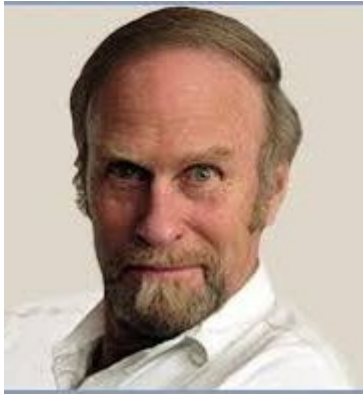


# What It's Like To Be A Baby Boomer



Frosty Wooldridge

Part 3: College years, Vietnam, racism, affirmative action, buddies dying, discovering the people leading the US Government thrive on corruption, Simon and Garfunkel, Beatles.

As to being a “Baby Boomer,” none of us realized that we constituted an 80 million person “wave” of kids from 1946 to 1964, who stepped off the farm, with all its hard work and long hours—and ran headlong into TV, muscle cars, women’s rights, civil rights for Blacks, Elvis Presley, the Vietnam War, the Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, and a nasty feeling that our “safe” world wasn’t so innocent.

After Kennedy suffered assassination on November 22, 1963, I sat in my 10<sup>th</sup> grade English class with Mrs. Clyatt when the principle announced it over the P.A. system. Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson became president. No one knew he constituted one of the most corrupt, money grabbing, lying and deceitful S.O.B.’s ever to reach the White House in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even Bill Clinton couldn’t beat LBJ out. Johnson literally created the Vietnam War via the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, which proved a total fraud. It duplicated G.W. Bush’s “Weapons of Mass Destruction” in Iraq fraud that has killed over 6,500 U.S. soldiers in combat in Iraq and some 60,000 veteran and active duty suicides since 2001. Johnson

and G.W. Bush should share the same locker in hell. Nixon should be their cleaning maid.



In the case of Johnson, he killed 2.1 million civilian Vietnamese and over 1.1 million Vietcong and South Vietnamese troops. At the same time, he took the lives of 58,220 American kids he forced into combat, along with another 150,000 horribly

wounded. I knew a half dozen of them personally who died for that bastard. Johnson unknowingly started the drug onslaught in America of heroin, meth, cocaine, MJ and more from soldiers who got 'high' just to survive Vietnam. They returned to broken marriages, being spit upon and suffering from P.T.S.D. If you want a taste of what it was like, watch the movie: **Full Metal Jacket**.

All the while, the WWII generation, known as the "Silent Majority" quietly supported the Vietnam War because they trusted their president and Congressional leaders to do the right thing. When in fact, the majority of Congress funded an illegal "Bankers' War" instigated by the Military Industrial Complex. Those same Senators and House members dipped their wallets into the "War Machine" via insider trading on stocks from defense contractors. President Eisenhower warned against the MIC, but nobody paid any attention.

So, for 10 years, 1965 to 1975, corporations made billions while my generation got shot up, drugged up and maimed emotionally and physically. Pretty much the same today with two 18 year-long wars and an all-volunteer Army of young kids

that do not know what awaits them once they join the Army or Marines.

If you start talking about the African-Americans, well, racism raged everywhere. Separate drinking fountains, motels, restaurants and schools. With Martin Luther King, that changed with the Civil Rights Act. Much changed since the 60's, but racism still thrives on both sides of the races. Everyone pretends that it's learned, but in fact, it's "biological and tribal" and it's not going to calm down in the near or far future. It's going to be a thorn in the side of America for the rest of our existence as a country. I used to think we could solve it, but I am no longer optimistic for such a utopian future.

On a historical note, slavery built the pyramids, Great Wall, Carthage, Rome and other big empires. The one thing that African-Americans can at least appreciate: over 500,000 white Union soldiers gave up their lives to end slavery. Martin Luther King gave up his life to bring equal rights. No other country gives Blacks as much benefit and opportunity as in the United States of America. Yet, slavery still exists in Africa, the Middle East and other third world countries.

In my senior year, my mother struggled to balance the check book and raise our family. She worked at a church where the priests sexually harassed her. She came home in tears at times. I lack any clue as to how she survived all those years being single. In fact, she remained single the rest of her life.

I struggled to keep my sense of purpose. The summer of my senior year screamed by in a blur. We did not enjoy grief counseling. Therefore, each of us staggered through daily living. I really don't know how any of us made it through those first couple of years after dad's death.

At some point, the pain ebbed and life carried on, and took us

with it.

## **My Senior Year 1964 to 1965 in High School**

Mrs. Nancy Steller, my English teacher, divorced with two kids, provided me with balance and incentives to maintain my grades toward college. I don't know how our poorly paid teachers taught school. They lived on poverty wages. Yet, they taught us. Rex and I played on the football and basketball teams, plus track. I applied to Michigan State University and enjoyed the acceptance paper. We lettered in three sports, and participated in the class play and junior-senior prom. I took Judy Smith to the prom, my only date in high school!



I worked four jobs all summer in 1965. In the fall, mom bought a VW bug for \$1,495.00 and drove it 1,000 miles to East Lansing, Michigan and the sprawling Michigan State University campus. That first night in 433 North Wonders Hall, I sat up in my room in the window—and cried my eyes out.

“What in the hell have I gotten myself into?” I muttered through my tears. “I promise you this, dad, I’m going to do my best and make you proud.”

My freshman year passed with me being voted V.P. of my 50 man residence hall floor. I volunteered to be secretary of the hall council government. The Head Resident Counselor who ran the hall saw my potential. I became a resident assistant staff member the next year.

I attended every class by using my \$10.00 used Schwinn bicycle on the 500 acre campus. I studied every spare moment outside of class. I booked it every weekend. I played paddleball three times a week for one hour to blow off energy. I didn't

date because I didn't enjoy any spare money. I played freshman football with some of the biggest stars of the 1970's in pro-football: Bubba Smith, Clint Jones, Gene Washington, Saul Brothers, Mickey Webster, Al Brenner and others in baseball like Steve Garvey.

What I didn't know: those inner city kids could catch a pass and hit like a freight train, but they were dumber than a box of rocks. Bubba never attended class and spent all his time in the grill checking out the women. The academic fraud blew my mind. I studied my rear-end off while those free-ride minority athletes enjoyed free grades. Many of them 'graduated' functionally illiterate.

In my sophomore spring practice, a 240 pound linebacker hit me so hard that he knocked me into the hospital for three days with a severe concussion. I never suited up again. Football is one God-awful vicious and deadly sport. How anyone survives a whole season in the pros blows my mind.

In the summer of 1966, I worked as a baggage handler for United Airlines for a whopping \$2.12 an hour. I slept in a tent all summer to save money.

In the fall of 1966, the Vietnam War began taking casualties of young kids like me. And, we needed to keep in the top half of our class to be exempt from the draft. My roommate didn't make the grade, got drafted into the U.S. Army—and trained in Advanced Infantry at Fort Polk. When he shipped over to Nam, he stopped by to give me a small peace ring. He said, "If I make it back, we can drink a beer and laugh about it...if I don't, wear this peace ring and be a man of peace for the rest of your life."

He got killed in a firefight within three months of landing in Nam. Each time I visit The Vietnam Wall in Washington DC, I cry my eyes out that he didn't get to live his life because of the bastards in Washington DC.

I have worn his ring every day of my life since 1967.

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