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**Nothing sells like bad news. According to the mass media, the sky is *always* falling.**



I recently read a book set in the early 1900s; the stories and the photos of that era always bring about craving for simpler times. But the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, though simplistically appealing, was also terribly primitive compared with today.

The early 1900s was an era of tuberculosis, typhoid, sanitariums, child labor, child death, horses, horse manure, candles, 12 hour work days, tenements, slaughter houses and outhouses.

100 years ago you would count your blessings if you lived to 50. 1 in 4 children died by age 14. Cities were polluted with black soot and smoke. Streets were smelly and garbage filled. American farmers were still using the spade and hoe. Power on the farm was by horse, and a farmer could produce only about one percent of what his counterpart is capable of today.

According to the Cato Institute, "There has been more improvement in the human condition in the past 100 years than in all of the previous centuries combined." For example:

Today, the death rate among children has improved by 95%.

Man spent the last 100,000 years trying to get enough nutrition, now we are being encouraged to cut back on our caloric intake.

A family living at poverty level has an income 3 times the average per capita income of the world. They own a car, color TV, DVD player and an assortment of modern conveniences.

The fastest growing household expense for is recreation. We spend 3 times what was spent in the 1950s, and 10 times what was spent in the 1900s.

Today about 85% of families live in their own home, compared to about 40% in the 1900s.

A \$350 laptop today has more computing power than was available to all nations combined during WWII.

In the early 1900s only about 1 in 10 children went to high school. Today 9 in 10 do.

The Cato Institute writes, "We live in the wealthiest society in the history of the planet." Daily we allow ourselves to be bombarded with bad news. Yet, we are healthier, live longer, are richer, have better jobs under better conditions, have more time and money for recreation, bigger and better homes, breathe cleaner air, and drink healthier water.

Our challenge is to appreciate the opportunities we have and enjoy life as it is, and not as the news media would like to convince us... Life isn't necessary easy; it never has been. But satisfaction comes from rising to the challenges, using our strengths to create something better. Our goal should be to become bigger, better, stronger, and faster than our predecessors.

A properly designed and judiciously implemented succession plan creates a better outcome for family business owners and their successors. The primary purpose of succession planning is to promote, preserve and protect the family's most valuable asset. A comprehensive plan removes uncertainty, mitigates risk and allows the owner to exercise control. It encourages the family business owner to plan success and enjoy life.

