

Children of the Greatest Generation

" We are the Silent Generation—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 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. We are the last to see the gold stars in the front windows of our grieving neighbors whose sons died in the War. We saw the 'boys' home from the war, build their little houses. 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." We did play outside, and we did play on our own.

There was no little league. There was no city playground for kids.

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.

On Saturday afternoons, the movies gave us newsreels of the war sandwiched in between westerns and cartoons. Telephones were one to a house, often shared (party lines) and hung on the wall.

Computers were called calculators, they only added and were hand-cranked; typewriters were driven by pounding fingers, throwing the carriage, and changing the ribbon.

The 'internet' and 'GOOGLE' were words that did not exist.

Newspapers and magazines were written for adults, and the news was broadcast on our table radio in the evening by Gabriel Heater.

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.

The radio network expanded from 3 stations to thousands of stations.

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. We entered a world of overflowing plenty and opportunity; a world where we were welcomed. We enjoyed a luxury; we felt secure in our future.

Depression poverty was deep-rooted. Polio was still acrippler. The Korean War was a dark presage in the early 50s, and by mid-decade schoolchildren were ducking under desks for Air-Raid training. Russia built the "Iron Curtain" and China became Red China. Eisenhower sent the first 'advisers' to Vietnam. Castro set up camp in Cuba and Khrushchev came to power.

We are the last generation to experience an interlude when there were no threats to our homeland. We came of age in the 40s and 50s. The war was over and the cold war, terrorism, "global warming," and perpetual economic insecurity had yet to haunt life with unease. Only our generation can remember both a time of great 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" More than 99% of us are either retired or deceased and we feel privileged to have "lived in the best of times"!

[Think about it . . . ed.]