

The Voiceless Generation

— Richard Rotman —

It's graduation-time now in the Republic and from the egresses of every school in the land winds forth a mighty generation of determined but lost youth. Suspiciously quiet and regards. As benign a growth as The Silent Generation, they dominantly slide forward in the hot June sweater. Still a mother's pride, they wait for the president to hand out long-awaited diplomas, possessors of wistful smiles, definitely fearing the future.

I, the fly on the wall, find myself among them, about halfway back in the line, just between an economics major and a sculptress. Sizing up my classmates' heroic travails with success and their glorious failures, I hope some won't outpace me as I remember those wild nights with each other, thinking wouldn't it be sweet again. Just twenty-two years old, an M.A. in liberal arts under my belt, I grimly face the search for a job. Qualified for nothing and everything, I am part of the last generation, born '48 to '54, not to have a specific profession, if the geometric feast of applications for law, medicine and business schools continue to disobey Malthus. Sure

Coming mostly from the women, the talk starts me wondering... the funny thing is the men don't say much. They're quiet. Now the women have truly had their say: their arrival has been announced; unto the highest rafters of generation, are brave and independent, in superior shape for the mad dash on the road to success. Indeed, if artfully enticing chimeras in the shape of propriety and financial security don't snatch them from the marathon with promises of easy short-cut victories after nine-month time outs, well, then, no more determined mafia shall ever have fought for a piece of the action.

But what about the men? What about that singularly voiceless and heroless generation? What do they believe in? Obviously, the Kennedys are dead and McGovern blew it, though he is still warmly regarded and is given the ultimate accolade of trust. The Beatles grew up and abdicated their throne, Jagger is a kick onstage. Paul Simon is no longer a social critic, and Richard Farina is dead along with Hendrix and George Jackson, too. That leaves Dylan who has a wife and

replacing George III with George IV (perhaps with Queen Victoria to follow)? Our old generals — Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, and Abbie Hoffman — abandoned us for movie stars, kid gurus (the god America deserves) and best-seller publishing.

Have we, the foot soldiers, also lost our vision, foresight and ethics or our vituperation for the sham of cold-warriors and hucksters of the face, wasteful and intentionally obsolete? Some of us will "take a year off," mostly to travel in Europe, which has always proved efficacious methadone for post-graduate withdrawal; others will work idly in their home towns before pushing on to more school. Most have just morosely deteriorated in the library, members of a determined rat-race which drinks American beer (that water funnelled through a horse) and tallies up its future income after professional school.

First to know only the global America of suburbs, supermarkets and atomic bombs, my generation, this generation, once promised to come forth like so many John F. Kennedys, full of vigor and noble purpose, ready to follow those who would ship us anywhere and have us pay any price to defend the cause of the American century. It was to be a clean-cut generation in short-sleeved shirts, tee-shirts, cutoffs of khaki-Farrah pants, strolling beside nice girls, virgins, in round-collared blouses, kilts and nylons held aloft by girdles, that stubborn garment with which our younger brothers will never have to struggle. That we wound up for a while with hair like Karl or Harpo Marx, in work shirts, wearing our crown jewels, a faded pair of blue jeans, was merely the psychopathology of a lofty dream's violent perversion. Assassins slaked the nation's darkest thirsts, and the murders of Dr. King and the Kennedys signalled the angry ringing down of the last curtain of altruism — not the final cloth curtain in a full theatre, but the moldy old asbestos firecurtain, its thump in the empty auditorium announcing the snuffing out of the age of liberalism and humanism, just like that.

Sure it's bad, real bad, that we haven't marched on Washington to topple this President, but it doesn't mean all is lost. A generation which has scaled the heights of ideological ecstasy can't have forgotten the view. Johnson was given the luxury of protest, the possibility of regeneration, and will be remembered, thanks to David Halberstam, as a slightly comic but basically lovable old boy who knew chicken salad from chicken shit. But Nixon, who would have screamed for China's defection, had anyone else gone to China, is so distant from even the faintest hint of credibility, so far from the most ephemeral bestowal of seriousness that Watergate, the Plumbers, the Secret Bombing were foregone conclusions — maledictions decreedly heaped on those suckers fool enough to support him. From Transylvania Street to Pennsylvania Avenue, his meanness reacted to epiphanies of Joyce or Hemingway.

But making it with that note,



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his political spirit from the blood of the Kennedy brothers and was thus America's ultimate lucky overachiever.

It was precisely at the moment when the attention of a whole generation was turned away from what we could do for our country that we discovered what we could do for ourselves. In *Rolling Stone*, Paul McCartney may have discounted replacing Kennedy, but the coincidences of departure and arrival are too convincing. With JFK gone, the Beatles showed a new kind of manhood, taught that guitars and loud music could be as heroic as good works and that, more often than not, won girls more quickly. With their music, dope sailed in right past the customs guards and it became our pabulum, our blood (with long hair, the public constitution that only we had ratified). It may have been difficult for guys to find love, but marijuana, so much better than nervous adolescent sex, was everywhere in school hallways, carpools, Carnegie Hall walking the dog. It was our skin bracer before we could shave, the cologne of manhood, old Mexican sweet-pepper scent manufactured only for us.

Arthur Frommer couldn't have written a better guide to Egocentricity on \$5.00 a week. Nobody smoked and sold marijuana like manhood in the 60s: years of a sky-rocketing Dow Jones, we really understood marketing. Dope became our life, our sustenance, our universal metaphor. "I'm going to do some dinner, I'm going to roll me a peanut butter sandwich." It helped generate, if it did not give rise to, hair, hippies, indifference and studied bemusement. Mother never quite understood why we were laughing so hard at the dinner table. Dope yoked personal experience to public existence, we talked about ourselves, not politics. We found our voice not in prose but in guitars, gulping kilowatts and reaching into those magical electrical sinews, the whole knowable world came out in one note, much as it did when earlier generations reacted to epiphanies of Joyce or Hemingway.

that voice, was not important; finding yourself was. Many a performer's momentary bummer made him a million in song because his musing reflected real internal existence and allowed him to "relate to the world." Egocentricity became the curriculum vitae of all that passed for culture, our own apocalyptic vision, like Pound's *Unruly Canto*. What hath slayeth the commune and wileth the movement was the cry of the ego. Everyone wanted to be Trotsky, a Commander of the Red Army, and few had read enough to know that Stalinism triumphed. Dopers emulated Senators and preachers, not computer programmers.

In the future, when tales are told over scotch around fireplaces, in whatever place we make our Westcoasters, be they in Soleri houses or not, the great adventures of lost youth will come from our underground existence as the princes of dope. Fantastic trips, great highs and, most importantly, getting busted. Our contact with the long arm of the law had previously been a clout on the head in Chicago and now it was a rap of knuckles on the door in a bust. The dealer (there were no pushers) was every bit as romantic and unscrupulous as the bootlegger except that he was no Gatsby; he was one of us — the lawyer's son, the dermatologist's boy, the center on the basketball team. A true hero risen among us, he was a middle class merchant whose turnover of the same goods again and again shamed McDonald's at four times the profit. The casualties were numerous, though the jail sentences were few. One day you saw the hair of the Yale Admissions Interviewer turn orange in an acid flash and the next week the feds came out of manholes in your suburb with 45 Police Specials to warn against escape. Turning on the entire wrestling team and the intra-mural manager is fun but then they turn you in. I even had my car temporarily confiscated at the border because my passenger had weed. But what the hell, man, it's another story to tell... it's all that matters, with dope.

There were, however, other kinds of adventures. On the road, disguised as Dean Moriarty (Kerouac's Cassidy) we took off for school in 400-cubic-inch Bonnevilles, hunched over the wheel as if on the tail end of Benedicte, just pulling

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Photo by Paul Newman

it would be great to have a profession, in the grand old middle-class Jewish tradition, before the lawyers and MBA's suffer the famine of the teachers. But, sentimental to the last, I want to write and have thus doomed myself to financial insecurity I might otherwise have avoided. It's okay with me, I know the novel is dead.

Listening to the speeches of professional graduation-time optimists banishes the distaste of the morning's anxiety over attending or avoiding the ceremony, wearing cap and gown over my jeans. "The world is before you, make of it what you will," says the chairman of the board of trustees, commemorating life after finishing Yale a half-century ago. Around me, dense talk rises like mist off dank miasma.

"What am I going to do? I'm not qualified for anything... and I can't find a job anywhere. Jane's going to law school and Joanne's going to make so much money after business school. Man, she'll get 20 thousand a year!"

five kids, like a regular 30-year-old, retaining the aura without the substance of heroism. Mellowed, you might say. Elliot Gould sure is cool and devoted... politics are lost in the shuffle of heroism. And Norman Mailer, who has preached manhood but seems vaguely threatened by youth's possibly superior, how shall I say it, muscle tone. He avoids considering young people, preferring instead, thank God, to cover the quivers in the national psyche.

That leaves us on our own. Who are we? Whatever became of the junior officers of the 2-5 battalion, deferred students who did not go to the war *pro patria* and instead fought the great anarchic civil war at home? First to those frontlines, they now come of age and yet the eerie solitude and worldly corporate ambition of the campuses is absolutely frightening.

What happened to the spirit that brought down the house of Lyndon Johnson and cynically allowed that of Richard Nixon to succeed, thus

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THIS WEEK IN SAN DIEGO JUNE 20 TO JUNE 26

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

LOUIS NIDORF, sculpture. Triad Gallery, 3701 India St. Opens Friday, June 14. Reception, Friday, June 21 from 5-8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday 11-5 Sunday 12-5 p.m. 238-4543.

ALLIED CRAFTSMEN, San Diego craftsmen are featured in an all-craft media exhibition. Fine Arts Gallery, Balboa Park. Sunday, May 12 through Sunday, June 23.

17th CENTURY ITALIAN MASTER drawings from the private collection of Janice Scholtz. Fine Arts Gallery, Balboa Park. Show extended to June 23, 232-7231.

CLAUDE MONET paintings, from California Collections, Fine Arts Gallery, Balboa Park. Saturday, May 18 through Sunday, June 30, 232-7231.

JURIED SHOW and one-man show by GUILLERMO ACEVEDO, mixed media. San Diego Art Institute Gallery, Balboa Park. Runs until June 30, 234-5546.

THIRD ANNUAL CALIFORNIA FIBERS SHOW, with different types of textiles and related handicrafts. Central University Library, Matthews Campus, UCSD. Tuesday, June 4 to Monday, July 1, 755-9212.

PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURE by members of the Board of Trustees of the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery Art Guild. Included are Richard Marks, Ressey Shaw, Myra Noble and others. San Diego County Law Library, 1105 Front St. Daily, 238-2231.

SCROLL PAINTINGS by contemporary Chinese artists. Fine Arts Gallery, Balboa Park, through June.

MUSIC

VOCAL MUSIC of the Renaissance and Elizabethan era, performed by the Goliards. St. Andrews by the Sea Episcopal Church, 1050 Thomas Avenue, Pacific Beach. Sunday, June 23, 8 p.m. 272-0313 or 273-3022.

MINI CONCERTS: THE BRASS ARTS QUINTET, playing Renaissance music from the tower overlooking the Plaza. Convention and Performing Arts Center, 202 C St. Tuesday, June 25, 11:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.

BIRDIE CARTER BIG BAND, a 19 member band playing modern music. Part of the Mini Concert series. Convention and Performing Arts Center, 202 C St. Wednesday, June 26, 11:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.

SOLISTI DE ALCALA will play C.P.E. Bach's Suite for String Orchestra, Trio Sonata by Szarynski, and Mozart's Duets for Violin and Viola. Dr. Henry Kolar conducting with violinists Kenneth Jerehan and Alan Kolar, pianist Magdalena Flannery, and bassist Alison Bairdick. Benefit concert for USD's music scholarship fund. Camino Theatre, University of San Diego. Friday, June 21, 8 p.m.

HARPIST Gail Dietrichs Halbig, member of faculty of Bishop's School will perform Adrian Baillet's Concerto for Harp, Hindemith's Sonata for Harp, Ottorino Respighi's "Siciliana," and David Watkins' "Fire Dance." Sherwood Hall, La Jolla. Sunday, June 23, 3 p.m.

MUSIC AND DANCES OF SPAIN, Dance Company with Jose Luis Espasola and Juana de Alva. Horner Auditorium, 4474 El Cajon Blvd. Sunday, June 23, 8 p.m. 295-5551 or 444-3050.

SPECIAL EVENTS

BATH ANNUAL SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION. Different exhibits including flowers, paintings, photos, hobbies, gems, tropical fish, custom cars, model trains, industrial, commercial, and small forces exhibits. The Pal Boone Family, 8 p.m., June 21-22, Johnny Rodriguez, 8 p.m., June 24-25, All Servicemen Rodeo, 2 p.m., June 21-26, Square Dance Jubilee, June 23, ballroom dancing to Big Band sounds, June 25, San Diego County Fairgrounds, Del Mar. For more information, call 297-0338 or 755-1161.

NATURAL HEALING CELEBRATION, featuring 40 to 50 "teachers, guides and healers," conducting workshops on nutrition, massage, meditation, prayer healing, herbology, acupuncture, yoga and Tai Chi. The four-day event will take place in an oak meadow near Lakeside, June 21-24. For information, contact the Medicine Wheel Family, Box 9352, San Diego 92109.

DISNEY ON PARADE, Disney characters will perform in skits and acts. Fashion Valley Center, Highway 163 at Friars Rd. Thursday through Saturday, June 22, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

QUEEN VICTORIA PARTY AND PROMENADE, sponsored by Save Our Heritage Organization. Visit four Victorian houses on the way. Purchase tickets at 1970 Third Ave. (Diabetes Assn. Bldg.) Thursday, June 22 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 225-1033.

LECTURES & TALKS

HASSLE-FREE INDOOR PLANT CARE, a lecture by Lynn and Joel Rapp, co-authors of Mother Earth's Hassle-Free Indoor Plant Book. Room 2722, Undergraduate Science Bldg., Revelle Campus, UCSD. Friday, June 21 from 7:30 to 10 p.m. \$6, 453-2000, ext. 2061.

SEXISM IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS, a lecture and slide show presented by women from N.O.W. and the Socialist Workers Party. The Millant Forum, 4535 El Cajon Blvd. Friday, June 21, 8 p.m.

FEMALE IDENTITY: WOMEN'S SEARCH FOR SELF AND NEW SELF CONCEPTS, a lecture by psychologist Joyce Fleming and Carol Tavris. Part of "Women's Work" series. Room 1105, Basic Science Bldg., School of Medicine, Matthews Campus, UCSD. \$3.50. Tuesday, June 25, 7-10 p.m. 453-2000, ext. 2061.

ADVANCED BEACHCOMBING SEMINAR, lecture on marine plants and animals. Natural History Museum auditorium, Balboa Park. Tuesday, June 25, 7:30 p.m. \$4, 232-3821.

NUCLEAR POWER? SUNPOWER? a public lecture sponsored by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. with Dr. Al Weinberg, Manager of Fuel Element Design and Department for the Gas Cooled Fast Breeder Reactor Program at General Atomic, and author Mary Wale. Pacific Beach United Methodist Church (corner of Ingraham and Thornc) Friday, June 21 at 7:30 p.m. 276-8475.

SPORTS

JUNIOR TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS: advanced divisions, singles and doubles. Morley Field, Balboa Park. All day, Monday through Friday, June 17 through 21, 236-5717.

JUNIOR OLYMPIC TRACK AND FIELD FINALS, San Diego and Imperial Counties. Balboa Stadium, Saturday, June 22, 8 p.m. 236-5717.

BASEBALL: Padres vs. Giants. Monday through Thursday, June 24 through 27, 7:30 p.m. San Diego Stadium. 283-4494.

FILMS

THE TRAITORS, a film about a trade union leader in Argentina. Center for Radical Education, 5071 College Avenue. Friday, June 21, 7:30 p.m. 287-0175.

THE MYSTERY OF STONEHENGE, a film exploring the theory that these British ruins are actually a giant computer used by the Celts. Natural History Museum, Balboa Park. Saturday, June 22 at 3 p.m. and Sunday, June 23, at 1:30 p.m. 232-3821.

MORNING OF THE EARTH, a surfing film, and **BIRDS DO IT**, a hang-glider short. Both presented by the Western Surfing Association. Pacific Beach Junior High School. Friday, June 21: Hoover High School, Saturday, June 22. Both showings begin at 8:30 p.m.

BABY NEEDS A NEW PAIR OF SHOES, a film about the numbers racket, by the Ghetto Messengers. Civic Theatre, Saturday, June 22, 9:30 p.m. 236-6510.

THEATRE

RATS by Israel Horowitz. **COP OUT** by John Guare. **SAVE ME A PLACE AT FOREST LAWN** by Lorea Verby. Performed at 8:30, 9:30 and 10:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday, by the New Heritage Theatre, Inc., at the Stratford Court Theatre, Del Mar. 459-3435 or 276-7555.

YOUR OWN THING, a "youth" drama suggested by Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. Classic Center Stage, Balboa Park. Tuesdays through Sundays, 8:30 p.m. and matinees 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. 239-2255. Opens Tuesday, June 25.

YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN, dinner show. Uncle John's Dinner Theatre, 5758 El Cajon Blvd. Runs through June 23. Fridays and Saturdays, dinner from 6:30 to 8 p.m., Sundays, from 6:30 to 7 p.m. Shows at 8 p.m. and 7 p.m. respectively. 463-2012, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

DETECTIVE STORY, a Sidney Kingsley play. Mission Playhouse, 3960 Mason. Open run, Fridays and Saturdays at 8:30 p.m. 255-6453.

THE FANTASTICKS, the musical. Golden Rolin' Belly, Del Mar. Mondays and Tuesdays at 8 p.m. (dinner 6:30 p.m.).

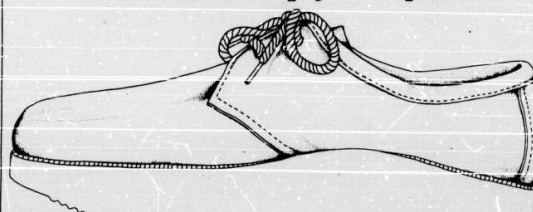
APPLE TREE, parts one and three: "The Diary of Adam and Eve" by Mark Twain. "Rascallones" by Julie Failer. Uncle John's Dinner Theatre, Fridays and Saturdays, 8 p.m. (after 6:30 p.m. dinner), Sundays, 7 p.m. (after 5:30 p.m. dinner). Through July 7.

MACK AND MABEL, new musical comedy about Mack Sennett's Hollywood. Civic Theatre. Thursday and Friday, June 20 and 21, 8 p.m. (matinee Thursday at 2:30 p.m. also.) 236-6510.

NATIONAL SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL: ROMEO AND JULIET, Thursday, June 20 and Sunday, June 23 at 8:30 p.m. Saturday, June 22, 2 p.m. **TWELFTH NIGHT**, Friday and Saturday, June 21 and 22 at 8:30 p.m. and Sunday, June 23 at 2 p.m. Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park. 239-2255.



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