

THE BABYBOOMER'S DILEMMA

“I want what I want when I want it ... and I want it now!” This exclamation was part of a commercial I overheard on TV that might epitomize the Baby Boomer’s motto and ID. The concept would suggest that the “Gracious God of Giving” is in a very generous and impetuous mood so as to grant that command ... or wish ... depending on how you might want to perceive it.

There is no question but that Baby Boomers have been indulged for much of their lives by those of us who came up on the tail end of the Great Depression of the last century. Simplistically put, it was probably due to the irrational guilt that we felt resulting in our need to give our children what we didn’t or couldn’t have as children ourselves. And, of course, we felt totally justified and believed that it demonstrated our love for them and that we were doing them a great favor so that they would grow up not having to feel the sense of deprivation of going without that we suffered.

Therein lies the rub! We forgot that that sense of deprivation and inability to “go without” was a character building ingredient that allowed us to withstand the stress and pressures that were thrust upon us while growing up not to mention the gratitude and satisfaction of achieving our goal of finally claiming our prize after a prolonged period of hard work and sacrifice. Character building is a process of being able to make lemonade out of lemons instead of cursing the sour taste. Character building seems to be a personality trait that is sorely lacking today and, along with the greed and amorality that seems to be the norm of our society, may justifiably be cited in part as being responsible for the many socioeconomic and the helpless-anger producing elements that we now face.

The Baby Boomer’s dilemma may not be their sense of being deprived of what they once had. Of course, that is where most of the emphasis is placed as one perceives what is going on today that is seemingly beyond control. Indeed, the primary source of the dilemma and the root of the problem may rest more with their inability to cope with going without what they once had.

However, there may be a “silver lining” to all of this if one would consider the fact that during these very testy and difficult times when rampant anger and ensuing depression might be the rule, it could afford an opportunity for the leaders within the ranks of Baby Boomers to “step up to the plate” and “bite the bullet” to demonstrate that sense of character that is so vital to our survival. The changes that we are all looking for and expect our politicians to provide must occur within us in order to deal with life more realistically, rationally and effectively. We, not Washington, are the sources of the changes necessary to place us back on the right road. Considering others instead of greed., realizing and doing the right thing instead of amorality and pursuing excellence instead of perfection are substitutions that are required of us in order that change be accomplished.

Some while ago, I wrote an article on the mistaken identity of America as being the best, doing the best and surpassing all other countries through the ages. I questioned the power

that we as Americans subscribe to as being the ultimate power of the whole world. I can remember studying Greek and Roman history with that same credo being their cries as well. I find it very interesting that some believe that we can force other nations to think and act like we do or at least “the way they should.” The dilemma for the American Baby Boomer is probably contained in having to put aside the expectation that all of our needs must be met or otherwise we have failed. They may need to put aside their sense of power and immediate gratification and replace it with the patience of hard work and the satisfaction of reaping the fruits of that labor. They may need to get back down to business and realize that there is no “Gracious God of Giving” and that their power comes from within ... not from outside of themselves.

There are many lessons that can be gleaned from the dire circumstances that we all face today. My generation needs to look to the Baby Boomer generation for both the inspiration and leadership that is required in order to face and deal with these circumstances. I believe that will be accomplished. Further, I believe that they will indeed rise to the occasion and provide this great Country of ours with what is necessary to lead us to the light at the end of the frightening tunnel that we walk through daily. If Americans are anything, they are industrious, imaginative and possess the “gene” of entrepreneurship. Hard work never killed anyone. Not working hard does.