

CONSULTANT: Rob Crook
AGE: 52
RESIDENCE: Carrboro, NC
OCCUPATION: Biologist
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Rob Crook approached the table with curiosity, but after hearing about the project, he said that he had few memories of the turn of the century. Regardless, he was interested in sharing his thoughts on the topic. We began with the audio introduction (e.g., name, age and residence)

All right, so you said you don't remember a lot. But take a second and think about it. What do you remember about that moment?

You know, I remember the Y2K scare that was going on regarding computers, and how everything was going to possibly shut down, and how civilization was going to be horribly thrown back into a dark age of pre-computer era, when we only had paper to work with. And you know, that's about the only specific memory I have from that era. I know that we were out, you know, on New Year's Eve, that we probably stayed out until about 11:00. Then we probably went to bed.

Because you had, you said, young children at the time?

I had, at the time of the millennium change, I had one daughter, and she would have been a year and a half old. So, yeah. So she was 18 months old, so yeah. And we never really hired babysitters at that point that much. I mean, we went out, she went out with us.

It would have probably been hard to get a babysitter that night.

And it would have been hard to get a babysitter that night, because we never planned ahead, either [laughs].

The daughter is not part of that M.O...

No, no. That would be the parents M.O. only.

No, I meant having the daughter.

Oh, *having* the daughter. [laughs]

'We don't plan ahead...'

Exactly.

So, aside from Y2K and the possible technological problems, did the moment seem important to you at all?

Um, *yeah*, it did. I'm a history buff, and so I do remember reading a lot things about the history of the previous millennium change. At 1000 A.D., or whatever it is, After Current Era, AC, After Current...whatever they call it now. But you know, how everybody thought the world was going to end after the first millennium. They had same social phenomenon of, you know, 'This is the end time. Jesus is going to come back and take over and rule the world, and you know, we're all either going to go to Heaven or Hell.' So it was...I mean, there were –

And it happened again in 2000.

It happened again. It just...it was very, very similar, when you look at the historical –

Do you think the Y2K bug just made it even worse?

I do. I think that was sort of the bogie man that everybody sort of pinned a lot of their anxiety on. Instead of having it be this battle between, you know, God and Satan, it was between Y2K bug and, you know, order and being able to go online and shop. So yeah. I think there were a lot of similarities. We haven't changed much. [laughs]

Now why do you say that?

I think humans are still humans. I think the human beings of 1000 AD are pretty much the same as the human beings of today.

Now, some people have said that the way we communicate and the way we interact with each other has changed because of the technology. It doesn't sound like you feel that way.

No, because you're still talking about the same –

Rob sees someone he knows and quickly says hello before going to back to the interview.

No, because I think in the end, it's still biology, and that you still have a random assortment of genetic pairings. So there is no diff—we're still the same material.

You have an interesting take. What do you do for a living?

I'm a biologist.

Okay.

I build a lot of things that clean up water. That's what I do for a living. So yeah, no, I think we're not evolving. I think we're the same people that we were 2000 years ago, 5000 years ago.

Interesting. So you're not, you don't prescribe to the 'Google effect' changing the wiring of our brains?

It hasn't been around long enough to reproduce, when you've got one generation. So...

But do you think it might, down the road?

Sure, it might, just like the car and modern medicine has allowed people to live that wouldn't have...I mean, technology has changed, and certainly there are people alive now that wouldn't have been alive, you know, even a hundred years ago, because of disease and famine and all these other things. But essentially, we're still the same material. We're still the same genetic material. We're still the same species.

Still bipedal animals that...

Yep.

Selfish memes. Or no, genes.

I mean, yeah, we haven't really evolved morally or ethically or spiritually. We're still, you know, I think we're still the same people. And you're just the same people all over the world.

Okay, so that leads to a question I've asked several other people, because this is kind of a time capsule thing. You're a biologist, so you'll have an interesting take on this. What do you think is going to be most often on people's lips, on the conversation, in 2100?

2100? [Pause] I think it's probably going to be...not human beings [laughs] being alive on Earth.

That's interesting. And I actually agree with you. So do you think we're going to move beyond our corporeal existence at some point?

[sighs] Again, you know, its like...there's a guy named Tielhard de Chardin, who was a Catholic existentialist, who kept on saying that mankind -- to use the

phrase of the late 1800s, early 1900s -- was going to evolve towards this 'X-Man.' That we were evolving morally and ethically towards this higher plane. And when you do random assortment of genetics, you're constantly staying at the same plane. So I think that *yeah*, I think that we do have the potential to rise above a corporeal existence. And maybe some people have, but I think very few people will be able to achieve that.

So you don't think that we'll exist just as code, in the ether?

No, no, no. I don't think as code, I think as...I mean, I do think that...ultimately, at the very base of my soul, I don't know what the ultimate reality is of the universe. I don't know if there's a God. I don't know if there's not a God. And so, I'm sort of left with the idea of...I think that there is a higher power, that there's a higher reality that's going on that we don't always become aware of. But that I do think that very few of us are ever going to be able to realize what that is.

Interesting.

Including me. [laughs]

So, if the world ends before 2100 or at any time, does it end with a bang or a whimper?

I think it ends with a whimper. I think it ends with heat death. I think we've got --

Heat death?

Heat death. It's an old -- it's a classic painting from 1800s, and it represents the system in physics where everything goes towards enthalpy. Where there's a system, if it does not have energy put into it constantly, ultimately, will become disorganized and fall apart. And so then the lowest form of energy in the universe is heat. Heat energy. And so there's this like, portrait, a picture of the Earth that this guy came up with called 'Heat Death,' where everybody is sort of walking around on a barren, naked plain.

That's easy to picture, actually.

Yeah. And I think that that's really...I mean, I think that we need to stop making weapons, we need to stop killing each other. That would be the first thing that we could do, today. I don't know why, when we're all so connected, why are we even putting resources into weapons, when we could just say, 'No, let's put this into schools, let's put this into water systems, let's put this into food production, solar energy, renewable energy.' And let's stop worrying about how can we wax each other. I mean, I've lived around different parts of the world, and it's just, people still don't trust each other, and people hate each other.

I didn't even ask. Where were you living on New Year's Eve 1999?

I was in North Carolina, yeah. At that time, I was in North Carolina. So yeah, I was here.

I thank Rob for his time and end the interview.