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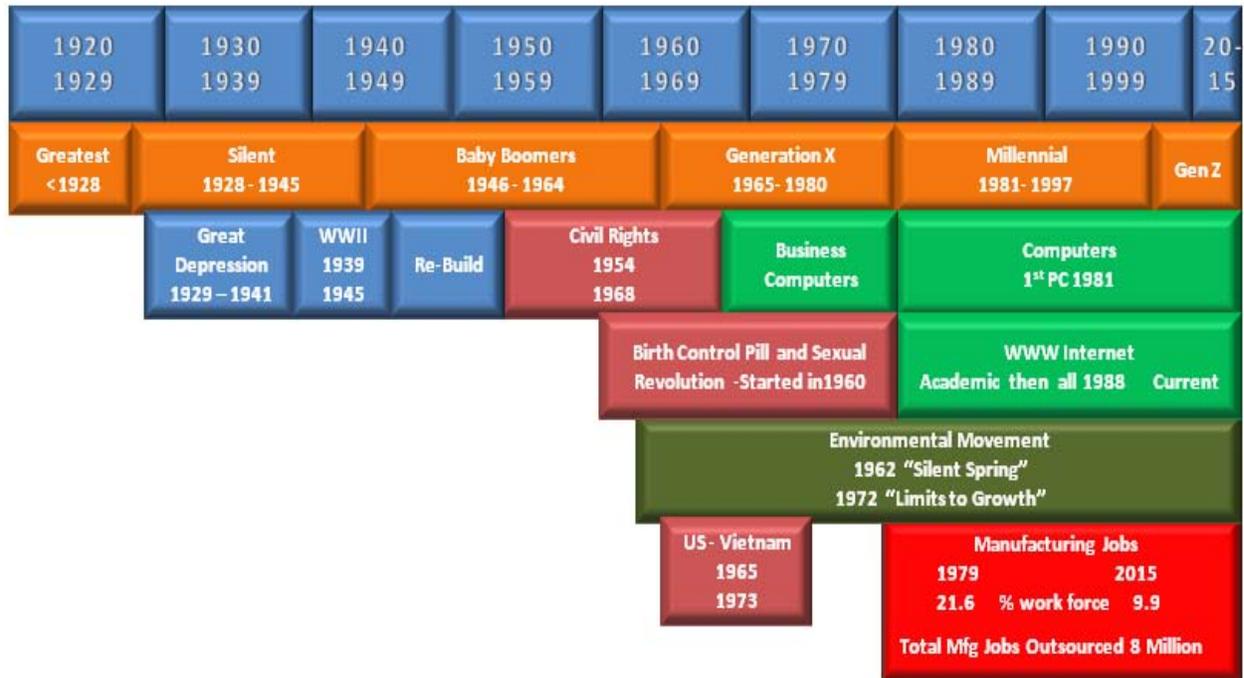


Revisiting Generation

X

The subject of the April Focused Fire Newsletter is Generation X, the children of the Silent's and the Boomers. Our children belong to this demographic. All have college degrees, are in original marriages, and we are very proud of them. They have, and are, doing an amazing job of raising and educating their children, the Millennials and the Gen Z, preparing them to participate in a complicated and very competitive world. Like every demographic, there are degrees of success and all will not profit equally. Education, for the most part, will determine who will succeed.

To understand Generation X, it is useful to redefine earlier groups. The baby-boomers classification covers multiple social iterations, starting in 1946 and ending in 1964, two vastly different worlds. This is very important. The parents of the early Generation X, the Silent Generation, born before or during World War II, were more traditional, and grew-up in a two-parent environment. The Baby boomers, parents of the majority of generation X are products of the nineteen-sixties, a very different society. They grew up in the Age of Aquarius, a time of social and sexual revolution where everything establishment was rejected. While only a small number actively participated in events, like Woodstock, in 1969, society in general grew far more liberal and supportive of progressive ideals.



Throughout the 1950-70 period, a number of social conflicts erupted. In the late nineteen-fifties, the civil rights movement was in full force. The Vietnam War brought violent protests across the country, and civilians spat upon and vilified returning veterans. At Kent State University, students were shot and killed. These events dramatically altered attitudes about free sex, drug use, religion, government, family composition, education, and work. These were among the many challenges Generation X had to face.

The nineteen-sixties signaled the start of the computer age, and the first personal computers were available in 1981. Generation X, and to a lesser extent the other generations, had to assimilate a brand-new technology that eventually changed "everything" about how we see and view the world. The computer, coupled with the Internet, changed the nature of work forever.

Generation X suffered through a series of social upheavals, but the worst situation was/is economic. The transfer of jobs from the United States to global competitors started just as Generation X students were entering college. The nature and type of jobs changed as Generation X aged. Two-thirds of the factory jobs disappeared, and white-collar, high-tech jobs quickly followed production overseas. The United States, no longer powered by a production/labor based economy, transitioned to a consumer/service based society. This triggered a profound, ongoing social effect. The continued high levels of automation and job outsourcing will widen the income gap.

Education has always divided society, providing persons that spent the time, money, and effort acquiring a degree, with much greater job prospects. The factory system had provided opportunities to less-educated workers, and high-paying factory jobs created a middle class. With those jobs gone, the divide between the educated and non-educated has worsened considerably.

The downsizing of the factory system to foreign competitors occurred on the timelines of the Silent and Boomer generations. Where one parent had been able to support a family, it now required two working people. The latchkey child came into being. The downsizing of America was well underway before Generation X finished college, and outsourcing was an accepted business practice by the time they matured and occupied executive positions. The drift towards socialism, often embraced by the Boomers

in the sixties, continues today, manifesting through anti-free market/capitalism and big-government attitudes.

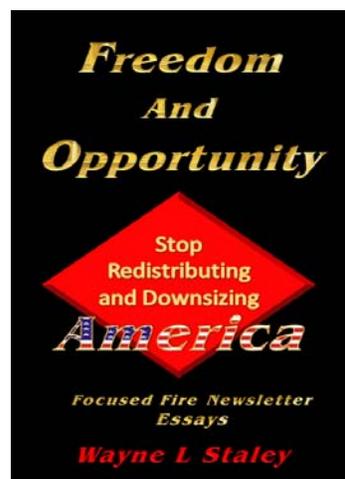
The reason for the outsourcing of America is very complex, as discussed in [Freedom and Opportunity - Stop Redistributing and Downsizing America](#). The causes were changing social and economic conditions, including greed, more so than generational demographics. Regardless, the result is a nation with fewer opportunities and decreasing prospects. While government regulations were a reason for downsizing America, they are also largely responsible for redistributing America. I suspect Generation X perceives redistribution as equality, while I view it as degrading America's ability to compete. I believe history will reflect badly on some of Generation X's misguided, but admirable social attitudes, because without a system that generates wealth, there will be far less to redistribute.

In searching through the literature, some writers have problems describing the X-Generation. I believe they are resilient, adaptive, and survivors. Dealing with constant change and social turmoil, they were/are very protective of their children, the Millennials and Gen Z. Perhaps too much so, but knowing what happened to their generation, they want a much better life for their children. Like prior generations, regardless of labels, their children's futures are very important.

Generation X, heavily influenced by the environmental movement, became the keepers of Mother Earth, and the proponents of nearly all green technologies. I agree with them, but our long-term solutions are markedly different. I believe America must reindustrialize using every green technology available. Manufacturing is not an excuse to pollute, as occurred in the Second Industrial Revolution. If America continues to disintegrate, China is the winner, and if we do nothing, at some point they will have the power to control America. I think the options are clear. Rebuild America or slowly cede our country to the least environmentally friendly country on earth.

In last month's newsletter, I stated that America must rebuild an opportunity society based on advanced technology and environmental integrity. Given their history of adaptability, the Generation X demographic must be involved and provide leadership. Leadership has to promote and teach entrepreneurship, and take action. Generation X needs to re-examine the political, social, and moral circumstances that led to the destruction of America. Without a rebirth, their children and grandchildren's future prospects appear to be very bleak, perhaps not individually, but collectively. Equality will degrade to an abstract concept - the rich will have more, and the poor, less.

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