

## 12 frightful slides before Halloween: Stocks boil and bubble, investors toil and trouble

### Summary

*A number of signals indicate the S&P 500, which has been led by a handful of technology-related stocks, is at risk of further correction. We see the P/E multiple pressured by Oct-2020 by a slightly higher real 10Y Treasury yield (we estimate +40bps to -0.60%) as fiscal assistance recedes and 2021 EPS estimates come under pressure. We “get” the obvious Equity Risk Premium bull case, but the S&P 500 earlier this month briefly reached the middle of a 2,880 to 3,715 range that ERP would imply through 2021, and we see more downside by Oct-2020. There is an alternate, outright “bubble” case featuring Fed repressed real yields with low inflation and resulting gargantuan P/E expansion, but history teaches us that over-paying for earnings growth when the Federal Reserve and Treasury (finally working in unison amid populism) are determined to reflate is the purview of speculators, not investors.*

### Key Points

**Buyer beware: 20 years ago (just before the 2000-02 Tech Wreck) stocks were expensive vs. commodities, and we are there again:** In the past 150 years, following the first month that the S&P 500 relative to commodities crossed above +1.5 sigma within the polynomial uptrend, an average -45% bear market has ensued about 1-2 years later, and the most recent cross was Jan-2020 (**Pages 2-3**)

**Cyclicals vs. Defensives (equal-weighted), led by Technology and Discretionary, are at a level that indicates S&P 500 downside:** Equal-weighted S&P 500 Cyclical sectors relative to equal-weighted Defensives are peaking close to the level that for the past 20 years has preceded a major (high-teens percentage) correction or bear market for the S&P 500 (**Page 4**)

**Fading oil divided by gold signals a higher real 10Y yield in the near term, which could weigh on the S&P 500 P/E (especially Growth stocks):** Oil divided by gold (barrel of Brent oil divided by an ounce of gold) indicates a deflation shock beckons, possibly catalyzed by fading fiscal policy support; as inflation fades real yields may rise, and it is the higher real yield that weighs on Growth stock P/E ratios (**Page 5**)

**Next shoe to drop for a high P/E market? The Street may be too optimistic about 2021 EPS based on past curve inversions:** The 50-day moving average inversion of the 10Y-3M Treasury has never missed a recession call and besides the (correct) recession call the Jun-20, 2019 inversion warned of weak EPS for two years through 2021E, making the consensus EPS 44% EPS recovery in 2021E seem outlandish (**Page 6**)

**If the recession ended Jun-2020, the S&P 500 has just delivered the second strongest post-recession rebound despite the weakest GDP track since WW2:** The dichotomy between the S&P 500 and the economy is attributable to the increased prominence of large cap Tech and the positive effect of low real bond yields which magnify the valuation for those long duration stocks, but the cognitive dissonance of price versus recovery potential does appear *stretched* to us (**Page 7**)

**Liquidity and the “Powell Pivot” in Dec-2018 have led to a P/E ratio boom (nascent bubble?) for long duration Tech stocks:** Price and fundamentals are separate issues, so despite tech fundamentals perceived now as stronger than the late-1990s bubble, the price pattern is exactly the same: an “ascending curve,” with all the attendant risk and reward (**Page 8**)

**Lesson for today? The 5 “high-tech” stocks in the 1972 Nifty Fifty saw their superior EPS offset by P/E compression 1973-82:** We understand the view that tech leaders today are stronger in every respect than those of the late-1990s bubble, but a better comparison is the 1972 Nifty Fifty leaders, the post-script for which was that over-paying for growth with a Fed and Treasury determined to reflate in the next decade was not a good combination in 1972...nor do we believe it is now (**Page 9**)

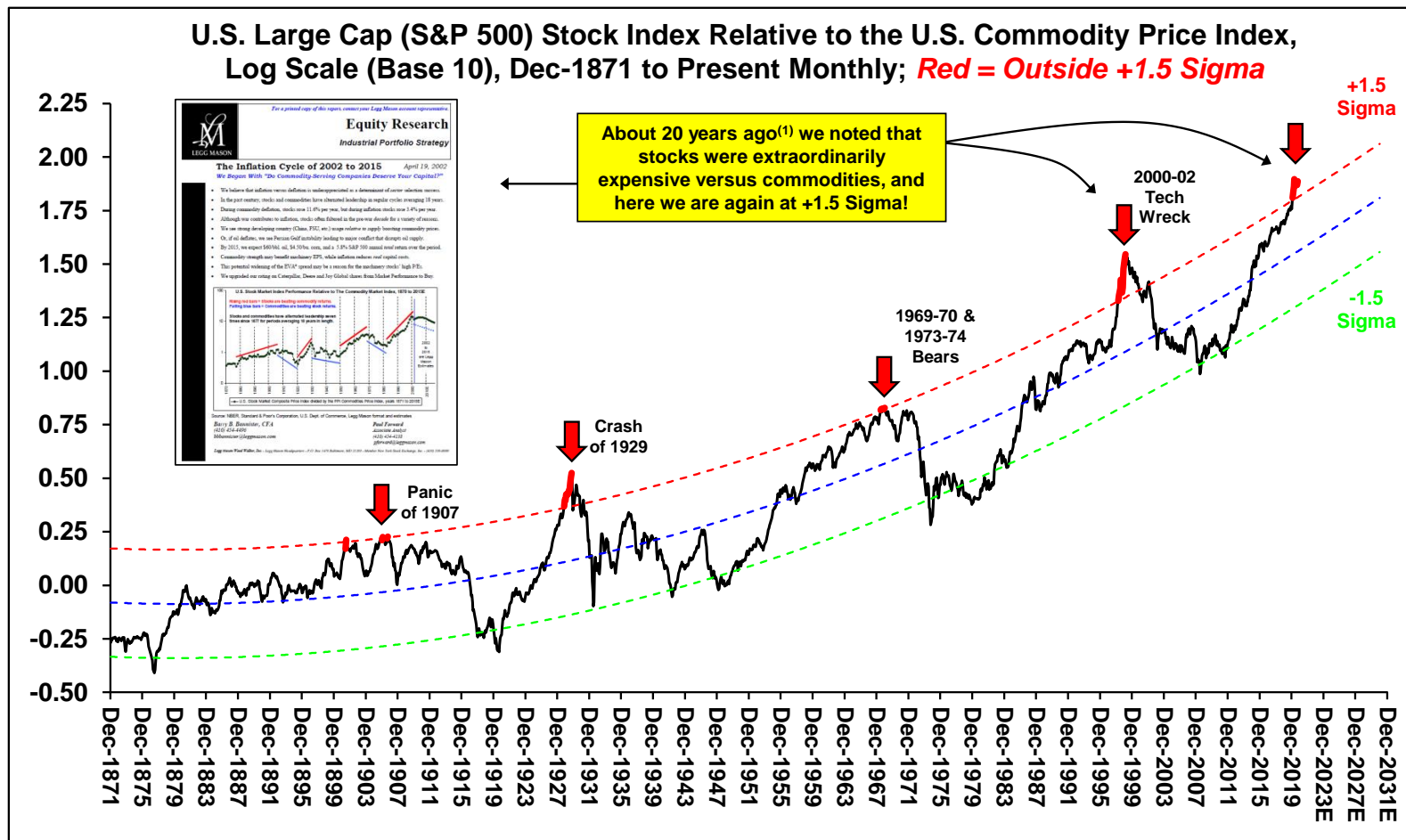
**We “get” the Equity Risk Premium bull case, but the S&P 500 is just in the middle (not the low end) of the 2,880 to 3,715 ERP-implied range we would expect:** We see the S&P 500 CAPE Equity Risk Premium indicating a 2,880 to 3,715 potential range the next year, but acknowledge the alternate “bubble” case which hinges on a negative (repressed) real yield and resulting gargantuan P/E expansion, the historical aftermath of which would be a major bear market (**Pages 10-11**)

**The CAPE will tell us soon if this is a P/E bubble (like the late-1920s & late-1990s) or a top (like the mid-30s & mid-60s):** If CAPE breaks out and the S&P 500 rises meaningfully past 3,700 it could signal a late-1920s or late-1990s style bubble that builds to a fateful peak; note that bubbles are rare (4 years of the past 120 years in our chart) (**Pages 12-13**)

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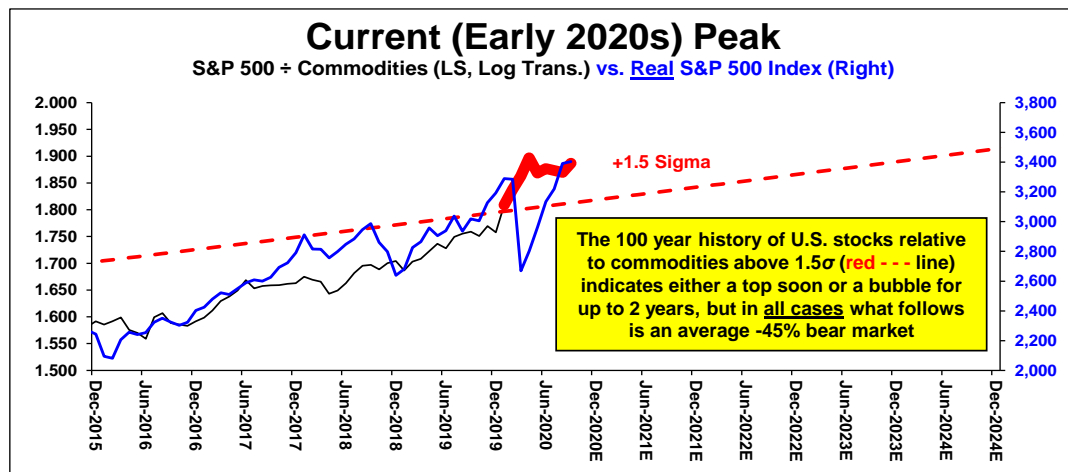
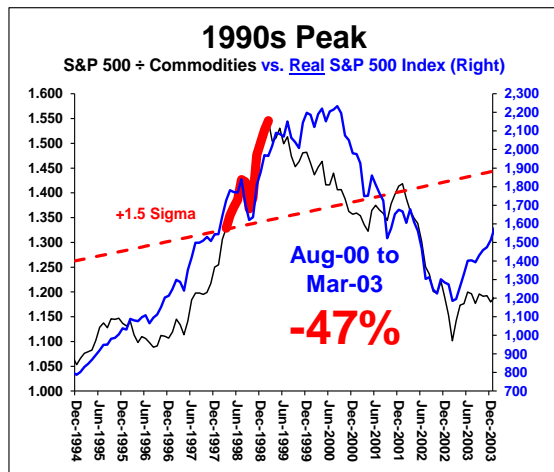
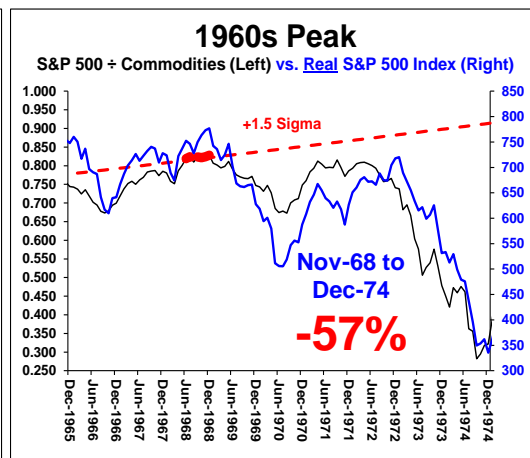
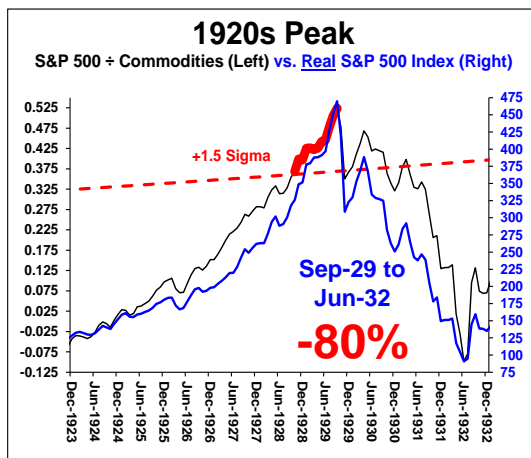
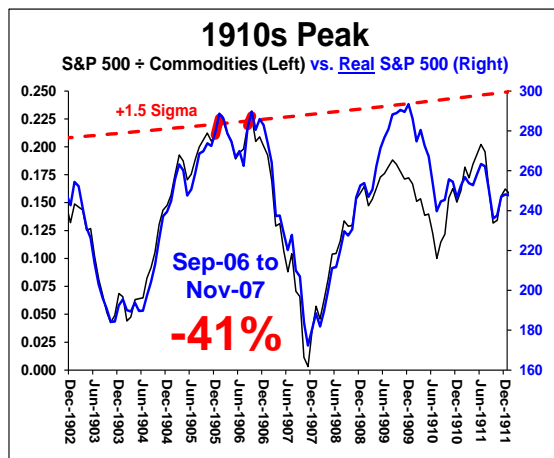
**Buyer beware: 20 years ago (the 2000-02 Tech Wreck) stocks were expensive vs. commodities, we are there again**  
 Following the first month that the S&P 500 relative to commodities has crossed above +1.5 sigma in the long-term polynomial trend (red - - - line), a bear market ensued about 1-2 years later, and the most recent cross was Jan-2020



Source: S&P 500 and CPI data [Shiller, Warren & Pearson](#) Commodity Index (1871-1925), equal-weighted (1/3<sup>rd</sup> ea.) PPI Energy, PPI Farm Products and PPI Metals (Ferrous & Non-Ferrous, excl.-precious metals) (1926-1956), Refinitiv Equal Weight (CCI) Index (1956-1994), and Refinitiv Core Commodity CRB Index (1994 to present).

(1) From a former report by Barry Bannister & Paul Forward dated Ap-19, 2002 at Legg Mason Wood Walker, Inc., the prior owner of parts of Stifel Capital Markets.

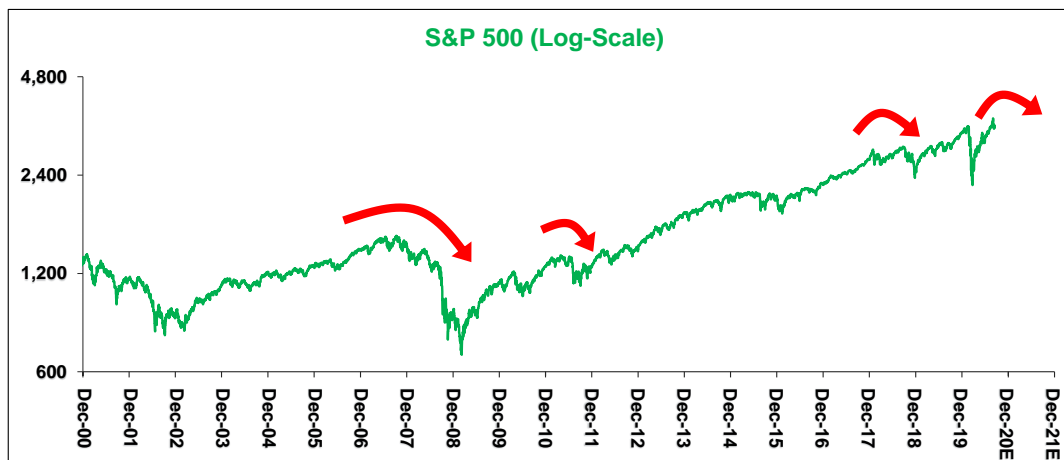
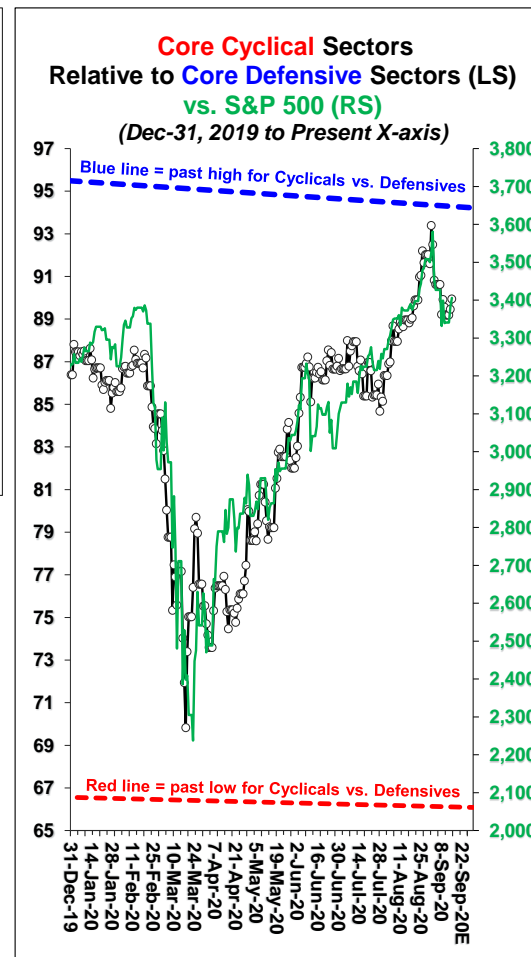
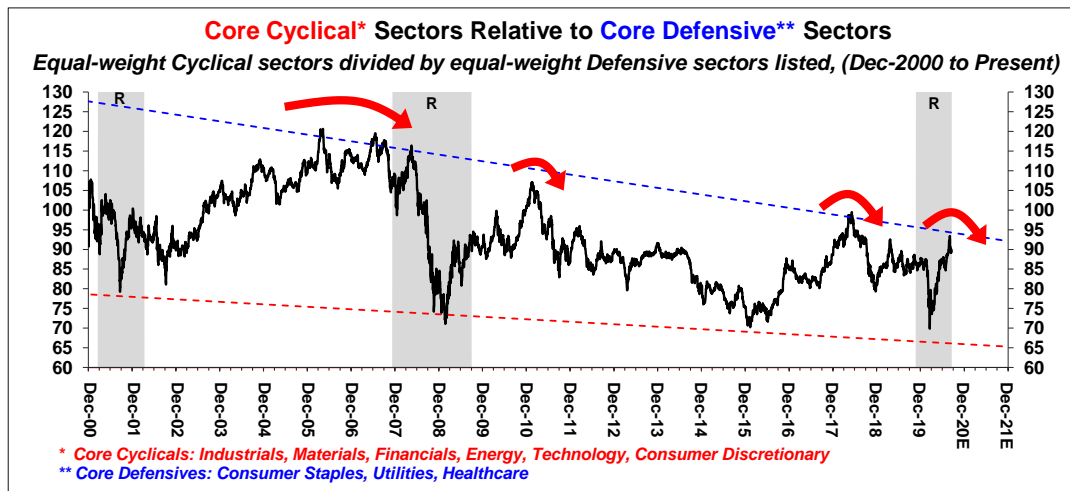
**Looking at the stock vs. commodity tops (prior page): above 1.5σ precedes a -45% S&P 500 plunge begins ~1-2 years later**  
**When S&P 500 ÷ commodities rises >1.5σ (red - - -) the S&P 500 (blue line) has subsequently plunged an average -45%**



Source: S&P 500 and CPI data [Shiller, Warren & Pearson](#) Commodity Index (Trend Starts [1871-1925](#)), equal-weighted (1/3<sup>rd</sup> ea.) PPI Energy, PPI Farm Products and PPI Metals (Ferrous & Non-Ferrous, [excl-precious](#)) ([1926-1956](#)), Refinitiv Equal Weight (CCI) Index ([1956-1994](#)), and Refinitiv Core Commodity CRB Index ([1994 to present](#)).

**Cyclicals vs. Defensives (equal-weighted), led by Tech and Discretionary, are at a level that indicates S&P 500 downside**

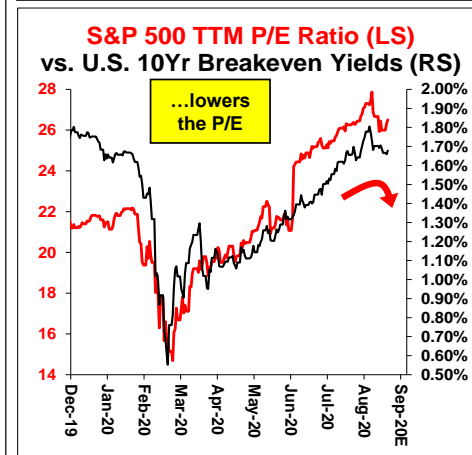
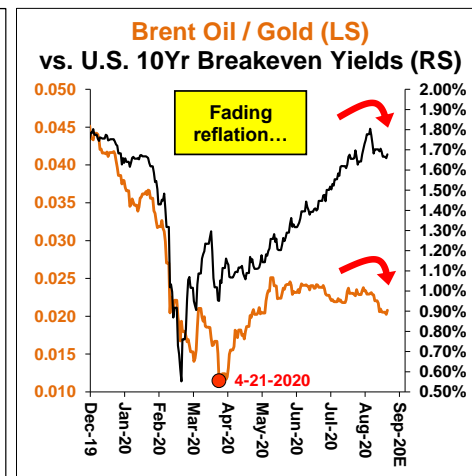
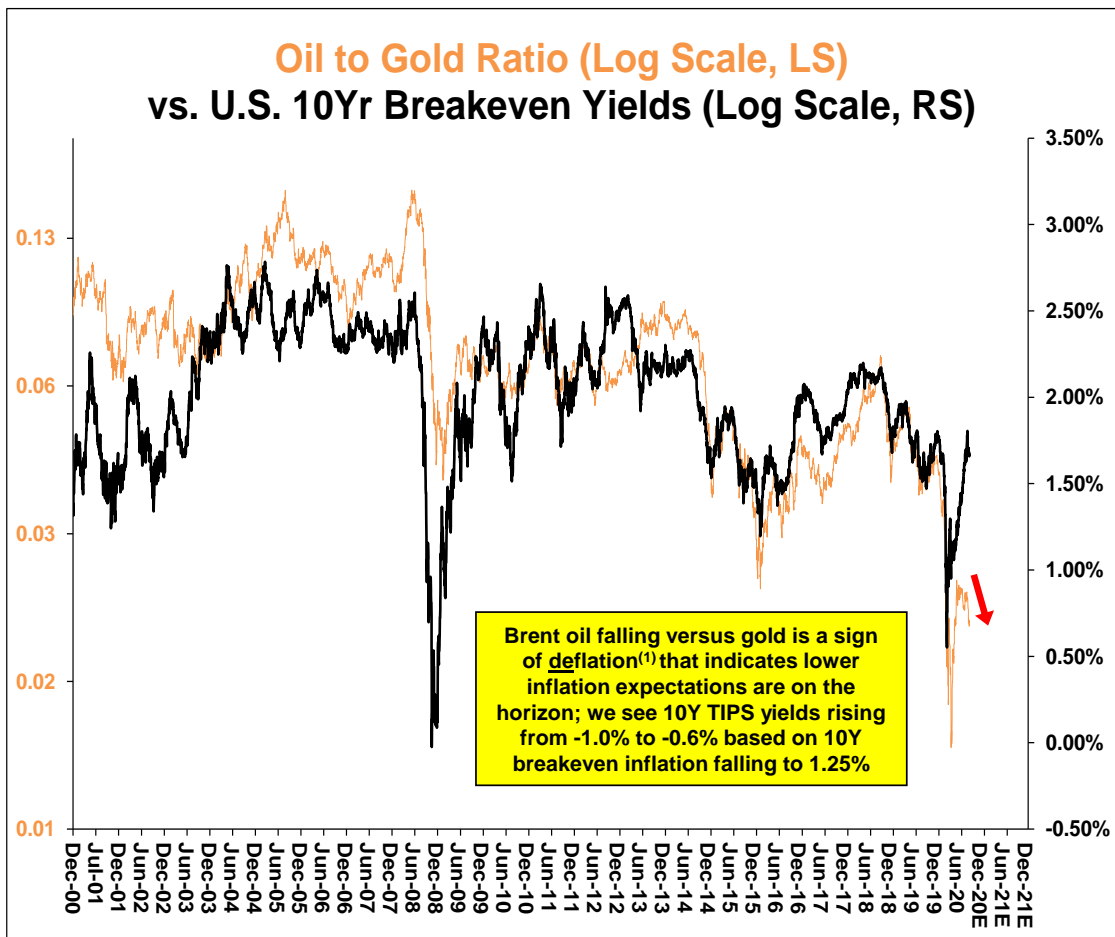
Equal-weighted S&P 500 Cyclical sectors relative to equal-weighted Defensives are peaking close to the level (blue --- line, top left chart) that precedes a major correction or bear market for the S&P 500 (bottom left chart) the past 20 years



Source: Bloomberg prices, Stifel estimates.

**Fading oil ÷ gold signals a higher real 10Y yield, which could weigh on the S&P 500 P/E (especially Growth stocks)**

**Oil ÷ gold (brown line) is rolling over, indicating a deflation<sup>(1)</sup> shock (we estimate -40bps decline to 1.25% for 10Y breakeven inflation), catalyzed by fading fiscal policy support; the higher real yield weighs on the Growth stock P/Es**

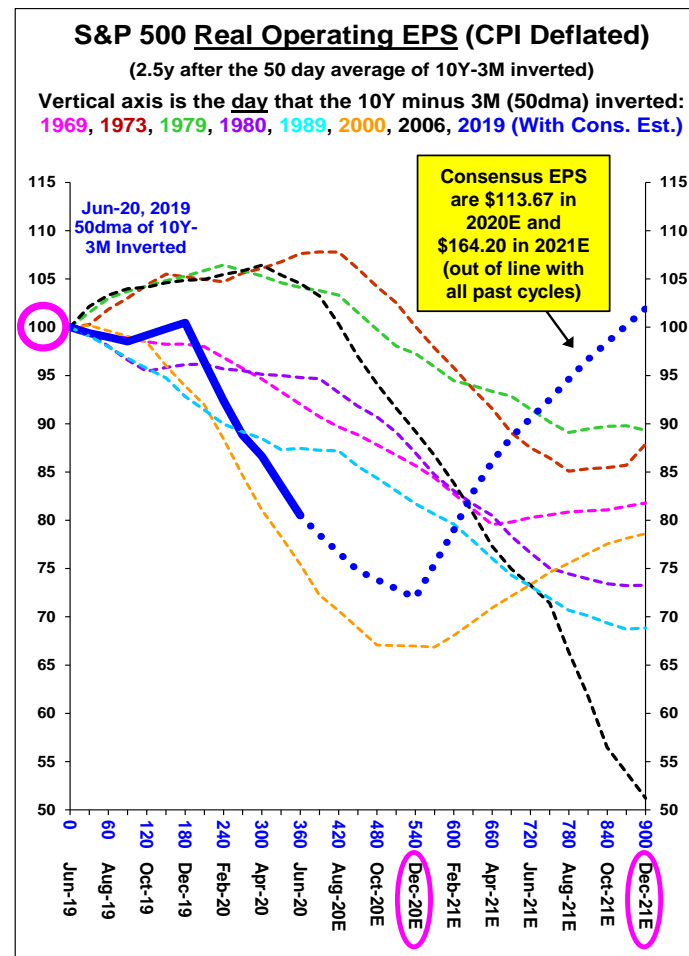
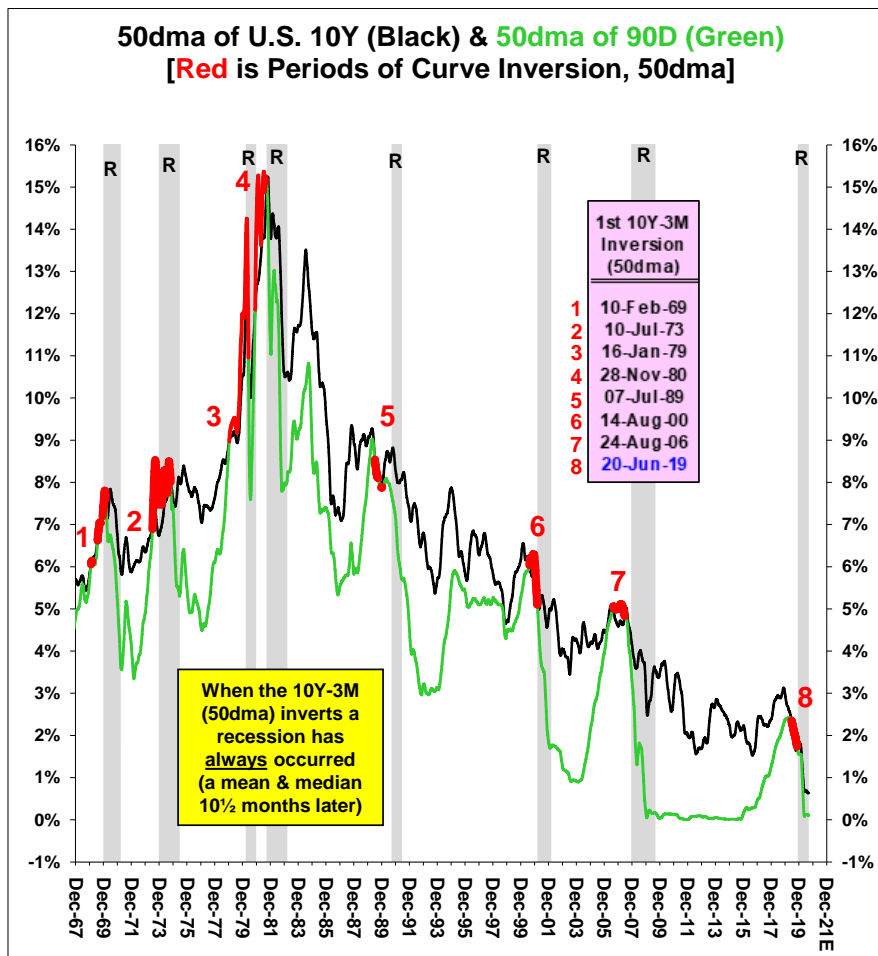


Source: Bloomberg data, Stifel format.

(1) Brent oil (not WTI oil, with more storage issues) falling relative to gold means the price level of “things” (like oil) is falling versus “money” (which is gold), which is deflation.

**Next shoe to drop for a high P/E market? The Street may be too optimistic about 2021 EPS based on past curve inversions**

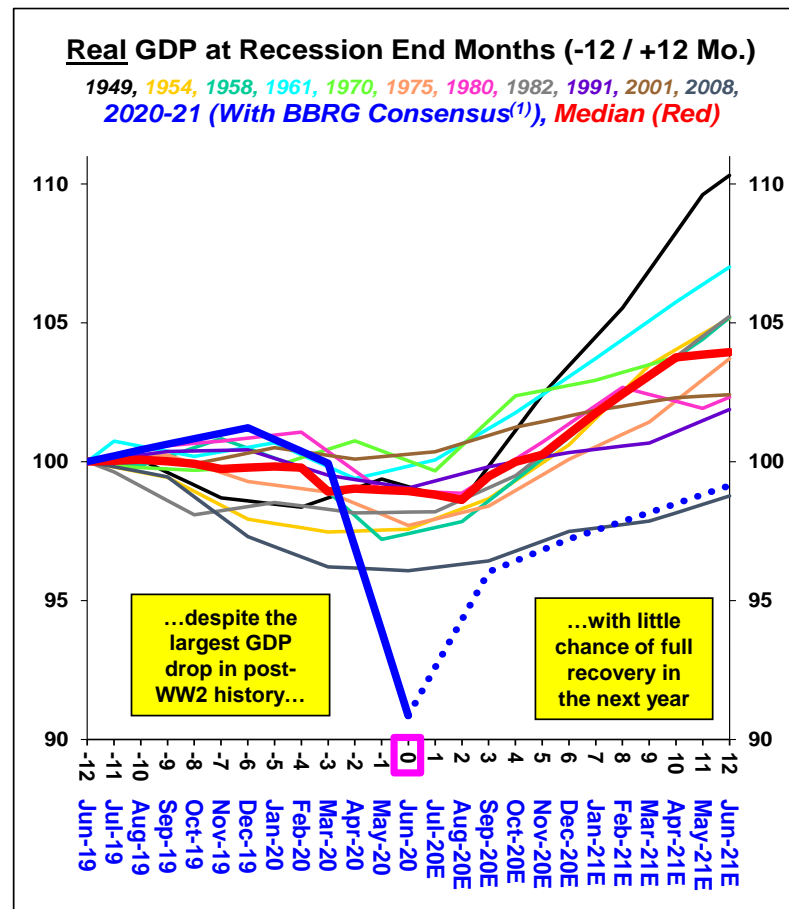
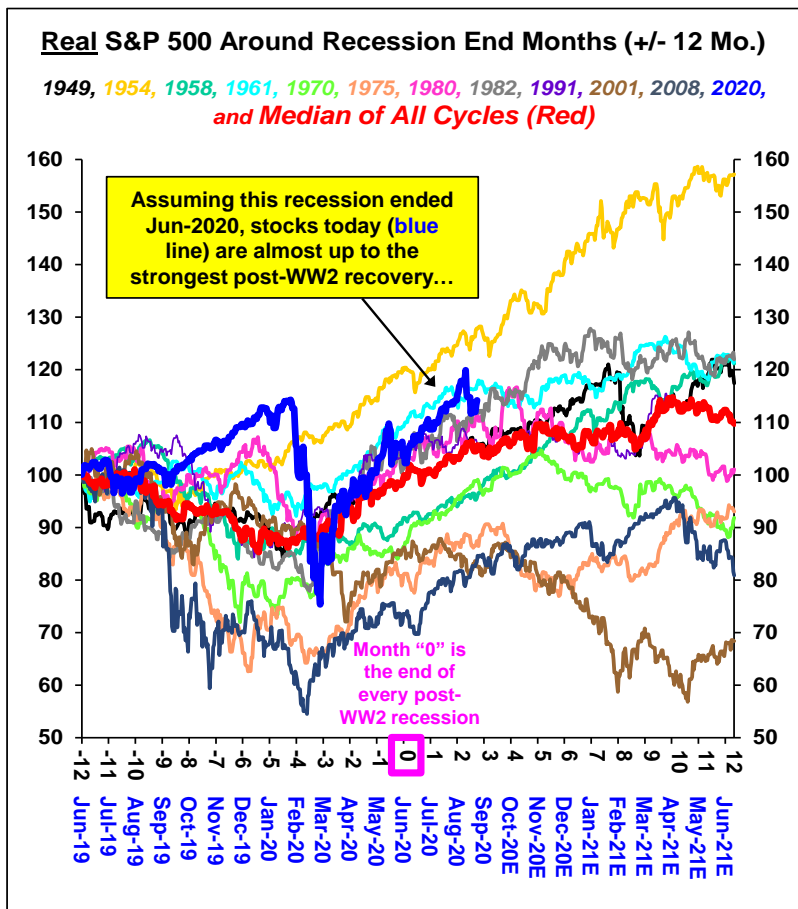
The 50dma inversion of the 10Y-3M Treasury (left chart) has never missed a recession call, and the Jun-20, 2019 inversion warned of weak EPS for TWO years through 2021E, making the consensus EPS recovery seem outlandish (right chart)



Source: Bloomberg yields and Operating EPS 1989-present, pre-1989 S&P/Shiller/Yale GAAP EPS [data](#) grossed up 11.7% to match the historical GAAP/Operating difference.

**If a recession ended Jun-2020, the S&P 500 has the 2<sup>nd</sup> strongest bull market despite the weakest GDP track since WW2**

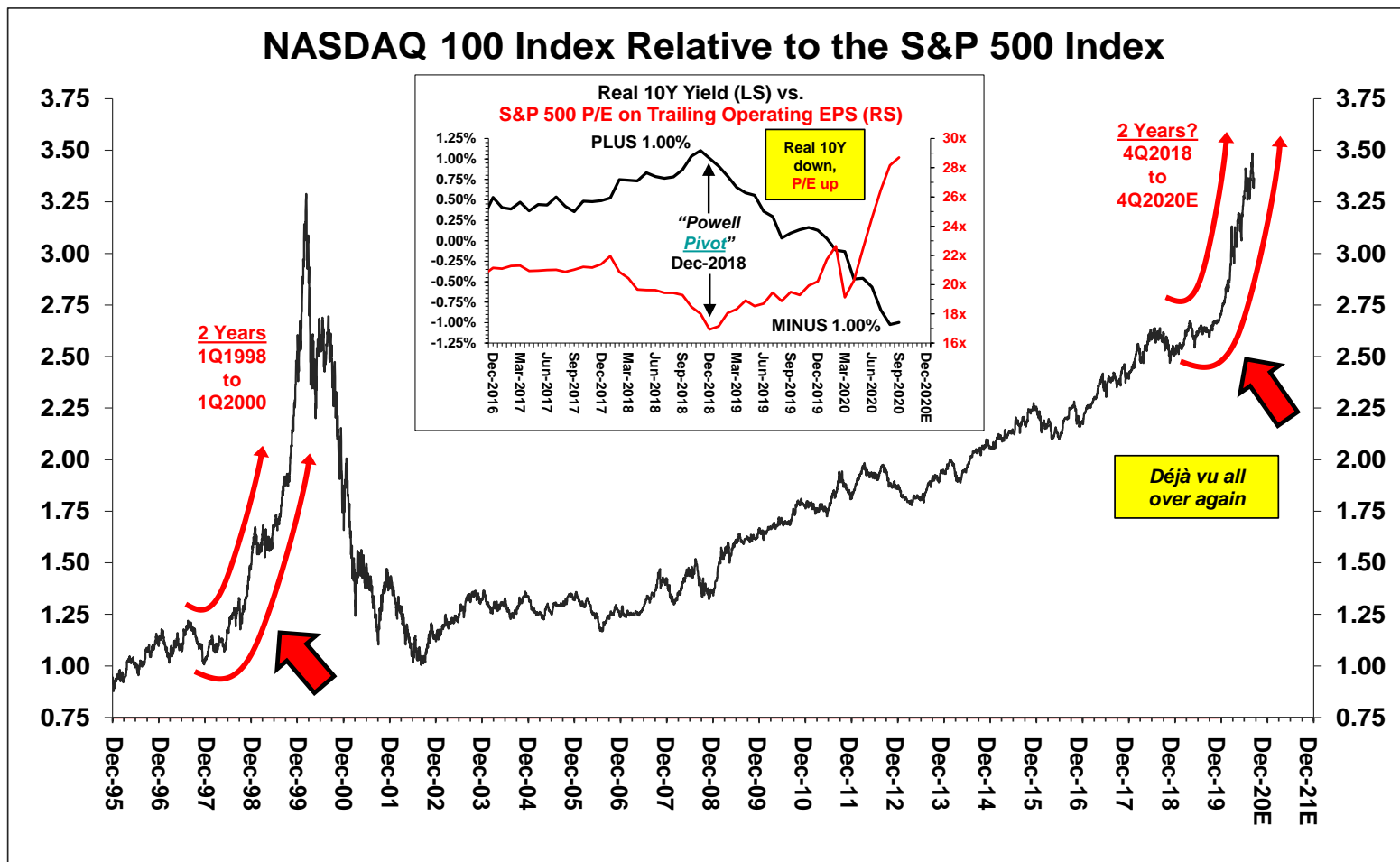
***The dichotomy between the S&P 500 (left chart) and the economy (right chart) is due to the increased prominence of large cap Tech and the positive effect of low real bond yields which magnify the valuation for those long duration stocks***



Source: Bloomberg data, [NBER](http://www.nber.org) business cycle dates, Stifel estimates.

(1) U.S. 2H20-21E real GDP forecasts QoQ% (SAAR): 3Q 24.8%, 4Q 5%, 1Q21 4%, 2Q 4%, 3Q 3.3%, 4Q 3.2%.

Liquidity and the “Powell Pivot” in Dec-2018 have created a P/E boom (nascent bubble?) for long duration Tech stocks  
 Price and fundamentals are separate issues, so despite tech fundamentals perceived now as stronger than the late-1990s bubble, the price pattern is exactly the same: an “ascending curve,” with all the attendant risk and reward



Source: Bloomberg prices, Stifel estimates.



**Lesson for today? The 5 “high tech” stocks in the 1972 Nifty Fifty<sup>(1)</sup> saw superior EPS offset by P/E compression 1973-82**  
**Over-paying for growth with a Fed & Treasury determined to reflate the next decade was not a good combination then (or now?)**

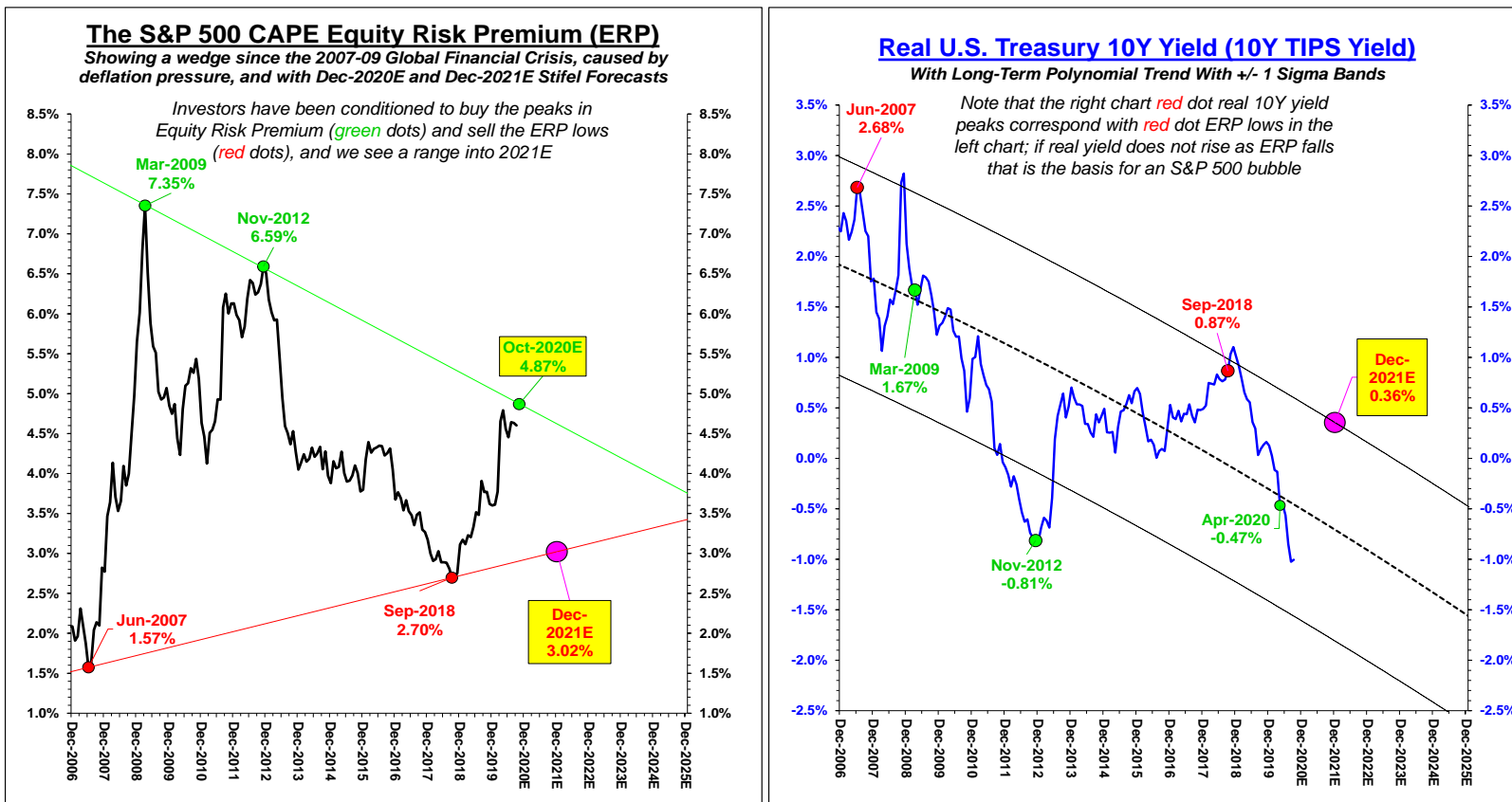
"Nifty Fifty" Dec-31, 1972 - The Decade after, note the Technology-related stocks had P/E compression that offset their above-market EPS growth														
Rank	Company Name	31-Dec-1972				31-Dec-1982				10-Yr Annualized Change				
		Share Price	12M Dividend	72FY EPS	TTM P/E	Share Price	12M Dividend	82FY EPS	TTM P/E	Price	Dividend	Total Return	EPS	P/E
1	Phillip Morris	\$1.23	\$0.01	\$0.05	25.1x	\$0.10	\$0.26	9.5x	7.3x	4.0%	11.3%	18.3%	-9.3%	
2	Pfizer	\$0.89	\$0.00	\$0.03	28.4x	\$1.43	\$0.04	\$0.09	15.9x	4.9%	2.8%	7.7%	11.1%	-5.6%
3	Bristol Myers	\$2.16	\$0.02	\$0.08	26.3x	\$4.20	\$0.15	\$0.34	12.4x	6.9%	3.6%	10.5%	15.3%	-7.3%
4	Gillette	\$2.00	\$0.05	\$0.08	25.6x	\$1.41	\$0.07	\$0.15	9.4x	-3.4%	5.1%	1.7%	6.8%	-9.5%
5	Coca-Cola	\$1.55	\$0.04	\$0.07	23.5x	\$1.08	\$0.11	\$0.18	6.2x	-3.5%	10.2%	6.6%	10.2%	-12.5%
6	Merck	\$2.48	\$0.03	\$0.06	44.3x	\$2.35	\$0.08	\$0.16	14.7x	-0.5%	3.2%	2.7%	11.1%	-10.4%
7	Heublein [Merged 10-82]	\$58.00	\$0.87	\$1.87	31.0x	\$60.50	\$1.96	\$4.53	13.4x	0.4%	3.2%	3.7%	9.3%	-8.1%
8	General Electric	\$1.52	\$0.02	\$0.06	25.3x	\$1.98	\$0.07	\$0.17	11.6x	2.7%	3.5%	6.2%	11.0%	-7.5%
9	Schering Corp.	\$2.14	\$0.02	\$0.05	47.6x	\$1.23	\$0.05	\$0.13	9.8x	-5.4%	4.2%	-1.2%	10.8%	-14.6%
10	Squibb	\$2.16	\$0.02	\$0.08	26.3x	\$4.20	\$0.15	\$0.34	12.4x	6.9%	3.6%	10.5%	15.3%	-7.3%
11	Pepsico	\$1.16	\$0.02	\$0.06	20.2x	\$1.99	\$0.09	\$0.19	10.8x	5.5%	4.5%	10.1%	12.4%	-6.1%
12	Eli Lilly	\$4.98	\$0.02	\$0.12	40.5x	\$3.59	\$0.18	\$0.35	10.3x	-3.2%	4.9%	1.7%	11.0%	-12.8%
13	American Home Products	\$5.08	\$0.07	\$0.15	33.0x	\$5.59	\$0.28	\$0.45	12.4x	1.0%	4.9%	5.9%	11.3%	-9.3%
14	Procter and Gamble	\$3.48	\$0.10	\$0.23	15.5x	\$3.48	\$0.15	\$0.33	11.2x	0.6%	4.1%	4.7%	3.9%	-3.2%
15	Revlon	\$72.00	\$1.00	\$2.88	25.0x	\$29.31	\$1.84	\$2.41	12.2x	-8.6%	6.3%	-2.3%	-1.8%	-7.0%
16	Johnson & Johnson	\$2.72	\$0.04	\$0.05	60.4x	\$3.10	\$0.07	\$0.17	18.2x	1.3%	2.1%	3.4%	14.2%	-11.3%
17	Anheuser-Busch	\$2.30	\$0.02	\$0.07	31.5x	\$2.69	\$0.06	\$0.24	11.4x	1.6%	2.2%	3.8%	12.4%	-9.6%
18	Chesebrough Ponds Inc	\$43.88	\$1.08	\$2.20	19.9x	\$45.00	\$1.72	\$3.56	12.6x	0.3%	3.8%	4.1%	4.9%	-4.5%
19	McDonalds Corp	\$1.88	\$0.00	\$0.02	78.3x	\$2.24	\$0.03	\$0.19	11.8x	1.8%	1.4%	3.2%	23.0%	-17.3%
20	First National City Corp	\$1.38	\$0.09	\$0.15	9.2x	\$1.35	\$0.13	\$0.04	34.6x	-0.2%	9.7%	9.5%	-12.6%	14.2%
21	Disney	\$2.20	\$0.00	\$0.03	81.5x	\$1.32	\$0.03	\$0.06	22.0x	-5.0%	1.9%	-3.1%	8.3%	-12.3%
22	American Express	\$5.41	\$0.04	\$0.16	34.7x	\$5.35	\$0.19	\$0.50	10.7x	-0.1%	3.5%	3.4%	12.4%	-11.1%
23	Dow Chemical	\$5.54	\$0.10	\$0.23	24.1x	\$5.60	\$0.40	\$0.40	14.0x	0.1%	7.1%	7.2%	5.7%	-5.3%
24	Amer. Hospital Supply Corp	\$33.67	\$0.18	\$0.70	48.1x	\$42.00	\$0.77	\$2.70	15.6x	2.2%	1.8%	4.1%	14.5%	-10.7%
25	Schlumberger	\$2.98	\$0.03	\$0.14	21.3x	\$11.66	\$0.51	\$1.17	10.0x	14.6%	4.4%	19.0%	23.7%	-7.3%
26	UpJohn	\$10.75	\$0.14	\$0.27	39.8x	\$8.50	\$0.37	\$0.73	11.6x	-2.3%	4.4%	2.0%	10.5%	-11.6%
27	AMP Inc.	\$12.87	\$0.08	\$2.90	42.9x	\$24.86	\$0.48	\$1.13	22.1x	6.8%	1.9%	8.7%	14.1%	-6.4%
28	Texas Instruments	\$1.89	\$0.00	\$0.05	42.0x	\$2.80	\$0.02	\$0.14	20.4x	4.0%	0.7%	4.7%	11.8%	-7.0%
29	3M	\$10.70	\$0.13	\$0.27	39.0x	\$9.38	\$0.40	\$0.70	13.4x	-1.3%	4.3%	3.0%	9.8%	-10.1%
30	Baxter Labs	\$6.97	\$0.02	\$0.10	71.4x	\$12.09	\$0.13	\$0.67	18.1x	5.7%	1.0%	6.7%	21.2%	-12.8%
31	Int'l Tel. and T'grapp Corp.	\$60.25	\$1.33	\$3.91	15.4x	\$31.25	\$2.83	\$4.60	6.8x	-6.4%	9.1%	2.7%	1.6%	-7.9%
32	JC Penney	\$22.59	\$0.28	\$0.72	31.5x	\$12.09	\$0.50	\$1.48	8.2x	-6.1%	4.1%	-1.9%	7.5%	-12.6%
33	IBM	\$20.10	\$0.27	\$0.57	35.5x	\$24.06	\$0.86	\$1.85	13.0x	1.8%	3.6%	5.4%	12.6%	-9.6%
34	Schiltz Joe Brewing Corp [Merged 6-82]	\$58.38	\$0.55	\$1.58	36.9x	\$16.88	\$0.08	(\$0.71)	-23.8x	-11.7%	0.4%	-11.2%	-104.5%	-106.4%
35	Xerox	\$25.58	\$0.16	\$0.53	48.0x	\$6.41	\$0.50	\$0.72	8.9x	-12.9%	7.8%	-5.1%	3.1%	-15.5%
36	Halliburton	\$5.84	\$0.09	\$0.32	18.4x	\$8.84	\$0.80	\$2.17	4.1x	4.2%	9.0%	13.3%	21.2%	-14.0%
37	Lubrizol	\$11.25	\$0.11	\$0.33	34.6x	\$9.38	\$0.53	\$0.63	14.9x	-1.8%	5.7%	3.8%	6.8%	-8.1%
38	Eastman Kodak	\$65.25	\$0.48	\$1.50	43.5x	\$40.00	\$1.42	\$3.20	12.5x	-4.8%	3.6%	-1.2%	7.9%	-11.7%
39	Simplicity Patterns	\$53.00	\$0.30	\$1.06	50.0x	\$10.08	\$0.56	\$0.54	18.7x	-15.3%	5.6%	-9.7%	-6.5%	-9.4%
40	Digital Equipment Corp	\$15.29	\$0.00	\$0.27	56.2x	\$49.75	\$0.00	\$3.15	15.8x	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	27.8%	-11.9%
41	Avon Products	\$17.09	\$0.17	\$0.28	61.2x	\$3.34	\$0.25	\$0.35	9.5x	-15.1%	7.5%	-7.6%	2.3%	-17.0%
42	Louisiana Land & Expo	\$43.25	\$1.00	\$1.74	24.9x	\$21.13	\$1.60	\$0.33	64.0x	-6.9%	7.6%	0.7%	-15.3%	9.9%
43	Black and Decker	\$36.00	\$0.34	\$0.72	50.0x	\$18.13	\$0.53	\$0.38	47.7x	-6.6%	2.9%	-3.7%	-6.2%	-0.5%
44	KMART	\$16.83	\$0.06	\$0.34	49.5x	\$8.75	\$0.35	\$0.70	12.5x	-6.3%	4.0%	-2.3%	7.5%	-12.9%
45	Burroughs	\$724.17	\$1.10	\$15.74	46.0x	\$139.17	\$8.62	\$18.10	7.7x	-15.2%	6.2%	-9.0%	1.4%	-16.4%
46	Poloroid	\$61.62	\$0.16	\$0.65	94.8x	\$13.30	\$0.50	\$0.35	38.0x	-14.2%	3.8%	-10.5%	-6.0%	-8.7%
47	Emery Air Freight	\$59.17	\$0.52	\$1.07	55.3x	\$9.59	\$0.83	\$0.65	14.8x	-16.6%	8.6%	-8.0%	-4.9%	-12.4%
48	MGIC Investment Corp. [Merged 3-82]	\$92.00	\$0.10	\$1.34	68.5x	\$52.00	\$0.13	\$4.21	12.3x	-5.5%	0.2%	-5.3%	12.1%	-15.8%
49	Sears Roebuck	\$58.00	\$0.70	\$1.99	29.2x	\$30.13	\$1.35	\$2.50	12.1x	-6.3%	4.5%	-1.9%	2.3%	-8.5%
50	International Flavors	\$14.48	\$0.07	\$0.21	69.1x	\$9.21	\$0.35	\$0.57	16.2x	-4.4%	3.8%	-0.6%	10.5%	-13.5%
<b>Median</b>					<b>36.2x</b>	<b>Nifty 50 P/E collapse offset their superior median EPS growth</b>			<b>12.4x</b>	<b>-0.9%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>-9.6%</b>
<b>S&amp;P 500</b>					<b>16.4x</b>				<b>9.9x</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>-4.9%</b>

Source: SRC Chart Books ([various issues](#)), Standard & Poor's, Bloomberg, Univ. of Alabama [Bruno Library](#) historical financial reports database.

(1) Morgan Guaranty Trust [Nifty Fifty list](#) (never a "formal" index).

**We “get” the Equity Risk Premium bull case, but the S&P 500 is only in the middle of the 2,880 to 3,715 ERP-implied range**

If S&P 500 Equity Risk Premium<sup>(1)</sup> rises to the maximum (bearish) case we would expect in 2020 on a rising real yield shock, that is 2,880<sup>(2)</sup> for the S&P 500; if ERP falls to the minimum (bullish) case of 3.02% by 2021 (left chart) with a real yield of 0.36% (real yield may rise as GDP improves, a form of taper tantrum) that is 3,715<sup>(3)</sup>; the S&P 500 was 3,310 on 9/11/20, near that mid-point



Source: Bloomberg Data, Stifel Estimates.

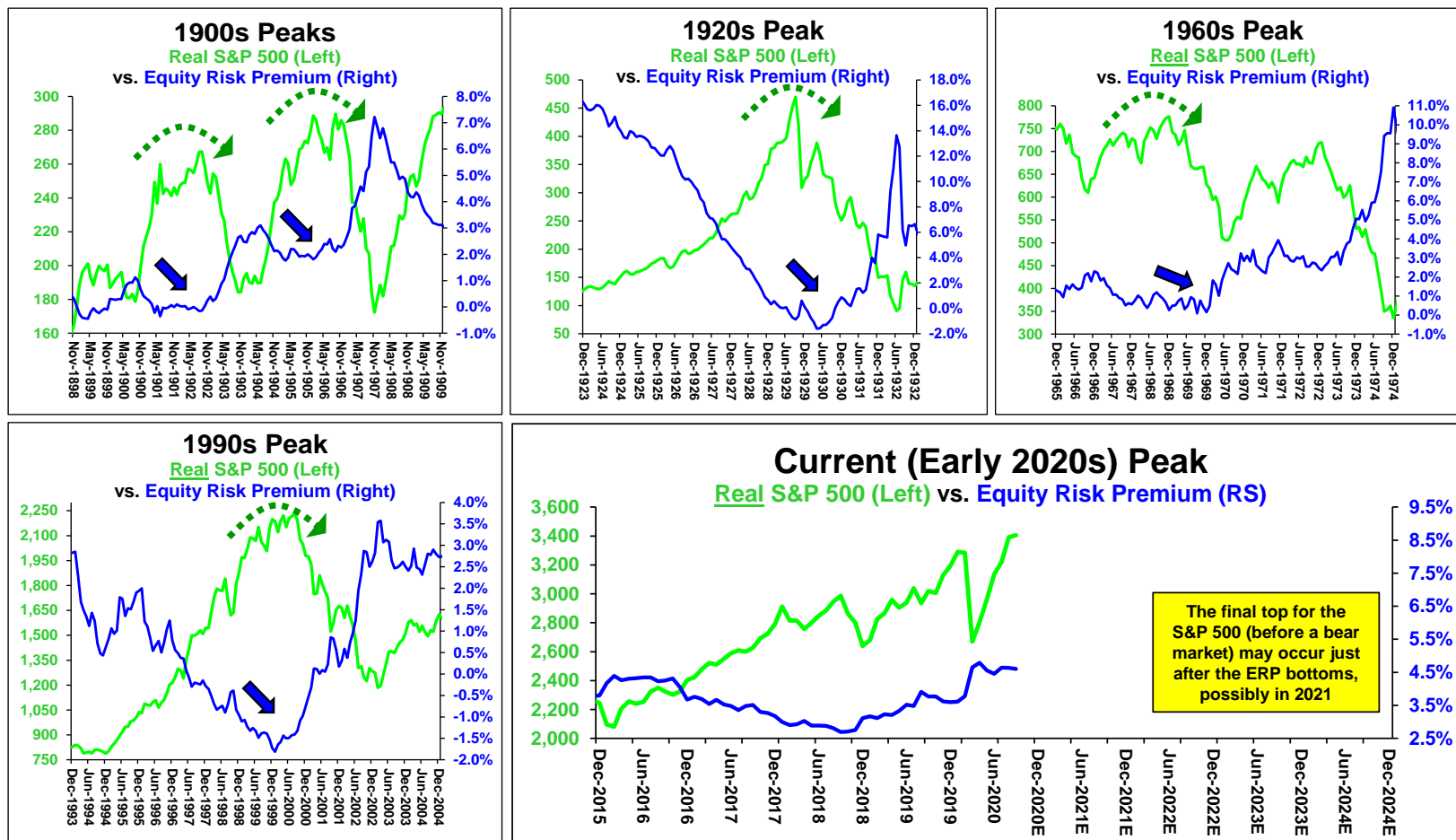
(1) CAPE Equity Risk Premium (ERP) is: [(10 year moving average of inflation-adjusted S&P 500 operating EPS / price each month) - Real 10Y Yield].

(2) We estimate 2020E CAPE EPS of \$123, an ERP high of 4.87%, a 10Y TIPS yield worst case of -0.60% and CAPE EPS Yield of 4.27%, or a CAPE P/E (1/.0427) x \$123 = ~\$2,880

(3) We estimate 2021E CAPE EPS of \$126, an ERP low of 3.02%, a 10Y TIPS yield of +0.36% and CAPE EPS Yield of 3.38%, or a CAPE P/E (1/.0338) x \$126 = ~\$3,715.

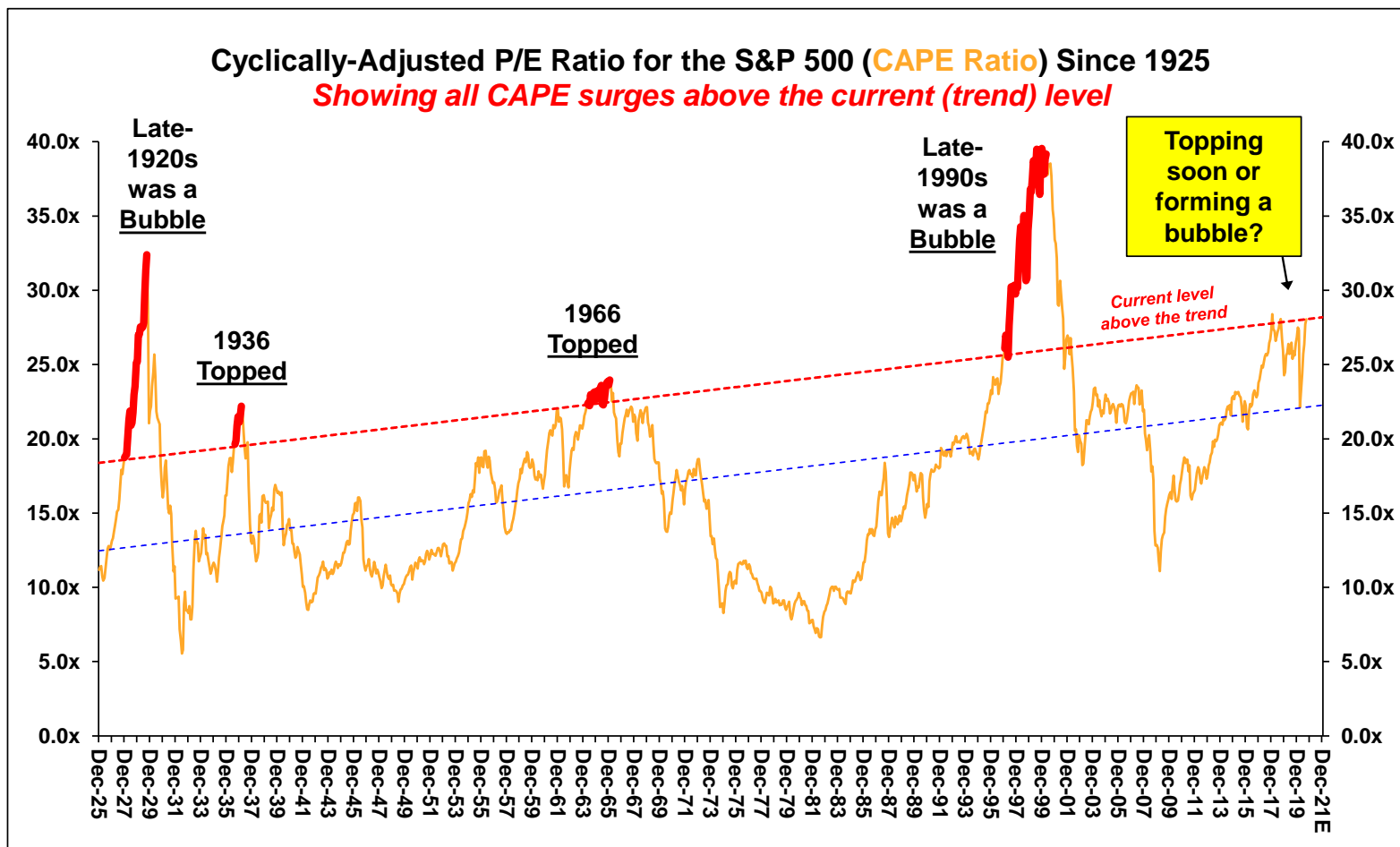
**If the Equity Risk Premium does make the final dash for a low, a century of precedent says the S&P 500 tops and plunges**

The final top for the S&P 500 may occurs when ERP bottoms, making an ERP-driven market more about speculation than investing



Source: S&P 500 and CPI data [Shiller, Warren & Pearson](#) Commodity Index (Trend Starts 1871-1925), equal-weighted (1/3<sup>rd</sup> ea.) PPI Energy, PPI Farm Products and PPI Metals (Ferrous & Non-Ferrous, excl.-precious) (1926-1956), Refinitiv Equal Weight (CCI) Index (1956-1994), and Refinitiv Core Commodity CRB Index (1994 to present).

**The CAPE will tell us soon if this is a P/E bubble (like the late-1920s & late-1990s) or a top (like the mid-30s & mid-60s)**  
***If CAPE<sup>(1)</sup> breaks out (if the red - - - diagonal line, which marks the current level above the blue - - - trend, rises above the mid-1930s and mid-1960s tops and continues to rise), it could signal a late-1920s or late-1990s style bubble***

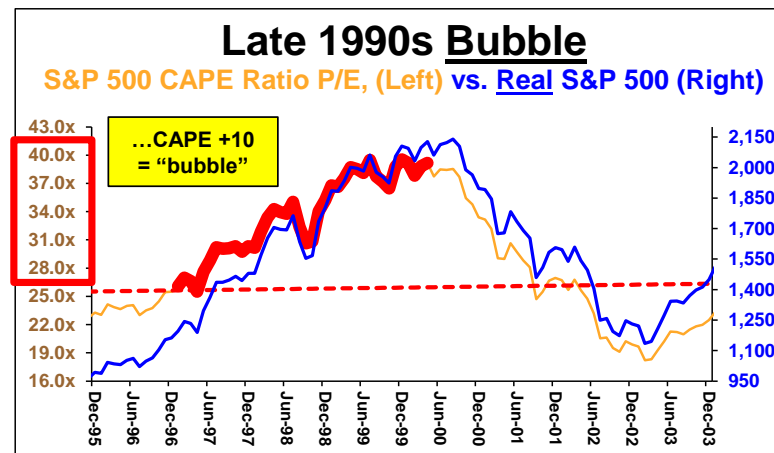
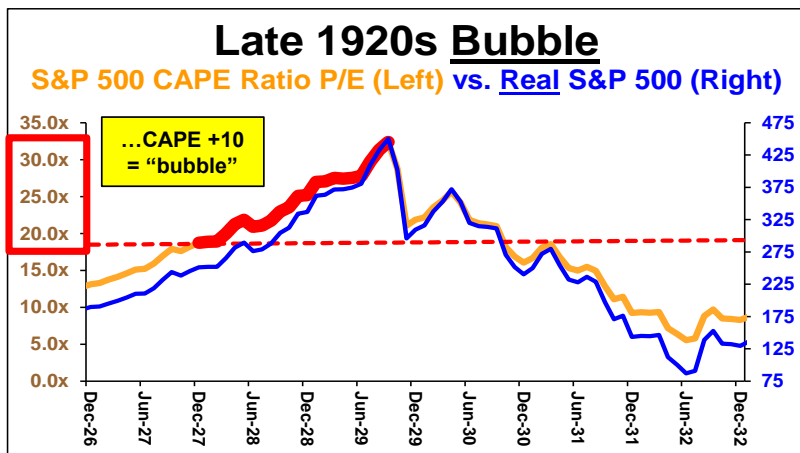
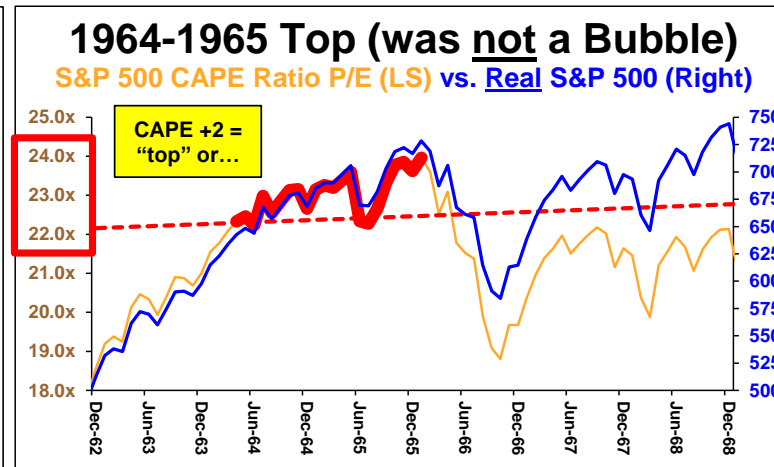
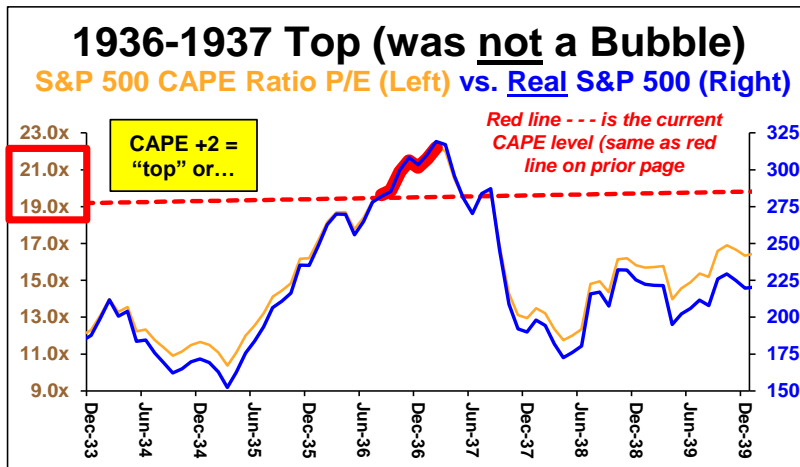


Source: S&P/Shiller/Yale [data](#), Stifel estimates.

(1) For valuation we show the [CAPE](#) P/E, which is the P/E based on the trailing 10-year average of inflation-adjusted EPS; Bloomberg Operating EPS 1989-present and pre-1989 S&P/Shiller/Yale GAAP EPS [data](#) are grossed up 11.7% to match the historical GAAP/Operating difference.

If CAPE rises >2 (above 1930s & 1960s, top row), we would go on bubble watch (like the late-1920s & late-1990s, lower row)

We are not averse to calling a bubble >3,700<sup>(1)</sup> for the S&P 500, we just note that bubbles are pure speculation and very rare



Source: S&P/Shiller/Yale [data](#), Stifel estimates. For valuation we show the CAPE P/E, which is the P/E based on the trailing 10-year average of inflation-adjusted EPS; Bloomberg Operating EPS 1989-present and pre-1989 S&P/Shiller/Yale GAAP EPS [data](#) are grossed up 11.7% to match the historical GAAP/Operating difference.

(1) We estimate CAPE 2021 EPS of \$126E, so more than 2 CAPE multiples would pierce the 1930s & 1960s levels (top row) and be an S&P 500 price meaningfully above 3,700.

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**September 15, 2020**

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