

Monday's Commentary

The Flip Side

by craig piechura



Woodstock Nation noted

I don't think it was ever hip for hippies to call themselves that. Just as I'm sure beatniks never liked their collective calling card.

But for all practical purposes I guess I would have qualified as a hippie. After all, I was the first kid on the block to put a black light and day-glo posters on my bedroom wall. I remember there was an orange peace sign on the wall next to a political poster of Donald Duck imitating Uncle Sam's "I Want You" pose. Except Uncle Duck said "Quack!"

I'm still not sure of the political message, but it disturbed my dad, which was enough at the time. A year later I succeeded in being classified a conscientious objector by the draft board.

I tossed out the hippie posters a few years later when I got into a 'let's leave the past behind' mood, but I was reminded of them last week during all the news reports commemorating the 10th anniversary of Woodstock. At the risk of being accused of being overly sentimental, Woodstock was an important event in mass culture. Granted, it was not as significant as we thought at the time, but it was a symbol of a profound change in national direction.

I was 17 in 1969 and wanted to go to Woodstock in the worst way.

I had made some money and gained 20 pounds that summer working at a cafeteria inside a factory. But I didn't want to take my car to New Bethel, N.Y. figuring it would conk out on the other side of Niagara Falls. All week we tried to find somebody who had a reliable car. Since most of us delivered pizzas on weekends, nobody had a reliable car.

So we did the next best thing. We went to New York City on a class trip the following spring and went to the opening day performance of the movie "Woodstock" at 9 in the morning. (We had to be back at the hotel at noon to go to the U.N.)

And in the summer of 1970 I attended the local equivalent of Woodstock — the Goose Lake Rock & Roll Festival (and drug convention) in appropriately-named Grass Lake.

But we didn't have to go to Woodstock. We had to experience it vicariously through a couple of high school classmates — Gene Branni and Paul Eckstein — who were lucky enough to make the pilgrimage. I remember I regarded them highly enough to write a feature story on their excursion in the high school paper.

"THREE DAYS of peace, love and music" was the way the festival was described at the time. You couldn't get away with that claim in today's cynical atmosphere. But people like my classmates, and another friend who went, say that the Woodstock participants really were friendly and really did share their food and shelter and that the music was fantastic.

But that's not what brought them to Woodstock. They wanted to see some naked girls and be part of an historic spectacle.

I talked to some people my age last week about their impressions of the festival at the time compared to their view of it 10 years later. None of them wanted me to use their names for fear they'd be called wild flower children.

Bill (might not be his real name), my friend who actually went to Woodstock, said he didn't go to hear the music but to "see the spectacle." He was visiting a friend in New York and heard disassembler reports about the unprecedented traffic jam and figured that was the place to be.

"I went when things were sounding good, when I heard they were expecting one million people. That's when I decided to go. I bought a ticket to the festival in New York City, which I didn't have to use because by the time we got there the festival was open to anyone."

Bill saved a copy of the New York Daily News with the glaring headline blaring: "Traffic Uplight at Hippie Fest."



Images of the festival remain intact. Images of non-chalant naked couples, O.D. tents for LSD casualty cases, white blues singer Joe Cocker contorting his body on stage, volunteers making thousands of peanut butter sandwiches, and a busload of Brooklymites singing their neighborhood song "Be Bop Bo."

TIME HAS a strange way of capsulizing and compressing the past. For example, just the week before Woodstock were the murders by the Charles Manson family. Ten years ago last month Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Somehow those events didn't seem related at the time but are almost inseparable upon historic reflection.

I could quote some of the lyrics of the Woodstock singers who talked about how "we've got to get ourselves back to the garden." But those words seem painfully naive now.

No, the lyrics that come to mind right now were sung by Iggy Pop, lead singer with a local band called the Stooges that played the Goose Lake Rock Festival.

Iggy sang a snotty little ditty that went like this: "Well it's 1969, OK. All across the U.S.A. Another year for me and you. Another year with nothin' to do. Well last year I was 21. Didn't have a lotta fun. Now I'm gonna be 22. Said 'Oh, my,' and 'Boo-hoo' This is 1969 baby."

That, to me, announced the end of the summer of love. And this is 1979 baby. But the point we shouldn't forget or be ashamed of is that at one time Woodstock Generation meant something sincere. And sincerity has been in short supply in the Me Generation.

"Around the edge"

by Jackie Klein



PYG shows heart for kids

The Oakland County Youth Assistance Program is celebrating its 25th year of working for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and neglect.

Southfield Parent-Youth Guidance Commission (PYG), sponsored by the county organization, has been around for two decades, quietly and without fanfare, helping troubled kids and their families.

"PYG is a group which has not just gone where the path leads, but has gone where there is no path and left a trail," said Southfield City Administrator Peter Cristiano.

"My wish for PYG is that there will be no need for it," said last year's chairperson Ray Krieger. "But as long as we have a place within our community, my hope is that the accomplishments of PYG will multiply and grow successfully for many years."

"The supreme happiness in life is the conviction that we are loved and needed," Mrs. Krieger added. "So all PYG members can go forward supremely happy."

The commission is allowed 21 members, all volunteers who represent a cross-section of the community. They come in many age groups and have a variety of backgrounds. But they all share the common denominator — dedication to youth.

SHARLENE KRUGER is a paid Oakland County caseworker assigned to PYG. She expressed her emotions in the commission's 1978-79 report. In a one-page message, she got to the heart of the program.

"This is the time of year when I pause for a few minutes and kind of look back at all the events that have transpired in order to decide whether it is all worth it," she wrote.

"I wondered whether all the countless, relentless hour PYG members gave of their time was worth it — whether the conflict and disagreements were worth it — whether the hurt, disappointments and sometimes tears were worth it."

"I wondered whether the constant re-evaluation, reshaping, structuring and restructuring of pro-

grams and finally pushing ahead, always ahead, with better programs by PYG members were worth it."

"And as I sat and pondered, I conjured up sort of make-believe pictures of the programs that were created as a result of this dedication and commitment by PYG members."

"I thought of the joy that I saw in the children's faces as they jumped off the buses returning from a camp experience (sponsored by PYG). I thought of the children on Youth Recognition Night walking up to the stage with heads held high, proudly accepting their awards."

"I THOUGHT of the parents attending our parent education workshops who said, 'I tried that with my son and it actually worked. It felt right.' Yes, oh yes — an overwhelming yes — it was all worth it."

Oakland County probate judges agree local youth assistance programs like PYG, which is also sponsored by the city and school system, have been effective in meeting the challenge of a dynamic, changing society.

Last year in the county, through casework services, more than 2,000 youths were able to remain outside of the juvenile justice system. There was more community organization activity than ever before.

New youth involvement committees were formed, volunteer membership increased significantly and so did parent education workshops and youth recognition events. One-to-one volunteer committees continued to have a positive impact on youth by matching them with caring adults, according to probate judges. More than 1,400 children in Oakland County went to camp, despite the rising costs for camperships.

"This was accomplished by sponsors, caseworkers and volunteers striving as a team to prevent delinquency and neglect. Was it worth it? As Ms. Kruger said, "Yes, oh yes, an overwhelming yes."

Shirlee's Sallies

by Shirlee Iden



Sowing seeds for peace

Barbara Blum's a hometown kid. Born in Southfield, she writes poetry, studies art and tries to live down being the youngest of the five kids of Joyce and George Blum.

This summer the world became a lot wider for the 11-year-old because of one woman's dream for international peace.

Barbara visited Sweden, spending four weeks in a CISV (Children's International Summer Village) with other 11-year-olds from many countries.

"Now I can count in eight languages," she said. "But Europeans speak so many languages that I really felt dumb speaking only English. Most of them spoke English to accommodate us."

When she goes to Birney Middle School in a few weeks, Barbara will have a great many souvenirs, some gifts, some items she traded for, to show her classmates.

Treasures in her collection include a book from India, shirts from Denmark and other countries, booklets from Yugoslavia, beads from North Africa, a carved elephant figure and a booklet made by Spanish children which includes a recipe.

But the bright girl understands that her most valuable treasure is not tangible, but the friendships she formed and the understanding she gained in a few short weeks.

"RIGHT after the war, a lady in Cincinnati thought up the idea of the Children's International Summer Villages," Barbara said.

"She thought that children had to be the only hope for the future and that if they could meet one another that might be the way to stop wars."

After her summer in Sweden, Barbara thinks that the woman might be right.

"Even people who don't speak your own language can somehow understand what you mean when you use to face."

"My best friend is Volaine, a girl from France, and we didn't speak the same language."

Barbara said the CISV idea is that 11 is the ideal age to bring youngsters together.

"The reason they picked 11 is that you can understand what's going on in the world and yet not be too opinionated about other governments," Barbara

said. Libyan children who participated for the first time, the year contributed booklets, however, espousing their country's opinions on democracy.

Activities for the month included a week-end with a Swedish family and a lot of camp-like activities. "But what was different was we played games from all different countries and had international nights," she said. "The groups would do dances and songs from their country and wear the costume, too."

The American contingent wore Mickey Mouse shirts and hats and before Barbara left Sweden, they had taught the Virginia Rebel to youngsters from far and wide.

BARBARA HEARD about CISV at Stevenson Elementary School and applied after attending some play days and participating in a socio-gram where the youngsters stated preferences for "people we liked best."

"I was picked, and although I wanted to go to Belgium, I'm glad now because Sweden is a nice country," Barbara said.

Barbara found many things in Swedish life that were different from Southfield, but, along with the other children, she adjusted.

"I did lose six pounds because the food was different," she said. "They had a lot of ham and I don't eat that, but we had a lot of Swedish meat balls and boiled potatoes."

Television was mostly in English with Swedish subtitles, but there are only two TV stations in Sweden. Barbara "kind of missed" a full television schedule.

"Another thing different was when they cleaned house," she said. "They would sweep a rug with a broom and take it outside and hit it, and I never saw that before."

On one week, Barbara wears a leather bracelet that she says she will never remove.

"The last night we stood around the flagpole, and we each took a strip of leather and tied it on the wrist of the person on our left," she said. "I may never see any of those people again, but my bracelet means I'll never forget them. I don't ever want to take it off."

From our readers

Citizen cheers for police

Editor: We read daily of the rise in suburban crime — the bicycles and stereos stolen, and the cars vandalized — and we hope it will never hit our quiet, sedate Farmington neighborhoods.

We read also the usually bad press given to our local police departments, accusing them of inefficiency and sometimes even nonchalance in dealing with the growing problem of crime. Recently, for the first time in my life, I was a victim of a robbery. In broad daylight my home was broken into and some valuable items were stolen. When I came home from work to discover this, I was shocked and frightened and enraged. Finally, I was saddened by the thought that the items taken would probably never be returned or the thief captured.

My phone call to the Farmington Police Department dispatcher brought them to my home in minutes. The officers were polite, efficient, thorough and very concerned. A detective was called to my home and arrived quickly. I was impressed with this team, their speed and their conscientious efforts. At 7 p.m. that night I received a call from the department saying a suspect had been apprehended with my stolen

READERS' FORUM

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Items in his possession. Needless to say, I cheered into the phone, "I don't believe it! You guys are great!"

What happened? How did they catch the thief? Was it a miracle or a stroke of good luck? I do not think so at all. In defense of our local police: they must work doggedly against insurmountable odds, often with little evidence and sketchy information from victims.

The gentlemen who investigated my home that night were anything but nonchalant. I firmly believe it was their speed and concern that brought about the apprehension of this particular suspect.

I know this sounds like a 30-minute television "Police Story" with the usual ending that does not usually happen in real life. But, in this case, it did happen, and perhaps an encouraging local police story needs to be printed. Thank you, officers. You really are great.

CAROL KAE STABLEIN, Farmington

"The final straw"

Editor: Jackie Klein's "Around the Edges" column in the Aug. 13 paper was the final straw. How sick can a person get? It's too bad Jackie's world is falling apart. I'm sure every mother would be proud to have a daughter with Jackie's comments on life.

It's no wonder we have the problems with our teenagers with viewpoints as expressed by, I suppose, Ms. Klein. The article was in poor taste. It marks the end of my reading or subscribing to your very liberal publication. ROBERT MISTELE, Farmington Hills

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