I'm not finding any real Sixties people. None of the people I'm interviewing were into drugs or protesting.

—a student engaged in an oral history of the 1960s

Introduction

This is a story about white, middle-class American baby boomers who came of age during the 1960s. Is it possible that an essential part of the story of the Sixties generation has not been told—and retold—given the procession of movies like *The Big Chill,* television shows like *thirtysomething,* nostalgic retrospectives in magazines like *Rolling Stone,* documentaries, and memoirs?

During the nearly twenty years that I have been teaching a course on the 1960s, I have become fascinated with the distorted views my students hold about the meaning of terms like "baby boomers" and "60s generation." They assume, often based on popular cultural experiences, that baby boomers, with few, if any, exceptions, went to or wished to go to Woodstock, protested against the Vietnam War, and engaged in the rites of passage, including drug experimentation, of the hippie counterculture. Indeed, they are often quite shocked to

discover, when engaging in oral history projects, that many of their baby-boomer subjects do not fit their presuppositions.

The story my students tell, which, I believe, reflects a view held by a majority of Americans, goes something like this: The Sixties radical hippies raised holy hell as they grooved on acid rock, smoked grass, dropped acid, and fought against authority in general and the Vietnam War makers in particular. Then, in the Seventies, they awoke with hangovers—those who didn't overdose and die or forever make mush of their brains—and, somewhat liberated from old-fashioned, repressive behaviors, especially regarding sex, reentered the mainstream. The story has a certain rhythmic charm: of hippies becoming yuppies, of materialism unleashed, of a nervousness about a betrayal of one's youthful past. As a character in the movie *The Big Chill* asks, Was it all just a passing fad, a fashionable and youthful moment?

In my students' story of the 1960s, the electoral shift from Gene McCarthy and George McGovern to the Reagan Revolution reflects a doubling back of "doing your own thing" from the marketplace of ideas to, simply, the marketplace, a transformation of hippie into yuppie. But, of course, the story contains several glitches. For one, several recent studies suggest that a surprising percentage of activists have held to their values and remain marked by their youthful ideals as they approach middle age.[1] Of perhaps greater significance, the dominant story excludes from baby-boomer credentials those not of the middle class: nonwhites and poor and working-class people.

The people my students often discovered in their oral histories were baby boomers whose lives seemed relatively unaffected by the 1960s, who had stayed within the main-

stream of what Herbert Gans calls middle American or popular individualism.[2] As much as possible, they went about their lives as, at best, spectators to the tumultuous events of the 1960s and early 1970s, for example, civil rights, Vietnam, cultural rebellion. Such were most of the 1966 graduates of Coastal High School.

Coasters range from upper middle to working class, with a heavy concentration in the middle middle. They are suburbanites. We too often conflate suburban residence with an upper-middle-class affluence. Many social critics write as if "affluent" and even "rich"—as well as "white"—are the appropriate adjectives to precede the word "suburb." Such assumptions, especially characteristic of liberals and radicals, simplify the complexities of suburban America and make it more difficult to recognize, not to speak of respect, the struggles of middle-income families seeking to achieve and maintain, in the face of cultural deterioration and economic stagnation, if not decline, what historian Loren Baritz calls "the good life."[3]

To tell the story of a particular graduating class, I have needed to clarify the problematic categories within which it must be listed. These *are* middle-class suburban baby boomers. One might call them "silent majority" baby boomers, not because they are a majority within their generation—that remains to be determined, although my hunch is that they are—but because they were not, for the most part, involved in any of the vocal challenges, both political and cultural, associated with the 1960s. Their essential posture was conservative and, given the times, cautious. Most of them voted for Richard Nixon in 1972, their first presidential election. But in heeding Nixon's call for a silent majority to stand up against

the various challenges of the 1960s, Coast baby boomers also were affected, characteristically at some distance and indirectly, by most of those challenges. They remained conservative but in a variety of ways had to come to grips with the questions concerning race, gender, morality, and patriotism that had driven the social movements associated with the Sixties.

I have alternated thematic material with profiles of Coast graduates. The chapters begin by describing the social, cultural, and historical context of the area—what it was like to grow up on the Coast. The portraits give flesh and blood to that context and to the themes that begin with Chapter 3.

One recurrent theme is that of a "warming" of a generation. Let me use a recent event to make my point. In the debate over gays in the military, there has been a tendency to minimize the advances that have led to the very fact of the controversy. Barry Goldwater has come out unequivocally for inclusion. The New Left and counter cultural segments of the Sixties generation may have "chilled"—although I believe that has been much exaggerated—but more significant is the warming, the gradual acceptance over time by mainstream people, especially more apolitical baby boomers, of what were once radical challenges. Coast graduates have incorporated core "Sixties" values, for example, greater toleration on matters of race and gender. In the 1992 presidential election, nearly half my sample voted for Clinton. Interestingly, such a shift from lifelong Republicanism was more notable among women, several of whom mentioned that their disillusion with Bush focused on his antiabortion position. A cautionary note: My own sample showed no greater tolerance regarding homosexuality.

This book challenges the argument that baby boomers went from activists to yuppies; instead, it focuses attention on the less spectacular developments among what I believe to be the larger segment of the Sixties generation. We've heard all too much about yippies and yuppies. Too many of those writing about the Sixties, having themselves been part of the more visible and vocal activist and hippie wing, analyze themselves. The picture one receives from a mix of the academy, the Beltway, and Hollywood, from the networks and PBS, tends to ignore the more mainstream experiences of baby boomers.[4]

Regarding Vietnam and the Sixties movements, discussed in chapters 3 through 6, Coast boomers confound the prevailing dichotomy that divides a generation into those who protested the war and those who served in it. In fact, most of those who found ways to avoid service in Vietnam did not join the marches and vigils against the war; rather, many of them supported it or were ambivalent, sometimes even oblivious. Coastal baby boomers looked to the National Guard or the reserves to resolve the contradictions between their mainstream values and their self-interests.

Their private lives inform another central theme of this book: the ways in which suburbanization allows middle-class people, mostly white, to construct cocoons to fend off what they perceive as threats to their families, their work, their communities. Too many observers have contempt for their struggles; they reduce them to stereotypes, for example, conformists living in "ticky-tacky" suburban tracts or racists in flight from cities, or they fixate on a segment of their most affluent members, for example, the professional, upper middle class, the "yuppies." This book examines the actual lives

of a middle-class suburban generation that does not fit such stereotypes.

I have changed the names of the towns, the high school, and the graduates and have obscured a variety of situations to protect, as much as possible, the privacy of those who cooperated in the making of this book.

Americans are in the habit of
never walking if they can ride.
—Louis Philippe, 1798

Home Life

It wasn't until after the Korean War that the Garden State Parkway extended down to the South Jersey shore area. At the time, Atlantic City's decline, accelerated by commercial air traffic to Florida, was becoming apparent. The offshore communities of Wilbur, Channing, and South Bay presented attractive options to many of those fleeing both the urban decay and the increasing black presence in Atlantic City and nearby Pleasantville.[1] By 1965, as the decline approached its nadir, Elwood G. Davis, in a report on poverty commissioned by Atlantic Human Resources, the local antipoverty agency, could sharply juxtapose Atlantic City's reputation of "playground of the world" with the grim fact that "not a single, well-equipped playground exists in the disadvantaged areas." Davis described "the inadequacy and fragmentation of social and health services" and "the woefully understaffed welfare system," noting that although summer tourist season "is a

happy time," "for almost nine months of the year, when the unemployment rate swings from 4 to 15 percent, living conditions are harsh and grinding." The report called Atlantic City, with a poverty rate of 33.5 percent and a 36 percent black population, "the poorest city in New Jersey," adding that Atlantic County was "one of the poorest counties" as well.[2]

Less than 10 percent of the parents of Coastal 1966 graduates were born and bred in the offshore communities of Wilbur, Channing, or South Bay. More than half were raised in Atlantic County, with approximately 30 percent from Atlantic City and Pleasantville. Roughly one-half came from urban environments, especially Philadelphia(8).[3]

In 1940, half of the county's population was in Atlantic City; by 1970, the portion was down to one-quarter, with a quarter of that declining citizenry over sixty years old. Within a population decreasing from 64,094 in 1940 to 47,859 by 1970, Atlantic City lost much of its tax base. Between 1960 and 1970, of 10,580 leaving the city, 8,258(78 percent) were whites.[4] While there is no statistical measure available, impressionistic evidence suggests that a significant minority of those whites migrated to the three Coast towns.

The offshore communities of Wilbur, Channing, and South Bay were being transformed from relatively sleepy, semirural towns to booming suburbs. Wilbur, for example, with approximately 3,000 people before World War II, doubled by 1960 and peaked at close to 9,000 by 1970. Channing grew from about 1,500 in 1940 to over 4,000 by 1965. And the sea-shanty town of South Bay, with its strip of bars and restaurants, grew from 2,500 in 1956 to 8,500 by 1968.[5]

In addition to the migratory pressure out of Atlantic City and Pleasantville—several parents had come over in two

stages, first to Pleasantville, then to one of the Coast towns—there was the stimulation generated by the establishment of the National Aviation Facilities Experimental Center, popularly called NAFEC, in 1958, with its 1800 jobs. Many Coasters recall the tract housing in Wilbur at The Meadow and in South Bay's Greeneville as responses to NAFEC's arrival. Jimmy O'Brien remembers many of his neighbors being NAFEC people, "a lot of them fighter pilots." The presence of a military facility bolstered the red-white-and-blue conservatism already characteristic of the area.[6]

Nevertheless, despite NAFEC and the population explosion, Atlantic City's painful decline weighed down any hopeful economic indicators. Many Coast baby boomers recall that the opportunities in the area were scarce and that many considered leaving for more reliable, if not lucrative, work. The leading nonresort employers at that time included NAFEC, Lenox China, Wheaton Plastics, Spencer Gifts, and Prudential Insurance.[7] Some 1966 graduates hoped to find niches in the security of the local utilities. The general feeling was that the more ambitious were likely to move on to greener pastures.

And yet graduates' parents poured into the Coast towns, first, because it was a step up from Atlantic City and, second, because postwar GI Bill benefits made such migrations financially attractive, with small down payments and low interest rates.[8] And their migrations did stimulate construction and services—for example, the opening of Coastal High School in 1961, expansion of the local hospital, the opening of a new mall, the ground-breaking on a new county community college.[9]

It was a conservative area, dominated by Frank "Hap" Farley's county Republican machine, which controlled pa-

tronage and the graft and corruption endemic to Atlantic City since the permanent boardwalks had gone up in the 1890s.[10] The Democrats were barely in evidence, and Main Street values—God, country, family—shaped at least the public discourse. During World War II, over fifteen thousand county residents answered the call; 236 didn't return.[11] The region which resonated with flag-waving rhetoric on Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. Veterans organizations flourished.

In fact, five of the marriages producing 1966 graduates resulted from World War II encounters. Atlantic City had become Camp Boardwalk, with troubled resort hotels contracting to house Air Corps trainees and to serve as hospital, rest, and rehabilitation facilities.[12] Bill and Bobby Green's Southern-born dad met their mom, a native, in Atlantic City during the war. Linda Duncan Gent's father, also from the Deep South, had been a GI; her mother, a nurse. Such marriages gave the region a Dixie flavor, though touched by Atlantic City's carnie sophistication and Philadelphia's ethnic tones and mass media market.

Of forty-seven Coastal 1966 graduates interviewed, fifteen were born in either Wilbur, Channing, or South Bay; thirteen came over from either Atlantic City or Pleasantville; and another five had some urban childhood experiences. Four migrated from local towns or farm areas; one graduate was from a western Jersey suburb; and three were foreign-born. On the average, the twenty-six not born to the offshore towns arrived at age eight or nine. Their parents, often reconstructing their lives and then establishing families as the American economy began to flourish in the late 1940s and early 1950s, typically had two or three children.

The parents, many of them marked by the disruptions of the Great Depression and the war, were not highly educated.

It seems that few were willing or able to take advantage of the educational benefits of the GI Bill. Only six fathers were college graduates; the two Ph.D.'s were earned abroad by foreign-born who had emigrated to the United States. Only a handful hadn't completed high school. A few mothers had college degrees or nursing training, but for the most part, they had been limited to secondary educations.

These Coast families scattered throughout the bungalows and new ranches of the three towns. The wealthiest were in Channing's posh Seaview section, emerging out of the back-bay marshes. Almost all, from factory workers to physicians, were home owners. They were part of the white suburban middle classes, perhaps more distinguishable by family background, reputation, and lifestyle than simply by income.[13] Of forty-four families, six could be called blue-collar, working class; two fathers died on the job in industrial accidents. Another fifteen families were lower middle class, with occupations ranging from milk and mail carriers to delicatessen and sub-shop owners. The middle class, numbering twelve, included bank employees, a principal, and some insurance agents. Among the eleven upper-middle-class fathers were a restaurateur, a technical writer, an engineer, and several owners of successful businesses.[14] Given their high level of social mobility, Coast parents are best characterized as members of the variegated middle classes. Despite the impression many county residents have that the Coast communities feeding into Coastal High School are upper middle class, even rich, the three towns are, except for small pockets in places like the Gold Coast, decidedly what sociologists call middle-middle.[15]

I was interested in finding out about family life, child rearing, parental values, and lifestyles. Within these small

towns evolving into suburbs were a diversity of families: military people, tourist trade businesspeople, transplanted Southerners, Italian and Irish Catholic urbanites, Piney rustics, and devout fundamentalists. There was significant upward and downward mobility; some families, sharing in the general prosperity of the postwar years, rose from near poverty to middle- and upper-middle-class comforts.

I was surprised by the relatively small amount of ethnic or religious bigotry. Most baby boomers report that conflicts between Protestant and Catholic, or between Northern Europeans and Italians, were minimal to nonexistent; in fact, there were six Protestant-Catholic marriages in my sample. Suburban experience seems to have flattened out the ethnic rivalries characteristic of city life. There were no "turf" issues in the Coast suburbs. The minor exception was Jewishness, of which there was little within the three communities. To most Coasters, Jewish meant the affluence of nearby Margate and the Channing Country Club where several Coasters caddied. Few gave much thought to the fact that the Channing Country Club existed because of the anti-Semitic restrictions of the other major country clubs in the area. Sally Vincent Rogers recalls being asked for a date by Sam Gordon, a recent arrival from New York—"heavy accent, real nice smile, smooth talker"—only to be told by her father, "He must be Jewish," and not allowed to accept. Gordon turned out to be Protestant. And Ronnie Glueck, whose mother was Jewish, recalls subtle slights and occasional insults. The president of the school board, however, was Jewish.[16] The norm seems to have been a low-grade, social anti-Semitism, kept latent by minimal contact.

Of forty-two families responding, twenty-nine were Protestant, thirteen Catholic. The largest and most prestigious

denomination was Methodism, with Channing's Methodist Church serving as an important social center for not only most of the Methodists but also for other Protestants wanting to go to Sunday school or wanting to belong to a youth group with their school friends.[17]

Virtually all of the baby boomers speak of regular church attendance during their formative years. As many as half went to Sunday school and belonged to church-sponsored youth organizations. But by adolescence, church attendance began to diminish as peer-group activities subverted family togetherness. At one end of the continuum, Rachel Barnes's life was integrated with a fundamentalist church; at the other, several graduates reported only nominal church involvement. Perhaps most characteristic is Carol Smith Rizzo's experience, growing up in a devout Baptist home with Southern roots, but drifting away during high school. She recalls, "In the South we used to go there every summer for a couple of weeks—a beautiful church—it was nothing to go to church four times a week, sing and the whole bit. Sunday was the Sabbath; you wouldn't do anything." She notes, however, that such devotion eroded in the North—"you were in Jersey—the Sunday wasn't the Sabbath, the Sunday was the day you rode your bike."

The area had its share of conformist and repressive pressures, manifest particularly in the clash between small-town morality and resort-business modernity. Sally Vincent Rogers, one of several South Bay "bar brats" in the 1966 class, angrily recalls a sixth-grade teacher making remarks about "a saloon keeper's daughter" and remembers her mother talking about a local church that denied the Vincents membership because of their "notoriety." Although the Vincents were not a religious family, they went to church regularly to counter

such charges. This wasn't convenient, as Sally recalls, "because my parents owned a restaurant and worked very late hours—and when you work in the restaurant everyone works—[but] even if it meant a taxi ride to church, the children went to church."

A minority of 1966 graduates faced restrictions regarding dances—or, as Al Judson recalls, no smoking or drinking during his Methodist boyhood—but for the most part the suburban milieu, the high school subculture, tended to relax such strictures. Most baby boomers were allowed to get caught up in the rock 'n' roll spirit of junior high school canteens. The larger variation was between regulated and permissive parental responses to adolescence. In some cases, because parents worked hard and long hours, kids had more leeway to do as they pleased. In other instances, parents varied in how much control they exerted once their children entered the high school or, in some instances, the middle school. One Channing native remembers sixth-grade drinking parties, a rarity perhaps limited to a few Seaview homes. More typical was the fairly rowdy crowd of mostly Wilbur guys like Joey Campion and the Green brothers, who began drinking in early adolescence, were able to stay out later hours, and were free on weekends to carouse at their hideaway, The Nest. The parents of other Coasters, male and female, kept a watchful eye on out-of-school hours. Bette Carter Roszak, for example, had to duck and hide in Campion's dad's soda shop, one of the main hangouts, when her father drove past on his way home. To the more traditionalist parents, temptation still lurked in suspicious places—like those containing pinball machines or jukeboxes—especially for their daughters. Youth culture was ascending, but the eruptions of challenges to authority associated with the Six-

ties had not reached the Coast by 1966. Adolescent deviance, particularly in matters of style, alcohol, and sex, never challenged adult authority. Kids were just kids. Some were a little wild; a few were "bad"; but the assumption was that when reality hit—work, marriage, and family—they'd settle down. There was little reason to doubt such comforting projections in the 1950s and early 1960s along the Coast.

Family life appeared to be stable; at least that's how most, in the context of their own more tumultuous marriages, remember things. I've only been able to discover four cases of divorce among the parents of those I interviewed and perhaps an additional dozen families discussed. Most baby boomers can't remember knowing of any divorces within their parents' generation. Certainly divorce was not as commonplace as it has become to Coast's baby boomers. And one respondent whose mother was twice divorced recalls that "it was very difficult for us children because there were boys and girls who weren't allowed to associate with us. That was like the scarlet letter at that time; it was something terribly wrong; and, of course, there was something wrong with us because we were in that situation."

Fully half of the mothers were full-time housewives, at least until baby boomers left the home. Many others didn't work until the kids were either in elementary or high school, or worked only part-time to supplement family income. Among the exceptional cases were Dave Ford's mother, who took over the family business upon the death of her father, and George Evanson's, who started a successful rental business. Several mothers were nurses, librarians, and secretaries; in four cases, they worked alongside their husbands in family stores, typically twelve to fourteen hours a day, seven days a week. Many baby-boomers shared few leisure activities with

their parents; often the parents, after working long hours or a second job, collapsed in front of the television after dinner, too weary to play catch or discuss college plans with their sons and daughters. Christian Olsen remembers his father sleeping when he wasn't putting in eighteen hours in his store: "There wasn't a whole lot left for the kids."

On the other hand, there were a number of parents who became community leaders and activists in creating and sustaining sports activities, church clubs, and scouts. Several parents, for example, actually laid out the baseball fields and built the dugouts and scoreboards for the community-based leagues created during the 1950s. Nora Reilly Bennett's mother was "a pillar of the church", heading important committees and taking a lead in insuring a family-centered congregation. And when parents weren't available, there were other adults to meet children's needs. For example, Tom Rogers, whose dad, a blue-collar worker, died when he was very young, had "a few men in the neighborhood who organized sports" and kept him "on the right track."

Whether mothers worked or not, the family structure and tone were decidedly patriarchal. Husbands assumed, even demanded, that their working wives remain responsible for the children, the cooking, and the housework. The kids, if anything, knew the moms. Matt Blake reflects, "When I grew up, most of the men worked, and most of the women stayed home. If Bob was over to my house all the time, or Rick or Johnny, my mom was their adopted mom; that's how it was; and when I got out of grammar achool, that's when the women started making the break of getting part-time or full-time jobs." Polly Bain Smythe remembers that "when dinner was over, the men got up and went into the living

room; the women got up and did the dishes." Changes were occurring; the very fact that more wives were taking jobs as their children became more independent, that they were both insuring a more middle-class living and getting out of the house—finally—suggests a subversion of housewifery few Coasters noticed.

These were mostly old-fashioned people, conservative Republicans in an all-white, mostly Protestant area. Almost 75 percent of the parents were Republicans, and among the 16.9 percent who were Democrats, many, of Southern origins, were quite conservative, possibly more so than the GOPers, who seemed to prefer Henry Cabot Lodge over Barry Goldwater in 1964.[18] All of the baby boomers recall where they were when President Kennedy was shot, and most seem to believe that their parents, despite conservative Republicanism, liked him. But few grew up in households that paid much attention to public affairs outside of the immediate local area.

Politics was not a typical topic at the dinner table, or anywhere else. To most baby boomers, the history-making events of the 1960s, from the Cuban Missile Crisis to the Civil Rights Movement, were distant, marginal. Jack Claire jokingly characterizes Coast households as "Methodist," meaning that silence and repression were hallmarks of the dinner table. These were not expressive families, for the most part; there was more respect than warmth, more love than touching and hugging. Conversations, including those about politics, that threatened to unleash pent-up emotions were avoided.

Few had open disputes; rare was the kind of struggle Rodney Wayne waged with his parents following his college rebellions. (See profile.) In a few relationships, like that between Joey Campion and his dad, tensions did flare. The

father, old-world in his values, could talk sports with his son, but little else. "My father and I never got along that well," Joey tells me, "until ten years ago." He recalls, "We couldn't be in the same room for an hour without an argument. My father was very quick to say no to whatever it was. The way he grew up, you didn't walk out your front door if you didn't have a tie and jacket and hat on; down here we didn't know what a tie and hat was." One Easter Sunday when all the Wilbur guys planned to go to the boardwalk, father and son argued after the elder Campion demanded that Joey dress properly—with a tie: "So I didn't go, and we had a screaming match." However, in most families, seething outranked screaming. And certain topics—politics, religion, anything controversial, and anything personal—were forbidden.

Yet these were children growing up with an exploding mass culture—televisions, cars, movies, pop music, record albums, button-down shirts, Ivy League sportswear, ponytails, *Father Knows Best,* and *Ben Casey*. Their parents had to cope with new realities—suburban lawns, a big regional high school, an exponentially growing community, and confusing national and global issues of which they were ill equipped to deal and over which they had little control. Most of them felt blessed that they were providing their children with more than they had ever had, and worked hard and long to sustain those blessings.

They could be narrow-minded and bigoted, especially regarding black people. Nora Reilly Bennett's mom was dogmatic and righteous: "If she was ever on a jury for a rape case, God help that person; everything was black and white—there was no gray for her." Several graduates refer to their parents' rigidity and intolerance. Judd Dennis had an ancestor who was in the Klan, which met just down the road at a

local tavern. Harry Kearns recalls his anti-Catholic grandfather turning off the television when Kennedy was on. At the same time, the Christian upbringing of those like Polly Bain Smythe taught that all—including Catholics, Jews, and blacks—were God's children and should be treated accordingly. But given the high level of racial, religious, and social-class homogeneity of the Coast communities, such Christian universalism suffered few tests. And there is no evidence that a significant percentage of offshore people felt uncomfortable with the institutional bigotries that kept blacks and Jews out of their neighborhoods and schools. For example, no effort was made to eliminate such de facto segregation patterns. Indeed, the very nature of suburban life kept the "other," both racial and religious minorities, out of sight and therefore out of mind.

There was considerable stress, hard to assess secondhand. I have, however, discovered enough instances of alcoholism, especially among fathers, to believe that it was a problem, a signal of suppressed dreams, self-doubt, personal demons, and, always, abuse of those one loves. A number of the children carried problems of alcohol abuse into their own lives.

These were not households that prepared children to deal with racial injustice, poverty, the Vietnam War, feminism, environmentalism, Watergate, stagflation, or sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. But they wanted the best for their kids; as Sally Vincent Rogers states, "My parents' dream was for everyone to go to college; my father was doing something that he really didn't want to do, but he was doing it because he had a family to support; and my mother always felt that she could have gone to college, but life has its own way of turning out." And Christian Olsen, whose immigrant parents were in their retail

store night and day, saw college as a way out of a "labor-intensive" life: "We saw that there was a different way from what our parents had given us; I swore I would never do what he had to do." Even within a relatively depressed area, the postwar economic boom that was climaxing as the class of 1966 approached graduation offered hope to the children of hard-working, old-fashioned, and insular Coast families.

Coasters were part of the extraordinary upward swing that expanded middle-class comforts to previously poor, struggling rural and blue-collar people. The GI Bill, tract housing, what Alan Wolfe calls "the politics of growth," which through federal government intervention spawned the suburban-shopping-mall interstate-highway environment literally and figuratively driven by the automobile, the unique and never-to-be-repeated monopoly the United States possessed as the world's only economic power[19]—all of this helped to give flesh to the dreams built into Coasters' self-image. Wilbur, for example, proudly called itself "the neighborly city." The townspeople had every reason to be proud of what they and their nation had accomplished. But the price paid was a narrowing of vision, an intolerance of dissent, and an invisibility to those left behind in the Inlet ghetto of Atlantic City and in all of the other pockets of poverty Michael Harrington was making visible while Coasters were sending their baby-boom offspring to a brand-new suburban high school. This "most marrying generation on record," according to historian Elaine Tyler May, believed that suburban insulation and family stability would contain threats, real and imagined, but now externalized.[20] Their children grew up ill prepared to come to grips with the kinds of challenges, often perceived as threats, associated with the social movements of the 1960s.