

## TIME WARP

Talking a little while ago about the legacy of the Civil War, I mentioned the time span of less than five generations since the end of the conflict. That got me thinking on all the things and events that the generation that is now having kids have missed.

We think of things before our memory as ancient. If it didn't happen in our own experience, it's relegated to the dustbin of history. It is unfortunate that we tend to make this assumption.

That dustbin of history contains the remains, ruins, and recollections of only two-hundred-fifty generations of human existence. Doesn't seem like much, does it? One-hundred-sixty generations separates us from the pharaohs of ancient Egypt. Only eighty generations from when the Roman Empire existed and Christianity began. Twenty-one generations since Gutenberg invented the printing press and the Renaissance began.

Fourteen generations since the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock. Eight generations since the Constitution was written and nine since the American Revolution.

I was watching the film Gettysburg the other night, and at the end they listed some of the characters and what had happened to them after the war.

I was struck by the fact that Longstreet (Lee's premier general) died in 1904, the same year that my mother was born. Chamberlain, the 20th Maine commander, lived until 1914.

This got me to thinking about the distancing that we do from our history and how we tend to push it further into the past that it really is. This goes for almost every facet of our remembrances and everything that shapes our lives.

My great-grandfather brokered the steel that went into making the Monitor Ironclad and provided ferry supply services in the Chesapeake Bay region for the Union troops during the Civil War in 1862. My grandfather served in the First World War in the trenches. My mother lived from the birth of aviation to the supersonic Concorde. I've personally seen the evolution of broadcasting and communications from 'Hello Operator' and an eight-party line to instantaneous satellite communication. It's only been four generations from my great-grandfather to myself.

My mother probably knew Civil War veterans in her youth. I had the honor to be friends with a WW1 vet who survived gas attacks in the trenches. That war was only a hundred years ago. Many of us have

friends or relatives that served in WW2, and almost all of us know a Vietnam vet or three.

I personally remember flying on DC-3 aircraft in service on commercial routes along with Lockheed Constellations and larger 4-engine DC-6 & DC-7's. I even got to hitch a ride on an old Ford Trimotor once.

Anybody under forty would not recognize these names and cannot envision what the experience was like - they can only imagine it.

Mention Jack Benny and Rochester to the younger generation and you get a blank stare. Kukla, Fran and Ollie or 'No School Today' of radio fame gets the same response. The Saturday broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera still exists, but it's the only dinosaur left that I can think of.

I remember the days prior to desegregation, when 'colored only' or 'no colored allowed' were a staple of restaurants and gas-station rest rooms. Most people under forty tend to think that George Wallace standing in front of the University of Alabama to prevent the registration of six black college freshmen is ancient history. It was 1963. The firehoses and dogs used against the civil rights marchers at the Edmond Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama can be attested to by John Lewis, a prominent political leader in the House of Representatives today. This was 1965. If you want an example of how the atmosphere was back then, watch the film 'A Time to Kill' with Matthew McConnehy, Sandra Bullock and Samuel L. Jackson. It's pretty accurate.

I remember what the atmosphere for gay and lesbian folks was like prior to the Stonewall Riots in New York in 1969. In the 1970's in Texas, there were routine police raids on gay clubs with many arrests on trumped-up charges. Thinking about same-sex marriage and transsexual rights was right out of the fantasy world.

In my youth, radios were put together with things called vacuum tubes which lit up with filaments inside. Techs these days only hear about them as history. Computers in 1950 took up rooms with huge air conditioners to provide less computing capability than today's I -phone. That same I-phone has many times more computing capacity than the one in the Lunar Lander that took us to the moon in 1969.

Telephone conversations when I was growing up traveled over open-wire lines that spanned thousands of miles with copper wire, glass insulators and wooden poles. In fact, we still call them 'telephone poles' in many instances even though they don't carry conversations except in rural areas. Satellites were a figment of science-fiction writer's imagination. Rockets were inaccurate weapons of terror used by Nazi

Germany in WW2.

If we can't personally remember it, it's ancient history and we can't be bothered. From the American Revolutionary war to the present is only eight or nine generations. It's only four or five generations since the Civil War. Maybe two or three generations have elapsed since World War II. The younger generation sees this as a past only to be read about in history books.

Lest you old farts get to feeling superior, may I suggest that you go to one of the younger generation's fan sites on the Internet and see how many entertainers YOU recognize. I bet it won't be many.