



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #253 — OCT. 23, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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Now We Await the Election

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 23, 2012)

The debates are now history as we head into the stretch...finally! President Obama apparently won this last contest on points, but his inexplicable rope-a-dope in Denver is still probably the most significant moment in the entire campaign.

"Mitt's Disappearing Act" by Steve Kornacki, Salon

Oct. 22, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/10/23/mitts_disappearing_act/)



(The GOP nominee knew there was no way for him to win the foreign policy debate, and it really showed.)

The good news for Barack Obama is that Monday night's debate went better for him than the other two. The bad news is that it figures to have the least impact on Election Day.

Three weeks ago in Denver, the president was practically comatose, while Mitt Romney was glib and confident in a way many viewers hadn't seen before. Last week, Obama bounced back and turned in an impressively punchy performance, but Romney held his own (except for his awful Libya flub) and scored some real points on the economy. On Monday, Obama showed up with some strong material, challenged his opponent persistently, and was met with surprisingly little resistance from Romney.

That Romney was playing it safe became clear moments into the debate, when he took Bob Schieffer's lead-off question about Libya and immediately sought to broaden it out, launching into a discussion about Egypt and the Arab Spring. He also complimented Obama on ordering the bin Laden raid, but then added that "we can't kill our way out of this mess." Obviously, Romney had no interest in a repeat of last week, when his assertion that Obama had waited two weeks to call the attack on the Benghazi consulate a terrorist act blew up in his face. This time, Romney seemed content to run out the clock.

And it went that way for most of the night. Sure, Romney repeated some of his standard attacks on Obama's foreign policy leadership, branding him insufficiently concerned about Israel and even dredging up the "apology tour" nonsense. And when he could, he tried to pivot away from foreign policy and to remind voters about the fragile state of the domestic economy. But Romney wasn't eager to engage Obama on many specific points, or to offer a significantly different vision of America's role in the world. He agreed with Obama on drones, on Afghanistan and even on Syria, acknowledging that besides calling for the arming of rebels he doesn't have a different course of action in mind.

I think three factors contributed to this. The first is that Romney and his team recognized that foreign policy isn't their strong suit in this election. His campaign strategy depends on economically anxious voters turning on Obama; there's just not much room for foreign policy and national security in this equation – and it shows in how little effort Romney and his party have put into defining their international agenda. This was going to be a tough debate for Romney to win, no matter what.

He was further hindered by the neocon pronouncements he made en route to the GOP nomination, and the strong neocon bent of his foreign policy team. Voters are no more eager to return to Bush-era international policies than they are Bush-era domestic policies, and Romney plainly understood that, so he reined in the hawkishness. But he wasn't about to attack Obama from the left either, so this left Romney with little to say at times.

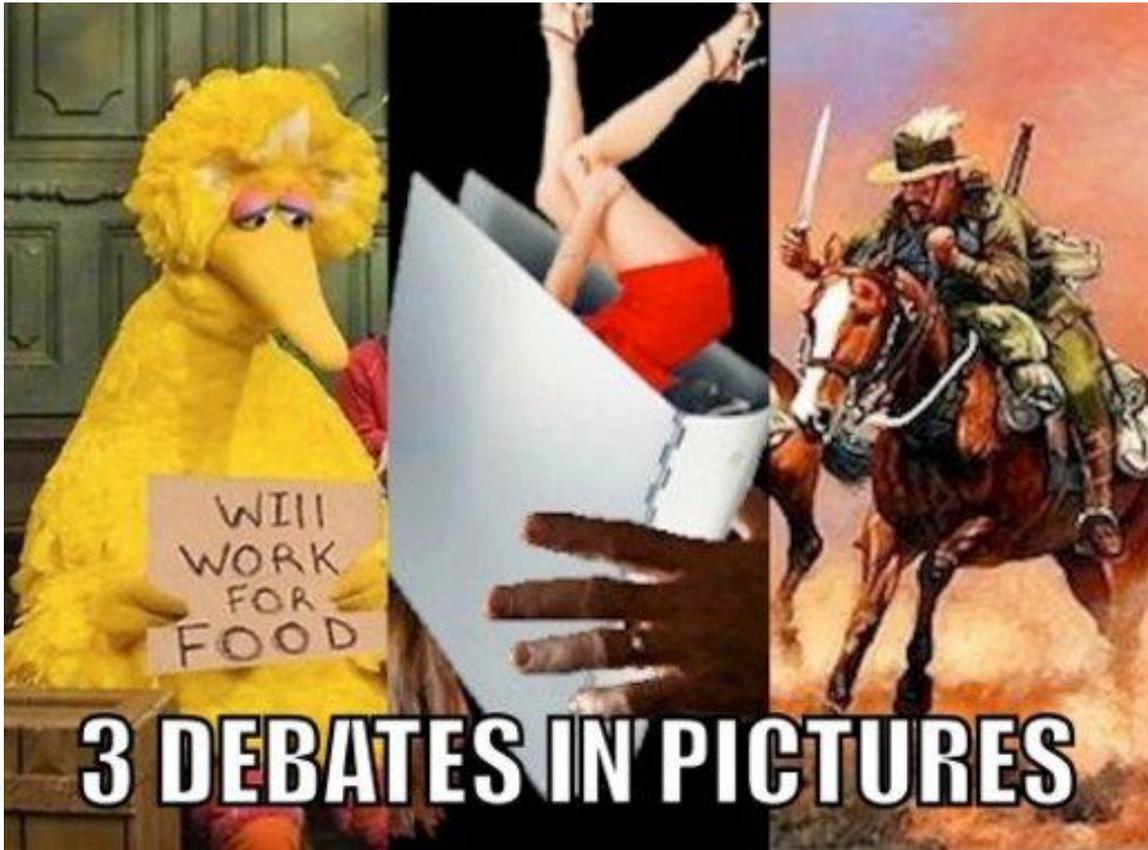
He also may have been spooked by what happened at Hofstra last week, which marked the second time he'd made a political mess for himself with Benghazi. Maybe the Romney camp concluded that it just wasn't worth the risk of going down that road again.

The result is that some of Obama's best attributes were able to shine. He was in command of the facts, ably deflected Romney's attacks (particularly on the apology tour business, when Obama pointed out that like Romney he'd gone to Israel as a candidate, but that he hadn't taken donors or fundraisers with him), and seemed more presidential than he did in the first two debates. There seemed to be a stature gap at the table.

The early returns are encouraging for Obama. A CBS News insta-poll of undecided voters found that 53 percent judged him the winner, compared to just 23 percent for Romney. In that same poll last week, Obama's edge was just 7 points, and in Denver he was blown out by 24. If the Obama we've seen in the last two debates had shown up in Denver, this race might not be as tight as it now is.

The problem for Obama is that Monday's debate will probably have the smallest audience of all of them. And even if voters were more impressed with him than Romney, this remains an election that's fundamentally about the economy. Nor was there a particularly dramatic or memorable moment that will live on for the rest of the race. Obama delivered a few funny lines ("Well, Governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets"), but there was no Romney meltdown.

In the best case for Obama, his strong performance offers a crucial bit of reassurance to voters who like him and were leaning toward voting for him before Denver. Perhaps this, coupled with his showing last week, will provide these voters with the motivation they need to troop to the polls for him. The worst case for Obama is that Monday night won't matter at all – and given where the race stands, that wouldn't necessarily be bad for him.



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<u>20121022-01</u>	06:09	SteveB	Fw: For Your Attention
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This one seems like it's got to be legit to me!?

From the desk of:
AL-Hassan Yazid
Contract Review Panel
Ministry of Finance
Iraq,

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am Al-Hassan Yazid of the Contract Review Panel of the Ministry of Finance, Iraq.

After the demise of the Americans from Iraq, we have decided to rebuild our country.

My intension of writing you this letter is to seek your permission to invite you into a deal that will mutually benefit you and I without any risk involved, knowing fully well that everything will be done in a legal manner. You and I have this once in a life time oppurtunity to share the sum of US\$27Million at the ratio of 50:50.

I will tell you more details when I hear from you.

Al-Hassan Yazid.

[20121022-02](#)

10:13

Pam

Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #252)

I haven't read the articles yet, but what you say here is beautiful, Steve. As is your family. I'm so glad you posted pictures of them. Your daughters are gorgeous, your grandchildren adorable, and their granddad a good, wise man. I think this is a wonderful message to send to a new granddaughter, and I know that when she's old enough she'll cherish it.

[20121022-09](#)

14:31

Pam

Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #252)

"For if God does not exist, then what is the foundation for moral values? More particularly, what is the basis for the value of human beings? If God does not exist, then it is difficult to see any reason to think that human beings are special or that their morality is objectively valid."

This is one of my "favorite" arguments for the existence of God. Why should we think that humans are special? In this whole, vast universe, why would this crawling, snarling conglomeration of creatures (us) mean anything more than a drop in the ocean? We're special to ourselves, but that's something entirely different. I happen to think humans are fairly intelligent--some of them--and can figure out ways to live on their own. Some ways are better than others, at least to my way of thinking, but if humans aren't perfect--and they're not--then they are bound to make mistakes and false starts. God has nothing to do with it, and doesn't have to. I actually think it's more to man's credit that he has developed morality(ies) in the absence of a controlling force. In a sense, we have created something from nothing: morality from the anarchy of nature. Relying on God for one's morality is like being a child relying on your parents to tell you what to do. It corrodes autonomy. Dostoyevsky asked whether if God does not exist, does that mean anything is permissible? Anything is possible. It is human, not divine, conscience that prompts us to do good rather than evil. When evil intrudes, it means there has been a human failure, and this is only on our terms. Objectively, the beings on distant planets (if there are any) might have a very different notion of what constitutes good and evil. We'll never know. All these arguments about the existence of God mean little to me in the end. Absent empirical proof, no one can say for sure what the Truth is, so when it comes to belief, I'd say it's every man for himself--so long as what you believe doesn't imperil others. Since I haven't a clue what the truth of the cosmos is, I don't think it matters very much what individuals believe. Trying to argue someone into or out of religious belief is a pointless act, like trying to argue someone into liking opera.

[20121022-10](#)

15:32

SteveB

Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to Pam, above)

Yet maybe there is progress to be made here...

I agree with you about morality and I guess that's much of what humanism is about...so, yes, the problem of morality doesn't have to have anything to do with God...

The first author is obviously a little too immersed in Christianity...and he likes to set up straw dogs.

Just as we can have morality without God, so too can gratuitous evil exist in the presence of God. Whenever the religious man starts to know the mind of God, he gets into trouble. So I think, with you, that, with or without God, both evil and morality may thrive. And it seems as if we are left alone to decide which is which.

But then Plato sometimes out-Plato'd himself...

Pam: "Trying to argue someone into or out of religious belief is a pointless act, like trying to argue someone into liking opera."

I know what you mean, yet I see the Mormon missionaries busy as bees, even here in Bolivia...obviously saving souls everywhere they go. How do they do that? The Book of Mormon is absolutely CRAZY!

20121022-13 19:33 Pam Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, above)

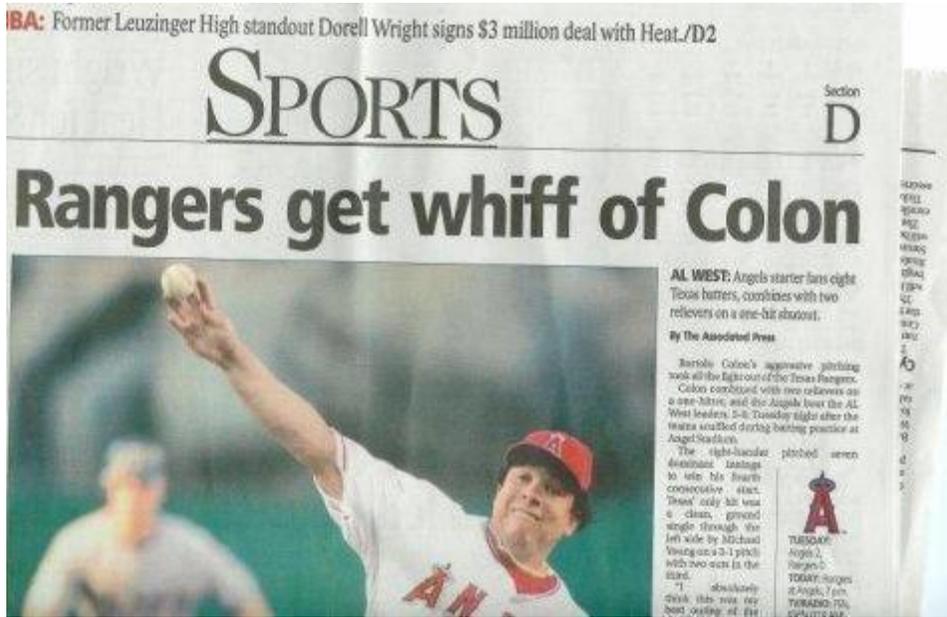
What you said in your message to your granddaughter made more sense than those other arguments. Believe this, or believe that, at the end of the day, what difference does it really make? That's why I never understand why people are so eager to try to convert others. If God is so inscrutable, then how do you figure you know the truth? Are you so special that you have special knowledge that is denied others? It's the "I'm right and you're wrong" mentality that drives me around the bend.

20121022-03 12:17 Tom Video: "Obama Kept Us Safe"

Remember, being in Solitary confinement in a Prison, could also keep you 'Safe!'

<http://youtu.be/gAG19uO6Og8>

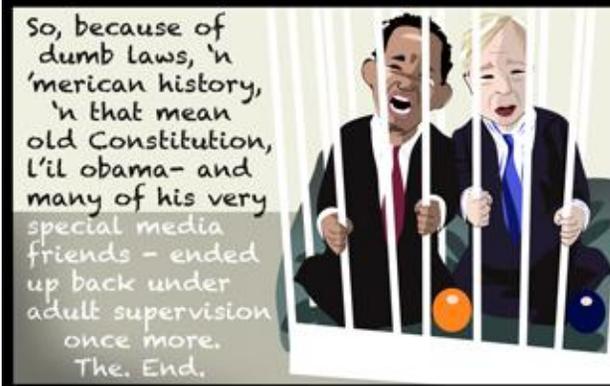
20121022-04 13:03 Dennis Graphic: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #1





Once upon a time, Americans elected a lightbringer, who promised toys, 'n unicorns, rainbows, 'n good things for all the boys 'n girls who would vote for him!

To do this, L'il obama threw out a mean old Constitution, and children just like him everywhere cheered, 'cause now THEY were in charge!



[20121022-06](#) 13:23 Tom Video: Space Shuttle *Endeavor's* Trek Across L.A.

Time-lapse video: Space shuttle *Endeavour's* trek across L.A

This is memorable..... enjoy!

<http://framework.latimes.com/2012/10/15/time-lapse-video-space-shuttle-endeavours-trek-across-l-a/>

[20121022-07](#) 13:27 Tom Graphic: Anti-Obama #1



[20121022-08](#) 13:35 Tom Fw: "Ghosts of War: Artist Superimposes World War II Photographs on to Modern Pictures of the Same Street Scenes"

from RandyG:

"Ghosts of War: Artist Superimposes World War II Photographs on to Modern Pictures of the Same Street Scenes"
by Emma Reynolds, TidyRead

Oct. 18, 2012,

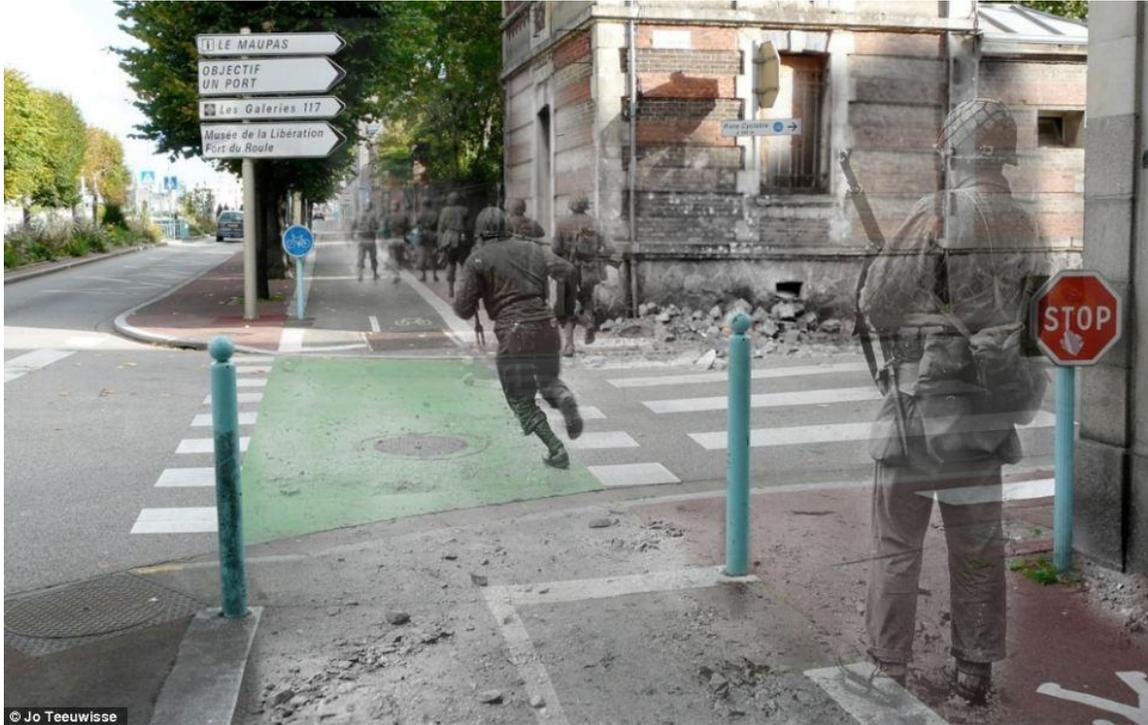
http://www.tidyread.com/td/index.php?r=site/read&xml=eNpNzs1KAzEQXDDgdynUy5DUblV0S5FelH2ChiVsRhNMNmFm1tC3d9pFKYQJmb8v3O_un_pVEKn9ZiPRnwmtdt2PJ_4-Pn87WUF9nSodL33p3XFx3b3paa9a7mM5Zg47Y-VuzEzbWy5HEMaHpuu3L4_ODZt5DYWHTHJmjFlkMzxUp5loY2ZwKJW9OWh0GU0OR8kWuBja5eKTJ1DjKTnrIQog6POKEbIPkdFwnURieFlwylwnqKG_hIWBWwauDCgDw1wwNwyUCaTAgSefdIkMAYFd1nCFYYFX-1_Z4HHU&id=1846513

This haunting collection of images shows what it would look like if the ghosts of World War II returned to our streets.

The remarkable pictures overlay modern scenes from France with atmospheric photographs taken in the same place during the war.

Historical expert Jo Teeuwisse, from Amsterdam, began the project after finding 300 old negatives at a flea market in her home city depicting familiar places in a very different context.

[Just one sample of many fascinating images... --SteveB]



Dangerous crossing: Soldiers race up Avenue de Paris in Cherbourg in 1944, speeding past the rubble and over modern-day road markings



Fear and fighting: The original image from 1944, before it was laid over a photo taken from the exact same spot today



Startling contrast: Dutch historian Jo Teeuwisse finds pictures from archives and then researches their background, before taking a picture in the same place now and elegantly interweaving them.

[20121022-11](#) 16:05 Ben Re: "Ghosts of War..." (reply to Tom, above)

Wow! This is really cool: very powerful; art applied to history. Or is it history applied to art?

[20121022-12](#) 19:24 SteveB "LiquidPiston Unveils 40-BHP X2 Rotary Engine with 75 Percent Thermal Efficiency"

"LiquidPiston Unveils 40-BHP X2 Rotary Engine with 75 Percent Thermal Efficiency" by David Szondy, Gizmag

Oct. 21, 2012, (<http://www.gizmag.com/liquidpistol-rotary/24623/>)

The internal combustion engine (ICE) has had a remarkably successful century and a half. Unfortunately, it's notoriously inefficient, wasting anywhere from 30 to 99 percent of the energy it produces and spewing unburned fuel into the air. Last week, Gizmag interviewed Dr. Alexander Shkolnik, President and CEO of LiquidPiston, Inc. about the company's LiquidPiston X2 – a 40-bhp rotary engine that burns a variety of fuels and requires no valves, cooling systems, radiators or mufflers, yet promises a thermodynamic efficiency of 75 percent.

Co-founder of LiquidPiston with his father Nikolay, Dr. Shkolnik believes that the internal combustion engine is at the end of its development cycle. According to Shkolnik, after 150 years the ICE has made as many incremental improvements as it can. Many varieties of ICE, such as the Otto cycle used by petrol engines and the Diesel cycle, have had their successful points, but all fall short of being as efficient as they could be. Even what seem like very efficient engines, like the diesel, aren't as good as they might appear.

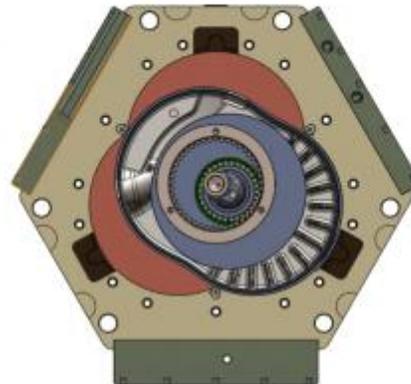
"Everyone would say at first glance that the diesel engine is more efficient (than the petrol engine). The truth is that if you had both engines at the same compression ratio, the spark-ignited engine has a faster combustion process and a more efficient process. In practice, it's limited to a lower compression ratio otherwise you get spontaneous ignition."



LiquidPiston's approach to the problem was to go back to the basics of thermodynamics and work forward to develop what Shkolnik calls the "High Efficiency Hybrid Cycle" (HEHC), which combines the features of the Otto, Diesel, Rankine, and Atkinson cycles.



- Wankel Engine**
- Low Compression ratio
 - No constant-volume combustion
 - No over-expansion



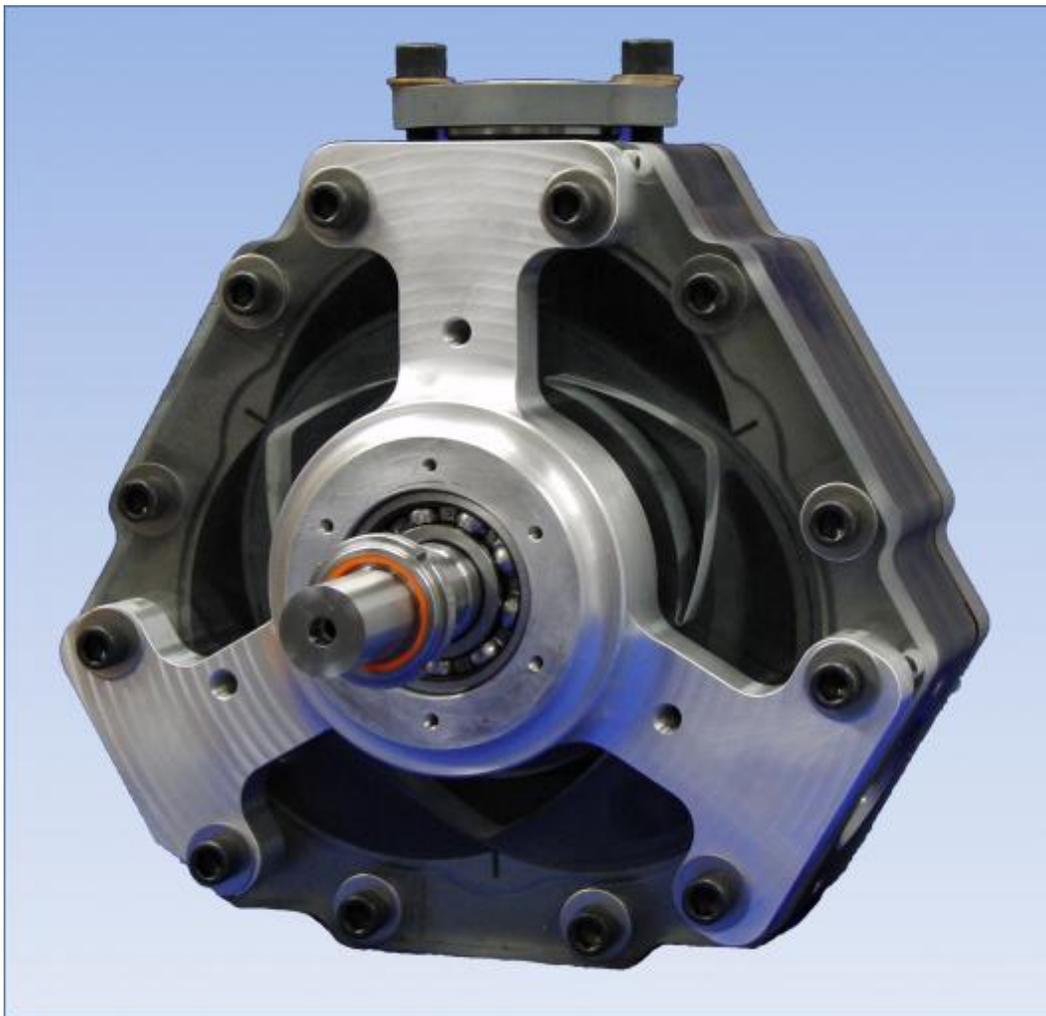
- LPI X1 Engine**
- High Compression ratio
 - Constant-volume combustion
 - Over-expansion

The idea is to compress the air in the LiquidPiston X2 engine to a very high ratio as in the diesel cycle and then isolating it in a constant volume chamber. When fuel is injected, it's allowed to mix with the air and it auto-ignites as in a diesel engine, but the fuel/air mixture isn't allowed to expand. Instead, it's kept compressed in a constant volume so it can burn over an extended period, as in the Otto cycle. When the burning fuel/air mix is allowed to expand, it's then overexpanded to near-atmospheric pressure. In this way, all the fuel is burned and almost all of the energy released is captured as work. Shkolnik calls this use of constant volume combustion "the holy grail of automotive engineering."

Constant volume combustion and overexpansion provide an HEHC engine like the X2 with a number of benefits. Shkolnik points out that the X2 engine is exceptionally quiet because it burns all of its fuel. In current ICE engines, an alarming amount of fuel goes out the tailpipe. This not only cuts down on fuel efficiency and pollutes the air, it also makes the engine noisy. Since the X2 engine burns its fuel completely, there's no need for complicated silencing apparatus.

The overexpansion used in the cycle also means that there is very little waste heat. An ICE only converts only 30 percent of its heat into work while the X2 engine has a thermal efficiency of 75 percent, so a water cooling system isn't necessary. Water may be injected into an HEHC engine during compression or expansion for cooling, but doing so also helps to lubricate and seal the chamber and as the water cools the engine it converts into superheated steam, which boosts engine efficiency.

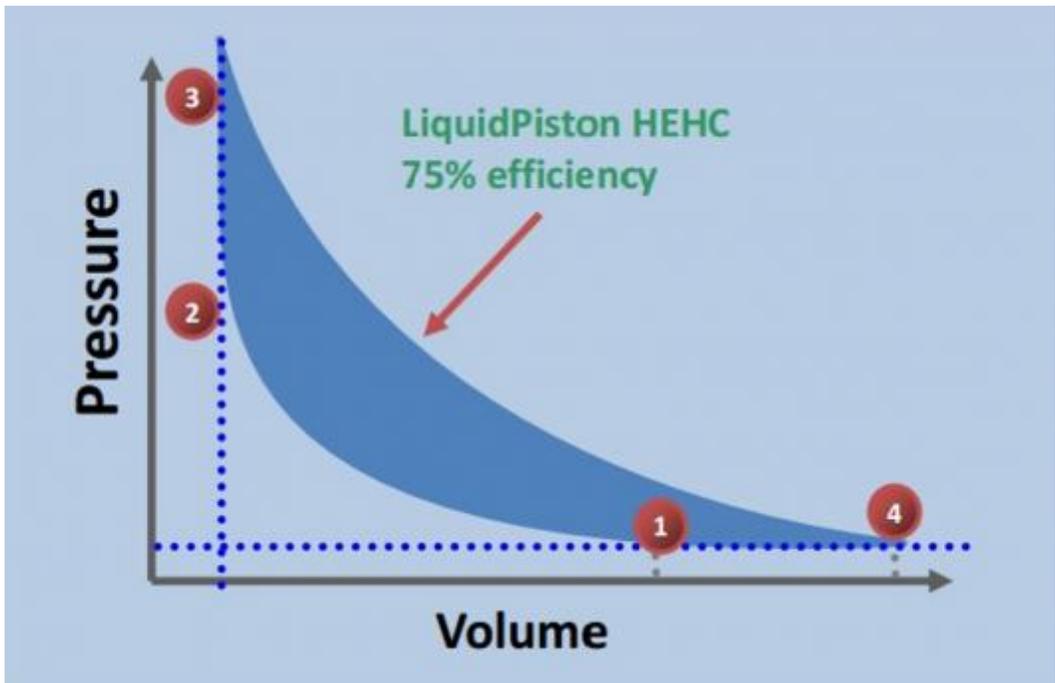
Shkolnik says that the X2 engine is a rotary because piston engines aren't suitable for the HEHC and a rotary engine provides much more flexibility. Also, the use of a rotary design greatly simplifies the engine with only three moving parts and 13 major components required. That allows the X2 to be one-tenth the size of a comparable diesel engine.



When asked whether the X2 engine isn't just an updated Wankel, Shkolnik pointed out that though both are rotary engines, the Wankel is very different. For one thing, it uses a straightforward Otto cycle like a piston engine and operates at a much lower compression rate than the X2. In comparison, the X2 engine is almost the opposite of a Wankel. "It's almost like the Wankel engine flipped inside-out," said Shkolnik.

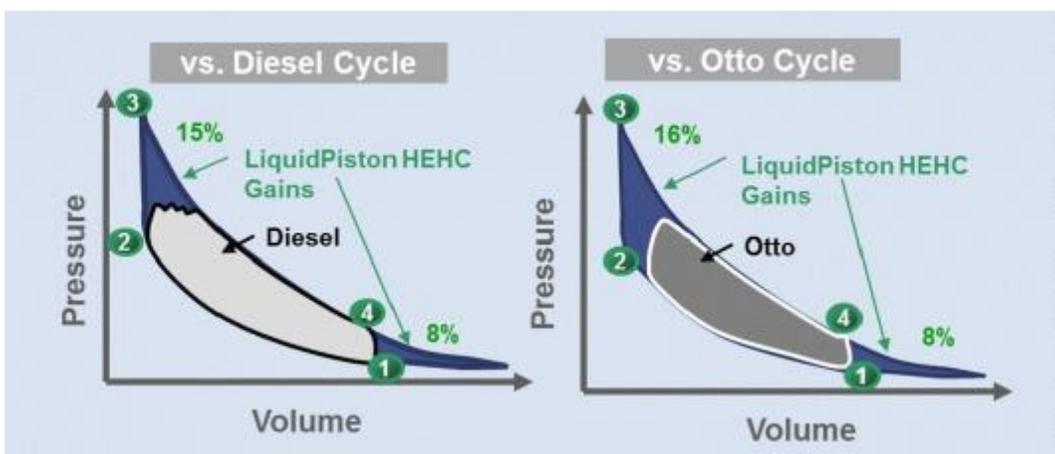
Not only does the X2 engine work on a different principle from the Wankel, but it doesn't suffer from the same limitations. The X2 engine has a better surface to volume ratio, it doesn't have the thermodynamic limitations of the Otto cycle and it doesn't have the emissions problems of the Wankel. The Wankel has apex seals that are carried

around with the rotor and need to be lubricated. To do this, oil has to be sprayed on them, which means that the Wankel is burning oil as it runs, resulting in the high emissions that have recently curtailed its use. The X2 engine, on the other hand, moves the seals from the rotor to the crankcase, so no special lubrication is required.



Another way that the X2 engine differs from the Wankel is that Shkolnik has no intention of it sharing the same fate as the Wankel, which turned into an automotive also-ran when put head to head with the ICE or hybrid electrics to power motor cars, (though he admits that the X2 engine would be an excellent range extender for hybrids). Instead, he plans to go after niche markets that can use the X2's peculiar strengths.

One place where the X2 engine may have an advantage is in auxiliary power units (APUs). Shkolnik said that an enormous amount of diesel fuel is wasted by lorry drivers for "hotel" purposes. That is, when they stop overnight they leave their engines idling to provide power for the living amenities of their long-distance rigs. Small, lightweight diesel power units with high fuel efficiency, he believes, would be particularly attractive.



Another area is military applications. The U.S. military has a need for APUs that can run on heavy fuels, which the X2 engine can. Also, the Pentagon is very keen on developing robots. According to Shkolnik, "you can do amazing things with robots, but ask a robot to carry this giant engine and there's problems." He believes that the X2 engine may be the answer to these problems. In addition, the military has need of APUs for tanks, which suffer from extremely bad fuel efficiency from idling to run electronics.

Currently, LiquidPiston is running its original X1 engine in tests, which has been built after only a year from its first design concept. This month, the company unveiled the X2, which is a more fully integrated engine with a simpler construction, at the DEER Conference in Dearborn, Michigan. Shkolnik says that the X2 will be available for partner tests in 2013 as a new round of financing is launched and he hopes to have a preproduction prototype by 2014.

[20121022-14](#) 21:31 SandyI Quotes: Gotta Share

"A woman voting for Romney is like a turkey supporting Thanksgiving."

"You can't change the direction of the wind. But you can adjust the sail."

<http://soundlikejeff.wordpress.com/tag/sample-rate/>

Great 1906 San Francisco Earthquake



—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

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