

Passing the torch

As Baby Boomers enter the twilights of their careers, the time has come to entrust America's future to a new generation of leaders.

"Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed and to which we are committed today at home and around the world."

*John F. Kennedy inaugural address
Jan. 20, 1961.*

W

ow! With those words the largest generation of Americans was introduced to a very unsuspecting American society. The Baby Boomers were the best educated, the healthiest and most coddled group of Americans ever. We had the largest amount of disposable cash and were not afraid to spend it to meet our every desire. We were loud, absolutely right and

we were about to make significant changes to this stodgy society.

Baby Boomers are the children of the returning World War II and Korean War heroes. Their mothers and/or grandmothers worked in the factories to make tanks, ships and shoes. They were paid good wages and changed the workplace forever. Men returned home to a new era of womanhood. Not all returning veterans welcomed the changed head of the household, but all were eager to re-establish their presence in

society. They put their heads down and went back to work for America. It was a time of prosperity, and there was a lot of government money to help them get started. Home ownership, snappy-looking cars and, of course, a family were their goals.

Baby Boomers, a total population of about 76 million, were born between 1946 and 1960 and today are between 49 and 66 years of age. They were experimental, individualistic, free spirited, distrusted government and very social cause oriented. They lived through the JFK and Martin Luther King Jr. assassinations and then saw Robert F. Kennedy killed on live TV. They lived through the unpopular Vietnam War, watching the bloodshed spill into their living rooms each evening. They saw friends leave for service or leave the country as lottery numbers for the draft were announced in college cafeterias. To avoid the draft, many men stayed in school and continued into doctoral programs and, subsequently, landed jobs teaching at the university level.

They took to the streets to march against the war and to support civil rights. Women marched to support equality in work status and equal pay. They saw the Democratic National Convention turned into a war zone when Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley released the National Guard on a group of young protestors. At Kent State they witnessed their fellow Boomers shot for protesting the war. Young civil rights workers in Mississippi were killed for “just being there,” and that same treatment was repeated over and over in many southern cities. In 1955 a tired black woman boarded a bus in Montgomery, Ala., took a seat in front and refused to sit in her lawful place in the back. Rosa Parks gave a face to the civil rights movement. Boomers saw big cities burn because of civil rights issues. Those events were shaping them (us) to be the next leaders of America.

Boomers’ music was like no other. We had songs about peace and songs about “a white haze.” We listened to our music in parks and fields, and we danced with the wind. Dylan, Presley, the Beatles, the Who, Hendrix, Pink Floyd, the Stones, the Doors, Credence Clearwater Revival and many, many more depicted this counterculture mood in music. In August 1969 we lived The Summer of Peace and Love in Woodstock, N.Y. Remember—or not.

Vietnam brought us recreational drugs, which opened the gates for our freedom of expression. The West Coast exploded with the influx of young, college-educated liberals, the counterculture was expanding its borders, and San Francisco and Height Asbury became destinations. Drugs continued to be a burden for our generation. They did, however, open a new industry of counseling and rehab clinics. We became politically charged and worked to change anything familiar to our parents. “Free love” and sexual expression changed the look of the American family, and we embraced the difference. Hippie became a social class and not a body type. We

were all about self with a capital “S” and trusted no one over the age of 30.

Our generation brought about Bill Gates and Microsoft and Steve Jobs and Apple. Our needs and wants exploded the electronics markets and made millionaires out of geeks. Wall Street became the place to be as middle class Americans were involved in stocks. Money was being made by everyone who dared to take the risk.

Medicine made life healthier. Medical science developed replacement body parts, and our vanity let us to partake. We were getting older but definitely were not going to look it. Botox, liposuction and tummy tucks kept the cosmetic surgery industry thriving. America became the fastest growing country in the world. We were living high and the “old money” elites were reluctantly meeting the hip nouveau rich. Our generational identity was all about us and our appetite for excess. It was a time of imagination—if you can think it, it can happen.

Every aspect of the American workplace felt our presence. We heard people over the age of 30 saying things like, “I’m afraid for the future of this country.” Can you imagine?

As life would have it, most of us settled into society as we put away our sandals and Levis and transformed into suits, shoes and briefcases. We became responsible adults who had families to raise and bills to pay. We opened businesses, entered politics and ran hospitals and schools. We ultimately became our parents, only cooler, as we went to Little League games and coached our kids’ teams. For the Boomers, life has come full circle—and now another change is about to happen.

The torch will be passed to a new generation of Americans, and we will pass it. It is our time to step down and let America be guided by the Generation Xers. “There’s a new



There is a lot to be finished—so much more to do. This torch comes with a big challenge and an even bigger opportunity.

sheriff in town,” and they don’t need us. They are younger, faster, very techie and well-groomed. Like us, however, they are hungry for success with one major difference—they want it now—they want instant gratification.

In two separate college graduation speeches this spring, speakers questioned the Boomer generation’s stewardship of the country. They suggested that we had come up short on country, honor and duty. We were not wise and careful with our land and our resources. We were too lax on discipline and national loyalty. Yes, we created a wonderful, wealthy society, as we blew the doors off of capitalism and enjoyed the ride. So where’s the problem?

We were living in a time of possibilities, imagination, high energy and inherited hatred. Every day there was a new social injustice being addressed. We did not settle for average but, rather, persevered to a level of consciousness once only dreamed about. We walked on the moon and replaced a human heart. Everyone had an opportunity to wade into untested waters. We did some things very wrong, most things very right and the other things we left undone. We were

about excitement and challenge. We climbed Space Mountain, created the middle class and gave small businesses a real opportunity to succeed. Excess, yes; complacency, no!

All the things we did allowed our generation to live the American dream. We succeeded where our parents couldn’t and accumulated more than they ever dreamed possible. Excessive, yes; irreverent, yes; morally challenged—definitely. For all that we did wrong, our nation and our world is better off for the things that we did right!

Along with this torch, we are handing off a very imperfect world that is filled with hatred and fear. There is a lot to be finished—so much more to do. This torch comes with a big challenge and an even bigger opportunity. The next generation of achievers has been handed preserved national freedom. They have seen failure and know it’s not a death sentence, only delayed success, and they should now embrace the responsibility. The Xers will right our wrongs and lead the country on a new path. Our prayers go with them. We hope they are wiser than we were and can rekindle a sense of family and country. Good Luck! **TLT**

PCC
CHEMAX

We don't simply sell products... *we sell solutions.*



Featuring our Soybean Oil Emulsifier...
Chemax EM-1169

- Makes stable concentrates
- Makes stable emulsions with Soybean Oil
- Excellent hard water stability
- Excellent performance on aluminum
- Easily formulated with other PCC Chemax Metalworking Additives

Chemax EM-1169
is the solution for you!

You are invited to
take a look at our
Formulations and Test Data
www.pcc-chemax.com/ad3.html



Call for your sample today **1.800.334.6234**
www.pcc-chemax.com

“In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty.”



JFK, January 1961.



Noreen Cherry is the owner of NCEED Enterprises, a nationally certified Women’s Business Enterprise and major supplier of castor oil derivatives to industrial chemical markets. She has been involved with STLE’s New York Section since 1983 and now serves on the national society’s board of directors. Noreen has mentored for the New Jersey Entrepreneurial Training Institute, working with new businesses. You can reach her at chem616@nceed.com.