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### **WITHOUT OLDER GENERATION, WHAT TRADITIONS WILL AMERICA LOSE?**

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Imagine an America bereft of the World War II generation. Imagine a time when America's nursing homes are full of baby boomers and her society is controlled by Generation X. How would America be different? Would she be a better place or would she lose some of her charm?

When I sit down and think about this future society, I begin to realize how many facets of today's culture are affected by the WWII generation. This generation played a huge role in forming and maintaining America's traditions, art and history. Now I begin to wonder whether today's teenagers and young adults will have the ability to maintain these traditions, fine arts and history. The society I ask you to imagine lacks many of the traditions that characterize the holiday season at hand. For example, grandma's cookies and pies. What would Thanksgiving be like without them? No one can make them like she can, probably because no one has taken the time to learn how.

In fast-paced 21<sup>st</sup> century, you feel forced to opt for the pre-formed, frozen cookie dough over the laborious task of making baklava. You took it for granted that grandma would make her traditional homemade cornucopia of desserts every year. Now that she is gone, you begin to regret how little time that you spent with her in kitchen.

You decide to look up grandma's cookie recipe in a cookbook. Unfortunately since frozen pizzas, fast food and espresso make up the bulk of your diet, the recipes look foreign to you. After you spend months taking cooking classes, your sister tells you that grandma never used recipes. No wonder nothing you made tasted right. You are back to square one and decide that your taste buds were fated to taste artificial, pre-made cookies.

When your daughter asks you to sew her Halloween costume, you shy away from traveling the circumference of another vicious circle and tell her you will buy one.

OK, so your holidays and family traditions will not be the same. But everything else will be, right? Maybe not.

Will my generation of heavy metal goddesses and 'NSYNC fans really support the Minnesota Orchestra? It does not seem very likely. My generation is growing up watching Britney Spears lip-sinc her songs so that she can dance like crazy on stage. The WWII generation grew up with Frank Sinatra and Big Bands. It seemed natural for them to enjoy classical music performed live. I have a hard time imagining my age group making the same transition. I am convinced that the fine arts are not going to be the same in my imagined future society.

What about history? Will anyone in this future society remember the history of WWII? Hardly anyone does now.

More importantly, will America's history mean anything to us? For most people, history is a huge collection of facts and events. This is probably because they have not experienced their history. I believe Americans would be more interested in their history if they took time to talk to veterans about their experiences during the wars. Unfortunately, these veterans do not exist in the society I asked you to imagine. Maybe you will regret all of the time you played video games during family gatherings instead of relating to your family members.

It is too bad that it took terrorism to awaken our country to its need for tradition. No longer feeling the same sense of safety that they felt prior to Sept. 11, Americans have reached out to their country's traditions for a sense of place, unity and comfort. Americans pull out their flags and patriotic songs in frantic effort to support each other and to remember who they are. Possibly the flag reminds them of their country's strength in the past and gives them hope for her future.

A pessimist would read this column and become overwhelmed. An optimist would read this column and say to herself, "America is not in this condition yet—I'm, going to make sure that she

never is." The next time she saw her grandpa, the optimist would ask him to share his WWII experiences. She would ask her grandma when they could get together to work on baking. The optimist might even decide to buy season tickets to the Ordway. I would invite my fellow young adults to play the part of the optimist and do your part in preserving America's history, fine arts and traditions.

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