

Daniel Muller explores the conflict between generations by sharing life stories of fourteen Baby Boomers. These fascinating life stories serve to explain the impact of families and social environment on current Boomer values.

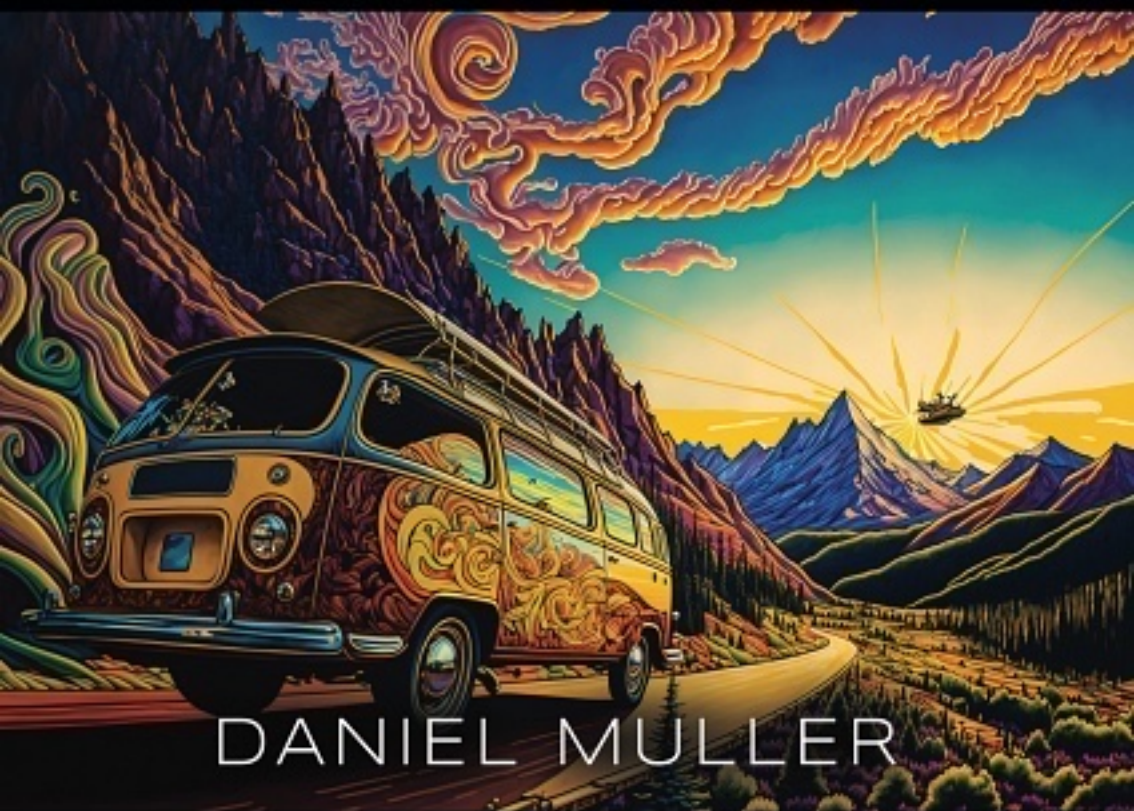
SEX, DRUGS, ROCK and WAR: The Boomer Generation
By Daniel Muller

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SEX, DRUGS, ROCK and WAR: THE BOOMER GENERATION

14 BOOMER LIFE STORIES
THAT BRING A NEW PERSPECTIVE TO THE
CONFLICT BETWEEN GENERATIONS



DANIEL MULLER

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FOREWORD

It was a warm, humid Sunday afternoon, and I had some time to read a magazine on the nightstand before taking a short nap. As I read the first three pages of the feature article, I felt my pulse quicken, I could tell my face was getting flushed, and that usually meant that my blood pressure was rising. I muttered to myself out loud, which I rarely do - “This cannot be right. It’s not possible. This is a reputable magazine! Who in the world wrote this?”

As I read further, and digested the content and the survey methodology, and later checked the credentials of the authors of the article, all looked to be in order and very valid.

What I was reading was an article, one of hundreds on the subject as it turned out, that discussed the opinions and values of younger generations, namely Generation Y / Millennials, and Generation Z. Among other findings, the article stated that these two generations felt *more positive about socialism than capitalism*. Perhaps the average person would not have had such a strong reaction to this, but I suppose I am not average.

I would consider myself a patriot, among other descriptors, and am a core Baby Boomer in terms of age, born in 1957. I love this country, even with all the warts and problems we have.

There was an eight-year period of my career when I travelled internationally a significant portion of my time. I also travelled overseas prior to that period, but less frequently. But during those eight years, I went virtually everywhere in the world, as I held a job with global responsibility. I visited Mexico, Central and South America, Canada, just about every western and central European country, as well as a few in eastern Europe. I spent significant time in China, and made several trips to Australia, Singapore, the Philippines, and India. Each and every time I landed back in the U.S., I took a deep breath of appreciation that I was back home in the ‘good old U.S.A.’

I frequently tell students, and others who will listen, that we live in the greatest country in the world. (Not exactly the first person to say this from my generation!) Of late, I have noticed a bit of skepticism from listeners, a few rolling eyes, as if they were thinking “OK Boomer, we have heard this before, but what you are telling us is crap.”

Let me say first that in just about every country I have visited, the citizens are usually wonderful people who, like most of us on this planet, want the best for their families, friends, and children / grandchildren especially. They work hard, they are friendly, they are loyal to their countries, and love family and friends. Other countries clearly have positive aspects and lifestyles, but also have some negative characteristics.

With that said, what do I think is so great about the U.S.A? I won't bore you with the details, but in the main, with some exceptions, we have clean water and clean air, usually jobs are available for those who really want to work, our electricity is pretty reliable (few if any brownouts or blackouts), we have freedoms that others in the world envy, and our cost of living, compared to elsewhere, is generally affordable. Housing, believe it or not, per square foot, is affordable versus other countries. Land is available, in suburban and rural areas, for those who want to own land or a home with more acreage. Our educational institutions are highly regarded, and we can vote on a regular basis to elect those to represent us. We have three branches of government that tend to keep each other in check, although some would challenge that currently. Our tax rates are relatively low relative to many other countries. Our standard of living is also the envy of the world. Our dollars go a long way, albeit with inflation of late, less so. Do we have problems? Of course, too many to name here. But relative to what I have seen in other countries, I would never choose to live elsewhere, not that there is anything wrong with the other places I have been. I guess my overall conclusion is that across many dimensions of evaluating quality of life in a country, we rank pretty well in all categories, relative to other countries. Overall, from my perspective, there is not a quality of life any better.

I am a strong believer that our 'system' of capitalism and our constitution enable this country to thrive and to overcome most problems we encounter. I am loyal to a fault, even though I did not enlist in the military nor was I drafted. But I love and respect our veterans and those who did serve, as they sacrificed so much for the rest of us.

So, for me to read that the younger generations thought that socialism is better than capitalism was just shocking to me. I could not understand it, and clearly it convinced me that I somehow had fallen 'out of the loop' in not understanding this sooner.

I began to read more about this, and began, by design, to interact with those in these younger generations more than previously.

Here are some of the comments I heard:

“The Boomer generation left this planet and our country in a mess! Pollution and global warming are terrible, and we cannot afford housing given our wages and the exorbitant cost of housing. You are leaving us to fix the problems you created.”

“Boomers have almost all the wealth of this country, and they don’t seem to care about our generation’s challenges and the fact that we are in debt and poor. The country is \$31 trillion in debt, and you voted for and elected the politicians that overspent our budget and got us in this mess. WE have to pay this back, not you, since most of you Boomers will likely die before this is resolved.”

“Boomers think that capitalism is just wonderful. Well, it may have been for them, but capitalism today is all about making the wealthy even wealthier, and making the poor even poorer! Socialism would be a much better system in our country, to help spread the wealth.”

“Our parents are great, they help us kids out, but the rest of the Boomers as a group just complain that our generation dislikes work, that we don’t know how to manage money, and that we must get what we want now, even if we cannot afford it. They don’t have a clue about us.”

“You created a university system that is completely unaffordable and leaving us in deep debt.”

“You created a society that treats minorities, women, LGBTQ, and others as second-class citizens with fewer opportunities than the mainstream.”

“Gun violence is out of control. Boomers strongly defend their right to carry a gun, and do not want to have any discussions to make common-sense changes such as background checks or elimination of automatic weapons.”

“Good paying jobs are gone, as are company pensions. You enjoy Social Security payments, pensions, and Medicare, but those programs won’t be around to help us.”

“Boomers grew up in a different world, and how they behave and what they believe today has nothing to do with the situation we are in today. They are just oblivious!”

INTRODUCTION

First of all, let's address the title of this book. Most Boomers recognize a variety of terms to describe the times of their youth.

Clearly, they were known as the first generation to grow up within the sexual revolution, which began in the 1960's. Many attribute this to the invention of the birth control pill, and many youths began to separate sex from procreation and marriage.

The drug culture also accelerated during the late 1960's and 1970's, with marijuana and other more serious drugs such as LSD becoming commonplace in our neighborhoods and universities.

Most of our generation became fans of 'rock and roll' music, a term coined in the 1950's to reference music with a strong beat. Most consider Chuck Berry the father of rock and roll, but it became increasingly popular when The Beatles came to America in the early 1960's.

The Vietnam War became a base of contention for Boomers as they grew up. The Boomer generation at that time seemed to be split between those who supported the war, and those who opposed it. Most men who were high on the 'birthday drawing list' of the draft had to make a choice. They could either proactively enlist in a branch of the armed forces (including the National Guard), be drafted into a branch of the armed forces without having a say as to which branch, or choose to protest the war and refuse to serve. Those in the latter category may have fled to Canada, or found ways to be lowered in the draft pecking order, such as claiming mental or physical disabilities, or enrolling in college and obtaining a deferment, or delay, in required military service.

(Many from younger generations may not know that in the years from 1940 until 1973, during both peacetime and periods of conflict, men were drafted to fill vacancies in the U.S. Armed Forces that could not be filled via volunteers. As the Vietnam war began to wind down, the draft was 'retired' around 1973 when military service became a completely volunteer enterprise.)

Thus, the reason for the book title – 'SEX, DRUGS, ROCK and WAR: The Boomer Generation'.

First, let me clarify again that I am a core Boomer, in that I was born in 1957, right in the middle of the range for Boomers, which are those born between 1946 and 1964, inclusive.

I have never been one to focus upon generational names or differences, but I certainly was aware of the generational nicknames (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials/Generation Y, and Generation Z) and some of the generalizations made about each group.

I learned that the generations discussed today have assigned names, a range of birth years, and estimated accumulated wealth, as a percentage of the entire U.S. population wealth:

GENERATION	BIRTH YEARS	WEALTH %
Silent Generation	Before 1946	13%
Baby Boomers (Boomers for short)	1946-1964	50%
Generation X	1965-1979	30%
Generation Y / Millennials	1980-1994	6%
Generation Z	1995-2015	1%

My research and discussions with those in Generation Y and Z in particular resulted in my discovery that the ‘generational war’ and ‘generation gap’ were hot topics. Many from these generations were pointing fingers (maybe not literally, as in public) at Boomers, even making fun of them and their habits, and how out-of-touch they were relative to the younger generations.

After digesting the above comments I heard from Generation Y and Z, I began to understand some of the other claims that I read about in articles and in other media. Besides the complaints I mentioned above, there are follow-on implications for younger generations today. For instance, some claim that they cannot afford to live on their own, that they have to rely upon their parents for housing after high school or college, that they could not get married and start a family given lack of financial resources, and that the government needed to do more to support the younger generations financially. And if socialism was going to be a better way to support the younger generations, then the country should move in that direction.

VALID POINTS?

To an extent, I began to accept some of the claims from younger generations. Was social security going to be there for their generations? It is hard to know, as I am not completely confident that it will be there for the rest of my life and other Boomer lives in its current form. For a Generation Y or Z worker, I could appreciate their resentment of paying into Social Security and Medicare when they had no assurance that they would get any benefit from those investments. However, I do recall feeling the same way when I was in my twenties. I was told by many, when I took on my first full-time job, that I should not count on getting social security when I was retired. (But they were wrong as it turns out)

Do companies provide pensions anymore? I am not aware of many companies that promise pensions for new employees, but most offer a 401K/405c or similar savings plan usually with some employer matching. But the old ‘guarantee’ of a pension for life after retirement is gone for most in the non-Boomer generations. (By the way, many Boomers lost some or all of their pensions as some pension funds became under-funded and sponsor companies went out of business, so having a 401K where you ‘own’ the funds, versus being managed by a corporation or other entity, is likely a better approach anyway, in my humble opinion.)

Was housing more expensive than when we grew up? Certainly, but so are pay rates and salaries. Per my analysis, this is about a breakeven, median housing costs have increased at about the same rate as median salaries and pay rates, looking at the period from 1975 thru 2020, with the exception of some very high-priced housing areas, such as California or New York.

Are interest rates higher now than when we grew up? Certainly not, as when we bought our first home in 1982, mortgage rates were over 12%! But with escalating mortgage rates currently, the horizon looks darker than before when mortgage rates were as low as 3-4%.

Is college debt a larger problem now? It would seem so. I recall in 1976, my tuition at a state school (it was all I could afford) in Ohio was about \$350 per quarter, with room and board being about \$500 per quarter. So, in any one school year, I was paying about \$2500 per year. My summer job, on afternoon shift working in a grocery warehouse, paid \$3.35 per hour. Working all summer long, all four summers of college, I was able to save about \$1200 per year toward my education. Luckily my parents were able to

pay the remaining \$1300 per year, so I graduated with no college debt, but had no savings to start my new life. College loans were less available at that time, so most students who were not from wealthy families were forced to work their way through school both in the summers as well as during the academic year, taking part-time jobs on or off campus. The 'load' of a full roster of college classes, plus the time required to work part-time or full-time during college, was stressful for many. I recall hearing about suicides on some campuses due to someone getting a poor or failing grade on an important midterm or final.

Back then, being the first in my family to attend college, I was not all that aware of the value of a degree from a top-tier school relative to a degree from a more affordable state school or technical school. To me, it was all about affordability and being able to attend college and get a degree without getting buried in debt. In hindsight, I learned that college reputation does carry some weight in hiring and advancement, but that value seems to diminish after the first few years of a career.

I did some research on the affordability of a college education today versus when Boomers were going to college. Each study is different, but in the main, adjusting for inflation, a college education is more expensive by anywhere from 150% to 200% relative to current earnings and the cost of living.

Today, it seems that a higher percentage of students are prioritizing attending the very best school they can, regardless of cost. I was talking to a Millennial about this, and he stated that if you are going to go to all the trouble to attend college, and want to be an engineer as an example, you just have to attend one of the top 10 or 15 engineering schools in the country. (I disagree) He said he had heard stories of business executives telling graduates that 'I didn't even look at your resume or GPA, I just saw that you graduated from XYZ University, and I just made you a job offer based upon that.' Demand is high for the educations from these institutions, and as a result of that demand and other factors, prices may have increased more for these schools. Contributing to the cost escalation is that many universities continue to plow profits into their campuses, new buildings, student services, and new administrative jobs. Tuition, room and board at private schools may be well over \$50,000 per year, some are close to \$100,000 per year. It is not unheard of for students to graduate in 4 or 5 years with debt of over \$100,000 or \$200,000.

OTHER BOOMER BAGGAGE

In addition to some of the financial comparisons between current generational problems and the Boomer early years, the term 'Boomer' now can refer less to a specific range of years of birth, and more to anyone who is older and/or out-of-touch with younger generations and their issues. To quote one person from Generation Z - "Boomers are not an age group, they are a mindset of being out-of-touch and ignorant of the current world and country dynamics."

The term 'OK Boomer' has become derogatory, sort of inferring to Boomers that 'OK, you have it made, and are enjoying your lives in retirement or late careers, but what about us and the polluted, costly world you have left us?'

Granted, the Boomer generation (including me) could be considered out of touch by some, given their habits that do not seem to change, in a world where perhaps those habits do not make a lot of sense. After all, according to some of the younger generations, Boomers are the generation that may still use phone books, use cash or checks to pay at checkout lines, may still have landline phones at home, take pride in their 'fine China' dishes and plates (that are rarely if ever used), wear denim for shirts, jackets, shorts and pants, love 24-hour news, use bar soap in the shower instead of body wash, and may still iron their clothes.

On the flip side, there are some nostalgic memories that Boomers have that other generations do not because they were not alive to experience them. Many Boomers remember:

- Walking long distances to school and then walking back home, sometimes in sub-zero temperatures (I am sure we all exaggerate the actual distances and cold)
- Doing their homework alone at home after school, just so they could get out to play in the streets with their friends
- Going to the 'five and dime' store to buy candy (for 5 cents or 10 cents)
- Playing hide and seek after dark
- Collecting and trading sports cards that were included in a pack of bubble gum
- Finding empty soda bottles and returning them to the local grocery store for 5 cents each

- Buying vinyl music albums to play on record players, or buying music cassettes or 8-track tapes to play in their cars
- Collecting photos and news stories from newspapers, and creating personal albums of clippings of their life experiences
- Playing board games and cards with family and friends for hours
- Spending Sundays with family having dinner and socializing
- Passing the time listening to a transistor radio
- Watching their only TV station ‘signing off’ at midnight

I would venture to say that most Boomers feel as though they contributed to society as best they could throughout their lives, and do resent some of the criticism now being thrown their way. I am sure that some do not begin to understand the resentment that younger generations talk about and express.

In response, some Boomers are using the term ‘OK Zoomer’ to refer to Generation Z and their ‘out-of-touch’ attitudes, at least from a Boomer perspective. Some criticize that Zoomers believe that the world owes them something, that they do not have a strong work ethic, that they need instant gratification, that they want things now instead of saving until they can afford them, and that they lack understanding of financials and the value of saving and hard work.

Other Boomers do recognize the challenges today that younger generations face, that were not in place, or not as serious, as when Boomers grew up. Pollution, the national debt, the high cost of living, and very high university expenses are issues that were not usually on the radar for Boomers.

GENERATIONAL FRICTION AND FICTION

I don’t perceive that there is exactly *a war* between generations, but certainly there is a friction between generations that comes out, perhaps not daily, but occasionally in family discussions or friend interactions, as well as in media articles, blogs, social media and TV shows. The generalizations made about the ‘other’ generations are concerning, if not disturbing. Contrast that to the respect that most Boomers had for their elders during their childhood and adult years, maybe due to their parents absolutely *demanding* respect from their children, not only for the parents, but for anyone older!

As in any situation where there is growing animosity between groups, there usually is a lack of understanding and appreciation of others, outside of their same-generation peers.

In my research of generational conflict, I began to feel frustrated that most of the generational analyses was focused upon statistics such as ‘45% of Boomers believe this’ or ‘72% of Generation Z believe this’, but where was the real story? Where was the deep dive into the lives of Boomers or Generation X, Y or Z so that we could better understand the specific issues and how these issues have played out in the lives of individuals within their generations? Where was the information and analysis that might help the generations understand one another better, and help narrow the generational divide?

HOW ABOUT REAL-LIFE STORIES?

I began to consider the idea of writing a book about real life biographies of individuals from all generations, as a way for me and others to better understand the issues. I wanted to ask probing questions to shed light on this generational divide. I anticipated that I might better understand how external events and environmental factors affected the values, views and opinions of each generation, hopefully explained via each individual story.

But when I developed an outline for the book, and began to develop questions for individuals, I realized that some questions would not make as much sense for younger generations, especially those questions that asked for their perspective now versus when they were younger, because they are fairly young now, at least in comparison to a Boomer! For instance, I wanted to ask the question – “In looking back over your life, what key lessons have you learned that you could share with other generations?” For a Generation Z person who might be 22 years old and just entering the workforce, I am not entirely sure that their perspective on life lessons would be developed much at all, nor might they want to invest the time to talk to me. I also was curious how an individual’s opinions and values *changed as they aged*, as they passed through the phases of life. Those sorts of questions would not make as much sense for Generation X, Y, or Z.

After considering many options, I ultimately decided to focus only on Boomers, with the logic being that for this generation, their entire story could be told from beginning to near-the-end. I concluded that I might be able to understand the key influences on their lives growing up, and to assess how they affected their choices in later life and their opinions now, sitting in their retirement or late working years. I thought it would be insightful to see how they might look back and reflect upon the choices they made, and understand

their views of the world today versus in their early years. It would be intriguing to hear how their views had changed (or not) as they aged and as some left the workforce.

Interviewing younger generations, although more of a comprehensive approach, seemed to me to be less of a complete story. Perhaps the choices of some from Generation Z or Y to accumulate high college debt in exchange for the best education, might pay off in later life, but it may be too early to know at their current stage of life. Maybe their sacrifice to live at home with parents until they could save enough to afford to live independently would turn out to be a brilliant choice both financially and from a relationship-with-parents standpoint. It could be that the sacrifices the younger generations seem willing to make to clean up the environment, convert to solar and wind power, eliminate oil and gas, etc., will turn out to be the best investment in the history of the world, but it is just too early to see how that may turn out.

So, I decided to focus this book on the lives of the Boomer generation.

But how would the reader be able to reach any conclusions about the Boomer generation, or other generations, from just fourteen life stories I captured? Clearly, understanding fourteen lives out of the millions of Boomers is not a statistically significant exercise from a mathematical perspective. Broad conclusions about this generation certainly cannot be reached from such a limited number. Furthermore, I believe all would agree that the individuals in any of these generations are not homogeneous, thus even if all in the book believed in one ideal, it would be impossible to conclude that the generation as a whole had the same belief.

However, I did believe that there would be enough commonalities in the stages of their lives, the sorts of challenges they met, descriptions of the times they grew up within, the lifestyle they led as children then adults, and the evolution of their characters and mindset, that the reader could gain a significant understanding of the key issues and contributors to Boomer thinking and behavior.

MY METHODOLOGY

How did I find the individual Boomers I have written about in this book?

My first task was to decide if I was going to randomly choose individual Boomers, or if I should look specifically for certain traits, backgrounds, family situations, professions, etc.

I decided that instead of biasing the selection by looking for something in particular, I would choose randomly, except that I would *exclude* a part of the Boomer population whom we hear about all-too-often, namely, celebrities, TV stars, movie stars, social media icons, sports stars, and politicians. I was certain that their perspectives, already over-represented in much of what we see or hear, might not represent the views and history of the core Boomer population. So, I concluded that I would seek out those I called ‘everyday Boomers’, those who quietly lived their lives, those who don’t get much attention, and those who did not have high-profile jobs or careers. I have nothing against celebrities, but I do believe that our views of the world get skewed a bit by the exposure they receive in the media.

I began by using traditional methods to find candidates – social media, email, friends, and word-of-mouth.

I used social media, reaching out to friends and family. I used my high school alumni group, asking for interest. I talked to friends directly, asking them if they knew any Boomers who had an interesting life who might want to share their story with me. I emailed a long list of professional contacts I had made during a 35-year career.

I quickly developed a list of about 30 candidates who agreed to participate, which I thought to be an ample population to at least begin my work. As it turned out, over time, some of those candidates decided they did not want to invest the time in answering so many questions, so the list narrowed. But the candidates I did write about turned out to be an all-star team in my view, which I will discuss later, as they satisfied my main criteria for ‘everyday Boomers’ with interesting lives and stories.

In hindsight, the methodology to find the candidates and their stories did not matter all that much.

I have concluded that every life that I have written about is like a snowflake, (and that is not a jab at any other generation!) very unique in its own way. The stories, although perhaps not worthy of a TV news special or movie, are interesting, touching, and very satisfying to learn about, write about, and understand. Each life story here has its own twists and turns, its own challenges, and its own unique changing environment that impacted the

choices they made and how they view the world today. I am convinced that if I had randomly selected a dozen or more *other* people to write about, I would, perhaps, have been just as satisfied with their stories and the lessons I learned.

In every case, I found each story to be very worthy of being told. None were boring or typical of a Boomer life, whatever that might look like. Once I completed writing their life story, I transitioned into the questions I had for them about key issues in the world today, and how they felt about them. In most cases, it was clear to see some linkage between their environment growing up and how they viewed the world today, and what their opinions were about current topics of debate.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that I learned a great deal about history, as well as this generation, at more of a micro level, which was one of my goals. A primary conclusion I reached was ‘there is no typical Boomer’. Each story made me consider and question my own opinions and views relative to theirs, and to compare how our lives differed, especially growing up. The diversity in lives and stories was simply amazing.

THE STORY

This book describes the lives of fourteen individual Baby Boomers, as described to me by each of them.

Each chapter is about the life story of one Baby Boomer that I got to know better and interview. I call them ‘everyday Boomers’ from this very interesting Boomer generation, a generation which mainly grew up in the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s.

WHO ARE THESE BOOMERS IN THE BOOK?

There are four women and ten men. All were born in the U.S. except for one. Politically, this group is very diverse, split evenly between conservatives, liberals, and independents.

Their birthdates range from 1946 to 1957. The birth year of 1957 was a popular one, as 5 of the 14 Boomers were born then.

Six of the fourteen served in the military. Combined, this group lived in about twenty-five states.

Their careers spanned a variety of professions, functions, industries, companies and enterprises. You will read about an engineer, a professor, a fund-raiser, a construction worker, an insurance agent, an information technology manager, a computer specialist, a manufacturing company executive, an entrepreneur, a postmaster, an investor, a lawyer, a waitress, a customer service agent, a 911 call center worker, a newspaper deliverer, a grocery store clerk, a home pet-sitter, a babysitter, and many more.

There are 14 life stories here, but I mentioned that there were more than 19 careers held. How can that be? Well, some held multiple jobs, and focused upon multiple careers during their lives.

Honestly, I would have preferred a better balance between men and women, but for some reason, more of the women I contacted decided not to participate, for a variety of reasons. That is not a commentary of any kind, just a fact.

All were members of very interesting families growing up. The majority of the group referred to themselves as poor or low-to-middle class growing up, with a few exceptions. You can sense the struggle each had during their early years, and how their families became very tight-knit as they cooperated to survive and support one another.

All of this group felt comfortable looking back on their lives and exhibited a certain satisfaction overall with where they are today, and the decisions that they made in life. I sensed zero resentment or misgivings about the past. All are proud not only of themselves and their families, but of our country, albeit most pointed out faults and significant areas of concern. I found it interesting that I would call just about all of them patriots in their own unique way, yet nearly all of them felt that the *country was headed in the wrong direction*. I will cover this in more detail later.

PREVIEW OF THESE STORIES

First of all, I hope that the life stories are of interest and cause readers to reflect on their own lives relative to each story. Second, for Boomer readers, I expect that you will begin to see some patterns in Boomer lives and views relative to your own, given that we all grew up in similar times and experienced similar events. I know some of the stories made me feel nostalgic. Third, for younger generations, I believe you will gain some understanding about this Boomer generation and why they might behave the

way that they do, and say the things they do. Last, I hope this book can help reduce some of the generational friction by explaining how the Boomer generation came to be, and to help Boomers realize and understand the differences they have experienced relative to younger generations.

THE QUESTIONS THESE BOOMERS ANSWERED

First of all, the list of questions I asked each Boomer was lengthy. I sent each participant a questionnaire that was thirteen pages long. About half the questions were used to draw out the life stories of each person. The other half were focused upon obtaining their opinions and views about important issues going on in our country and the world today.

Second, each question was optional. For example, I asked about military service, if any. Some did not have any military service thus could not answer that question. I asked about children or grandchildren, if any, and the relationship they had with each. Some had no grandchildren as yet. Some questions were perhaps too sensitive for them to discuss, for a variety of reasons.

Third, I required all candidates to answer these questions in writing. I had several candidates request that I interview them verbally, as they did not want to take the time to write their answers. But I found that having them take the time to read, think about, and write answers to these questions made the candidates think through the questions more thoroughly, and their responses were extremely thoughtful and more detailed.

Once they sent me their written answers, I was able to draft their chapter, then develop additional follow-up questions I had, and I interviewed most of them in person, or on Zoom if we could not meet in person. Once I incorporated their follow-up interview responses into their story, I asked them to review the story for accuracy and content. None of the featured Boomers in the book were aware of who the other Boomers were, with one exception: there is a husband-and-wife duo who each have their own chapter story in the book, and of course they were aware that the other was participating.

I share all the questions I asked in the summary at the end, but here are just a few examples from the list of ‘life story’ questions:

SEX, DRUGS, ROCK and WAR: The Boomer Generation

- 1 - If you had to tell a story about your life in 5 minutes, what would that story be? What are you most proud of? What would you do differently if anything in your life?
- 2 - How well do your friends and family understand your life story and the challenges you have had?
- 3 - Tell me about your high school experience and rate it on a scale from 1 to 10. If you could, would you want to go back to that time and experience it again?
- 4 - Please share a bit about your family situation growing up, and your family situation as an adult. Were there any specific family events, issues, traditions, tragedies, etc., that changed you significantly?

Here are some examples of the questions I asked relative to their opinions and views of important issues in the country and world today:

- 1 - Do you believe that the generations following ours will be, in general, better or worse off financially when they get to our age?
- 2 - Do you believe those generations will live in a better country and world in the coming decades, versus what our generation experienced as we aged?
- 3 - How about drinking beer/wine/alcohol today versus growing up? How do you feel about legalizing marijuana and other drugs?
- 4 - What do you recall about the press (TV and newspapers mainly) when you were a teenager and in your twenties? How does that compare to now?
- 5 - How do you feel about U.S. immigration, the border wall, and our illegal alien policies?
- 6 - If you had an audience of receptive non-Boomers in a room, what would you suggest to them that you believe would help them?
- 7 - How do you feel about the second amendment and gun rights?
- 8 - Should we reduce our global influence, or expand it?

- 9 - What are your feelings about green initiatives and the state of our planet? How do you feel about how serious global warming is? Should we be doing more or doing less?

BOOMER COMMONALITIES – A PREVIEW

Within the life stories of the Boomers in this book, I found that in the main, each Boomer had a very individual story, with unique experiences, family lives, views and opinions relative to the others. There were very few experiences or views which were common across all. Surprisingly, I only found a few commonalities. This sampling of the Boomer generation did not appear to be one that adhered to the generalizations made about them!

A very unexpected commonality, however, was that most Boomers specifically mentioned having pianos in their homes growing up, and how they either took piano lessons or recalled the family gathering around the piano and singing songs together. There seemed to be something about how piano music and perhaps the discipline learned in taking piano lessons left a lasting impression on most of the Boomers I interviewed. Or maybe, it was just pure coincidence that most of this group of Boomers had this in common. (In our house, we had an organ, not a piano, but I remembered that all family members learned to play!)

Another consistency was in regards to their views about the planet, global warming, pollution, and green initiatives. All agreed that this was a much more serious issue than before, and that we (all on the planet) need to do more. So much for the Boomer reputation of doubting all the claims about climate change!

There seemed to be common values or beliefs mentioned by most, and by ‘most’, I would say there was a majority that shared these views, but not enough to call it a completely-shared Boomer view:

- 1 - Hard work – nearly all mentioned that their parents influenced them to take jobs early in their lives, such as paper routes, babysitting, etc. and that this instilled in them the value of hard work. Some said that when parents forced them to take these jobs, it was required for the family to survive, due to financial challenges. Not one person resented having to work at a young age.

- 2 - Saving money – this seemed to be a common thread in their stories, stating that the income from these early jobs were used for family needs, or to save for some specific need or future desire, such as a bicycle, a college fund, or their first car. Many discussed the sacrifices they made to save money in lieu of enjoying what they wanted. So, in effect, they were investing in their future selves, versus their then-current selves.
- 3 - Most talked about the importance of thoroughly learning the skills required to do their job well, and taking pride in doing a very good job. None talked about a priority of getting promotions or having a set career path that they created and pursued.
- 4 - Helping their children and grandchildren financially – most talked about their habits of financially helping their children, most now grown, and grandchildren. Most shared their plans to continue that practice going forward, although a few indicated that their children were well enough off now and did not need any further assistance. *I did not hear any of them say that their parents helped them financially* after high school or after college, if they attended college. This is a curious and interesting difference between Boomers and their parents, one that I discuss further in the analysis section.
- 5 - Boomers have a reputation for, over their lifetime, garnering a lot of possessions stocked away in basements or closets. Most of those I interviewed fell in line with this reputation, and most had little concern that they had too much ‘stuff’. Strangely, most had minimal concern that once they passed, their children or other heirs would have to deal with all their ‘stuff’. One Boomer put it best: “I worked very hard, and saved, to be able to obtain these possessions, and it is just too painful now to give them away, even though I know they are of little value today, and that I will likely not use them again.”

ANOTHER INTERESTING CONCLUSION

As I worked through each of the life stories and interviews, I slowly realized that I genuinely *liked* all these people, not only for their stories and their cooperation, but for some of the challenges they faced and overcame. They just seemed to be very good folks who I respected more and more as their story emerged. They all seemed to do the right things, either at that time, or eventually, to overcome a variety of challenges at different times in their lives.

I would be happy to share a beer with any of them, or to spend an afternoon together. They are so at ease with themselves and where they are in life, perhaps because they have reached a point in their lives where they do not care about impressing anyone else. They genuinely seemed more concerned about others and the future of younger generations, versus themselves. They are all memorable to me and I plan to stay in contact with them going forward in one way or another.

So, let's get to the most interesting part, the life stories of these Boomers!

CHAPTER 1:

Karen, Who Gathered No Moss and Loves Convertibles

BACKGROUND

We have all heard the saying ‘A rolling stone gathers no moss.’ Karen is one of those ‘rolling stones’ who lived a full and adventurous life, holding many jobs and responsibilities in many geographic locations. I will get to the love of convertibles later.

I did not know Karen until I began writing this book. Someone I did not know suggested that I talk to her since ‘somebody should write a book about her!’.

I reached out to her, and we traded messages until we finally met face-to-face over the internet.

Over her lifetime, Karen graduated from high school and then beauty school, was a customer service rep for a telecommunications company, married and lived on a military base, divorced, raised a daughter on her own (with help from her mother and sister for a period of time), moved 15 times, lived in three states, and worked for seven different companies. Her career steps included 20 years at a steel mill (out in the mill, not the office!) and 22 years in telecommunications. She also started her own pet sitting business which she runs today! She is 75 years old and lives in Texas.

HER STORY

Karen was born in 1946 in Northeast Ohio, and graduated from high school in 1964. She grew up with two siblings and parents in Ohio. Her mother worked in an attorney’s office before staying at home to raise her children. Later in life, after divorcing, she worked at a large bakery until retiring. Her father held multiple jobs after going to business school, including working for a manufacturer, enlisting in the Army, then working in human resources and accounting, where he was recognized as an employee of the year, before opening his own hardware store. Later, he worked as a treasurer for a school system before dying at a young age when Karen was only 28.

When Karen was 15, her parents suddenly split up and stated they were divorcing.

“The divorce was just horrendous. One day, the arguing was very bad, and I called my boyfriend to come get me, and he took me to his house. Later, my grandparents came to tell me that they had gotten her mother and that she was going to live with them, but that they did not know where her father was, so they asked Karen what she would be doing. She chose to just live with her friend’s family until things got settled, because the house was empty.

Later, she lived a few months with her father, which did not work out, then her mother agreed to let her live with her.

One day, after the divorce, when Karen and her mother were arguing, her mother said ‘Do you think you are too big to be spanked?’ Karen said ‘Yep!’ According to Karen, ‘Boy, did I ever get it from her for saying that!’ This was when she was a senior in high school!

ON TO A CAREER

After high school graduation, and getting licensed in beauty school, she landed a position with a major telecommunications company in customer service, mainly working on residential orders and collections for two years. Then she met her future husband, introduced through a roommate. He was in the military, and they married and moved to a military reservation in Eatontown, NJ. They soon had a daughter.

Their daughter was over a year old when Karen and her husband divorced. What happened? “I am not sure what went wrong, but my husband said he would rather go to Vietnam than be married to me.”

She and her daughter moved back to Ohio then, in 1969, and lived with her mother. She remembers that year because when they moved back, when the moon landing took place, she was watching it on TV, and woke her daughter so she could experience something so important “even though she had no idea what was going on.”

She then landed a job at a rubber products company, making rubber gloves as a ‘tumbler’ and also filled in as a stripper of the rubber machine, but it was a dangerous job. Later, she was able to find a job as a manager of radiology at a local hospital, where she worked with radiologists and patients, scheduling tests, and reading reports to workers on the hospital floor.

Her mother watched Karen’s daughter when she worked. Her sister, who had been studying at an Ohio university, moved back with her mother due to

financial difficulties, and she helped with babysitting as well. Then her sister graduated and got a job locally.

Later, she heard that a local steel mill was hiring workers in production, and she applied.

She interviewed for the job, and was told during the interview that she was hired, but could not get any training that day because she had not worn 'mill clothes'. They told her the next day to wear gloves and warm clothes (it was February), but to make sure her gloves would allow her to pick-up things and be agile. She was not sure what sort of gloves would work, so she wore white band gloves that first day on the job. 'My supervisor went crazy, and always told others later that I was the one that wore white band gloves into the steel mill on my first day.'

Karen was a loyal employee, working there for 20 years, even though much of that time, she was the only female in her department. Fifteen of those years were in inspection roles. She had to deal with comments from all the men, being the only woman working in inspection jobs all over the plant.

Soon after starting, she was told that a good job in the mill was a 'spark tester', which used equipment to determine the chemistry of the steel being tested. She landed that job and did that job for several years, before wanting to bid on a bar hand-grinding job. She was told that she could not bid on that job to do hand-grinding because she was 'too short and too heavy on top'! She finally did bid on that job, but never held that position as a fulltime job, instead doing it occasionally on overtime, as well as doing a variety of other mill inspection jobs.

As she tackled new jobs, either as a fill-in during vacations, or a new job she took on, what was the most important lesson she had to learn? "The most important thing was that you NEVER asked a question or bothered anyone else while they were on their lunch breaks or other breaks. As long as you didn't do that, they tolerated you and didn't care all that much what you were doing."

Once when she was laid off during a slow period, she went to the union hall and asked for food vouchers, as other workers did during times of layoff. But she was told that 'there were men with families that were not getting food vouchers, why should she get vouchers?' Later, they told her she could get a food voucher as long as she did not come to any more union meetings.

While working in the mill, she was able to buy her first house, under a Department of Agriculture program. She then lived there with her daughter, and drove to work each day. Back then, her credit cards were insured, and her loan was insured, so if she got laid off, her mortgage payment and credit card payments were covered.

Her credit card company also called her, and told her that they became aware that she took the lowest paying job in the mill, and they wanted to help her out, so paid her credit card bill for the first month!

Later, when things slowed down, she applied to work in a salaried position in the traffic department, and began working there, coordinating shipments for shipping departments in mills across Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana. Her last three years at the steel mill were in this area.

Karen learned quickly that most of the workers in the mill were related to someone else, and she was not. So, she told others that she was related to the head of the mill. She knew he must have heard that, because after that time, he would wave at her when he walked by.

She drove two different foreign sports cars, and she was one of the first employees to drive a foreign car to the mill. Foreign cars were allowed in the parking lot but not in the plant. At that time, foreign cars were not viewed positively when much of their steel was sold to U.S. automotive companies!

There was a central locker room for women, but because Karen worked so many different jobs, it would take over an hour to go back to her locker room to get equipment or change clothes. When she began work as a mill inspector, she could not leave the area, so she took a locker, without permission, in the men's locker room near one of the rolling mills. Later, they positioned a single locker out in the mill for her to use.

Did she feel resentment from the men? "One time, I walked into the office, and a guy was there, and he said 'You don't belong here! You are taking a job from a man who needs it!' I told him that he couldn't do what I did, either my job, or all the other things she was responsible for at home, raising a daughter more or less alone, etc. I told him that if he didn't have his wife at home to pack his lunch and take care of all the things at home, he couldn't cope."

Another time, a religious man came to work carrying religious pamphlets that his wife had given him to share with the other workers (especially Karen

she believes), and some of the content was that a woman should not work outside the home. Out of respect, Karen read the material, but told the man that he should tell his wife that she has to eat just like everyone has to eat, so she needs to work!

Once she was asked by management what they should do differently to improve things, and she told them that they needed to get the guys to work more than two hours per shift!

“Others never understood me working in a steel mill!” As an example, her mother often asked her ‘When are you going to get a REAL job?’ “Nobody really understood why I worked there. But I enjoyed it, I was mainly outside and not cooped up in an office, and the variety of jobs was fun.”

“You know, I keep hearing about this ‘Me Too’ movement, but I always thought that if something happened when a man offended you, you should try to turn that around if you could and make it work for you. As an example, one night, a plant foreman knocked on my door at 2:00 a.m., apparently after being out drinking. I used that against him until the day I left! He didn’t want anyone to know that he had done that.”

Eventually, her daughter graduated magna cum laude from college, and moved out of state to work for a major manufacturer. Karen was proud that her daughter was later nominated as employee of the year.

How would Karen compare her parenting style vs. those of her parents?

“There was a vast difference. I realize that some things were just ingrained in my parents’ beliefs, but I fought hard for my daughter against what my mother and her husband would tell me was acceptable. I just would not rule over her. I allowed her to make her own decisions, based on what she believed, with some guidance.”

About that time, Karen realized that with an empty house, and things degrading at the mill, it was time for a change, and she decided to move to Northern California, as she had a friend there.

After a few months, she relocated to the Houston area, and worked for the police department as a uniformed telecommunications officer. She attended the Police Academy and obtained a state license as a 911 operator. She answered and prioritized all calls coming into the department, both 911 calls and non-emergency. “We were taking up to 40 calls per hour, it was a very

busy job, but on special occasions, we were allowed to watch the Rockets in the playoffs, all the while taking calls.”

Then she was hired by another telecommunications company as a service rep taking orders for service in an after-hour center, where she earned higher pay and better benefits than with the police department.

She worked in various departments for 22 years. Her last job was working in revenue management, but her employer chose to close that office due to building problems. She had the option to move to another office, but decided to take a package and retire, in December 2015.

Then she went to work as a dog caretaker, and got the idea to start her own dog-sitting business in peoples’ homes. “I love what I am doing. And I learned that it is less stressful for the dogs for me NOT to be there when the owners leave or come home, so she leaves just before the owners return, and arrives just after the owners depart for the day.”

How does Karen compare living in a small town in the Midwest vs. her home now in Texas?

“I really enjoy living in a part of the country that is very diverse, like in Houston. I always rebelled against my parents’ beliefs about other people, religions, races, etc. Living in a small town, everyone knows everyone’s business, plus the population was very homogeneous. But when I lived there, it was the late 50’s and 60’s, and attitudes were much different then. As an example, I was not able to go to college because my parents wouldn’t support me attending a Catholic college, even though I had a scholarship.” She was also accepted at another private college in Ohio, but her father told her that he wasn’t able to support her attending there, as she wanted to major in music, and her parents did not believe there was much of a future in music.

“Also, I dated a Jewish guy from Cleveland. He was not welcome in Mother’s home. Once my mother visited me in Houston and we drove to the grocery store. She refused to get out of the car because all the people she saw were Hispanic.”

POLLING FOR OPINIONS

What are some of the most important lessons you learned in your life?

I learned from a music teacher, Mr. Marini, that to write music well, you must learn all the rules and know them backwards and forwards. Then, and only then, you will be able to break all the rules. If you take shortcuts and do not have a firm foundation, you will fail. I think that applies to other things in life.

Also, I learned from a high school history teacher, Mr. Marzulli, that learning the little facts ensures you will also know the big picture. I did not get great grades from Mr. Marzulli, but I learned so much about history that I still remember.

I also believe that you can never put a man before your job or what you believe. You have to prioritize what you believe and prioritize your work.

Then Karen laughs - "The last lesson, is always drive a convertible! I learned that from Mary Brown, my 5th grade teacher and a friend of my parents."

If a Millennial or Gen X or Gen Z person was sitting next to you on your death bed, and they asked you "What is the meaning of life? What is it all about?" What do you think your answer would be?

Life is to teach you what you must learn so that your next life will be better. I have become friends with some Hare Krishnas, and they believe in reincarnation. I like them a lot, and maybe because of that, their beliefs rubbed off on me. But I worry about believing that!

What else stands out to you about your life?

My parents always called me the dumb one. I keep wondering why they said that, but it may have been because my mother kept telling me that one of my biggest faults was that I thought I could do anything! (Well, I think Karen has proved that she CAN do anything!) It also could be because I can be scattered in talking about things. I can talk about one topic, then switch to another topic sort of randomly. Plus, my siblings were both very smart and both attended college, and I did not.

Do you believe that other people in younger generations appreciate what you have contributed to society through the work you did, and the family you have?

I don't know, but I am not sure I need to be appreciated. I just lived my life one decision at a time.

What does she think about the opinions of others regarding Boomers and her generation?

I think Boomers need to stay independent - I don't always just accept what I hear, if I hear something that doesn't make sense, I say 'wait a minute here!'.

Will we have another Great Depression?

Yes, the government tries to keep buffering the implications of what we are doing, but so many things are falling apart. Crime is getting out of control.

Should marijuana be legalized?

I don't see detrimental things that marijuana causes, unlike alcohol, and it helps people with anxiety and pain vs. so many prescription drugs. I don't use, but if legal, I might.

How does she feel about the border?

I don't like what is going on, there has to be a better way to manage this. Many immigrants are paying the price of the illegals coming across the border who are criminals or gang members.

What about her views about socialism vs. capitalism and how younger generations feel positive about socialism?

We sort of have some socialism, such as social security. I would not have made it at times when laid off without unemployment or sub-pay, but so many now want free things, and we are more dependent upon the government. I keep hearing unemployment is so low, but what about all the people who are not working? They cannot all be counted in unemployment because many are no longer looking for a job.

IN SUMMARY

After talking to Karen at length, and being so impressed with her life and the different jobs that she held compared to others during their lives, it started to dawn on me that if anyone could feel shortchanged in life, she might be near the front of the line.

Think about this..... her parents divorced at a crucial time in her teen years. They left their house, and neither parent asked her to live with them during this time. She lived with a strange family for months until she was able to

live again with her parents separately. How would that affect most people's self-value?

She was not allowed to attend college because the scholarship she received was at a Catholic college. She was focused on improving her lot by trying to find the best job she could throughout her life. She was a single mother, was divorced two times, worked in a steel mill with nearly all men, was able to buy her own home for her daughter and her to live in, successfully raised a wonderful and successful daughter, moved herself multiple times to find a better life, worked loyally for 42 years at two different companies, and last but not least, lives in a diverse community which she loves, and started her own company at age 70! And at age 76, is still working doing something she loves, calling her own shots.

Add to that, she lost her father at age 28, dealt with what we may today call workplace harassment for close to twenty years, and although she is more or less happy with her family situation, does not have as strong a relationship as she would like to have with her daughter or grandson.

"I seem to upset my daughter sometimes, I don't mean to, but that seems to happen. Sometimes I feel as though she doesn't want others to know that her mom was a blue-collar worker and worked in a steel mill. But she has such a nice life, and I am so proud of her, I don't want to poke my nose into her life and ask her to think differently about me. There is not much I can do about it."

When you begin to appreciate what Karen accomplished in her life, and the challenges she met head on, I think 'dumb' ('my parents used to call me that') is definitely not a word that describes her.

Let me share my assessment.

I believe Karen is very happy with the life she has built for herself, and the memories she has.

I would describe her as 'tough, entrepreneurial, a quick learner, flexible, a hard worker, empathetic, open to different ideas, someone who can get along with a variety of people, street-smart, and most of all, INDEPENDENT!'

Well, Karen, one thing is for sure, nobody will ever say that you want to be dependent on the government or that you don't want to work!

Even though Karen doesn't think she or her generation should be thanked for what she has done with her life, let me say 'thank you' to her for being what so many Boomers are.

Most Boomers are unique individuals who, through their contributions to various employers, and through their contributions to family, have carved out a memorable, if not remarkable, life for themselves, all the while making our country, society, and world a better place for future generations. People like Karen do not make headlines, do not get featured in the media, but they quietly live their lives, pay their taxes, and contribute to others in mostly unseen ways. I am thankful that I got to know Karen and was able to share her story with others. I am also, for the first time, considering a convertible for my next car, after hearing that driving a convertible is one of the most important lessons she has ever learned!



CHAPTER 2: *Jesse, The Rebel*

“Work when I have to, quit when I can. I'm one of God's chosen, I'm a motorcycle man.”

BACKGROUND

I first met Jesse in high school, but lost touch with him when he dropped out of school my junior year.

He began to show up at our high school reunions a while back, and clearly, he was a different cat. He usually rode in on a motorcycle, and dressed in full biker gear. It seemed that just about everyone at the reunion remembered Jesse, as someone who made an impression with them at some point during their lives.

Through the years, all I knew about Jesse, just from second-hand information, was that he had a tough up-bringing, losing his mother at an early age. I had heard that he had gotten into legal trouble. Other than that, he was a bit of a mystery.

When I posted on our high school alumni site that I was beginning a book about Boomers and that I was looking for volunteers to perhaps be in the book, Jesse reached out to me. Our emails back and forth took a long time to develop, but finally he asked to get my questionnaire. After months, I received four scanned documents, and it turns out that Jesse completed over 30 pages of hand-written information! He clearly spent weeks if not months contemplating how to best answer my questions. I discovered he was a very talented writer, which I had heard about back in high school.

After devouring his responses and stories, I asked for a personal meeting for me to interview him so I could fill in a few blanks in his story line. Again, he seemed cautious, asking if he could understand more about how his story might be developed. I sent him a few examples of other chapters, and weeks went by. Finally, he agreed to meet for lunch at a local hangout of his. As I sat there waiting, a bartender asked me if I was Dan, and that Jesse wanted to talk to me on the phone. It turns out his motorcycle had broken down a few miles away, and he asked me if I would pick him up? After finding him

and bringing him back to lunch, we had a great discussion, one I will always remember. His story is one of a tough upbringing, rebellion, tragedy, transitions, and pride.

EARLY LIFE

Jesse was born an only child in 1957, and lived in Justus, Ohio. His father was much older than his mother, marrying her when he was 41 and she being in her early 20's, suffering from epilepsy. He lost his mother at Christmas, when he was only two years old, in 1959. His father had a fulltime job working in the steel mill, and decided he could not find a way to raise Jesse himself, so Jesse was placed in a series of foster homes until his father contacted an elderly lady who had actually spent time raising Jesse's father. Jesse moved to live with her in Beckley, West Virginia. His father would come to visit occasionally. After several years, she passed away when he was only 10 years old. After that, Jesse lived with his father again, although he had to be very independent as his father was working. "I had to get myself up for school and later on jobs, because nobody else would have been there to do that. I don't have much sympathy for those who cannot 'get started' in the morning."

Once Jesse hit puberty, his relationship with his father deteriorated. "The war started then because his little boy was becoming a young man enamored with the hippies and later, the Yippies and Abbie Hoffman. Dad was thoroughly disgusted. Our relationship never really recovered. I once wore a hippie shirt with flowers on it, which convinced Dad I was a homosexual."

The first job Jesse recalls having was cleaning out a horse stall for a neighbor and selling seeds from a seed company, which paid workers via merchandise rewards. "Flipping through the catalog, I spied a T-shirt with the Confederate battle flag, and I lost my mind. I am wearing it in my sixth-grade class photo." At age 14, Jesse got a job cleaning and mopping floors after hours at a bar in a nearby town. He would pour a shot of liquor from each bottle into his own bottle, to be enjoyed with other youths who would camp out and smoke cigars. "But that was short-lived."

Jesse always had a love of history during his formative years, and he recalls studying the American Indian philosophies of life, and how 'saving' was not a priority for them. About that same time, he encountered Matthew 6:25-35, which taught him that God would provide the important things of life (food, clothing, etc.) provided you prioritize your relationship with God. So, for

Jesse, jobs and saving money and acquiring things (houses, cars, etc.) were never a priority, a philosophy that he stuck with throughout most of his life. “God will provide.”

Growing up, his father did send him to church with some neighbors and friends living near them. “We would go to the steelworkers hall in Massillon, some would rent the hall, and they would try to have their own church service. They didn’t have a preacher, so they would take turns preaching as they were called. That is where I learned about religion.” So, what did Jesse take away from that religious training? “I was very confused and struggled with the teaching. Here we have, supposedly, the perfect being, God. Yet the Bible indicates that he is so vindictive! It was taught that there is only one way to get to heaven, and that is to accept Christ as your savior, and anything else, you burn in hell for eternity. Why? Eternity is a long-time vs. the short time we are on here the earth. Shouldn’t there be other options to earning your way into heaven?”

When he was 16, and got his driver’s license, he began working at a restaurant on the late shift, and borrowed his dad’s ‘souped-up’ car to drive to work. In his words, the car was ‘too much of a car for a 16-year-old!’ On his way home, someone pulled up beside him revving his engine, and before he knew it, he was drag-racing someone on the main street in Massillon. Soon, he saw police lights coming from behind. It crossed his mind that his dad had stated that if Jesse ever got a ticket, he would never drive again, so Jesse decided he was going to try to get away. At a high rate of speed, the car came upon a curve at an intersection, and Jesse lost control of the car, and hit a telephone pole. “All of a sudden, I am laying in the rear seat looking out the rear window, in a lot of pain.” He had dislocated his hip, which would have an effect later in life when he enlisted.

“That same night, a friend’s sister was hit by a car, and since my accident was reported in the local newspaper, everyone in town assumed I had been the one who hit her.”

Also at age 16, Jesse spent a semester in Columbus, and was able to attend a Yippie meeting. “I read their book ‘Steal the Book’ (which I did!) and reached some seriously warped conclusions. You might say Abbie Hoffman ruined my life. But I will give the Yippies credit, they were trying to correct what was wrong with the country, not destroy it as some of the protesters are trying to do today.”

Soon after, Jesse learned that his father was planning to retire, and he realized that this would mean that he would be seeing his father a lot more at home. Given that they did not get along at all during this time, this was one of the causes of Jesse deciding to drop out of high school and enlist. His father suggested that Jesse at least finish his junior year first, but he did not. “I remember that I was getting frustrated at everyone telling me what to do, from my father, my teachers, etc. I don’t recall exactly the interchange that day in the high school office, but I recall yelling ‘No I am not!’ and I threw all my books into the trash can and walked out, and set off to begin my life of high adventure.”

EXIT HIGH SCHOOL AND ENTER THE MILITARY

When Jesse enlisted, at age 17, he wanted to go into the 82nd airborne division, but was rejected due his prior hip separation. “I was devastated that I did not get into what I wanted, I sat in the Cleveland recruiting office and cried. I told the recruiter I didn’t care where I went, so, with all the travel and educational opportunities the military offers, I went to Oklahoma and was trained to shoot cannons. Being only 17 and being allowed to drink in bars, I slept through most of the Advanced Individual Training.”

“One night, my sergeant, his wife, me, and my date (who ended up being the aunt of my children), all went to a concert to see Grand Funk Railroad. We all did acid, and the sergeant’s wife and I freaked out so badly that we had to leave the concert. On the way home, I saw a spiral moving in and out, and heard, or felt, the message of ‘Be. Just Be.’ I have no idea what it meant, but I was overcome with a sense of peace and confidence. Sort of like a message of ‘whether you realize it or not, the universe is unfolding as it should’.”

Jesse had been on active duty for nine months, when he was arrested for armed robbery. He was found guilty and on his 18th birthday, was sentenced to five years in prison, the minimum sentence in Oklahoma for that offense. “It was the best birthday present I ever received. In many ways, I was so blessed. I had discharged a weapon during the robbery, and admitted to a string of other offenses, yet received the minimum sentence.”

While in prison, he got to know a very large black man who was a lifer, who he watched bench press 400 pounds repeatedly. He told Jesse that he had initially dispatched his hippie minions to invite him over to get high with the evilest of intents, but after talking to him a bit, he relented and thought ‘I can’t hurt this kid.’ “In my innocence, I didn’t realize that everyone thought

he was having sex with me because he wouldn't tolerate people speaking about it in his presence. One guy called me 'a dumpling', and his response was 'he's not a dumplin', he's a man.' 'I thought maybe he was your dumplin', and the lifer repeated 'he's no one's dumplin', he's a man.'"

"Without this guy looking out for me, I might have been raped, and I am sure I would have gotten revenge and killed someone, ending up serving the rest of my life in prison."

After serving 11 months of a five-year sentence, Jesse was granted parole.

Jesse looks back and talks about the miracles that occurred during that time and how he developed a faith in God. "First, my sentence was a miracle, then doing less than 20% of the sentence was a miracle, and having a protector in prison was a miracle. God is good."

Upon returning from the prison and military service, Jesse was struck by the comments of 'Thanks for your service' that arose from the national shame of how Vietnam veterans were treated. "My reply was usually 'I didn't do much'. I was a hybrid of Beetle Bailey and Sad Sack, but overall, the time in the service was a good experience."

BACK TO SCHOOL, ON TO HIS CAREER

He then returned to finish high school, graduating in 1977. "It was one of the proudest days of my life. I had the highest GPA in my academic career, and had worked a fulltime job while finishing. Others told me I could not graduate while working, but I did it."

A few months before graduation, Jesse found a job at a manufacturing company. "I was working about 50 hours per week, plus attending classes, and only sleeping in bed less than an hour per night. I was so tired, I slept through a Led Zeppelin concert!"

While working, during a lunch break outside near the road, Jesse made a large cardboard sign that said 'On Strike', and another which said 'If our demands are not met in 48 hours, we will kill the hostages'. "They had NO sense of humor there. The supervisor told me that I worked like a horse, and if I ever got the kid out of me, I would make a hell of a man. I got fired in April of 1977."

He quickly landed another construction job just after graduation.

Shortly thereafter his father died at age 59. “When he died, I thought to myself, ‘well, the war is over.’ Dad never talked about his early life or childhood. He was a blue-collar Democrat with conservative views. But he was plagued by drinking. I knew he was in the service, and had injured his back, then worked most of his life in the steel mill. Being an older father when I was born, maybe he just didn’t have much patience to listen to me. But I did swear growing up that I was going to be a better father than he was to me. I knew he loved me, but I was disgusted at how he showed, or didn’t show it. I am glad that I had visited him at the nursing home a few days before he passed. I will say that Dad’s belief in a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work gradually became a firmly held belief of my own.”

Jesse’s father had talked to him earlier that he wanted to leave him the house he owned, or to build him a house on some property that he owned in West Virginia. “I told him I didn’t want any of that.” So, his father sold his house to someone else but set it up so that Jesse inherited a land contract on the house, and as long as he made rent payments, eventually the house would be his. But Jesse did not want anything that his father wanted to leave him. “What I wouldn’t give to have that house now!”

“I did inherit an annuity, and just after Dad’s death, I had just enough from the first payment to afford to go to a local dealer to buy a GL1100 motorcycle. After joining a few local motorcycle clubs, I sought out a more substantial ‘tribal’ group, and shortly thereafter I joined a large, renowned motorcycle club. To me, it was the major leagues of motorcycle gangs.”

Jesse recalls that the reason he was accepted was that so many members had gone to jail, that they needed to rebuild and recruit new members. But he realized their rules were not to his liking. “The national president told me, ‘You smile too much, that will get you in trouble. Don’t talk to the public, they could be agents from the FBI.’” Jesse realized that some women loved bikers, but this club did not want women around the clubhouse until you knew them for at least a year. “What fun was that? So, I had to figure out a way to quit. As it turned out, it was quite simple. I decided to be a man and go talk to someone in the mother club, sort of a board member, and told him that my heart was no longer in it. Too many men get squeamish and run away and hide.”

At about this time, he was following the teachings of Abbie Hoffman, a 1970’s and 1980’s socialist leader who wanted to ‘change the country for the

better'. Jesse thought that this revolution had patriotic origins, one that did not strive to destroy the country, but rather to improve it.

At age 21, he was laid off from his job, and discovered the benefits of unemployment. He earned \$111 per week 'to ride my motorcycle and chase women'. Jesse recalls a personal slogan he developed - "Work when I have to, quit when I can, I'm one of God's chosen, I'm a motorcycle man."

At that time, per advice from Abbie Hoffman, Jesse signed up for as many public assistance programs as possible. "When I signed up, they asked me if I might want to register for classes to become a secretary." Soon Jesse found himself a member of a motorcycle gang studying to be a legal secretary. That led to him eventually earning an associate degree in paralegal studies. "I always enjoyed learning, and being back in the classroom was great. The highlight of that time was that I learned shorthand, and I used it to fulfill our teacher's homework assignment of 'write me a message in shorthand'. My message was 'Would you like to get naked with me?' I got an A but not laid, alas. She did tell me that the thought crossed her mind but it would be inappropriate."

This began a period where he dated various women, and found that he could have a place to stay with his then-current girlfriend. "That first summer set-up my tactical MO for the next several years; work long enough to draw unemployment, find a woman to lay up with during the winter months of unemployment in case it ran out, go back to work, ditch the woman, and repeat."

I digress from the sequence of Jesse's story here, only to quote his *current* view of government programs... "We need FAR fewer government programs. Forty years ago, I was a hale and hearty young man who was able to get a disgustingly uneven handout compared to my ability to work. You know it hasn't tightened up in the intervening decades!"

At one point, Jesse became a libertarian politically. "Libertarians take a hard look at all taxes and think a lot about them. I learned an interesting viewpoint from this experience. For example, we all think that if we buy a home, we own it, it is ours. But if they can take it away from you if you don't pay property taxes, then do you really own your own home? My goal was always to *not* own things, both out of the belief that 'God will provide' but also due to the belief that you don't really own anything given our tax system. But here I am married to someone who owns rental properties!" Why has he

always shied away from striving to own things such as a home? “I see so many people work so hard and end up with nothing.”

FAMILY LIFE

Jesse was married three times in his life, the first being Diane, who he started dating in high school. “Her mother did not like me, and she finally called the sheriff telling him that her daughter ran away from home and was over at my place. The next thing I knew, the sheriff pulls up to me and asks if I knew where Diane was at. She ended up in jail, and I asked if she could get out of jail if I married her. They said yes!” Even after a divorce, Jesse appreciates that Diane was always supportive of him.

In May of 1986, at age 29, Jesse was riding his motorcycle near his hometown and saw a young lady, Judy, out in front of her house. She was the younger sister of a girl he had dated earlier. He came to learn she was only 16, and Jesse was already dating Wendy, someone that he ‘could have fallen for’. After getting to know Judy, “Damn, if she didn’t upset the apple cart!”. In May of 1988, they were married and had their first child. They had two more children over the next five years. “Under my tutelage, she turned into the wife of my dreams. She was the most attentive mother ever, and supported me in all my decisions.”

That same year, when Jesse decided to join the motorcycle club, he told Judy about his plans. “She just said ‘OK’”. As related earlier, he eventually left the motorcycle club after a few years.

After this, Jesse cut his hair and began selling life insurance. Again, Judy said ‘OK’. “There was a fraternal organization I joined, and they asked you to sell others into membership, which included a small insurance policy. Then they asked me to go to a class to learn how to sell insurance. Once I got into it, I realized it was not for me either. I did this for about a year. Judy was pregnant and working, and I was trying to transition into becoming a white-collar guy, but that didn’t work. So, the union was hiring, and I went to work at a manufacturing company in Orrville, Ohio.”

In 1998, Judy’s sister, who was married, left her husband for a guy who asked if he could stay with Judy’s sister and her husband for a while, and eventually, the husband was out and this guy was in. Later, Judy’s sister kicked this guy out of the house, and as it turned out, this guy and Judy were classmates in high school. Since he was homeless, Judy asked Jesse if it

would be OK if this man came to live with them for a time. Jesse agreed, but unknown to him, while he was at work, the guy was plying Judy with drugs, and she became hooked. Judy then had a breakdown, and near the end told Jesse; “I am lost and not sure I can find my way back.”

“And then she was gone, and I was alone again, this time with three children. It was absolutely the worst time in my life. To this day, I am still not right. I cannot listen to ‘Ti Amo’ or ‘Stand by Me’. I sure miss ‘My Rock’. I contemplated suicide to escape the pain, but realized that my kids would be left alone, and the thought of that set me straight. I just had to eat the pain. The only good thing that came out of this was sobriety, as I was concerned that I would lose my kids if I became an alcoholic or hooked on drugs.”

“I always meant to get the kids raised and then go all medieval on him, but then I met Sonja, so I guess he gets a pass from TWO husbands and fathers.”

Jesse says that during that time, he lost his faith in God, thinking that a just God would never create all the terrible things in his life at that time. “But I came to realize that it was just Karma. Remember all those women I lived with and used? Many of them really cared for me and I hurt them. I figured it was God’s way of telling me that I was an ass.”

Having three younger children to raise, and having to work, he had to give up everything outside of job and caring for his kids. And his children had to grow up fast. In his words, the eldest, Sky, ‘Had to give up everything except school and family.’

“It is a minor miracle that my kids turned out so well, given all my time away from them, having to work. Our relationship is wonderful, compared to the relationship between my dad and me.” Jesse fondly calls them ‘my little bastards’, and takes pride in his parenting. “I spanked each child only once each, and that was when they darted across the street at a young age. They would cry that Daddy had spanked them, and I would cry telling them what my life would be like if they were killed under the wheels of an automobile.”

Jesse is adamant that those parents who let nannies and sitters raise their children have it all wrong. “There is nothing as valuable as children who know they are loved and who are guided and raised by parents who are present for them. Some parents decide that both spouses should work, but my view is that they don’t have to do this to survive, but they do it for better ‘things’. Sure, lots of money is good, but a stable loving relationship between parents and children can’t be bought.”

Jesse was a blue-collar worker most of his life, with a focus on masonry, working for masonry contractors in union construction projects. “It took a while, though, for me to abandon my freewheeling days. My foreman one day told me ‘I just can’t count on you’. It’s hard to believe how hard that hit me. Unless I was sick, I never missed another day for the next twenty years.”

“I dated a lot of strange women while the kids were growing up, from the affluent woman who was ‘out slumming’, to another whose problems were deeper and broader than I realized, she ended up doing 18 months in prison for stalking me. Another who thought she would make some Christmas money by running guns to Mexico, but who got nailed at the border with three hundred pounds of pot. Oh, and the 18-year-old, when I was 52, who got me over the fascination with younger women!”

Jesse met Sonja in 2011, who grew up in the area. “Sonja’s husband Dean was one of my favorite people from the bars. In fact, I had performed their wedding ceremony in 1994. Dean took a long time to die from his cancer and I ‘re-met’ her at his funeral.”

Sonja was raised Catholic, and Jesse claims that he knows more about Catholicism than she does. He observes that they are a good match, with Sonja being a bit of a ‘control freak’ whereas Jesse’s temperament is more about taking the path of least resistance. “Maybe her style of looking out for me comes from me not having as much control or concern about things.” As much as Jesse avoided gathering assets during life, Sonja owns and manages multiple rental properties. “When we met, it was like we had spent our whole life together in another life. A perfect match. She is very devoted, and I trust her completely. I know she would give her life for me if she had to.” They have now been married for ten years.

POLLING FOR OPINIONS

Jesse seems to have made an amazing transition politically. At first, he seemed to be very liberal, some might say extreme. Today, some would see him as a very right-wing conservative.

How does he explain that transition?

Was it Churchill who said ‘If you are not a liberal when you are young, you have no heart, and if you are not a conservative when you are old you, you have no brain?’” (It seems that there is a dispute as the origin of this saying,

some would suggest a Frenchman in the 1800's was the first to say something such as this)

I also learned that you have to work for what you get, and after a few jobs, I did apply myself to the job at hand.

Jesse seems very wise, logical, and well-read. How did he get to this point?

I think it is one of God's cruel jokes. Finally, through all the life lessons, you have this experience and wisdom, but now you cannot do much with the wisdom due to old age! I do think that I learned a lot by listening to others. I have always believed that you should let people talk, no matter what you think about them. All people deserve to be listened to and heard, because everyone has valid opinions and ideas. 'Listen to others, even if dull and ignorant. They too have their story.' – Desiderata

How did music affect you growing up?

My favorite band was Black Sabbath – the originators of heavy metal. Do you know where the term heavy metal came from? Per their bassist, when they launched their first album, critics said this was not music, it sounded more like heavy metal grinding together! I saw them in concert many times. There was not much of a stage show, as Ozzie was not much of a dancer. I hated disco, though I have mellowed toward it. I believe the Beatles to be the most overrated band in history, although I am surprised how much I generally enjoy covers of their work. I also always liked Motown.

Some say that Boomers did, and do, consume too much alcohol. Did you fit into that reputation?

I drank entirely too much in my life but I did learn that alcoholism is both very real and a very different thing from being a drunk. One of my little quips is 'they had me convinced I was an alcoholic, come to find out I was just a drunk.' At one point I realized I was drinking a half gallon of whiskey a week. Finally, it stopped being fun and I drink only 2-3 drinks in that time span now. I attended enough alcohol counseling and AA meetings to finally enlighten me to my true standing. I asked a counselor once 'What do you suppose is wrong with me, man?' He replied instantly 'You have an anti-social personality disorder.'

What was unbeknownst to me at that time was that I was, and am currently, an Omega personality type. It explains a lot about me.

Was there a time in your life that you felt you were treated very unfairly?

Besides my father and the way he was, when I went to prison for a first offense, I was thrown in with hardened criminals with multiple offenses. Before being released, I was approached by some guy asking me if I was interested in an armored car heist where they were going to have to kill a guard! They should not mix first time offenders with multiple offenders, but that is a topic for prison reform.

How might you explain the popularity of socialism in the country today? If it is being pushed, what is the logic for some pushing this on our country and youth?

I have thought a lot about this. I think it is a global push. If socialism spreads into the U.S. and into other parts of the world, you in effect are reducing most of the population to serfdom. Today, the wealth is distributed in a certain way, but under socialism, more wealth moves to those at the top than is the case today. Look at the socialist countries in Europe. They have all these migrants flooding in, just like here. Does anyone care about the quality of life for the existing citizens, the ones who worked so hard to make their countries as successful as they are?

Do you think future generations will be better off or worse off than the Boomer generation?

I think future generations are going to be consigned to a worldwide hellscape. I might just be a cantankerous crazy old man, but I've always been a political junkie and I see very little in current events to dissuade me from this belief. Just one example of what will drive future doom is the simultaneous movements to rid American society of guns, and to dismantle law enforcement. Madness. The whole globalism 'one world government' will bring a return to the Middle Ages with really only two classes, wealthy and poor. The divisions among people that the media pushes, BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of color) vs. white, vaccinated vs unvaccinated, men competing in women's sports.....compared to the Greatest Generation when everyone pulled together for the common good and how that turned out. Then look at what we have today. As interesting as it all is, I am glad I'll not be here to witness what they are going to do to our world.

Do you think that another Great Depression is possible?

I absolutely believe it is coming and perhaps imminent. In 2022, I have never seen a more dysfunctional government remarkable at all levels for sheer incompetence. People are appointed to positions of immense power with minimal concern for actual ability but feverish attention to skin color or what's between their legs. In some cases, what they pretend is between their legs. It's shameful.

What historical events affected you?

Well, 9-11 was a big deal. I have listened to others who believe that the U.S. government was behind this whole plan. The goal was to force us to go to war in Iraq and to get oil. I watched something where a videographer went into the basement of one of the twin towers, and it showed that the girders were sheared off, not melted as you might expect. It was as if someone had done something to cause the buildings to fall, knowing that the plane attacks were coming.

What about technology today and the internet, social media, etc.?

One thing I think is arguable is that some people don't have anything to say, but the internet enables them to reach out to the entire world, too often to spread nonsense which is then picked up and echoed by others.

What about the 'woke movement' and LBGTO and the schools getting involved in educating youth about this?

My oldest daughter is very in tune with the homosexual community. Her daughter at 12 years old said she did not like boys, and my daughter concluded she was a lesbian. But this passed. Her daughter has a boyfriend now!

Many say that Boomers have too much 'stuff' and possessions. What about you?

Again, I never strived to own things. But we do have a lot of junk. You never know when you might need it! I do have a 1968 Rambler, a cool little car, but it just sits there. We have 2 licensed trucks, a car and van, and six licensed and insured motorcycles. Like all Americans, we are drowning in 'stuff'. Both the missus and I swear we need to divest, but we can't seem to do so. I guess I will let my kids deal with all this junk when we are gone.

How important is education today versus when you were growing up?

Education is important and never ending. Formal education, however, with its focus on indoctrination is as evil as Satan himself. Put yourself scores, nay, hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt, learning how to hate your country. I would cite myself as an example. I opted for a blue-collar career and the freedom it offered, and ended up happy and loving the country which provided me the opportunities that I passed on.

How about health insurance, is it a good value for you and does it cover what you need?

We have good insurance through the union, but it costs \$700 per month for both of us, so it ought to be good. I cannot think of a time the health industry let me down.

What about social security and the upcoming problem of funding given so many beneficiaries, namely Boomers?

I was pleasantly surprised when social security was still available when I qualified three years ago. I paid off and on since I was 17, but never expected I would reach 62 or get any money when I did. I think in order to save social security, we should return it to its original purpose, to serve as a safety net for the aged and infirmed. I think it is an abomination that the wealthy who want for naught draw from it. Most Americans do not begrudge the poor, and don't object to paying into a fund for the indigent.

What do you think of the media today versus when you were young?

The Fourth Estate is a sacred calling. Just as the military protects us from foreign assault, so does the press have an honorable calling to protect us from governmental outrage. Tragically, journalism is basically dead in this country. Every news story and every news show are written or spoken to advance one political viewpoint or another. I love playing with words, and it is so easy to recognize the malfeasance of the charlatans. I don't know what the answer is, but by sacrificing their integrity on the altar of partisan politics, they've endangered the very people they are supposed to be protecting. What happens if a REAL virus is loosened on our country which would kill much more than 1% of the population? I'm certainly not going to heed the warnings of specific broadcasters, as they have proven themselves liars.

What about race and gender equality today versus when you were growing up?

Racism was all but dead in this country until the democrat party realized that it could be used to political advantage, and it's been 'Katie Bar the Door' ever since. They changed the definition of racism to exclude BIPOCs, as only white people can be racist now. The media is right in the middle of it, making up stories of white supremacy in police ranks when some hood reaches for a gun and gets shot, even if the cop was black. So, I would say things were pretty good until the media started to use this as a tool to divide the working class.

Black Lives Matter set back race relations probably as much as the KKK back in the 1920's. We can only imagine how blacks felt about the Klan, but you only need to ask working class white people how they feel about being blamed for all the past misdeeds of past generations, or being vilified by the government or media as vile racists from birth. Not one dares protest out of fear of public crucifixion, but the hardening of hearts and attitudes is there nonetheless. The wounds of the past were nearly healed when some took to the streets burning, because they could, and the pundits excused their thievery as the fault of systemic racism with nary a concern for the victims. The vice-president of the U.S. urged all to contribute to funds for the bail of the rioters!

What about the borders? Should we allow more immigrants in or tighten the security of our borders?

Our ancestors, you know, the white colonizing supremacists, worked to establish a country for their descendants. Americans have it wonderfully cushy here, full employment, accessible medical care, plenty of food. So why should we have all that and the rest of the world, not? Let's open our borders and welcome our international brothers and sisters in. So, what happens to that cushy lifestyle that our forefathers worked to establish? What happens to my union laborer job when my company hires immigrants for less than they paid me? I think U.S. immigration should be significantly restricted, and I support a border wall and whatever security is required to maintain its integrity. There should be a pathway to citizenship for those already here, it would be impossible to locate all of them now. Pretty much the same pathway as legal immigrants. There are thousands pouring across our southern border, while the White House prattles on about the integrity of the Ukraine border. WHAT?

How did you deal with Covid-19?

The ‘Yellow Peril’ wreaked havoc on friendships. The missus and I agreed to give it one year and see what developed. We have landed in diametrically opposed conclusions. She’s absolutely terrified of it, and I am not. I reached my conclusion well before the year was up, in the summer of ‘Burn, Loot, and Murder’. Someone recorded a protest rolling by a hospital, from within the hospital. There were people in scrubs, who admittedly could have been kitchen or housekeeping employees, but I assumed them to be front-line workers, battling the equivalent of the bubonic plague. Anyway, the hospital workers were out front of the hospital applauding all the unmasked protesters marching by. Now, it’s either a deadly disease or it’s not. If the people who deal with it on a daily basis didn’t see any danger in thousands of people screaming in each other’s faces, then neither do I. But my wife doesn’t want to risk socializing as we used to.

In looking back over your life, how do you feel about it and what you accomplished?

It is not like I have a series of monumental accomplishments to relate. Overall, I’d say my greatest success was that I lived life on my terms and now, much nearer to the end than the beginning, I have few regrets and most importantly, I feel I’m happy. My primary feeling is gratitude. As I told my youngest a few years ago, ‘I’m ready to die right now. I don’t WANT to, you understand, but it’s been such a very good life, I don’t have any right to expect more of it.’ I’ll damn sure take all I can get, though. God has been exceptionally good to me. Also, I pretty much ooze positive energy, a knack I’ve passed on to my kids. Maybe a small thing, but I believe it’s still important. I ceaselessly try to brighten people’s day whether with a smile, kind word, or compliment. I take pride in my small role as an ambassador of goodwill and the knowledge that after I’m gone, it will live on three-fold.

What is his greatest source of pride?

What I am most proud of is how my kids turned out. They had a hard row to hoe, raised by a single hillbilly biker dad, but they were such great kids that no matter how hard it seemed at the time, in hindsight, I miss it. They were hard but good times.

What will others say about him after he is gone?

I am pretty sure there will be some acknowledgement of my parenting skills and some are sure to mention ‘he was one ridin’ sonofabitch’. Maybe ‘such a nice guy’ or ‘good man’, which really, is all anyone can hope for.

How about the second amendment and guns?

Any thinking person who looks at what our government is doing today should support the second amendment. Any major city run by Democrats is decriminalizing crime and eviscerating law enforcement, leaving the citizenry to protect itself the best it can. All while striving to impose gun control on the people being victimized by their ludicrously inept policies. How’s that stupid saying go? ‘If you shoot someone for stealing your stuff, you value your stuff more than someone’s life.’ I love the rejoinder – ‘If you steal my stuff, you value my stuff more than you value your life!’

What about green initiatives?

Certainly, I think carbon emissions should be kept as low as possible without throwing thousands out of work or having to burn furniture to stay warm. I don’t think China or any of the developing nations take it seriously at all. I don’t think any of the reigning activists do either or they would have their conferences on Zoom meetings instead of flying halfway across the world. Hypocrites all of them.

Are taxes too high or too low?

Certainly, we are taxed far too much. I suppose the wealthy who can afford tax accountants can afford to keep proportionately more of their earnings, but good for them. I understand the need to have taxes to fund the military, but beyond that, my time with the Libertarian party kicks in with the simple axiom ‘taxation is theft’. Just look at the American Dream, owning your own house, being king of your castle. But just miss a few payments on property tax, and you will find out who the REAL king is!

How about politician pay levels and term limits? Should they be able to accept speaking fees and book fees while in office?

Political service on any level should be a privilege and an honor, not a career of self-enrichment. A pension for a one-term congressman is ridiculous, and another reason why our taxes are so high. Term limits should have been written into the constitution, since the existing politicians will not pass

legislation against their own interests. We're just stuck with the same Senate and House leaders until the collapse of the Republic. No politician should be able to profit from anything related to their office. Under my system of no pension for a few months of service, they would be free to make all the money they wanted once they left office. On a scale of 1-10, I would rate them a '1', and only because there are a few who I greatly respect. They are close to being in negative numbers.

How about government programs? Do we need more of them or fewer? What about enforcement for the programs we have?

As I said before, we need far fewer programs. As far as enforcing the rules of these programs to pursue those who are cheating or abusing the programs, I would force all recipients of these programs to work in some fashion. Community service is a joke, but at least it is something. If you can draw a check for doing NOTHING then why would anyone do ANYTHING? If people had to work, they might say 'well, hell, if I have to work, I may as well get a job.' And force the deadbeats on the dole to help screen those applying for benefits.

How serious is the national debt?

What is the national debt? \$30 trillion? I don't know what a trillion is, but I do know that you cannot keep writing checks when there is no money in their account, so just let the politicians keep driving up their personal fortunes and driving down our country until the inevitable happens.

Why are our politicians so divided today?

Back in the day, there was a saying about 'the loyal opposition', where each party had its own ideas how to improve the country. There no longer is a loyal opposition. I wondered what happened to the Hippies and Yippies and similar groups. Now it is obvious that they entered politics, education, and academia. We now have politicians bemoaning 'systemic racism', and academia publishing nonsense about Caucasian babies being racists and school boards promoting genderless bathrooms. There is no loyal opposition because the opposition is not loyal, they hate America and seeks only its destruction.

How would you describe yourself politically?

Through my life I've run the gamut from anarchist to libertarian to blue-collar socialist to whatever I am now. Pretty conservative, I guess, although I still cringe when I hear conservatives blasting the relaxation of cannabis laws – it's a plant, dude! Throughout history, there have been rich people and poor people. The difference in the time that we live is that the poor people are fat! All the pissin' and moanin' about poverty and hunger, look at the people going to the food banks. There's never been a better time and place to be alive if you are dirt poor. Sure, I would have liked to have more money when I was raising the kids, but I didn't so I had to settle for the love of my family. Poor me!

How about his relationship with friends today?

I once presented my kids with a wall plaque quoting the film 'Wyatt Earp' – 'Blood is all that matters. All the rest are just strangers.' I've always had a great many of what I call 'small F' friends. I like everybody and if we're friendly to one another, you're my friend. CLOSE friends, the ones who would understand your life story, are very few. A man's struggles should be borne by him.

What about his philosophy of life?

The whole point of my life was to avoid challenges. I know my attitude is pretty much universally frowned upon, but the path of least resistance has always been my preferred route. The challenge of living without 'my rock' and overnight going from the distant father to being the Mom AND Dad was plenty enough challenge for me, thanks.

What are some of the most important lessons you have learned in life?

A few of my dad's axioms I have never forgotten are:

1. The best place to find a helping hand is at the end of your arm.
2. A poor man HAS to keep his word. It's the only thing of value he has.

I would also say that I remember how my freshman English teacher brought in a recording of 'Desiderata', and it changed my life. Not then of course, but I never forgot it and when I was older, I looked it up again and was re-amazed at the timeless truths is contained. I would also encourage our youth to go primitive for a year. To go live in the woods, with no electricity, and learn to

grow your own food. Basically, to learn basic survival skills, because we just don't know how bad it might get in this country.

Did Boomers leave this country in better shape than when they were young?

Boomers, in hindsight, didn't position things too well. But who could have anticipated the collapse of journalism or the depths of corruption in politics and the courts?

What about the younger generations and their reported affection for socialism over capitalism?

I am not vehemently anti-socialist as far as workers go. Much of the progress made in the past decades was due to the struggles of the working class to improve or establish some social programs. But what is being discussed today is an entirely different animal. Most labor leaders today recognize that we NEED successful profitable businesses to provide good jobs. What's passing for socialism today is a bunch of spoiled brats who never worked a day in their lives, and don't intend to. They demand that those who did work and profit from that work, be stripped of their wealth, and that they keep getting free stuff. What these fools are advocating today is more like Soviet or Chinese control of everything. Remember where that took the Soviet Union.

If he was on his death bed, and someone from the younger generation was there, what would he tell them about the meaning of life?

Again, I would refer them to 'Desiderata', it covers every situation you're ever going to encounter and while it doesn't give you any answers, it does lend guidance on how to conduct yourself when faced with life's challenges.

SUMMARY

In reviewing Jesse's life, and especially his current thoughts about what is going on in the world today, I find it an amazing story. He is definitely NOT a typical Boomer.

I had to challenge myself to try to imagine what would have happened to my self-image had I lost a mother at age 2, been given to foster care during key years of learning and development, had my caretaker die when I was only 10 years old, then lived with a single parent who was not at home all that much due to working, and one that did not care to listen to what was going on in

my life. Then I had to imagine how I would have developed given the lack of direct parental guidance, replaced by readings and popular movements at that time such as Abbie Hoffman. Perhaps Jesse's rebellious spirit in those early years was fueled by a subconscious feeling of 'life has not been fair to me'.

Then life hit him with more tough times *after* a very difficult childhood. How could you expect anyone to emerge as well-adjusted after spending a year in prison with some career criminals, then losing your 'rock', your ideal partner



spouse, to drugs? How would any of us cope with having to raise three young children alone without help from a partner? But well-adjusted, at least to me, is what Jesse is, and more.

In preparing for my interview with Jesse, I had virtually memorized his 30 pages of hand-written notes, and the first thing I said to him was 'Dude, you ought to be so proud of how you have done in life given so many things going against you!'

Here is a guy who has learned so many of life's lessons the hard way. He has transmogrified himself over and over throughout his life, as he stumbled upon new philosophies and new life lessons as

he went along. Above all, in his words, he listened to everyone he talked to, because 'everyone has something to say and deserves to be heard'. All that listening translated into deep thought, and that deep thought has resulted in a man who strikes me as wise beyond his 65 years!

I cannot find any fault in his logic, given his assumptions, what he has observed, and what he has read. In writing his story, I found myself nodding in agreement at his observations most times, and cringing a bit because we have all become so accustomed to reading and hearing politically correct language. His thoughts and notes were refreshing to say the least, given what comes out of our TV shows and media today, and what comes out of most discussions, out of fear of being labelled in some way due to speaking the real truth.

Daniel Muller

I am so fortunate that at this later stage of life, I got to know Jesse a bit better, and can appreciate his story, his life, and the personality that is him. Had I not undertaken writing this book, I would have missed out on a real treat for me, and missed out on the opportunity to re-think how I see the world. I hope in some small way, I have become his 'small F friend'. I hope you can appreciate him too.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

(www.danielmullerauthor.com)

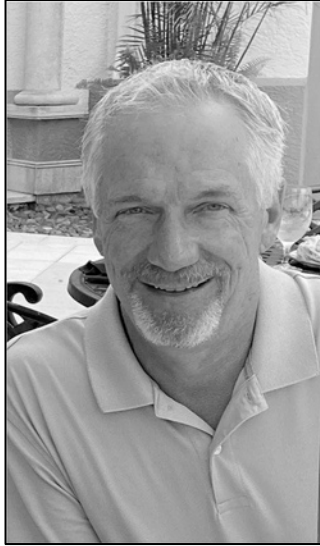
Daniel Muller grew up in a blue-collar small town in Ohio. Athletic and academic success in high school paved the way for a small scholarship to a state university, where he became the first in his family to attend college. He lettered four years on the varsity golf team, and succeeded academically as well, as he graduated Summa Cum Laude in his undergraduate and graduate programs.

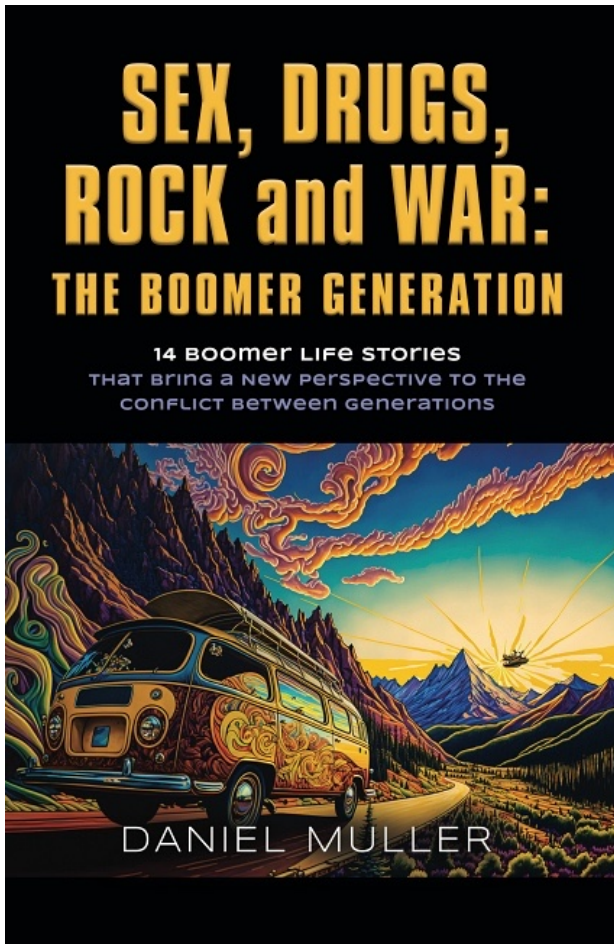
He spent most of his career in the business world, with various responsibilities taken on during a thirty-five-year career. He ended his career as a Senior Vice-President / Chief Information Officer of a Fortune 500 company, and also held other senior roles such as leading corporate strategic planning as a senior vice-president, and becoming president of a major division. He retired from his fulltime executive role in 2014.

Muller is now an author, and president of his own consulting company, DEM Consulting, LLC. He wrote and published his first book in 2019, entitled “CHANGING COLLARS: Lessons in Transitioning from Blue-Collar Roots to White-Collar Success”. His second book, entitled “SEX, DRUGS, ROCK and WAR: The Boomer Generation” was written in an attempt to capture the life stories of various Baby Boomers, and to explore the sources of friction between Baby Boomers and Generations X, Y, and Z.

He currently lives near his early hometown in Northeast Ohio. He has been recognized via various state and local awards, including being named CIO of the Year in Northeast Ohio, as well as being inducted into his high school Hall of Honor in 2017. He continues to serve as a guest speaker for various organizations, sharing insights extracted from his two books, as well as his business career. He is an avid golfer, winning 10 club championships over his career. He is married and has two children and five grandchildren.

Daniel Muller





Daniel Muller explores the conflict between generations by sharing life stories of fourteen Baby Boomers. These fascinating life stories serve to explain the impact of families and social environment on current Boomer values.

SEX, DRUGS, ROCK and WAR: The Boomer Generation
By Daniel Muller

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