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**And the Decade Goes To ... Anyone can pick a Person of the Year. It takes a great historian to define the decade**

I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD BE A FAMOUS HISTORIAN. This is largely because I'm not an academic or a biographer or particularly interested in history. I am, however, very interested in being famous. So when TIME didn't pick a Person of the Decade this year, I decided to do it myself.

Not wanting to read a bunch of old newspapers, I sought advice from former TIME editor Henry Muller, who picked Mikhail Gorbachev as the 1980s Person of the Decade. "The process is pretty simple. Pretend to consult a lot of people, and then make the decision yourself," he told me. I did him one better. I pretended to pretend to consult a lot of people and made the decision myself.

One obvious choice was Osama bin Laden, since he reconfigured the relationship between the Arab and Western worlds and gave action movies bad guys who made sense again. But picking bin Laden would lead to a lot of hate mail and lose me a bunch of readers. Same with George W. Bush. China had a good decade, but there was no way I was going to search 1.3 billion people on Facebook to find out who was responsible. And picking generic "Chinese guy" seemed like one of those experiences that would feel good at the time but leave me unsatisfied an hour later.

Another problem was that I'd have to write a profile on my person, and none of my choices seemed likely to respond in the 48 hours between when I thought of this idea and when the column was due. Which is how I decided on the Google guys, Sergey Brin and Larry Page. They have a publicist who returns e-mails. And if I've learned one thing these past 10 years, it's that without the help of a high-level exec at their company, there's nothing a man can do to stop his No. 1 Google image from being a high school photo of himself at the Jersey Shore with a mullet down to his butt.

The greatest thing about picking Person of the Decade is that you get to write in the inflated style that TIME reserves for this issue. It doesn't even have to make sense; it just has to sound as though it makes sense, like the stuff Sarah Jessica Parker typed on *Sex and the City*: In a decade when power shifted from organizations to individuals, when writers became cheap and librarians dear, when giving things away was the most successful business model, these men used their ingenuity to organize, connect and map our planet. For these reasons, and the fact that they can keep "Joel Osteen" from popping up every

time you try to find me online, Sergey Brin and Larry Page are TIME'S Persons of the 2000s. It turns out writing like this is totally easy.

The Google guys, however—after Googling a few of my columns—decided not to talk to me. But this did not stop the writers who profiled TIME'S Person of the Year when they were unable to score interviews with the computer (1982), the planet (1988) or even You (2006), when You were too busy flipping houses and hedge-fund investing. It's not going to stop me either:

Declining to sit down with TIME in Google's office in Menlo Park, Calif., the Google guys are making applications that will one day turn the human race into a bunch of fat idiots, subservient to robots, while they take all our money. (I am seriously mad at them for not talking to me.)

With my place as a great historian secured, I moved on to my runner-up. I picked the person I think is the best chef in America, Thomas Keller. In a decade when food became both entertainment and politics, when obscure ingredients filled grocery-store aisles, when I had to go outside in zero-degree weather to suck in air in order to keep from barfing after gorging on 22 courses at his restaurant Per Se but then ate four more courses, Keller led the way by focusing on being the best instead of hosting a Food Network

show. For these reasons, Thomas Keller is TIME'S runner-up Person of the 2000s. Seriously, the only thing easier than writing like that is writing the profile of him:

During an intimate sit-down with the Napa Valley, California, chef, in which I was sitting at a desk in Los Angeles with a cell phone and he may or may not have been sitting, Keller gave credit to his staff and farmers. Then he said something about the food chain, followed by "You'll get free food for the next decade." I know it's early, but it's hard for me to see how Keller isn't going to be the Person of the 2010s.

As a famous historian, I realize that people are going to argue with my choice. I welcome that discussion as long as I don't have to listen to it. I will be busy doing famous-historian stuff, like droning on to Ken Burns, blurbing books I haven't read and sleeping with grad students. Though deep down, I wonder if we should have just done a Bravo show about the real columnists of TIME magazine instead. I know how this decade really worked.

