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Forbes

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are 4 billion cell phones in use around the world.

In 1900 the automobile was a toy for the rich and cost the equivalent of about $100,000 today. Henry Ford's moving assembly line turned autos into something that any working person could afford.

We could attain similar and ongoing miracles in health care. We are already seeing some in a few areas. Conventional Lasik eye surgery costs a third of what it did ten years ago. And there has been virtually no inflation in the prices of cosmetic surgery, even though there have been enormous technological advances, and the demand for these procedures has increased *sixfold* since the early 1990s.

Special hospital facilities in India, Thailand, Singapore and elsewhere that engage in medical "tourism" have infection rates a fraction of those found in most U.S. hospitals. These positive results are driven by the fact that patients write the checks and are thus fully conscious of the costs, as well as by the fact that providers are under pressure to make their offerings more enticing and affordable.

Here are some helpful and constructive measures that can move us to a more genuinely free-enterprise health care system.

• Equalize the tax treatment of individuals and businesses. If the company you work for doesn't provide insurance or you don't like the plan offered, you are forced to try to buy a policy with *aftertax* dollars. If an individual wishes or needs to buy health insurance on his own, w shouldn't he get a refund tax credit of, say, $4,000—and a family, $8,0

• Allow consumers to shop for health insurance across state lin Today it's illegal for someone in Chicago to buy a health insu ance policy that someone living in New York City can buy.

• Encourage the use of Health Savings Accounts. That way co sumers—not government bureaucrats or employers—would co trol the purse strings, or at least a portion of them.

• Permit small businesses to form pools so they can increase th pricing leverage with insurers.

• Remove state-imposed obstacles to allowing routine medi care to be offered in, say, Wal-Mart stores.

• Remove the obstacles that prevent entrepreneurs from setti up new clinics or hospitals. A number of states make th extremely difficult by demanding that such entrepreneurs obta a certificate of need. In fact, in some jurisdictions hospitals m get permission to make major capital purchases.

Genuine free-market reforms in health care will slash t number of the uninsured and lead to the same kinds of innov tions and efficiencies that are experienced in most of the rest the economy.

King Fisher

THIS SUMMER MARKS KEN FISHER'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY AS A columnist for FORBES. Only three other individuals in our 92-year history have written more columns than Ken has. The reason for Ken's longevity is not only his excellent record of individual stock recommendations but also his insightful general observations and his creation of principles for investors to follow.

Ken's record is impressive. Between 1997 and 2006 his picks easily outpaced the S&P 500, achieving an average annual return of 11.7% versus the S&P's 6.8%. In 2007—a tough year that saw the beginning of the financial crisis—Ken still had a slight gain when the S&P turned negative. Last year was brutal, but at least Ken's column picks tracked the S&P. As he pointed out earlier this year, if not for two clunkers in his January 2008 column, he would have handily beaten the S&P bogey. Even so, he said, "I was dead wrong with a bullish stance in 2008." Normally, election years are good for stocks.

Though Ken has a low opinion of politicians, quipping last month that he is "an equal opportunity politician-hater," he underestimated their capacity to do harm last year. However, Ken's approach to politicians does not blind him to opportunities. He recently made the argument for why President Obama will be good for stocks.

It's Ken's unique perspective on the world that makes him su an asset. FORBES discovered him back in early 1984 when we r a major piece on him entitled, "The Case Against Price/Earnin Ratios." The metric he put much more stock in then and now ov P/Es is a company's price/sales ratio. Ken's seemingly simple b profound insight is that "unusual profitability can rarely b sustained," because it attracts competitors like honey draws bea Ken, of course, looks at other metrics, such as book value and R& spending. He also recognizes that a company's marketing ability usually far more important than its ability to invent something. he noted in his first FORBES column: "It's not the hot gadget th puts small companies over the top but hot marketing ... i troubled company is strong on marketing, it is a good bet to sol its problems. ... So I like companies run by a top-notch marketi person or companies with one close to the boss' elbow and ear."

Before it was common to do so, Ken urged investors to tak global approach: "Foreign holdings give you more opportunities a better diversification." His recommendations truly range the wor

Thankfully for us—and you—Ken's next 25 years promise be even more fruitful than his first 25 at FORBES.

RESTAURANTS: GO, CONSIDER, STOP

Edible enlightenment from our eatery expert Tom Jones and colleagues Gary Walther and Monie Begley, as well as brothers Bob, Kip and Tim.

● **Triomphe**—Iroquois hotel, 49 West 44th St. (Tel.: 212-453-4233). A delightful jewel box of a spot that's the ideal respite from Midtown madness. The fare is delicious, from the perfect appetizers of escargots or the sea scallops served with porcini mushrooms in a foie gras butter to the main courses of grilled salmon or swordfish to the spectacular desserts.

● **Almond**—12 East 22nd St. (Tel.: 212-228-7557). Comfortable place for conversation and a great dinner. Favorites: the artichoke vinaigrette, scallops with polenta ravioli, hangar steak, monkfish and scampi. Desserts: pot de crème and crème brûlée. F