

I Just Have **1** Question

So... What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?



by Doug Carpenter

It seems like an awfully long time since anyone's asked me that. [You too? Small world.] In fairness, though, it's still a perfectly valid question. After all, it's not like I've actually *done* it. Grown up, I mean. In fact, I don't think I know very many people who *have*.

Oh, we put on a pretty good show trying to convince others of how *terribly* mature we are. Our clothes. Our lifestyles. Our language. Then again, maybe we shouldn't be *too* proud of our "adult" mouths, considering how many threats of having them "washed out with soap" the trash we talk would very likely elicit

from our parents even today.

Not that edgy and provocative can't be entertaining. It's just gotten so much *worse* than we ever should've let it *get*. Just look at the desperate measures the film, television and recording industries have been socially pressured to enact in the desperate hope of shielding the sensibilities of the younger and more impressionable among us.

Ironically, the aura of forbiddenness those "Suitable for Ages..." movie admission ratings, "Graphic/Adult Theme" TV show advisories and "Explicit Lyrics" parental warning labels seem to have bestowed only increased their allure — not to mention their box office, cable and Internet profitability. ["It's not TV, it's HBOh my god! What did they just say?!"]

And adding even *further* to the cultural confusion, we somehow



The trouble with the career road trip of life isn't just how difficult it is to keep your wheels from skidding off the pavement, it's the rapidly-increasing possibility that the profession you're headed toward may quite literally no longer even exist when you finally get there.

managed to *do* all this while in some cases turning the very language whose stability we were trying to preserve literally *upside down*. [At one point, the slang word for "good" became "bad." What does *that* tell you?]

But regardless of the kind of chatter you like to throw around — whether it's trash talk or fast talk; small talk or sweet talk; talk you fire "off the cuff" or offer "straight from the heart," it doesn't matter *what* you say, or even how you *say* it. All that *really* matters is that you *mean* it.

This, in fact, is one of the *two* most difficult things to grow up to be. The first is someone who "says what they mean and means what they say." The *other* is being someone who truly understands what *meaning* it really *means* — and is prepared to "walk the walk" that goes with that idealistic *talk*.

You might, for example,

realize at a tender age that you are, deep in your heart, a born *crusader*! And that nothing would give your life greater meaning than to champion the downtrodden and battle against injustice [...cape and secret identity optional, but wouldn't they be cool?]

Once you begin preparing, however, to actually *fight* that "good fight," you'll undoubtedly also notice how much law school is going to cost as well as what public defenders make versus the big bucks corporate attorneys rake in. And hard choices will have to be *made*.

Now duplicate that dilemma in different colors and flavors corresponding to every possible dream that we could *dream* of everything we could *do or be*. [That *is* what the future supposedly delivers to us with the arrival of each new day, is it *not*?]

If only that were enough. But

Continued on Page 13



- Park-like setting
 - Beautiful new common areas
 - Parking & Laundry Facilities
 - Heat/Hot Water included
 - Erie County Senior Lunch Program
 - Pet Friendly
- 50 North Avenue, West Seneca, NY 14224

INDEPENDENT HOUSING

An Independent Housing Solution for Low-Income Seniors

"Beautifully Maintained"
- Louise, a resident

668-5804
www.ucmanor.org
A program of UCHS, Inc.

I Just Have 1 Question

So... What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?

Continued from Page 12

It's no wonder that even with the expanded educational resources and emotional support available to today's young people, it hasn't gotten any easier to figure out your purpose for *being* let alone how to *fulfill* it.

As for those of us who are already older and still waiting for that "...but wiser" thing to pay off, you'll want to have "Plan B" ready. Because our so-called "maturity" — once a hard-won and highly-coveted personal and professional *asset* — is in many ways now *hurting* us more than helping.

At the very least, it's brought down upon us no small amount of not-always-good-natured intergenerational razzing. [You say you're giving an important matter "serious thought?" O.K., Boomer. *Lighten up!* Unspontaneous much?]

Sadly, it's become a largely "fly by the seat of your pants" world. That's assuming you're even *wearing* pants since — for those now working "virtually" from home, anyway — they're basically optional. [Unless you stand *up* suddenly, who's going to *know*?]

Suffice it to say that a lot of people are now *perfectly fine* with a lot of things that used to drive *us* absolutely crazy. And frankly, their blasé indifference can be almost painful to watch, especially as we witness what often feels like the terminal "whatevering" of society.

And though that may be happening at the hands of people who — regardless of their age or

their generation — for some reason didn't seem to think it was particularly important to grow up, I guarantee you that sooner or later they're going to wish they *had*.

Because sooner or later, they're going to have to choose something to make a living at. And even in a world that insists on constantly reinventing itself [...which I *swear* it sometimes does just to *annoy* us...], there'll always be an inextinguishable drive within us to complete that process.

Call it a desire for self-determination, a need for personal fulfillment, or simply not wanting to starve to death in the dark — the motivation doesn't change all that much. But the end results certainly *do*, as they always have.

The trouble with the career road trip of life isn't just how difficult it is to keep your wheels from skidding off the pavement, it's the rapidly-increasing possibility that the profession you're headed toward may quite literally no longer *exist* when you finally get there.

The stock advice that kids have traditionally received over the years is equal parts the stuff of family legend and the curse of family obligation. I probably don't even have to tell you what it is, since at one time or another you've most likely heard it, said it, or both.

"The world will always need _____s," our elders would assure us — with that blank usually filled by whatever calling happened to have attracted the most members of the advice recipient's family.

A time-honored and often useful practice? No doubt. But *not*, unfortunately, foolproof. Because while *some* jobs will almost certainly be around forever, there are always others whose days, as the say, are num-

bered.

Anyone who happened to be descended from a long line of history's once-indispensable "Town Criers" understood that all too well when they discovered that you can only outrun cultural obsolescence for so long before you and your fellow bellowers get *ye olde heave-ho*.

Granted, there are still *some* around — *sort of*. Today, the paid ones are called "news anchors," while the amateurs are basically just your garden variety "loud-mouths" [...most of whom, I'm sorry to say, probably wouldn't shut up for *any* amount of money.]

And picture the disappointment of the late-'50s school kid with aspirations of following in the penny-loafed footsteps of his uncle, who had a cool job as a "soda jerk" at the local malt shop

until some *ordinary* jerk opened a fizzy-waterless fast food joint and *frappéed* the little guy's dream of fountain fame.

Imagine, though, the difference it might've made if rather than emphasizing how much glory we could get *from* the world by working hard, we had focused instead on how much good we could've done *for* it by living well.

I suppose that, probably more than anything, what *I* would've liked to have grown up to be is someone who didn't have to *wonder* what that world would've been like.

© 2022 Doug Carpenter

Throughout *After 50's* first 16 years, veteran WNY writer and columnist Doug Carpenter regularly shared his wry generational observations with readers as *Everyboomer*. He has now returned to write a uniquely-named new monthly humor/opinion column called *I Just Have 1 Question* — which he says he'll ask and then bravely try to answer... without, he fervently hopes, looking excessively foolish in the process. [We wish him luck.]



Come find your new place to call home!
Take a virtual tour at
bethelstatesonline.com or
call to arrange an assisted
virtual tour

Income Based Senior Housing

Welcome to persons 62 + or mobility impaired.

Located in the heart of the Southtowns. Nestled in a peaceful wooded setting.

- 1 & 2 bedroom apartments
- Pet friendly
- Beauty salon
- Newly remodeled kitchens
- Laundry facilities
- 24/7 Emergency maintenance
- Courtesy shopping bus
- New windows

BETHEL ESTATES

Affordable Senior Housing

Managed by Renewal Housing Corp.



Smoke Free



648-6444

4647 Southwestern Blvd.,
Hamburg, NY 14075