

## The Latest Trend in Money Management: Online-Only Advice

*Would You Trust Your Portfolio to an Advisor You Can Never Meet?*  
By Robert G. Yetman, Jr.

As time and technology continue to march forward, the evolutions they produce, particularly over the last decade, have greatly changed the way in which business is done in so many fields. One of the biggest changes has to do with the need for people to meet face-to-face on behalf of a job or consumer product. For example, many businesses no longer require all of their employees to work together in an office, with folks now working from remote locations, including home, and still able to get their jobs done. On the consumer side, there is a multitude of products and services that need not be purchased in person, and we're not talking simply about books, furniture, or cars;

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## What of Joe Biden in 2016?

*Hillary Clinton May Be the Dems' "Chosen One," but Biden Might Have Other Ideas*

By James L. Paris & Robert G. Yetman, Jr.

As amazing as it might be to people who see Hillary Clinton's many years in the public eye as little to crow about, the former First Lady and current Secretary of State is the frontrunner for the 2016 Democratic nomination for President of the United States...and when we say frontrunner, we mean by a *lot*; there are recent poll numbers that suggest she may have as much as a whopping 50 percentage-point lead over her nearest challengers from within her own party, and while it's still early in the next battle for the White House, the call from all corners seems to be for Hillary to lead the Democratic charge to keep the Oval Office next time around.

So what does Joe Biden make of all this early anointing of Hillary? While Biden has been playing the good soldier to President Obama, and largely deflecting speculative questions about his interest in taking over for his present boss, there is activity out there presently that suggests he may not go at all quietly into the night and simply acquiesce to Hillary when he himself has so badly wanted to be president for so long. As a matter of fact, in an interview with GQ magazine that was published earlier this year, Biden was quoted as saying, "I can die a happy man never having been

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## What of Joe Biden in 2016?

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President of the United States, but it doesn't mean I won't run." Putting together Biden's interest in residing in the White House, the fact that he's a sitting vice president, and also that his age in 2016 means it would likely be the last chance he has to run, it is hard to imagine he's not planning to take one last crack at the presidency.

Biden first ran for president 26 years ago, chasing the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination. As a young candidate, he accumulated a sizable war chest, and things looked pretty good for him up until August 1987, when he made a speech in Iowa that turned out to have been plagiarized from Neil Kinnock of the British Labour Party. Other accusations of plagiarism popped up soon afterward, including one dating back to his years in law school at Syracuse University. Ultimately, he dropped out of that race due to the negative press, and did not run again until the 2008 campaign. There again, however, he stumbled, making odd remarks of both fellow candidate Barack Obama as well as Indian-Americans that struck money as racist. Unable to find his groove in a new political era characterized by a new and dynamic African-American candidate, as well as by a popular female candidate seeking to become the first woman president, Biden withdrew the night of the Iowa caucuses in January 1988, where he failed to capture even one percent of the state delegates.

The 2016 election is just three years away. Barack Obama will obviously not be a factor then, so there's only Hillary, it seems. De-

spite her early strength, however, Biden advisers are under the impression that the vice president wants very badly to take a last stab at the presidency – in addition to his admission in GQ that he has not dismissed the idea of running again, his appearances in August and September in both New Hampshire and Iowa, two states so key to contenders at the outset of the formal race, on behalf of Gov. Maggie Hassan (NH) and with Sen. Tom Harkin (IA), are regarded as very telling.

As a sitting vice president, Biden is in what is usually a charmed position for someone interested in the White House; the last sitting VP to lose the nomination was Alben Barkley, who served under Harry Truman and lost to Adlai Stevenson in 1952, and the record of vice presidents subsequently becoming president since then has been strong. Still, however, there is the matter of *traction*, and Biden's historical inability to gain enough to be impactful, or to even be able to hang around in the fight until the end. Despite his evergreen popularity as a politician on the national scene over the last forty years, he has never been able to garner the perception of being a truly serious contender for the presidency. Nevertheless, it is clear Biden wants another crack at this, but what some suggest may be his biggest problem in seeking the nomination in the twilight of his political years is the advent of a new era in the Democratic party, a party now comprised largely of young, progressive voters who want to take a break from "old white guys," no matter how resonant the appeal of some of them may have been at one time.

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## The Latest Trend in Money Management: Online-Only Advice (Cont. from page 1)

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we're talking about highly-personal and sensitive goods and services that previously were not purchased unless the buyer and the seller had established an in-person relationship, one typically characterized by the buyer visiting the seller at his office on a not-irregular basis. On that note, *financial advising*, perhaps one of the more sensitive and important relationship-based businesses that has ever existed, is now finding itself increasingly influenced by the fact it can be done without any in-person relationship necessary between adviser and client. There can be many benefits to the online model of financial advising, but because the handling of one's money remains something that so many are reluctant to turn over to a company with which they've established no personal relationship, it may not be for everyone.

Exclusive, online advising is a relatively new manifestation. While most companies have availed themselves of technological advances to improve their customer service abilities, it has not, historically, been the goal of those firms to eliminate the core relationship model of in-person consultations and meetings with their prospects and clients. That, however, is changing, and there are now financial advisory services available where the services and pricing models are set up specifically on the basis that the advisor and the client will never meet in person. Take Personal Capital, for example. The annual management fees begin at .95% (of assets under management) per year, and work their way down to .75% per year, with the amounts decreasing on the basis of portfolio size – the more you invest, the cheaper it gets. Lower annual management fees is one of the great benefits of the online advisory model for the individual investor looking to access professional money management, because the sav-

ings on traditional overhead costs like office space and staff, which are, of course, among the most substantial expenses to a business, can be passed along to the client.

Personal Capital mirrors, in format, much of the way money management firms have worked traditionally, but there are other companies that step a little further outside the box and make money management even a little more “consumerist.” Take LearnVest, for example. LearnVest offers three levels of access to a fee-based advisory service. The monthly maintenance fees in all three cases are \$19, but the one-time setup fees are \$89, \$299, or \$399, and vary, as you might imagine, on the type and breadth of services available. The \$399 option gets you everything LearnVest has to offer – personalized recommendations on your whole financial profile, including your investment portfolio, as well as unlimited phone and email consultations with a Certified Financial Planner.

Is an online financial advisor for you? It depends on what sort of person you are, and perhaps how intricate your needs might be. Outside of especially-complex cases, everything a financial advisor can do for you in person can also be done over the Internet and phone. However, for many people, nothing replaces that face-to-face meeting with the advisor. For some, the very sleek, cost-efficient mechanisms that the Internet has produced are not suitable for use on behalf of important personal services. Still, it cannot be denied that the availability of online advisors has opened up personalized planning to individuals who had been previously priced out of it, and while traditional advisors are not going anywhere, the advent of online advisors presents one *more* option for the consumer of financial services to consider.

## Visitor-Created Content

*A Look at How You Can Leave the Content Creation of Your Site to Its Visitors*

By James L. Paris

Lately, more and more people are creating websites with the thought in mind that visitors to those sites will be the sources of much of the content that regularly appears. What is, of course so “magical” about this is that it gives you, the website owner, the opportunity to sit back and make money from your site via any or all of the usual mechanisms... pay-per-click ads, affiliate ads, and the like... while it is the visitor, who is bearing the “burden” of creating the content that keep your site appealing.

Perhaps the easiest example to note of user-generated content is the comment section of a blog. A blog that reflects a robust comment section is unquestionably an example of a source of user-generated content. It should be noted, however, that when it comes to beckoning a large number of comments, not all blogs are created equal; if a blog dispenses factual information in a relatively straightforward way, and does not ever deal with subject matter that is controversial, it is not likely that the associated comment section can be looked to as a resource for a lot of user activity. However, if a blog does tend to deal with areas that invite “lively discussion,” the comment section can be quite substantial. In cases like that, it is not unusual for a random surfer to find the blog by way of elements of the comments section that appeared in a set of search results before any of the content of the original blog articles did. Beyond the matter of blog comment sections, there are a few well-known websites where the content is really *all* user-generated.

**Wikipedia:** Everyone who uses the Internet is familiar with Wikipedia. Wikipedia exists on the basis of 100% user-generated content. It still amazes many bright people that the

idea of an online encyclopedia built entirely by users ever took hold, especially to the degree that Wikipedia has, but here it is, nonetheless.

**YouTube:** Once again, anyone who uses the Internet at all is familiar with YouTube, and, like Wikipedia, the content of YouTube is completely user-generated. The people behind YouTube are free to focus principally on cultivating ad revenue sources, in addition to spending time on the site’s administration, of course.

**Craigslist:** Another site where the significant content is all user-generated – the people behind Craigslist are certainly not creating the ads.

The most exciting part of this is that your website or blog can reflect its own user-generated content, and not simply by way of a comment section. For example, there are applications that interact with a variety of websites that permit the visitor to post news stories. If you have a WordPress blog platform, which is very popular, the *FV Community News* plugin can be installed, which allows theme-related articles from other blogs to be posted to *your* blog by users. Another solid WordPress plugin for the purposes of encouraging user-generated content is *WordPress Wiki*, which allows users to make contributions to your site along the lines of how Wikipedia functions.

There are now a variety of these kinds of mechanisms available that can interact with your own Internet platform, and their implementation can go a long way to making your website or blog function on what is essentially *auto-pilot*; how great is *that*?

## Guard Against Card Skimming

*Our Heavy Reliance on “Plastic Money” Requires You to Be Extra Careful When Using It*

By Robert G. Yetman, Jr.

When cash was the only way to buy anything, theft or loss of the cash was a risk, but that theft or loss only went as far as the cash you had in your possession at the time; when your credit or debit card information is compromised, it can quickly result in substantial losses to you through your bank or credit accounts. Fraudulent transactions committed against credit card accounts are generally not as big a problem as they can be when committed against bank accounts (the federal protections are stronger in the case of fraudulent credit card transactions), but, regardless, you have to stay on your toes about safeguarding your credit and debit card information whenever you place a transaction.

One of the constant threats facing the users of these cards whenever they make purchases in person (as opposed to making them online) at restaurants, stores, gas stations, and the like, is *card skimming*. Although there is now a variety of ways that skimming can occur, the basic method is that crooks install devices, called skimmers, at ATMs and other self-serve locations where consumers can use their plastic to make purchases, and these skimmers record the information from the card during the transaction. In many cases, there will also be tiny cameras surreptitiously installed at the transaction point to capture the PIN number that you input when you swipe your card. This is a very slick, but, sadly, all-too-common way to steal nowadays, so it's incumbent upon you to remain vigilant when you're out and about making purchases. Fortunately, there are a few simple things you can do to greatly limit the chances that you'll be victimized by skimming, but, they only work if you remain diligent about doing them each and every time you make a purchase at a self-service-type of

transaction location.

***Check the swiping mechanism.*** Before you swipe your card, visually check the swiper for any signs of tampering or damage. It's also a good idea to pull on it or jiggle it to see if it seems especially loose or unstable inside the machine.

***Note that the biggest risks generally exist with machines in more remote locations.*** This means that, whenever possible, do your card swiping at locations that are better-trafficked and where it is otherwise more difficult for a bad guy to tamper with the machine.

***Stick with “better quality” ATMs.*** Whenever you use an ATM, try to avoid, as much as possible, those ATMs that are not affiliated with a recognizable bank.

***Cover the keypad with your hand when you punch in your PIN number.*** This is to block the covert camera that may be lurking, trying to capture your PIN.

Electronic card theft has always been a problem, but it can become a monumental hassle now that so many people are replacing cash with debit cards, where the fraud protection can be less than fantastic; even if the fraud protection on behalf of your debit card is good, and the stolen money is ultimately replaced by the bank, one of the things that makes debit card fraud a royal pain is that in the immediate term following a theft from your account, you are generally “out” that money until the bank's fraud department sorts through what happened and determines you were not at fault or trying to pull a fast one on them. Bottom line? Stay aware.

## Resources for New Homeschoolers

*The Internet Age Makes Life Easier for Parents Looking to Teach Their Kids at Home*

By James L. Paris & Robert G. Yetman, Jr.

A few decades ago, most communities had to deal with a public school system that reflected increasingly worsening educational standards, and that was bad enough, but now, the *social* degradation that is unfortunately woven throughout much of the fabric of society has shown itself prominently in the school system, as well. Private schools have proven to be answer for some, but they are by no means a panacea. For one thing, a decent private school can be prohibitively expensive for most people; additionally, the fact that a school is private in no way limits the likelihood that a child will be exposed to liberal or anti-Christian indoctrination in the classroom. The simple fact is that the only way a parent can be sure that the school environment in which his or her child dwells each day is both productive and safe...is to situate the classroom at *home*. One of the challenges of homeschooling, however, is that those who have no previous experience with it are unsure how to start. This article seeks to serve as a bit of a guidepost, featuring some useful Internet resources to help you begin the process of homeschooling in smart fashion.

The most important initial step is to become knowledgeable about homeschool laws in your state. To that end, there are various groups and associations dedicated to homeschoolers that you would do well to consider joining, but you might want to begin with the biggest cat on the block, the Home School Legal Defense Association ([www.hsllda.org](http://www.hsllda.org)). For an annual membership fee of \$120, members can have access to a wealth of useful resources, including information and forms that help to ensure your compliance with laws in your state, as well as free consultations with qualified profes-

sionals regarding the education of your children in the homeschool setting. It should be noted that the HSLDA, as their full name implies, is also a constant presence on the front lines in the many battles for the rights of homeschooling families that take place in a variety of forums throughout the country.

Another great, very useful web resource is Homeschool.com ([www.homeschool.com](http://www.homeschool.com)), which exists essentially as a free clearinghouse of information for homeschoolers. The site is well-organized, and if you sign up to be on their email list, you will receive a package that includes several special reports, printable activities and worksheets for your kids, and their email-delivered newsletter. Also, The Homeschool Mom.com ([www.thehomeschoolmom.com](http://www.thehomeschoolmom.com)) is another free site that is *loaded* with resources for homeschooling families of all types.

Something else you will find useful is to run a Google search for “homeschool support groups in \_\_\_\_\_,” replacing the blank with your city, county, or state. If you repeat that Google search three times, using city, county, and state, you will come up with a number of excellent support group resources that you can access.

One of the biggest reasons people are reluctant to seriously consider homeschooling has to do with, quite simply, the lack of knowledge about how to begin. However, the advent of the Internet has made life so much easier for new homeschoolers, and there is really no reason any longer to allow lack of knowledge to grudgingly force you to keep sending your kids to the local public madhouse in hopes that they’ll survive and emerge with some kind of an education.

## **Can Only Experts Write Ebooks?**

**By Robert G. Yetman, Jr.**

Even though most people have enough experience in at least one field to write a non-fiction, "how to" ebook as a bona fide expert, many of them do not wish to spend their time writing books that are necessarily themed in that field. It is generally not a prerequisite that you be an expert in a given subject area in order to write about it, or even that you are terribly well-versed in that particular topic area. It is *recommended* that you write first about what you know best, both because doing so makes the writing process easier on you, and your expertise can help to increase marketability and salability, but if you are inclined to step entirely outside of your usual realm to write about an area that is of interest to you, but in which you have no practical experience or specific knowledge, then go for it. Here's the thing: Although one's expertise in a particular area can be a benefit to marketing, setting aside any ease-of-writing benefit that goes along with that, there are numerous other ways to enhance the salability of your ebook if you cannot tout any such historical experience as a credential - choosing a catchy title, creating a sharp cover, and engaging in relentless, targeted marketing to the audience that would be most interested in the topic about which you've chosen to write are just a few of the ways you can help to popularize your ebook, but given that, one of the very best ways is to simply do a good job assembling your research and writing the very best manuscript you can.

In fact, the willingness to do research is the key to your ability to write a quality ebook on any of a wide variety of topics. What's very exciting now is that with the advent of

the Internet, many of the research materials you might need to write your book can be accessed for free, so, ultimately, success is just about putting in the necessary time. One of the great benefits of looking at ebook creation in this way is that it opens up a world of prospective subjects to you, as long as you're willing to do the digging. Think about this from the standpoint of fiction writing, for a moment - there is always a constant wealth of exciting fiction work on the market, with so much of it dealing with complicated subjects, and yet relatively few of the authors have ever worked in the fields in which their books are based. Take well-known author Tom Clancy, for example. Tom Clancy chiefly writes technically-detailed thrillers that center on military science and espionage, and yet Tom Clancy was an insurance salesman before he became a full-time author. How does he write the masterful books he does with such authenticity? Meticulous research. If Clancy can do it on behalf of the works he assembles, why can't *you*?

You *can* do it, of course, but there's no trick involved; it simply, but absolutely, requires you to put in the necessary legwork, to do the research. Granted, there will be some select areas about which it will be tough for you to write coherently on the basis of pure research, like those related to law, medicine, or engineering, perhaps, but there is a vast array of others that require no more than your inquisitive mind and a dedication to your craft. You are encouraged to dive right in; once you get to work, you will likely find the process easier than you anticipated.

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# **The Jim Paris Perspective**

## ***Notes and Thoughts on Bible Prophecy, Business, and Culture***

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### ***Events Developing in Syria***

As we are going to print on this month's issue of the newsletter, events are quickly developing in Syria. I thought this would be a good opportunity to discuss in a little more detail the Isaiah 17 prophecy and what appears to be a disputed text among prophecy experts. The text predicts the destruction of Damascus and many prophecy experts cite today's current events as leading up to the fulfillment of this prophecy. Other prophecy experts suggest that this is a prophecy that has already been fulfilled and point to the capture of Damascus by the Assyrians in 732 BC. The problem some have with the present day destruction of Damascus interpretation is that Isaiah 17 also predicts the destruction of Israel. A recent guest on my radio show, Dr. Ron Rhodes, backs the interpretation of the 732 BC destruction of Damascus and not in the present day; an interpretation along these lines references the 722 BC capture of Israel by the Assyrians.

Regardless of how you parse this section of Scripture, the wider story here is that we are on the brink of a conflict in the Middle East that will draw in Israel under almost any scenario that can be mapped out. The details here may be lining up very well with the Ezekiel 38 war, which will be led by Russia against Israel. Russia, along with Iran and a host of other Muslim nations, will form an alliance to attack Israel. Russia and its allies will lose, and only one-sixth of their forces will survive the attack. While we don't know exactly what we are looking at here, it is a reminder that we are very close to some major endtimes events.

### ***Preparing for a Nuclear Attack***

While listening to the pundits discussing what could happen if the U.S. and Russia were to square off over the crisis in Syria, the discussion of a worldwide nuclear war has ensued, which is something we don't normally consider on a daily basis. One chilling consideration for you is just how close you may live or work to a military installation. The nuclear powers of the world have their targets worked out with GPS settings in place. It is a well established fact that those living near military bases may have little chance of survival above ground.

The truth is that if we became involved in an all-out nuclear war with Russia, who knows what anyone could really do to live through it? In my own case, I am keenly aware that Jacksonville, Florida, home of Mayport Naval Base, would be very high on the target list. I live only about 90 minutes drive from this base, so I may be on the edge of one of the highest danger zones. I do spend a lot of time up that way throughout my week, and as crazy as it may sound, I have been thinking about how I might change my plans if we ended up officially in a war with Russia. There are a lot of websites that provide lists and maps of the likely first cities to be hit in a nuclear war. Each shows the immediate kill zone of the attack and then also illustrates the larger area affected by nuclear fallout.

## The Jim Paris Perspective (Cont. from page 8)

From the Department Of Homeland Security Website -

“The three basic ways people can reduce exposure to radiation are through time, distance, and shielding:

**Time:** Decrease the amount of time spent in areas where there is radiation.

**Distance:** Increase your distance from a radiation source. Doubling your distance from a point source divides the dose by four. If sheltered in a contaminated area, keep your distance from exterior walls and roofs.

**Shielding:** Create a barrier between yourself and the radiation source with a building or vehicle. Buildings—especially those made of brick or concrete—provide considerable shielding from radiation. Exposure is reduced by about 50% inside a one-story building and by about 90% a level below ground.

Go as far below ground as possible. Shut off ventilation systems and seal doors or windows until the fallout cloud has passed, generally a matter of hours.

Stay inside until authorities say it is safe to come out.

Use stored food and drinking water.

Listen to the local radio or television for official information. Broadcasts may be disrupted for some time as a result of power outages.”

This is just an excerpt from the section on the DHS site, and it really gives you chills to read this and think about the possibility of something like it happening. Some key points to take from this are to remain inside with your windows closed and take all measures to keep air from coming in from the outside. The water will be highly contaminated and you should only use stored food and water after the attack. Many survival enthusiasts purchase Geiger counters and the price is not that unreasonable. You can get a low-end Geiger counter for about \$100. If you don't remember this from science class, a Geiger counter measures the amount of radiation in the air. This would be a key survival tool for anyone trying to live through a nuclear crisis.

By the way, it should be noted that a nuclear threat may come from a terrorist attack, or even the meltdown of a nuclear power facility. Also, talk about a great item to have with which to barter in a natural disaster – maybe buying a second Geiger counter for that purpose would be in order.

### ***PayPal And Facial Recognition***

On our continuing efforts to track the coming Mark of the Beast, this month we take a look at PayPal facial recognition technology and its implications. Talk about something right out of a

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## **The Jim Paris Perspective** *(Cont. from page 9)*

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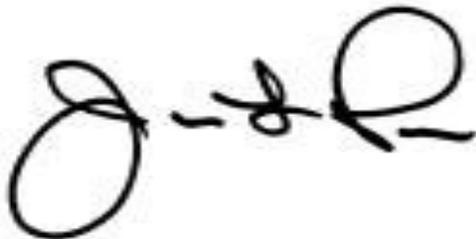
science fiction movie, here is how it works (it is presently being tested in the UK, but is likely to be in the United States very soon): You install the PayPal app on your iPhone and turn on the mobile recognition feature. Once you walk into a store, your phone interacts with the merchant's computer system and you are required to enter your four digit pin code. You might even receive some messages on your screen about specials and discounts available to you as a PayPal user. When you approach the checkout stand, your picture will automatically pop up on a computer screen. The cashier will be able to do a visual identification and add up your merchandise total and you are done. You won't need your wallet or anything else. This technology is already here. We are so close to the cashless society, I can't imagine the Mark of the Beast not being here very soon.

### ***Facebook and the Mark of the Beast***

I thought it might be interesting to add to my prior paragraph the fact the Facebook is planning on turning its social network into a 'PayPal-like' payment system of its own. Facebook has had its own currency for some period of time that could be used for buying actual and virtual gift items, but the new payment system being planned will be much more robust and will directly compete with PayPal. It is also interesting to note that Amazon has also come up with its own virtual currency in recent months. The currency can presently be used to buy apps for use on the Kindle device, but this is most certainly just the beginning. The continuing emergence of proprietary currencies gives appropriate rise to my final topic for this month's commentary.

### ***The Government vs. Bitcoin***

Many of you are aware of the comprehensive course I taught on Bitcoin a few months ago. This course is now available as a free component of my ChristianMoneyPlus.com subscriber site. Bitcoin made big news earlier this year when the price nearly hit \$300. The value of the virtual currency was just \$12 in October of 2012 and although it fell below \$100 in recent weeks, it is back up to about \$150. Much of the volatility in Bitcoin can be directly linked to an ongoing legal battle being waged by the U.S. government against the currency. The government recently took legal action against several major Bitcoin players on various bases, from accusations of money laundering to acting as an unregistered currency exchanger. In the end, Bitcoin is still standing, and this, in my view, gives further credibility to the long term prospects for the currency. Oh, and yes, I am still holding on to my Bitcoins.



***James L. Paris***  
***Editor-In-Chief***

## Protecting Yourself at the ER

By Robert G. Yetman, Jr.

The pronounced social and economic crises that have come to characterize the United States in recent years have also changed the nature of the hospital emergency room in a big way. The combination of lenient immigration policies, high unemployment, and a massive health insurance crisis that is itself comprised of multiple component problems, has left a large group of people in America now disenfranchised from coherent health and health coverage mechanisms, prompting them to head to emergency rooms in a desperate attempt to receive treatment. When the ER becomes like a Wal-Mart Supercenter on the day after Thanksgiving, your visit there can be fraught with risks, so if you must go, here are some things to keep in mind to lessen the chances you'll run into trouble.

### ***Go with an alert, able-bodied companion.***

Even if you can drive yourself, go to the ER with another person. This person can do everything from help to advocate for you, to shuttle you out of the ER safely if some kind of disturbance breaks out in the waiting area; outbreaks of violence at ERs are by no means rare occurrences anymore, and as the numbers of sick and emotionally distraught strangers in one location continues to swell, one can assume the violence will, as well.

### ***Take a record of your medical history with you.***

If you don't have a copy of your medical records with you, then you should be prepared to accurately indicate your medical history, including prescriptions, allergies, even over the counter medicines and supplements you might be taking.

***Wear a surgical mask.*** There's no reason to feel self-conscious about doing this; most of the other people in the waiting area will assume you're wearing it because of some ailment you have, but the truth is that you'll be wearing it to protect yourself from the nasty things floating around in the air, courtesy of others. Also, keep your hands as clean as possible. Wash them constantly while you're there, and if you have hand sanitizer that you can take with you, even better. More and more, we're hearing about people contracting deadly ailments *while* at ERs.

### ***Don't blindly accept what you're told by the staff.***

This includes doctors. Make sure you know everything that's being done, and get explanations for all of the steps being taken on behalf of your treatment. This is a place where your companion can be of great help to you, as he or she can advocate on your behalf if you're physically incapacitated or unable to think clearly. On a related note, the risks of the now-more chaotic ER can include a higher frequency of diagnostic and other medical mistakes, so it is incumbent upon you to pay as close attention as you can to the administration of your care.

Remember that your "job" when you go to the emergency room is as much to avoid any further complications as it is to get help for the reason you went there in the first place. ERs are, sadly, becoming dumping grounds for large portions of unwell humanity, and that can make them a veritable minefield for you when you need acute care. Go if you must, of course, but be smart about it, too.

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## The Risk of No Risk

By Robert G. Yetman, Jr.

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When discussions of risk take place among investors, most of the talk centers around the risk associated with instruments that are subject to regular volatility, are highly illiquid, or are unusual enough in some way that the chance of investment failure is substantial. There is, however, another kind of risk that is not normally considered, largely because it exists as a function of the fact that the instrument itself is, for all intents and purposes, *entirely* secure. The instrument of which we're speaking is cash or cash equivalents, and the risk is that which comes from being "invested" in cash for so long, and with such an amount, that your long-term investment objectives become unachievable due to the abysmally low return. Think of it as "the risk of *no* risk."

The subject for this article arose in large part out of *another* article that appeared a few weeks ago at the popular and well-regarded website Bankrate.com. In that piece, entitled *Upbeat Americans Wary of Stocks as Investment* and written by Claes Bell, the results of Bankrate's own monthly financial survey were cited, and they reflected some disconcerting information for those who understand the risks of investing too conservatively. The most unfortunate takeaway was that cash and cash equivalents topped the list of answers when survey subjects were asked their thoughts on the best place to keep money *not needed for at least ten years*.

This is a problem, to be sure. For one thing, even if you were willing to tie up your money in a CD with a five-year maturity, the very best rate, at this writing, is right at about

2 percent per year – this while the rate of inflation remains at roughly 3 percent annually. Even during periods when CD rates exceed inflation, they're not normally beating it to a significant degree, which means inflation's erosive effects on your wealth building efforts when primarily using cash equivalents remains both substantial and negative.

While a 3 percent annual inflation rate, to many, sounds relatively harmless, its long-term effects are pretty devastating; at that rate, the cost of goods doubles roughly every 25 years, which, put another way, means that the purchasing power of your money is cut in half during that same period (by the way, if you want a great read on this, refer to *The Effect of Inflation on Purchasing Power* by Robert Urie, posted at Advisor Perspectives.com).

One of the great challenges that investors typically face in ultimately realizing their investment objectives is the ability to stay the course in more volatile investment instruments during periods of high fluctuation, and while that's understandable, given the choices we have by which to see our money grow over the course of decades, it is in your best interests to prioritize a diversified portfolio that prominently features appropriate equities. Cash has a place in your portfolio, but not as a long-term "investment." In fact, cash is no kind of investment at all; outside of using it for your reserve fund, or as a place to temporarily move while you're considering your next *real* investment position, it shouldn't be a place in which you put your monies earmarked for long-term growth.