

## The Class of '64 ... By Peter Gutterman 5.14.14

In '45 our fathers returning  
from a world of war  
and a generation bent on self destruction,  
bloodied but not bowed  
with horrors to forget,  
now bent on resurrection  
and determined to beget  
a generation  
free from fear,  
to rebuild a nation  
safe for Mom and apple pie,  
fireworks on the Fourth of July,  
sowed the seed a baby bloom,  
that in '46 restored their faith  
in man and God and nation  
as a place safe  
for optimism, enterprise, regeneration,  
their children, in whose eyes  
they saw the hope for a future past  
of lasting peace  
free of war,  
the fear of annihilation

So came the boom  
the baby boom  
to the nation, and therefore the world  
for (as our fathers saw it)  
our nation was the Beacon to the World,  
and our blooming generation,  
the fruit of Hope.

They invented the suburbs,  
the subdivisions, the tracts of houses  
and the cul-de- sacs  
to raise us in.  
Dr. Spock to train us,  
vaccines to sustain us,  
a Brave New World to contain us,  
safe to flourish in.  
The Big Three,  
the shopping mall,  
brand new schools,  
and a highway system to connect it all.

Yet the civil War  
still cast a pall over public school  
and shopping mall  
for citizens still bereft of the justice  
our Better Angles promised,

and our fathers fought and died for  
in appalling war.

Nor was war at an end,  
just fought by proxy in foreign lands.  
Don't look children,  
avert your eyes.  
'What is that sign?  
"white to the right,  
"colored to the left,  
"where are those places,  
'Bolivia? Cuba? Vietnam?'"  
Or shelter from the Bomb?  
The Fallout Shelter?  
Under your little desk at school?  
Was there anywhere to hide?  
"Duck and cover!"  
Put your head between your legs!  
(and kiss your ass goodbye...)

But in Eisenhower Land  
life was good,  
all "Singin' in the Rain" and Hollywood.  
And I swear I never understood  
the depth of pain  
right before my eyes

But don't look now,  
the answers, my friend  
were blowin' in the wind  
to those pesky, persistent questions  
growing children are wont to ask,  
"Why is there one America for us,  
"and another for the negro?  
"Why aren't there any in my neighborhood,  
"or in the school where I go?  
"Who are those suffering children I saw on T.V.?  
"where is that war?  
"Why them, not me?"

Questions that made us squirm  
in our comfortable shells  
under the spell  
of the fables told  
of the Land  
of the Golden Beacon on the Hill,  
with the best of intentions by our fathers  
for our well being.  
Tales unraveling,

despite the earnest telling,  
for the times they were, indeed,  
a changing.  
Fathers and mothers roles  
were well defined:  
sex after marriage,  
toe the line,  
stick to the script,  
all will be fine.  
(just Ignore the man behind the curtain.)

By end of the decade  
the scales fell from our eyes  
under gathering clouds  
and troubled skies.  
But the New Era began  
full of optimism and hope.  
Our generation  
would cope with any challenge!  
We were America! The Beacon on the Hill!  
The Round Table Knights, the "best and the  
brightest"  
were gathered to kill  
the Dragons that beset us.  
What a thrill  
to begin anew  
in Camelot!

The Jim Crow tide was diverted,  
nuclear holocaust averted  
(by how slim a margin  
we were not to know  
for decades yet).  
There was nothing we could not do,  
no bar too high set.  
Just put our minds to it.  
We had decided  
we had the clout  
to put a man on the moon before  
the decade was out.

But, alas, so too  
was our innocence slain,  
before the decade was out,  
one sunny day in Dallas  
and laid to rest in chill Autumn rain.

And as if that was not enough  
our idealism  
turned to dust, assassinated  
with the ones we trusted  
to bear or banner forward

But that was yet to come.  
In '64 we were so young,  
looking at our future past  
through the big end of the telescope.  
A future  
that seemed so far and vast,  
and a youth that would forever last,  
so full of promise,  
so full of hope.  
We'd no idea of how to cope  
with the sorrows  
and the challenges it would bring  
that lovely  
Graduation Spring

The even built a special car,  
emblematic of the rising star  
of the "Youth Culture"  
(at term invented just for us,  
like the "Mustang").  
And so off we'd go  
listening to the radio,  
to the Beatles, our emblematic band,  
"I wanna hold your hand"  
as we ride off into the future.

Oh! Pretty red haired girl,  
you were my love,  
you were my world,  
and Forever was a daily thing  
that lovely Graduation Spring.

Hope truly springs eternal  
when the future seems so vernal  
unencumbered by reality infernal,  
all consuming, inexorable,  
remorseless, like war, it never goes away.

It ebbs and flows,  
until one day, we, looking through the 'scope  
the other way,  
see the future past.

It appears so close  
and now today is yesterday  
and all my troubles seem so far away.  
The flowers which in the doorway bloomed  
I feel as if I can touch them all.  
But time has flown  
and where have all the flowers gone?

Gone to Soldiers, every one.  
Oh, when will we ever learn?  
When will we ever learn?

Towers rise and towers fall  
our children's children  
hear the call of a distant drum.

Old men stand by the wall  
and weep for comrades they'd seen fall  
in a distant time  
in a distant war  
and wars.  
And I wonder  
did we leave a world  
better than our own?  
Time will be the Judge  
when we are gone  
and our children's children's children  
will decide  
if they remember us with pride  
and recall once more  
the legacy  
of the  
Class of '64

*Thank you, Peter...*  
*This is wonderful!*  
*Walter Johnson Class of 1964*  
*Reunion Committee*