It’s that time of year again! As OLLI celebrates its 29th year on the SBU Campus, we are all wondering about our workshops. Am I in the workshop or am I wait listed? Is there a gap between 2 workshops that I’ll have to fill with something I never considered or will I just have an extended coffee break? Thus, begins the Fall Semester at Stony Brook.

As OLLI’s enrollment continues to grow each year, we have proven that learning continues to be a life-long experience.

I am honored to lead the OLLI Advisory Board. The Board is staffed by a talented and energetic group of individuals who are able to work together for the common good of our membership. We were busy preparing for the Summer program, the Fall program and the program to welcome new members.

Our Director, Wayne Holo, and the OLLI Office staff have scheduled 108 workshops that are led by 135 talented and knowledgeable Workshop leaders. Currently, the office is searching for rooms based on workshop enrollment.

Kudos go to the new Curriculum Co-Chairs, Ira Kurtzberg and Ed Metzendorf. They have worked diligently on both the Summer and Fall programs. In addition, they arranged a luncheon for the Summer Workshop Leaders, which met with great success. As the Chronicle goes to press, Ira and Ed are busy preparing the Workshop Leaders’ Survival Guide.

Many thanks to Terri McCoy and Jerry Ebenstein, the outgoing Curriculum Co-Chairs, for the support and advice they have provided to our new Co-Chairs.

The Member Relations aomd Support Committee, Co-Chaired by Diane Druckman and Jothi Curcio, is in the midst of preparing a welcoming program for the new members of OLLI. They are also working hard to obtain volunteers to man the help-tables.

The Special Events Committee, Chaired by Jothi Curcio, has been discussing various activities and trips for the Fall Semester. As you can see, the Board and its members have had a busy summer. Please consider joining a committee, leading a workshop, manning a help-table.

Whatever assistance you can offer would be greatly appreciated! Our strength as a program is only as good as the people who volunteer to help.

As a final note, the Fall General Meeting will be held in October. The date and place will be forthcoming in a future announcement. Watch your emails.
Welcome to the Fall, 2016 semester! Your new Curriculum Committee co-chairs Ira Kurtzberg and Ed Metzendorf, along with experienced and new committee members, are looking forward to an exciting semester. There are about 100 workshops offered, and the Curriculum Committee has initiated planning for a host of on-campus special events that you will hear about in the future.

Below is a list of some of the new workshops for the semester. You will recognize some leaders, and see that others are new to the program. Many leaders continue teaching from one semester to the next and change the focus of their workshops. Please note that those offerings are not included in the list.

We are always looking for new leaders and workshops so if you know of anyone interested for the Spring, 2017 semester, please email either Ira (ibkurtz@hotmail.com) or Ed (saab92@optonline.net) with the information. Happy Learning!

Ira and Ed

NewWorkshops this semester:

• A Guide to Rational Living: Jeff Kochnower
• Aspects of Ancient Egypt: George Rystar
• Biological Warfare and Bioterrorism: Richard Meyer
• Celebration of Rock Music: Robert Hayes
• DNA, Genes and their Societal Applications: Carter Bancroft
• General Relativity for Poets: Irwin Steinberg
• Gospel of John: Marianne Mione
• Interpretation is Everything-Bringing Sacred Texts to Life: Nils Blatz
• Investing for Seniors: Walter Morgenstern
• Lightroom: Linda Steffens
• Middle East History: Theo Pavlidis
• Modern Sculpture: Philip Palmedo
• On 1 Photo Editing: Bob Oliva
• Opera Appreciation for Everyone: Claude Frank
• Physics for Citizens-The Science Behind the Headlines: Gene Sprouse
• Rome-Kingdom, Republic, Empire, Byzantium: Charles Rudiger
• Science of Natural Healing: Wayne Snell
• Sex, Lies and Makeovers-Ovid’s Metamorphoses: Thomas Hayes
• Stepping On: Kristi Ladowski
• Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention: Mary Chandick, Kristi Ladowski
• Understanding Greek and Roman Technology-From Catapult to Pantheon: Ed Cohen
The Member Relations and Support Committee has been meeting over the course of the summer to plan our new member event as we begin the 2016-17 OLLI year. The event will be held in the Hilton Garden Inn on September 7, 2016. We are hoping that the majority of the 150+ new members will attend.

Our plan is to replicate last year’s event and have Board Members and our committee members lead discussions at each table, using the information in the current handbook as a guide after the opening comments. Our new members will get directions on how to get IDs and parking hang tags, as well. Then the tours will enable them to learn about the campus. We hope to have all the new members’ names published in the October Chronicles as we welcome them to the program.

We are also looking to set up the information table in SBS to assist all members as they begin classes on September 22-28. Thanks to all who have volunteered to help.

The co-chairs of this committee are Jothi Curcio and Diane Druckman. We are grateful for the help that Board Members have given us, as we have not participated in this committee before. Also, we must thank the previous chair, Jaci Trigony. She did a magnificent job in the past, as everyone will attest. We hope we can do as well!

Thanks From the Editor

Jaci Trigony joined OLLI in 2004 right after retiring from the corporate world, and has written for the Chronicles since then. She has also served on the Chronicles Editorial Board.

On the 25th anniversary of OLLI/The Round Table, she was asked to write its history for the Chronicles, which she did admirably.

She has served on the Special Events Committee, and for 5 years was Chairman of the New Members Tea which was held in existing members’ homes each Fall. Jaci also served on the New Members Orientation committee, as Chairman of the Member Relations Committee, and served as a Member at Large on the Executive Board for 3 different terms.

Jaci says it has been a special 12 years of her life, getting to know all the wonderful people that make up this great organization, and she cannot imagine not being on the Stony Brook campus this fall.

She will be sorely missed by the Chronicles and all at OLLI who know her.

While I am at it I would also like to thank Carole Gambrell for the wonderful articles on pages 11 through 13 - On Campus events, On Campus Sports, and On Campus Dining. She too has been a consistent and unheralded contributor, proving many articles, unasked, with no by-line.
In The Spotlight

What’s the Fuss about Gus??
Let Me Tell You

Most OLLI members leave their careers behind when they retire and join our wonderful program. Primarily we lead or participate in workshops, socialize with our friends on campus and elsewhere and enjoy family and retirement for all that it brings.

And then there is Gus Alfieri.

An OLLI member since the Roundtable days, Gus taught social studies for 37 years. His career also included coaching the St. Anthony’s boys basketball team to state and national prominence. He then earned his Ph. D. at Stony Brook and taught in its graduate school for another 14 years. He’s also led OLLI workshops.

Time to settle down and become a “couch potato”?
No Way!

I forgot to mention Gus was the starting point guard for St. John’s Hall of Fame Coach Joe Lapchick. His team won the NIT in 1959. He wrote and published “Lapchick” which led to positive reviews and numerous sports talk interviews including “Mike & the Mad Dog”.

Gus founded the longest running Sports Book Club in the country which meets monthly at the Smithtown Library. He also began and still directs, with his son, Ron, what’s believed to be one of the nation’s longest running summer basketball camps (48 years).

Before I totally embarrass him, let me tell you five other reasons why I felt the need to write this story. He and his wife, Janet, and their family have truly had a summer to remember in 2016. In June, St. Anthony’s HS inducted him into its newly formed Hall of Fame honoring former players and coaches. As an additional honor, many of his former players urged the school to name their gym’s court the “Gus Alfieri Court” which it did. And to add icing to his cake, one of his former players and admirers, Kenny Atkinson, became the new head coach of the Brooklyn Nets.

Gus released his second book this summer titled “The Heart of a Champion.” This moving memoir about his championship teams at St. Anthony’s has received strong reviews. He’s been promoting it in area libraries plus will appear at Huntington’s Book Revue on October 18. Gus will also be presenting to members in OLLI’s “Business of Sports workshop” on October 11th at 10AM. Limited seating may be available. Please contact me, if interested.

And finally, he will be inducted into the prestigious New York City Basketball Hall of Fame on September 14th at the New York Athletic Club. His name will then be placed alongside some of the country’s top former players and coaches.

So now you know why there’s been such a fuss about Gus. For a guy who’s just 79 years young, this could be right up there competing for the “My Favorite Year” of his life.

Congratulations to a most deserving member of the OLLI family. We’re all very proud of you and look forward to your third book in the near future.
Sometimes You Just Have to Fly by the Seat of Your Pants
By Lee Marc Stein

NOTE: My wife Ann, whom many of you know from the Memoirs Workshop, deserves full credit for the title... and for her creativity, as you will read below.

It was Monday. Ann’s sister Susan had passed away the previous Wednesday and was cremated. There would be a mass in Forest Hills and interment of the ashes in Hampton Bays in two days. Ann suggested I check to see if my suit jacket needed pressing. I hadn’t worn it since a wedding in May 2015, but I took the hanger off the rack and it was perfect.

On Tuesday, we left East Setauket for Susan’s co-op. The suit was hanging in the back seat along with Ann’s change of clothes. At the apartment, we met up with Ann’s older sister who was also staying there for the night.

Wednesday morning we were to drive the mile to the church for arrival at 9:00. That should have been easy for early risers like us. I took my shower last – I think about 8:15. I put on my dress shirt and went to the bedroom door to get my suit. I unbuttoned the jacket and looked, and THERE ARE NO PANTS!

Ann heard my blood-curdling scream and rushed in. I was sick to my stomach, practically in tears. How could have I done this to her? How could I have been so careless not to check the pants at home? This was such a sad event, one that deserved my full attention and cooperation.

I thought of Men’s Warehouse across the street. We looked online and it didn’t open until 10:00. What now? I could not wear my jeans.

Cool Head Ann didn’t even give me a dirty look. She went to her sister’s closet and in two minutes pulled out a pair of her black trousers. My suit jacket is black with a really narrow pinstripe. Problem solved!

Well, not quite. There was no fly of course. There were no belt loops. The pants were enormous on me. And there was a zipper just above my left knee.

I put my belt on and Ann folded the material over the belt. The pants definitely wouldn’t fall down. I would need to keep my jacket on and try not to go to the bathroom.

As we got to the mass, way ahead of time of course, I was still viewing this incident as a great tragedy of our marriage. Susan’s friends and our friends greeted us outside the church and I started to forget about the pants I had on. The mass itself was beautiful. Brian, our oldest son who was very close to my sister-in-law, delivered a remarkable, emotional eulogy. Then something happened that immediately moved my situation into the realm of the comic.

Going out of the church, our other son Tom fell the remaining three steps. Sprawled on the concrete, we didn’t know if he had had a heart attack, or hit his head. He came to fairly rapidly, and was able to tell us his knee had buckled and he could not straighten it. We later learned it was a tear of the tendon in his quad (and he is still undergoing therapy). He was taken away in an ambulance as the rest of us headed out to Hampton Bays.

Continued on next page
The Chronicles

Sometimes....., continued

Obviously I had not taken off my jacket in church. Just before we got to the cemetery in Hampton Bays, we stopped at the Macy’s to go to the bathroom. By the car, Ann had to re-do the belt and back-of-pants configuration.

At the cemetery, it must have been 90 degrees. All the men had their jackets off, but no one asked why I was an exception. I did my best not to sweat. At the restaurant for the celebratory lunch, the men took their jackets off within 15 minutes. Mine stayed on. I waited until most people left to go to the bathroom and Ann was standing there to help me.

Now only Brian, his wife and son were left in the restaurant with us. Standing next to me, he asked “What’s up with the zipper on your pants leg?” I say nothing. I couldn't believe I’d been discovered with only minutes to go before I got back in the car. I could not reveal what happened…

… but I did. Fifteen minutes into our ride back, Ann called Brian’s cell phone and told him. I could have heard the laughter if he had been in Europe. Ann and I were cracking up as well. He called us back and told Ann I would have to tee off from the ladies’ tees from now on. We told the story to a lot of people in the next few weeks, but I still felt bad about my error of omission. I must have left the pants in the hotel we stayed at for the May 2015 wedding.

Three weeks had now passed. Ann was back in Susan's co-op with her sister Barbara cleaning out the apartment. I got a cheerful call. “Guess what? I found your pants. They were behind the door!” They had obviously slipped off the hanger when we closed the bedroom door at night and we didn't see them with all the other clothes on the floor.

Susan, who was always known for her big smile, will probably be grinning for eternity over this one.

What’s in it For Me?
by Harriet Polack

A senior is often viewed as a life that has declined.
But I’d like to suggest a way to have our image redefined.
It’s true that the years may have produced lots of aches and pains.
But there are also learnings and skills that certainly have remained.
We have the gift of many years that have taught us so very much.
And OLLI now gives us a special way to have other lives to touch.
We can volunteer and teach and share eacy unique ability.
This such a rewarding way to find joy and tranquility.
The Chronicles

22 Minutes of Fame—Part I
By Harold Leff

Andy Warhol is credited with saying that in the future, “Everybody will have 15 minutes of fame.” Well, I did him one better getting 22 minutes (30 minutes including commercials!).

My “fame” started about 25 years ago when I decided that one of my goals was to be a contestant on Jeopardy. Both my wife, Meryl, and I are addicted to watching the show, and we are in a friendly competition every night to get the correct answer first. Well before anyone had access to the Internet, Jeopardy would hold tryouts around the country from time to time. In the early 1990’s, I drove down to Atlantic City for an in-person test. My recollection is I only did fair, and no further invitation came my way.

More recently, Jeopardy holds an online test once a year. There are 50 questions and you have roughly 7 seconds to type in the correct answer before the next question pops up on the screen. There is no going back to a previous question when you have a revelation several questions later. Fortunately, it is not necessary to phrase your answer in the form of a question as you must do on the show. Approximately 70,000 people take the online test each year.

If you do well enough on the online test, you get invited to an in-person audition in a “local” city. Approximately 3,000 people get to this second stage of qualifying. Meryl has been to such an audition in Manhattan, but didn’t get any further.

Anyhow, in early 2014, we again took the online test. I felt reasonably confident with my results on the online test, but it’s a competition against a lot of really smart people. In any event, I received an invitation to an in-person audition in Philadelphia in October 2014. I took Amtrak from Penn Station and went to the Sheraton Hotel where the audition took place. There were about 100 people in the room with me.

The first “hurdle” was a written test consisting of 50 questions. Again, there was no need to respond in the form of a question, and since it was a written test, you’re able to make notes on the answer sheet if you’re unable to come up with an answer right away. I am certain that I got at least 3 or 4 questions right by going back later in the test. I was highly confident that I got at least 45 of the 50 questions correct, and felt that it was possible my guesses were correct on a couple of others.

After the written test, candidates are invited to the front of the room in groups of 3 to play a mock Jeopardy game. Each player has a buzzer similar to the one used on the show, and each group gets between 10-15 questions. In my group which consisted of two women and I, one woman didn’t do very well, while the other woman and I each got about 6 questions correct.

The final activity of the tryout was a video interview. I was asked “If you won a lot of money on Jeopardy, what would you do with it”? Some of the candidates said they’d pay off their student loans, while others said they’d buy a house, a new car, etc. I decided that an outrageous answer might get me more attention so I said “I would buy a ticket on one of the private space shuttles that were expected to orbit the earth in another 5 years”. It raised some eyebrows in the room.

I felt extremely positive on the train ride back to Penn Station. My optimism increased each time I recalled one of the questions I had answered. However, as the months went by with no call from Jeopardy, I began to face up to the likely reality that either I hadn’t done as well as I had thought, or everybody else in the room just did better than I had.

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22 Minutes of Fame, continued

In early 2015, the online test was again offered. I still felt reasonably positive since it was just after I had gone through the audition. However, when the online test was given again in early 2016, I gave up hope. After all, if they were seeking new candidates in 2016, they presumably had gone through the complete list of eligible candidates from the 2014 auditions.

On Friday, June 24, 2016, I played golf at the Brentwood Country Club with two other OLLI members—Ken Buxbaum and David Leader. I shot the best round of my life—an 82. I was feeling great about the day.

After golf, we went to lunch at Applebee’s in Hauppauge. Our meal was finished and we were waiting for the check when my cell phone rang. It was a number I didn’t recognize and my immediate reaction is it was one of those pain-in-the-*** calls from one of the credit card companies. I almost didn’t answer it, but when I did, I answered with a gruff “Hello”. The voice on the other end asked if I was Harold Leff. My answer was a gruff “Who wants to know?”

She answered that it was “Laurie from the contestant search team at Jeopardy”, and they would like me to come to California to be a contestant. My tone changed instantaneously to a “Hi, Laurie, I hope you’re having a wonderful day”!

Anyhow, I was asked to be in the LA area on July 25 for a taping on July 26. My knee jerk response was that it wasn’t a convenient date for me as we had a vacation scheduled in the Canadian Rockies! I quickly reversed course and said I’d make whatever changes were necessary and I would be there. Incidentally, contestants are responsible for their own travel costs, hotel costs, etc.

A couple of days later, I received an email with lots of forms to fill out including a formal contract. I looked it over and it seemed acceptable to me. My daughter, who is an attorney, said she’d like to review it before I signed it. I told her, “Allison, there is no way that I wasn’t going to sign it” so we left it at that.

Jeopardy tapes 5 shows every Tuesday and another 5 on Wednesday—3 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. On the morning of July 26, I was picked up at our hotel at 7 am. I met the Jeopardy staff, the other 11 challengers, and the defending champion. We were told that only 400 people each year are invited to appear on the show. We were also told that 10 of the 12 of us would appear as contestants on that Tuesday, with the other 2 having to wait until Wednesday for their shot. Before each game, 2 of us would be selected at random.

We each went to make-up to enhance our on-camera appearance, and then we all went onto the set for a rehearsal. In groups of 3, we played a mock game so we could get used to the damned buzzer. I am now convinced that winning Jeopardy depends more on being able to buzz in at the right time than it does on knowing the correct answer. If you buzz in before Alex Trebek has finished reading the question (at which point a staffer lights 2 strings of light bulbs at the side of the game board), you are locked out for ¼ second—an eternity, it seems, and your opponents have a huge advantage.

After the rehearsal, the audience including our guests (which included Meryl and her cousin, Adele) arrived around 1030 am, and the first game started around 11. I was finally selected to play in the third game of the day, and my nerves went hyper at that point.

The show is scheduled to air on September 28. One of the clauses in the contract I signed was a Non-Disclosure Agreement, so I am unable to talk about the results until it airs. I plan to discuss that part of the story in Part II of this article.
Op-Ed Thursday
Rules of Procedure

1. You must raise your hand and be recognized before you speak; recognized by the workshop leader, not the person you’re questioning or disagreeing with. If the workshop leader doesn’t recognize you and you don’t recognize the workshop leader, you’re probably in the wrong workshop.

2. When you are recognized to speak by the workshop leader, you must say your first name before you say anything else. This is so that you can be recognized and called upon by name during subsequent workshops as long as you always sit in the same seat and wear the same clothing.

3. When presenting an article, your introduction or concluding remarks may not be longer than the article you are presenting; similarly, when responding to an article your comments will be timed to assure they are shorter than the article.

4. Note taking will neither be accepted nor condoned by anyone participating in a discussion as it gives the note taker an unfair advantage over those who cannot remember the details of article then being discussed.

5. No matter how heated the discussion, there will be absolutely no personal remarks unless you want to compliment someone on how well they look. To do otherwise will result in you and your chair being moved into the hallway.

6. Disagreeing too many times with the workshop leader will also result in you and your chair being moved into the hallway. If it continues, for the remainder of the semester your chair for Op-Ed will be moved to the second floor hallway.

7. A person who is speaking may not be interrupted except by the workshop leader, who may interrupt anyone at any time, particularly if he disagrees with the ridiculous opinion of the person commenting.

8. There are no weekly tests, midterms, finals, or term papers. However, extra credit may be earned by profusely agreeing with or praising the workshop leader.

9. Papers, cups, bottles and other litter, including the day’s articles, must be disposed of at the end of each workshop and chairs must be repositioned, as there is no button to contact housekeeping on the university telephone.

10. Changes and/or additions to these rules may be announced at any time, at the sole discretion of the workshop leader.

Ken Buxbaum, Workshop Leader
The Chronicles

ON CAMPUS events

There is always something going on at Stony Brook University and many of these events are free. To see what’s coming up you can go to Stony Brook’s Calendar (http://calendar.activatedatax.com/stonybrook): Check out the left hand side. It allows you to limit the listings to only the things you are interested in, such as music, lectures, or athletics.

Here are some examples that you might want to explore further.

Art at the Simon Center for Geometry and Physics
scgp.stonybrook.edu/art
The Simons Center’s Art Program is dedicated to enriching the intellectual lives of its members and visitors, and to establishing the Center as a venue for world-class science-inspired artistic exhibitions, music, lectures, and events of interest.

Astronomy Open Night
http://www.astro.sunysb.edu/openight
The Astronomy Open Night is a public lecture series that takes place generally on the first Friday of each month during the semester (starting at 7:30pm in ESS 001). If the weather is good, viewing through our rooftop telescope follows the lecture. Open to the Public

Science on Tap
http://www.centerforcommunicatingscience.org/science-on-tap/
A scientist walks into a bar, sits down with a former producer of 60 Minutes, orders a beer and talks to a live audience. No punch line here! This is Science on Tap, a live, award-winning show and web series produced by Stony Brook University’s Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science.

Student Recitals
http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/music/performances/student_recitals.shtml
There are nearly 300 student recitals performed throughout the year, usually four a day, which constitutes a major requirement of the graduate performance degree. All recitals are open to the public and are offered free of charge. It is strongly advised to call ahead or check the website as these concerts are subject to change.

Asian Culture
http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/wang/index.html
The Charles B. Wang Center at Stony Brook University is a unique cultural center devoted to promoting Asian art and culture. For example, You can view Korean art, hear a Chinese opera, or see an Indian movie.

Sports
http://www.stonybrookathletics.com/
This fall you can watch football, or men’s and women’s soccer.
ATM and Bank Locations

[Image of an ATM]

http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/fsa/services/banking/atm-locations.html

Banking services are provided by Island Federal Credit Union.

ATMs are located in many spots on campus, including:
- Administration Building
  - Full-Service Bank
  - Deposit Taking
- Student Activity Center Branch
  - Full-Service Bank
  - Deposit Taking
- Student Activity Center Lobby
  - Cash Dispensing
- Student Union
  - Cash Dispensing

The UPS Store

[Image of The UPS Store]

http://www.stonybrook-ny-5854.theupsstorelocal.com/

Location: Lower Level Melville Library - E0320
Phone: (631) 632-1831
Email: store5854@theupsstore.com

Services include:
- Printing
- Copying
- Packing and shipping
- Faxing

Lockers

http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/fsa/services/locker-rentals.html

You can rent a locker for the year, at:
- Library Study Lounge: $56.00 per year
- Student Activities Center: $56.00 per year

Bicycle

[Image of bicycles]

http://www.stonybrook.edu/sustainability/stories/content/wolf-ride-bike-share.shtml

Leave your car and rent a bike.

SBU Wolf Ride Bike Share
Office of Sustainability
Phone: (631) 632-4658 or (631) 632-4438
E-Mail: sustainability@stonybrook.edu

Wolf Ride stations are located in proximity to the following University buildings:
- Athletic Fields
- Javits Lecture
- Library / Sustainability Studies
- Long Island Railroad (LIRR)
- South P Lot
- Student Activities Center
- Tabler Quad
- Wang Center

Mail

There is no longer an official U.S. Postal Service on campus.
Stamps: Student Activities Center (SAC) Mailboxes are available at these locations:
- The SAC Loop at Engineering Drive
- Behind Student Union, near parking lots
- Basement level of the Melville Library
- Building between north elevators and UPS
ON CAMPUS dining

STUDENT ACTIVITIES CENTER

- Omelets
- Cyclone Salads & Wraps
- The Grill
- The Kitchen Table
- Oodles
- Urban Pizza

Breakfast • Burgers • International • Simply to Go • Southern/Caribbean Soup • Sandwiches • Pizza • Noodle Bowls

UNION COMMONS

- Servings
- Cucina Italiana
- Crave
- Saladworks
- The Grill

Breakfast • Burgers • Sandwiches
Salad Bar • International • Vegan Bar
Pizza & Pasta • Allergen Free Dining

SB UNION

- Carlos & Gabby's
- Union Deli
- Starbucks
- Halal
- Wraps
- Salads
- Sandwiches
- Kosher Mexican
- Coffee
- Specialty Beverages

WANG CENTER

- Jasmine J-Club
- Jasmine Tea House
- Sushi Do
- Asian Entrees

Asian Grill • Indian
Made-to-Order Sushi
Chinese • Korean
Tea House

SIMONS CENTER CAFE

- Organically inspired French, Italian and American Cuisine

- Soups • Salads • Entrees • Dessert
The Chronicles

Children of “The Greatest Generation”
a Short Memoir

Born in the 1930s and early 40s, we exist as a very special age cohort. We are the Silent Generation. We are the smallest number of children born since the early 1900s. We are the “last ones.”

We are the last generation, climbing out of the depression, who can remember the winds of war and the impact of a world at war which rattled the structure of our daily lives for years.

We are the last to remember ration books for everything from gas to sugar to shoes to stoves. We saved tin foil and poured fat into tin cans. We hand mixed white stuff with yellow stuff to make fake butter. We saw cars up on blocks because tires weren’t available.

We can remember milk being delivered to our house early in the morning and placed in the milk box on the porch. [A friend’s mother delivered milk in a horse drawn cart.]

We are the last to hear Roosevelt’s radio assurances and to see gold stars in the front windows of our grieving neighbors.

We can also remember the parades on August 15, 1945; VJ Day. We saw the ‘boys’ home from the war build their Cape Cod style houses, pouring the cellar, tar papering it over and living there until they could afford the time and money to build it out.

We are the last generation who spent childhood without television; instead we imagined what we heard on the radio. As we all like to brag, with no TV, we spent our childhood “playing outside until the street lights came on.”

We did play outside and we did play on our own. There was no little league. There was no city playground for kids. To play in the water, we turned the fire hydrants on and ran through the spray.

The lack of television in our early years meant, for most of us, that we had little real understanding of what the world was like. Our Saturday afternoons, if at the movies, gave us newsreels of the war and the holocaust sandwiched in between westerns and cartoons.

Telephones were one to a house, often shared and hung on the wall. Computers were called calculators and were hand cranked; typewriters were driven by pounding fingers, throwing the carriage, and changing the ribbon.

The Internet and Google were words that didn’t exist. Newspapers and magazines were written for adults. We are the last group who had to find out for ourselves.

As we grew up, the country was exploding with growth. The G.I. Bill gave returning veterans the means to get an education and spurred colleges to grow. VA loans fanned a housing boom. Pent up demand coupled with new installment payment plans put factories to work.
New highways would bring jobs and mobility. The veterans joined civic clubs and became active in politics. In the late 40s and early 50s the country seemed to lie in the embrace of brisk but quiet order as it gave birth to its new middle class (which became known as baby Boomers).

The radio network expanded from 3 stations to thousands of stations. The telephone started to become a common method of communications and “Faxes” sent hard copy around the world.

Our parents were suddenly free from the confines of the depression and the war and they threw themselves into exploring opportunities they had never imagined.

We weren't neglected but we weren't today's all-consuming family focus. They were glad we played by ourselves until the street lights came on.' They were busy discovering the post war world.

Most of us had no life plan, but with the unexpected virtue of ignorance and an economic rising tide we simply stepped into the world and started to find out what the world was about.

We entered a world of overflowing plenty and opportunity; a world where we were welcomed. Based on our belief that there was more where this came from, we shaped life as we went.

We enjoyed a luxury; we felt secure in our future. Of course, just as today, not all Americans shared in this experience. Depression poverty was deep rooted.

Polio was still a crippler. The Korean War was a dark presage in the early 50s and by mid-decade school children were ducking under desks.

Russia built the iron curtain and China became Red China. Eisenhower sent the first 'advisors' to Vietnam; and years later, Johnson invented a war there. Castro set up camp in Cuba and Khrushchev came to power.

We are the last generation to experience an interlude when there were no existential threats to our homeland. We came of age in the 40s and early 50s. The war was over and the cold war, terrorism, Martin Luther King, civil rights, technological upheaval, global warming, and perpetual economic insecurity had yet to haunt life with insistent unease.

Only our generation can remember both a time of apocalyptic war and a time when our world was secure and full of bright promise and plenty. We have lived through both.

We grew up at the best possible time, a time when the world was getting better; not worse.

We are the Silent Generation; 'the last ones.'

Author unknown

The last of us was born in 1944, more than 99.9% of us are either retired or dead, and all of us believe we grew up in the best of times.
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To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
To reach out to another is to risk involvement.
To express feelings is to risk exposing your true self.
To place ideas and dreams before a
Crowd is to risk their loss.
To love is to risk being loved in return
To live is to risk dying.
To hope is to risk despair.
To try is to risk failure.

But risks must taken because the greatest
Hazard in life is to risk nothing.
The person who asks nothing, does nothing,
Has nothing and is nothing.
They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they
Cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.
Chained by their attitudes, they are slaves.
They have forfeited their freedom.
Only a person who risks is free.

---Anonymous