then add that they are too busy testing to read this anyway. For the students among you who have stuck with this column so far, let me suggest something shocking: balance your life. I probably don't offer the best example of my own advice (this caution is needed because there are still too many ex-students and faculty around who overclocked their time at MIT), but I did not achieve a balance. I went overboard for activities, devoting far more time to WMBR (then WTBS), the campus radio station, and The Tech, than in my studies.

I wasn't a complete wash, however. I did graduate; did learn heuristics from Fredkin, physics (real) yelling, programming from Donovan, and journalism from Diamond.

At the same time, I learned what made MIT tick at The Tech, learned to have fun at the radio station (when was the last time you wrote and produced a musical tragedy for radio?), run for UMOC (and lost) and anchored MITV's first newscast (in glorious black and white).

I have a friend who is an engineer at Hewlett-Packard in Palo Alto, California. He pulls down twice what I do, files his own place, and has a pool in his backyard. He is unhappy. I am not. We have discussed this. He thinks it is because he spent all of his time studying while he was here. I disagree. So does my musically talented girlfriend, who found him dull.

I have another friend, also an M-Engineer, whose wife said to me at a recent MIT Club meeting (we had never been before): "I guess you aren't an engineer." "I didn't know you I said. "You aren't dull," was her response.

When I arrived at MIT in 1970, I was not dissimilar to many of you, I wore acne-scarred, sucked to major in computer science, was clean shaved, and had my hair razor cut once a month (OK, the last was something of an affliction). After a year at the newspaper and the radio station, I let my hair grow out, grew a beard, bought blue jeans, quit EE, and wondered in interest at all signs of maturity. A lot of my classmates did not show similar signs for several years. Some still wear white socks today. I am not saying that participation in activities is the only way to grow while you are at MIT. I am saying it is the easiest and fastest way. The presence of people at MIT really divides rather quickly into two groups: those that spend some time on something other than class and those that don't. The ones that don't end up with real regrets later.

My engineering friend (who was an EE student) once said to me: "I didn't learn anything at MIT, the only thing I learned was that the education you get during four years at MIT and in the five years since I left (and there will be those who say I did learn nothing else). I learned that the education you get outside of the classroom is as important as that inside.

As a researcher of mine told me, the long-range predictive value of grades and scores — beyond identifying minimal aptitudes like literacy — is zilch!"

This way comes as quite a shock to professors and pre-law types, but then add that they are too busy testing to read this anyway. For the students among you who have stuck with this column so far, let me suggest something shocking: balance your life. I probably don't offer the best example of my own advice (this caution is needed because there are still too many ex-students and faculty around who overclocked their time at MIT), but I did not achieve a balance. I went overboard for activities, devoting far more time to WMBR (then WTBS), the campus radio station, and The Tech, than in my studies.

I wasn't a complete wash, however. I did graduate; did learn heuristics from Fredkin, physics (real) yelling, programming from Donovan, and journalism from Diamond.

At the same time, I learned what made MIT tick at The Tech, learned to have fun at the radio station (when was the last time you wrote and produced a musical tragedy for radio?), run for UMOC (and lost) and anchored MITV's first newscast (in glorious black and white).

I have a friend who is an engineer at Hewlett-Packard in Palo Alto, California. He pulls down twice what I do, files his own place, and has a pool in his backyard. He is unhappy. I am not. We have discussed this. He thinks it is because he spent all of his time studying while he was here. I disagree. So does my musically talented girlfriend, who found him dull.

I have another friend, also an M-Engineer, whose wife said to me at a recent MIT Club meeting (we had never been before): "I guess you aren't an engineer." "I didn't know you I said. "You aren't dull," was her response.

When I arrived at MIT in 1970, I was not dissimilar to many of you, I wore acne-scarred, sucked to major in computer science, was clean shaved, and had my hair razor cut once a month (OK, the last was something of an affliction). After a year at the newspaper and the radio station, I let my hair grow out, grew a beard, bought blue jeans, quit EE, and wondered in interest at all signs of maturity. A lot of my classmates did not show similar signs for several years. Some still wear white socks today. I am not saying that participation in activities is the only way to grow while you are at MIT. I am saying it is the easiest and fastest way. The presence of people at MIT really divides rather quickly into two groups: those that spend some time on something other than class and those that don't. The ones that don't end up with real regrets later.

My engineering friend (who was an EE student) once said to me: "I didn't learn anything at MIT, the only thing I learned was that the education you get during four years at MIT and in the five years since I left (and there will be those who say I did learn nothing else). I learned that the education you get outside of the classroom is as important as that inside.

As a researcher of mine told me, the long-range predictive value of grades and scores — beyond identifying minimal aptitudes like literacy — is zilch!"

This way comes as quite a shock to professors and pre-law types, but then add that they are too busy testing to read this anyway. For the students among you who have stuck with this column so far, let me suggest something shocking: balance your life. I probably don't offer the best example of my own advice (this caution is needed because there are still too many ex-students and faculty around who overclocked their time at MIT), but I did not achieve a balance. I went overboard for activities, devoting far more time to WMBR (then WTBS), the campus radio station, and The Tech, than in my studies.

I wasn't a complete wash, however. I did graduate; did learn heuristics from Fredkin, physics (real) yelling, programming from Donovan, and journalism from Diamond.