

What It's Like To Be A Baby Boomer: Kent State, Man On The Moon



Frosty Wooldridge

Part 5: Kent State killings, Armstrong steps on the moon, day to day

When you're living through horrific times in history such as the 60's, you don't think about it. Instead, you make choices. You make mistakes. You lose friends. You get betrayed by classmates. You get things stolen off you. People lie to you like the entire U.S. Congress and the president of the United States. You find yourself arguing with your parents. You question the "why" of Vietnam. You're also scared of dying over there.

I returned from Fort Benning, Georgia late in the summer of 1968 with my head completely shaved from boot camp. I could drop for 100 push-ups without batting an eyelash. I could shoot the dot on a target 100 yards away. But I realized that the "other guy" gunned for me with his rifle sight pointed at my head. And, snipers, they killed any soldier who stuck his head up above the bunker. It dawned on me that war didn't care about your status, your brains, your height, your weight, your color or your religion. If a bullet, bomb, I.E.D., or napalm carries your name on it, you're a dead man

or your body faces being totally mangled.

Boot camp taught me a whole new way to look at the world. Letters from my buddies already fighting in Vietnam gave me a greater understanding about power, money and greed. I read William



Lederer's: Our Own Worst Enemy in Vietnam: Our Government. Later David Halberstam wrote: The Best and the Brightest. That book really lays the facts of the Vietnam War at your feet. Our politicians: a den of liars, thieves and swindlers.

That's right! Lyndon Baines Johnson proved to be a sidewinder rattlesnake. Tricky Dick proved himself a "Dick" of the lowest order. Robert McNamara: a slime ball who kept us fighting in Vietnam for his "honor" at his decisions. It all came out in Daniel Ellsberg's: The Pentagon Papers. What all of us discovered: American men of money and power, i.e., corporations of the Military Industrial Complex, didn't mind sending all of us little twenty-year-olds to meet our maker, JUST to line their wallets with millions and billions of dollars. Worse, that complete "expletive" Westmoreland kept calling for more troops to kill every last Vietcong in the region.

Exactly what's happening in Afghanistan and Iraq for the past 18 years—happened in Vietnam. Only now, those MIC bastards enjoy a volunteer Army of kids that don't speak up, but they do follow orders. Every one of our troops died for nothing,

and every kid without legs or arms, lost them for nothing. And more than 60,000 soldiers who committed suicide in the past 18 years in Iraq or Afghanistan or after their deployments, well, the MIC considers them collateral damage.

When I returned to the MSU campus, I grabbed a job as a waiter at Coral Gables in East Lansing. After not dating my first two years, a couple girls made me their boy toy. That proved quite an introduction into the world of love or should I say, lust?

In January of 1968, the Tet Offensive began, and it created a blood bath on both sides. When I finally realized what was going on, I became very disillusioned with the Federal Government. No honor, no integrity and no respect. Just bomb, napalm and strafe millions of people in Vietnam. Final toll in 1975: over 3.1 million people in Vietnam killed. We lost 58,220 to death. About 150,000 wounded. Agent Orange created by the deadly Monsanto Corporation killed everything in its path and created birth defects for Vietnamese children for decades.

I carried my class load. I took humanities, social studies, journalism, biology, math, astronomy, history, English, and now, military science courses in ROTC. More riots nation-wide and more angry people everywhere. College kids found themselves pitted against the "Silent Majority." Ironically, the Silent Majority trusted the political rattlesnakes, and didn't mind letting their sons die in that God forsaken war.

McGovern and McCarthy stepped up their stances against the War in Vietnam.

In the summer of 1969, July 20th, Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. I watched it on a black and white TV after coming home from working the late-night shift at Coral Gables Bar. It's an amazing feeling to see humanity at its loftiest good, only to realize that we're still war-beasts that kill each other in

massive numbers.

At East Holden Hall that fall, I hunkered down with heavy studies. While I wanted to date, I didn't have time. Until, that is, I met a 6-foot-tall, built like Cindy Crawford, gorgeous lady who seemed interested in me. She made herself available.

The one thing I discovered about women: they pretend they like all the stuff they find in a man they want to date. They go skiing with you, scuba diving, backpacking, windsurfing, bicycling, tennis and more. But if that's not their lifestyle, they soon return to what they rather be doing. I didn't know that. But I sure the heck found out the hard way.

This lady, and she proved to be a wonderful woman, pretended to like tennis, racquetball, skiing and more—but in reality, she loved comfort, security, constancy, expensive dinners and hotels. She liked camping with me. So, I asked her to marry me. Big mistake. In actuality, she loved to buy clothes and watch TV. She proved to be a “couch potato.”

Anyway, I married her in the spring 1970, the day after I graduated. She did not understand that I loved camping and sports more than hotels and beaches in the Caribbean, unless I dove under water with my scuba tanks. I did not possess a clue that we were totally incompatible. Neither did she! Three years later, we shook hands and said goodbye. No kids, no problems, lots of emotional pain!

He got the 1973 Mustang Fastback and all our furniture. I grabbed my 1970 CB 750 Honda and a new apartment. I stayed single for the next 35 years.

As I look back, all my buddies that married their gals right after college, over half of them suffered divorces, weekend fatherhood and alimony. We baby boomers created the largest wave of divorces in U.S. history. Lot of pain out there and the kids paid dearly. Once a couple divorces, the kids lose

structure, security, peaceful existence, and get caught in the middle of two angry people.

That summer of 1970, I attended advanced boot camp at Fort Riley, Kansas. Holy crap, killing and being killed got serious. Because I stood at the top of my class, I reported to Col. Starr. We received three branch choices: two combat and one non-combat. When I walked into his office, I said, "I'll take Armor and Artillery." "What's your non-combat choice cadet Wooldridge?" "What's the safest branch," I asked. "Those pussy MSC people," he said. "I'll take MSC," I said.

Medical Service Corps! I would be patching up war wounded, dressing wounds, training medics and dealing with napalm patients who suffered horrific burns from that jellied gasoline.

When the branches came out, guys dropped to their knees in tears when they got infantry. Out of that class of 50 cadets, a lot of them died in Nam. To this day, being an MSC officer saved my mind and body.

That spring, May 4, 1970 at Kent State University in Ohio, the National Guard opened fire on students, killing four and wounding nine. It enraged the country.

Coming in Part 6: Army, school teacher, fate

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