

# And this too shall pass

Back in the days of my youth, specifically in 1952, the stale-mated Korean War frustrated most Americans because there was no clear end in sight. Sound familiar?

The time from 1951 to 1952 was recognized as the American "Winter of Discontent," a parody on the opening words from William Shakespeare's "Richard III." I suspect the humor of a true parody was inconsequential, considering the gravity of the time.

Although the economy was not an issue because the country was enjoying the strongest financial position in its history, Americans had other problems. The Korean War, the Cold War, and McCarthyism plagued the nation. The three issues appeared to be unsolvable, and the country's leaders were worn down. Hmmm . . . not unlike they are now.

President Harry S. Truman would not commit to seeking another term because he was not certain that he could win, and no other clear candidates were in sight. The nation was at a loss for a leader during this confusing time.

Through political maneuvering, posturing, and manipulation, retired General Dwight D. Eisenhower emerged as the Republican candidate against Democratic rival Adlai Stevenson so an election could take place.

While the country was suffering through the stresses of the Korean and Cold Wars, Senator Joe McCarthy, and the campaign between Adlai Stevenson and retired General Eisenhower, I was going through the stresses of being 9-years old.

My friends Kinky Boswell, Chilly Mac and Pookie Grossberg all shared the same dilemma. Nine was a weird age in 1952. We considered ourselves too old to be treated like children, yet we were not old enough to hang out with the big kids or to be allowed any significant independence.

We weren't old enough to have paper routes or any other "real" jobs. We had to depend on our allowances and running errands for family friends and relatives for nickels and dimes, or washing dad's car for a quarter. Pushing a lawn mower was still a chore that required more strength and size than any of us had. Skills that warranted worthwhile compensation had yet to be developed.

As if that were not enough, we quickly discovered that girls matured faster than boys did. The



**You can't beat a system you can't understand**

By Sam Bari

only girl in our group was Muffin Duffy, and she beat us up on a regular basis because she was bigger than we were. That was a major worry just about every day.

Actually, Muffin was bigger than everybody in the elementary school except for Tank Mueller, who she singled out to be her boyfriend when they were in middle school. They were a formidable pair of bullies.

The only light we could see at the end of this miserable tunnel was to turn the magic age of 10—if we could survive that long.

Nonetheless, we were resourceful, and we found ways to compensate for the unwarranted oppression imposed on us.

During the summer, we would get up at first light, long before anyone else in our various households would even think of rising. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches would be made silently, in minutes, and notes to parents would be hastily written. "Gone fishing, be back before dark," the notes would say.

Returning before nightfall seemed to be the criteria used by most parents. We had to be visible before the last shards of twilight gave way to the dark, or severe penalties would be imposed.

During that time we would go fishing all right, but not at a local lake or pond. We would ride fast and furious and go far beyond the geographic boundaries dictated by our parents. Then, with stringers of fish in hand, we would ride like the wind to get back in time to make the nightfall curfew.

We did this every day except on Tuesday. We always came home for supper on Tuesday because that was meatballs and spaghetti night, and none of us wanted to miss that. We never came home for dinner on Thursday. That was liver night. We would rather starve than endure liver and onions.

When we turned 10, that wonderfully magical double-digit number, the final vestiges of oppression subsided and we began to experience freedom. We shed our children's bodies and shot up like weeds. We were given permission to ride our bikes beyond

the boundaries of the neighborhood.

By the time we were 12, Muffin Duffy was hardly the threat of the two previous years. We took interest in the new rock 'n' roll movement and witnessed Bill Haley and his Comets when they released "Rock Around the Clock." We were official teenagers when Chuck Berry recorded Johnny B. Goode, and life was wonderful.

The only thing I remember about that election in 1952 was the slogan "I Like Ike." I had no idea what it meant until I entered high school and had to be concerned with political issues.

When I reflect on those times, I am grateful for my parent's generation. They handled the wars, the atomic weapons, and the threat of communism.

We were immune to the perils of adult life. When I look back on those years, I would be wrong if I said anything other than, "My childhood was fabulous." Along with my friends, I was afforded the luxury of discovery on my own terms. The oppression was nothing more than love-driven guidance.

Now, when I watch the children who are growing up during this important election in our country's history, I hope that "Vote for Change," or "Put America First" are their only memories of this troubled time. For this too shall pass. I want them to do their job and discover life. They will be responsible adults soon enough.

Now is the time for them to have fun and embrace life for all it is worth, as they learn to live in this system we can't understand.



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