



tweetbird OF YOUTH

It began as a decade of hope for world peace that ended in a state of international discord. The sixties opened with John Kennedy's establishment of the Peace Corp; it closed with the peace symbol animating a defiant anti-war chant of "Hell no, we won't go." The Vietnam War was a catalyst for change among America's disillusioned baby boomers, hippies, yuppies, flower children and garden variety acid heads who embraced a neo-romantic idealism that was more fuzzy than focused.

By 1966, Lyndon Johnson had over 500,000 troops deployed in a country of rice paddies half a world away. In response, tempers flared and college enrollment skyrocketed as universities across the United States became ideological battlefields in a culture conflict against this protracted and ultimately humiliating exercise in political hubris that forever stained the soul of America.

Revolution and evolution punctuated the sixties as gay rights, women's rights and equal rights became topics demanding recognition from America's white, polite, middle class suburbanites who admired June Cleaver, worshipped John Wayne and were frankly uncomfortable with all the fuss being kicked up by "the colored people."

Sexual freedom flung open the closet door one summer night in June of 1969. "The love that dares not speak its name" found a strong and resonating voice for itself at the Stonewall Inn, a New York City gay bar in Greenwich Village routinely subjected to police raids and random acts of brutality against customers. Enraged bar patrons battled an outnumbered police force with bricks and parking meters ripped out of the sidewalks. That night the limp wrist gave way to a clinched fist. By the end of that summer homosexuals delivered an unmistakable message to New York City's graft-driven police department and the world: If men could walk on the moon they could certainly walk into a bar.

In the early seventies, the youthful idealism that defined the sixties was discarded, much like a snake in the grass shedding an old skin. Plausible deniability became an operative catch phrase when White House Press Secretary Ron Ziegler dismissed the Watergate break in as, "A third-rate burglary unworthy of further White House comment." Carried out with a statecraft acumen reminiscent of The Three Stooges, this pathetic and ultimately pointless crime toppled a presidency and ushered in an era of cynicism among America's young people. It also gave lazy journalists the opportunity to attach the unimaginative suffix of "gate" to every political scandal right up to the present day.

Nascent developments in the area of technology were an overture for today's computer driven world. As the seventies unfolded barcodes, test tube babies and laser printers arrived on the scene. The neutron bomb, a device that destroys human beings but not property came into being—a move towards progress that now gives a less than comforting relevancy to the History Channel's endless repeats of its Life after People series.

Music, the reflective soul of society, defined the decade of the seventies with one word: Disco. Television actor John Travolta gyrated to a disco beat and international stardom in the box office hit, Saturday Night Fever. Early on in the seventies Don McLean immortalized teenage angst and lamented a past that never really existed in the epic ballad American Pie. In a career move that was doubtlessly unintentional, Elvis Presley bought the farm and moved in to history as his death and subsequent resurrections became a cottage industry on a worldwide scale.

The eighties found its definition in junk—as in junk bonds and junk cars. Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken mugged Wall Street in their three piece suits by way of insider trading and the use of arbitrageur trading, a financial sleight-of-hand trading technique whereby a bond trader plays both ends against the middle. A broker looks for price discrepancies between stocks listed on one or more exchanges, buys up the undervalued shares and short sells the same number of overvalued shares on another financial exchange. Yes, it is confusing. Oliver Stone's 1987 motion picture, Wall Street, conferred cult status quirkiness on Boesky through his thinly veiled alter ego in the film, Gordon Gekko, who proclaimed, "I think greed is good. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself." Shrug that one off, Ayn Rand.

In Detroit, John DeLorean, the maverick car manufacturer, gave the world just exactly what it did not want, an automobile with wings. Known for its car doors that opened upward, this automotive oddity would nonetheless find immortality in the 1985 movie, Back to the Future. DeLorean, however, did not fare so well. In the summer of 1982, he was caught in a cocaine sting entrapment orchestrated by the FBI. While he ultimately walked away with his freedom, his public image as a jet setter star ascendant came to a crashing end.

Acronyms exploded onto the scene in the nineties. Y2K, DDL, ISDN, MP3, CD-ROM, DVD and MAC OS X. INTEL replaced insight as the computer revolution took over the culture. beepers, the favored method of communication among early nineties drug dealers, rapidly fell by the way side while cell phones gained in popularity. Words such as browser, java and mouse took on new meanings in this world of hypertext and technology.

During the nineties, women moved from the bedroom to the boardroom in an unprecedented bid for power and recognition as the media catch phrase, You go Girl!,

took on a whole new meaning. Madeleine Albright took on Henry Kissinger's old job as Secretary of State, and Janet Reno became the hard ass United States Attorney General.

April of 1999 saw mass murder become an unwelcome part of the curriculum in American schools when two malcontents went on a killing spree at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Their commitment to Goth nihilism continues to plague high school and college campuses up to the present day.

Pop culture movie taste in the nineties was eclectic to say the least. Titanic, Forest Gump, Home Alone, The Matrix and Dances with Wolves all struck a nerve with American movie goers and proved to be a source of box office gold for Hollywood.

On September 11, 2001 America cried. Nine years later her citizens are still wondering when the hell the country's leaders will wake up and get the picture. A commitment to unconditional victory over terrorism is in a state of eclipse. The government's mindset is more concerned with political correctness than it is with prevailing over religious fanaticism that promotes mass murder and suicide as sacraments of faith. In its present day form the "War on Terror" is nothing more than a whining lamentation.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century "outsourcing" of jobs became more popular than ever. Consumers in New York calling Customer Service numbers often end up talking with someone in New Delhi—if they are willing to spend two hours selecting options on a touch tone phone.

Commitment to idealism became an anachronism among young people in the ten-year period leading up to 2010. Civil rights, equal rights and animal rights are no longer a rite of passage. A quest for meaning fell by the wayside as FaceBook, YouTube, MySpace, Twitter and Hotmail took over the dynamics of thought and reduced language to a series of phonetic abbreviations. With growing frequency the word "academics" is now spelled as "akademiks" by "boyz" who LOL (laugh out loud) while their PITER (parents in the room) look on in bewildered amazement at what they have spawned. Terminology such as "R U RED E 2 go?" is now acceptable newspeak. Along with texting and sexting, blogs, blings, twitters, twanks, twings and twongs now replace communication skills. As an end result, within this computer driven journey to oblivion idealism died from attrition, leaving behind only the Tweet Bird of Youth.

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