

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

I just received an e-mail from a friend who had read an article about this year's incoming college freshmen, most of whom were born in 1987. It was kind of an eye-opener as it mentioned that they had *never* lived in a world without Starbucks. They have *always* lived in a world of pay-per-view TV, and voice mail on their phones. Someone named George Bush had been president for half their lives. Some things they are just as well without, like not hearing about Andy Warhol, Studio 54 or enduring Arsenio Hall.

My friend said this e-mail made her feel old. Since she is a good dozen years younger than *me*, I was left wondering if I should begin checking out nursing homes.

I remember rushing home from grade school and fighting my brothers over who got to watch the color television set. I watched, "Gilligan's Island," and "Leave it to Beaver." They wanted "Star Trek." The "loser" had to watch the black and white. This was when Captain Kirk was young and virile and no doubt well before he could ever imagine himself doing cell phone commercials. At night we watched, "Gun Smoke," and "Get Smart." I secretly wanted to be Agent 99 and talk in a shoe phone and roll my eyes at Don Adams. Johnny Carson was the undisputed king of late night television among all three channels and it was a rare treat to be able to stay up late enough to hear the monologue, while my dad laughed and then explained what was so funny.

We begged our mothers for Ked's PF Flyers and dug in our cereal boxes for decoder rings. Later we all wore mood rings. We tied towels around our necks and jumped off the fence with our arms outstretched like Superman trying to gain enough momentum to make the towel flutter behind us for even a few seconds.

Typewriters had ribbons and mistakes were painstakingly removed with little sheets of white paper that invariably fell down into the thing while you were trying to use one. No one owned or could even imagine a computer and we were actually expected to know and use the Dewey Decimal System for locating books in the library. We did math in our heads and checked our answers on paper.

Telephones had cords on them and hung on the wall or sat on a tabletop. The new push button Slimlines were a big deal. If the line was busy or no one answered you simply tried again later. The bathroom in our house did not have a sauna or hot tub in it and was not as big as my parent's entire master bedroom. Likewise the closet. Fast food was a treat, not a way of life. McDonald's had yet to sell its first *million*. Mom could feed three kids and get change for her dollar. Dinner meant sitting down with everyone within your immediate family, passing dishes and talking to one another without the television on.

Adults were expected to behave themselves at their children's little league games and actually help teach good sportsmanship by example. Imagine!

The Twin Towers were just an idea and I vividly recall all the big people in my life crying and walking around in a daze because President Kennedy had been shot. I watched his small son, who was just a couple of years younger than me; salute his father's casket on the televised funeral. Now he is gone too.

"Regular" gasoline was a quarter a gallon. Seat belts had just become standard equip-ment on new cars but a law did not yet mandate wearing them. In my family, they

were used as punishment when we acted up. “Okay, that’s it! I’ve had enough! All of you put your seat belts on!” We rode our bikes everywhere we went and no one worried about being kidnapped, raped or murdered. Video games were just coming out but we preferred to play endless games of kickball, baseball and football in the empty lot across the street with all the neighbor kids until it was too dark to see the ball or the chiggers finally got the best of us.

Everyone I knew rode the bus to school and the only time your parents ever drove you was if you missed the bus. It was usually not a pleasant ride.

As life and culture continue their inevitable metamorphosis, I find myself telling my kids the same thing my grandfather always told me, “Kid, *these* are *your* good ol’ days!”