

WHO WILL BE THE FUTURE LEADERS OF CHAPEL HILL VFW POST 9100?

Jim Stallings, Senior Vice Commander

GENERATIONS SINCE WW I

(You will find variations in these dates from different authors.)

<u>Generation</u>	<u>Born Between</u>	<u>Ages In 2009</u>	<u>Their Main War(s)</u>
Lost Generation	(1883-1900)	All Deceased	WW I 1918-1919
Greatest Generation	(1901-1924)	85 to 108	WW II 1940-1945
Silent Generation	(1925-1945)	64 to 84	Korea 1950-1954
Baby Boomers	(1945-1964)	45 to 63	Viet Nam 1954-1975
Generation X	(1965-1981)	28 to 44	All Wars Since 1982
Millennial (Y) Generation	(1982-2001)	8 to 27	Iraq, Afghanistan
Generation Z	(2001-present)	0 to 7	None Yet

LOST GENERATION/VETERANS BORN 1883-1900 *(Their War: WW I)*

This **Generation** fought in World War I and preceded the "**Greatest Generation**" of WW II. Now all deceased, the last of them died within this last year (2009).

While the US didn't get into WW I until late in the war our troops played a decisive role in its outcome. And, there was this feeling among the troops that we were there to pay back France for their decisive role in the outcome of our American Revolution. When General Pershing's Expeditionary Force landed in France he is alleged to have declared: "Lafayette, we are here."

GREATEST GENERATION BORN 1911-1924 *(Their War: WW II)*

Patriotism High, Everyone Involved

This generation has tended to be patriotic and have been the driving force in our Post in recent years, but they are now dying at an increasing rate.

Men and women of this generation were said to have fought "not for the fame and recognition, but because it was the right thing to do." People felt that WW II was a "just war."

Unlike every war since then, virtually everyone was affected and involved in some way. There was gas rationing and certain foods and clothing were rationed. The speed limit was set at 35 miles per hour to save fuel. Everyone was collecting scrap metal and rubber to turn in to the war effort. There were Victory Gardens. There were War Bond drives and sales of stamps in schools each morning which resulted in a War Bond when your stamp book was filled. Many women worked in defense plants.

Also, future politicians and important people did not avoid serving in the military. Several U.S. presidents were involved including Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, Carter and George H. W. Bush. President Roosevelt's sons were in the services and Kennedy's brother was killed in the War.

They Rebuilt the US And Our Enemies' Economies

Many of the Greatest Generation who survived the War went on to build and rebuild United States industries in the years following the War. And, we contributed huge amounts under the Marshal Plan to rebuild our enemies' economies. This, of course, was not entirely altruistic. The Cold War started immediately after WW II ended. We and the USSR were competing for allies; and, the US goal was to stop USSR expansion and the spread of Communism."

THE SILENT GENERATION BORN 1925-1945 *(Their War: Korea)*

The Silent Generation grew up as the children of depression and WW II. They came of age just too late to be World War II war heroes and just too old to be youthful free spirits like the later "Baby Boomers."

Sandwiched as they were between the much larger, but now quickly diminishing, Greatest Generation and the later Baby Boomers, neither politicians nor advertisers paid much attention to them. They didn't even include a US president.

They faced a difficult job market as the WW II veterans got out of the services after 1945 and had all the good jobs before they were mature or had their university degrees.

Silent, Safe And Forgotten

But, with the war over, their life was now good so many became "organization men" and "good soldiers" whose bosses were often the WW II veterans. Their orders seemed to be: "Do as you are asked. Show up on time. And, never question authority." So, many became apolitical, safe, silent and boring-the "Silent Generation."

Now in their late 70's, or even in early 80's, many of the "Silents" wonder if they really have done anything important like the Greatest Generation did. They didn't "save the world;" and, they have never had a president and, now, never will. Their war was Korea, the "forgotten war." If the TV program M.A.S.H. had not been produced, and still be running, the younger generation may have never heard of it.

THE BABY BOOMERS BORN 1946-1964 *(Their War: Viet Nam)*

This generation was born after WW II, a huge shockwave of children never before seen in the history of the US. By their large numbers they were destined to have a huge impact upon American culture. Some authors divide them into two: Cohort #1 1946-1955 and Cohort #2, "Generation Jones" 1956-1964.

The "Affluent Society"-If You Were Lucky Enough To Be In It

Whichever cohort is used, both cohorts grew up in a time of generally increasing affluence. They have had a higher participation in higher education and have lived a more affluent life than any generation before them.

At the same time there was a part of this generation, the "middle class" and the "lower class," that were starting to lose out in this drive to

affluence due to loss of our manufacturing base and the lack of a more formal education.

However, the more affluent "upper crust" of this generation tended to have advantages bestowed upon them by their relatively affluent parents. Therefore, they grew to maturity also fully expecting a lifetime of prosperity and entitlements that would never end. They also expected it for their children.

Let The Good Times Roll!

They assumed that such things as recessions and depressions had finally been cured. This has encouraged them to take more risks in terms of investments, including larger expensive homes, than their parents. They tended to spend to live the "good life" and to promote the success of their children above those of the less fortunate.

Having not lived through the Great Depression they had much less fear of taking on large debt to achieve these goals. They tended to save less and to be in a state of denial regarding their own aging and death. This attitude has come back to bite them recently when the economy declined and their risky investments, which they were counting on for retirement, tanked.

The second part of this generation, Cohort #2 and "Generation Jones" 1956-1964, is sometimes characterized as: less optimistic than Cohort #1. By the end of their cohort, the economy was starting to cool down or decline. However, they are still lumped by most authors with the Boomers because of their large numbers and a similar association with great changes in our culture and the economy. One member of this latter cohort includes President Obama, born 4 August, 1961.

GENERATION X **BORN 1965-1981**

(Their Wars: All Since 1982)

Generation X'ers have one thing in common with the Silent Generation who had to live in the shadow of the Greatest Generation. They have had to follow in the long shadow of the numerous and dominant Baby Boomers who are often still in charge. They saw the Boomers as a generation that had it all. However, they now face a US where jobs are harder to get; and, if they get one, there may be no job security. Some have taken a long time to become independent and some have relied a lot on their parents for help. Some

have moved back in with parents, or have never left.

They see social security predicted to go broke in their lifetime. Oil dependency is a problem. Many of them were just getting into the housing market when it collapsed. And, climate is predicted to get unpredictable with global warming.

When they were just getting started in their careers the Government had a surplus and now the national debt is exploding. And, the US is involved in very expensive wars which most X'ers did not want and do not now support.

The Clean-Up And Repair Crew

So, it looks like X'ers are destined to be the generational "clean-up and repair" crew. They are going to be the ones who will have to clean up the mess and excesses of the previous generations; and, it will not be easy. President Obama has already found this out.

GENERATION Y **BORN 1982-2001**

(Their Wars: Iraq and Afghanistan)

The term "Generation X on steroids" has been applied to this generation. These are the kids following Generation X who are heavily immersed in a digital world and are perfectly at home in it. If some of their peers are not, they may be hopelessly behind with little chance of catching up. Other names for this generation have included Millennium Generation, Echo Boomers, i-Generation, Einstein Generation and the Google Generation.

A 2007 study of 7,705 college students by Junco and Mastrodicasa found that Generation Y used technology at a much higher rate than previous generations. They found that 97% owned a computer, 94% owned a cell phone, and 56% owned an MP3 player.

Their parents are sometimes labeled "helicopter parents" referring to the tendency for them to quickly come to their aid when they get into trouble at school, etc. But, they are the next generation in line after the X'ers and will eventually be in charge.

GENERATION Z **BORN 2002-PRESENT**

(No Wars Yet)

As this generation is still under aged and still being born it is too early to adequately predict what they will be like. They will be the children of the

youngest Baby Boomers, Generation X'ers and the oldest Generation Y'ers. They are growing up in a world in which single-parent, same-sex parent and two-income families are commonplace. One source called them "digital natives" in that they will inherit the digital and technological skills of their parents and will never have known anything else.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE LEADERSHIP OF VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST 9100

The Greatest Generation has done a great job of leadership. But they have done about all that they can do. The Silent Generation, as in employment, has been outdone and bypassed by the enthusiasm and competence of the Greatest Generation until they are also getting old and are no longer interested in leadership. The Baby Boomers could be the obvious ones to take leadership now except that many of them have been turned off by their Viet Nam experience. Those Viet Nam veterans who were career veterans may be enthusiastic about joining and promoting the VFW, but those non-career Viet Nam veterans have often shown little interest in joining any military organization unless it's an organization of only Viet Nam veterans.

So, in my opinion, that leaves Generation X. While they have had the same experience as the Silent Generation, waiting behind the Baby Boomers for positions of leadership, they are the obvious ones to begin to take over leadership of the VFW. And, the torch has already started to be passed to this generation as the Boomers are starting to retire. President Obama is a late Boomer or an early Generation X depending upon how the generations are divided by different authors. If we neglect Generation X and Y because we are afraid that they "are not ready" and do not appoint them to important positions, they may lose interest and we may lose them. Also, they should be in a better position to recruit younger members-the necessary future life blood of the Post. I believe that we should make a conscious effort to work for a mix of Boomers and Generation X and Y'ers in leadership positions before it's too late. We older veterans can step back and be mentors to them and serve as board members. We should not be afraid to give up primary positions of leadership to them. They are the ones who are going to be in charge next whether we like it or not!