

Bill Rea ? No generation gap here



There are certain trends that I see in young people that I admit I sometimes have a hard time understanding.

While some of the trendy stuff might lose me at times, I like to think I'm in tune enough to realize there are a lot of you out there in the same boat. And by rights, since I don't have children, I think I would have more justification to be out of the loop than a lot of you who are 50-something.

In my day, it was called 'the generation gap,' but I haven't heard that expression in years. I don't know what term is used today, but I have no doubt that the concept still exists, if for no other reason than it's been around since they came up with the word generation. Grown-ups have been thinking ill of the kids following them for centuries.

I was having dinner with family members one night last week, and one of the them was lamenting about the attitudes of some of the young people working in the same profession as her. The young kids, she said, are unwilling to put in the hours or the necessary sweat to effectively do their jobs and get ahead in their careers. She said it with a certain amount of world weariness in her voice. The fact is I am somewhat older, thus a bit more world weary. I informed her that the same could be said in just about any profession or occupation. I defy anyone to prove me wrong.

I have been seeing such attitudes since the day I entered the working world. Some kids, as was the case with me, need a harsh lesson early on to get the message that you actually have to do some work and put in some effort, not only to get ahead, but even just to hold your place.

A big benefit to all of that is job security. Because when bosses have to do trimming, they're going to be less inclined to get rid of people who are in the habit of stepping up, especially when needed.

It is a fact that some young people haven't yet learned that lesson, but they either learn it, or they spend a lot of their lives dealing with extra troubles.

I learned about that. So did my father. So did his father. I could go back as many generations as you'd like.

I should also state my belief that a lot of young people fall into this class, but certainly not all of them.

So accept the fact that young are sometimes not going to live up to expectations, and also keep in mind that recent occasion when some adult let you down too.

The fact that I sometimes can't fathom kids neither upsets or worries me, largely because I know some of the things we did as kids puzzled the older folks.

I think of the music we used to listen to.

I was in kindergarten when Beatlemania hit this part of the world. Most (but not all) adults thought they were terrible. My teacher thought they were evil urged us not to watch the Ed Sullivan show when they were on. My aunt thought they were the greatest. My mother tolerated the fact that my brother and I listened to them because she probably realized there wasn't a lot she could do about it. One had to feel for my father, however. He probably hated the music, although he never came right out and said so, largely because he couldn't. He made the mistake of reminiscing to his offspring, telling us of his adoration of Jimmy Durante in his youth.

Once, and only once, in his life, my father paid top dollar for tickets when Durante performed at the Canadian National Exhibition. His father (my grandfather) thought he was nuts, commenting that all Durante could do was 'change his hats.'

Thus my brother and I always had a comeback then our dad made critical remarks about the music we listened to, etc.

There was the year my brother got a new record album for his birthday, and in honour of the special occasion, Dad let him play it on

the main stereo in the house. He listened for a couple of minutes, and then started asking pointed questions, such as "Are these guys just tuning up?" and "Is this considered talent?"

Things continued, as he made it clear what he thought of the album, frequently using language I can't repeat here.

Finally, he raised the issues his father raised about Durante. "Am I being that unreasonable?" he asked.

I never thought he was being unreasonable, or at least no more unreasonable than older generations have been throughout the ages, and will continue to be.

Something to look forward to.

Life goes on

Behind every successful man is a proud wife and a surprised mother-in-law.

Hubert H. Humphrey

For many years, I thought that quote above was from one of my heroes from history, Harry S. Truman. It took a bit of googling to find that in fact came from another man who occupied an office Truman briefly held; namely United States vice-president.

As many of you might know, the last week or so has been a rough time for my wife and I. Beth's mother, Ethel, passed away last weekend after a lengthy illness. So needless to say, my mother-in-law has been on my mind a lot lately.

I don't know how successful I can call myself, but I do know I often succeeded in surprising Ethel. I am absolutely convinced I did that. I know because she and Beth spoke almost every day.

There were many times I could just envision her exclaiming, "Bill did what!?!?"

Whether it was having Beth sit with me in a car for 15 minutes while I counted the number of cars that actually made full stops at the three-way stop intersection (you'd be surprised how few actually stopped) to having her accompany me out of the house at 6 a.m. one Saturday morning so we'd be in Schomberg in time for an early morning bird-watching event, I'm sure I surprised Ethel, as I'm sure she heard about these two examples, as well as a host of others.

If nothing else, I think I amused her, which I guess proves I'm of some use after all.

A couple of weeks ago, a prominent local personality made a point of telling me how lucky I was to have Beth, and I lost very little time assuring him of how right I knew he was. I also know who Beth took after.

I never met my father-in-law (he died a couple of years before Beth and I became an item). But I do know he was a lucky man, like me.

Many of you have made contact with Beth and I over the last week, through emails, phone calls, attending the visitations and funeral, or just encountering us during our respective rounds. The thoughts you have expressed have been deeply appreciated.

But it is now time to move on.

Later Ethel.