Carol's Corner Continued

For example, what do glass, concrete, and computer chips have in common? SAND, known chemically as silicone dioxide, is the basis for the very oldest (glass) and for the very newest (chip) products that humankind has learned how to manufacture. There is not a shortage of sand but a scarcity of the right kind of sand. Sand bookends civilization. In between, is the ubiquitous building material, concrete, utilized from pre-Roman empire to today. Prepare to be pleasantly surprised with Conway's story telling genius of how chips are really made and why Taiwan is so key in the geopolitical power struggle embedded in The Chip Wars.

These six relatively benign substances have fueled the prosperity of empires, built cities, tore down cities, altered climate, and just may help save the climate. These are the primary building blocks of the modern world. This thought-provoking book has the potential to transform the way one thinks about our world and its future. Consider that human progress was fueled by climbing an energy density ladder—wood to coal, coal to oil, oil to gas. This transition to energy dense fuels in one sense did reduce carbon dioxide emissions dramatically; however, at the same time human population increased even more dramatically. Conway provocatively states, "There is a paradox: Without fossil fuels roughly half of us would not be alive." Quite the thought to ponder.

To be clear, Material World is neither a high school chemistry review nor an engineering exercise. This book is grounded in the human ingenuity that has built our modern world – in the geopolitical forces and power structures designed to control these materials, and in the climate change challenges associated with the story of human civilization. Read the book, and see how differently you view the (material) world.

The American Association of University Women Del Mar Leucadia Branch invites you to continue this discussion of Material World on Saturday, February 15, 2025, at the Encinitas Community Center 10:00am -12:00pm.