

Anne Offner, Ph.D.

DECEMBER, 2007

This newsletter features topics related to managing change and improving our work environments. If there are topics you would like to see covered or feedback you have about this newsletter, please submit your ideas and feedback to the following link: <http://www.anneoffner.com/contact.htm>

I heard today that the first Baby Boomer has officially filed for her Social Security Retirement Benefits. Her name is Kathleen Casey-Kirschling, born January 1, 1946. The Social Security Office expects that almost 80 million Americans will become eligible for Social Security benefits over the next two decades.ⁱ

This got me thinking about what's changed since Kathleen Casey-Kirschling was born. A look back at dates in history shows that on her birth date, Alabama beat Southern California in the Cotton Bowl and Harry Gilmer, their half-back, was the game MVP. The number-one song in the charts that day in the USA was "Chickery Chick" by Sammy Kaye, and the Alfred Hitchcock thriller, "Notorious", starring Ingrid Bergman and Cary Grant was released. Sports and entertainment were the norm then as now as the New Year is launched.

January 1, 1946 must have been a time of renewal for more than just New Year's revelers, I would think.

It seems to me the country must have been reeling from the euphoria surrounding the end of the war six months earlier. Doves of soldiers were returning home.

They would begin producing the great post-WWII "Baby Boom," take advantage of the GI Bill, rebuild the world's industries and go on to become what Tom Brokaw has called "The Greatest Generation."ⁱⁱ

War's end was also a solemn time because WWII had come at such a great cost. Estimates of total WWII casualties across the globe are between 50 and 70 million people, including all U.S., Asian and European military and civilian deaths and those who succumbed to the Holocaust and war-related famine in China, Indonesia, Indochina and India.ⁱⁱⁱ Soldiers' lives had been lost and two Japanese cities devastated by our atomic bombs, the world's first and only nuclear weapons deployed against another country. Survivors of the Holocaust were scattered, searching for new homes and over 100,000 Japanese Americans, who had been in "War Relocation Centers" on the West Coast since 1942, were trying to rebuild their lives. Europe and Japan were on the verge of rebuilding their countries. It must have been an arduous time – one that brings the joy and security of an end to conflict mixed with sorrow and loss.



As 2007 comes to an end, it leaves me considering how we, too, transition out of difficult times and how we handle loss. If you think about it in today's

context the Cotton Bowl is still being played and we still monitor the "top 100" songs and movies. The most recent number one USA hit listed by Billboard Magazine is "Kiss Kiss" by Chris Brown featuring T-Pain and the top box office of the year so far is "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End." While we have plenty of entertainment to lift our spirits and share with others, we still find ourselves living through a period of conflict. We cannot celebrate an end to the War in Iraq nor can we know what its ultimate affect will be on our economy or global relationships.

During the aftermath of WWII, just as the first Baby Boomer was being welcomed into the world, did anyone really have the opportunity to reflect yet? It's hard to say.



The end of the year is a traditional time for reflection, summoning up our gratitude for friends and family. It might just be appropriate to take that "extra time" to spend with your kids or revive your interest in a favorite hobby. Professionally, taking time to consider your career makes sense as well. Whether your job is secure or whether you'd like to find another job, it is a good practice to make a date with yourself to reflect. Block out an hour or a day – whatever time you can. Bring with you a laptop or pen and paper. Put down in words the plans and goals you have for the New Year. Link these to a larger career plan or vision. You can refer to my April, 2006 or December 2006 newsletters to get you started. Additionally, here are some broader things to consider as you reflect:

1. China, a 5,000-year-old civilization, described by Adam Smith in 1776 as "richer than any part of Europe," is back;

2. The value of the dollar has declined against the Yuan and Euro;
3. Gasoline prices are rising and we are in a "buyer's market for housing.
4. Global Warming will continue, if not accelerate, in the short run.
5. A new administration will be voted into the White House in November, 2008.

Hidden in these challenges are tremendous opportunities.

- (a) Look to history. Recall how on "Black Wednesday," 1992, George Soros sold the British pound short and reputedly earned \$1.1 billion.^{iv}
- (b) Monitor the growing media attention to "green" corporations. HOK, the architectural firm with roots in St. Louis' Central West End and designer of many of today's major league baseball parks, is building a stout 'green' reputation. Also note that Ameren, our local electric utility, has embarked on several renewable energy initiatives.^v
- (c) Get to know the 2008 presidential candidates. Understand the potential impact of each on business, your career, and our global environment.
- (d) Consider the changes going on in your own industry, company, or field. To keep pace professionally, do you need to learn new skills, encourage your staff to develop, or come up with a new product or service offering?
- (e) Finally, be proactive. Learn Chinese.

As Baby Boomers line up for their retirement benefits, let those of us still in the arena seize the day!



May you enjoy a satisfying end to 2007 and welcome 2008 with open eyes – along with a plan that excites and motivates you!

|
Anne Offner, Ph.D. is the owner/principle of Offner and Associates, a change management and leadership development consulting firm. She works with organizations & individuals to maximize performance, effectiveness and satisfaction in the workplace.

This newsletter is edited by Larry Offner of West Palm Beach, Florida.

© Offner and Associates, 2006. All rights reserved.

ⁱ Nation's First Baby Boomer Files for Social Security Retirement Benefits -- Online! Social Security Online Press Releases Monday October 15, 2007 Mark Lassiter, Press Officer.

<http://www.ssa.gov/pressoffice/pr/babyboomerfiles-pr.htm>

ⁱⁱ Brokaw, Tom (1998). *The Greatest Generation*. NY: Random House, ISBN 0375705694

ⁱⁱⁱ Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia: WWII Casualties, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WWII_casualties#fn_White.

^{iv} Quote from Wikipedia: "In British politics and economics, Black Wednesday refers to 16 September 1992 when the Conservative government was forced to withdraw the Pound from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) due to pressure by currency speculators—most notably George Soros who made over US\$1 billion from this speculation. In 1997 the UK Treasury estimated the cost of Black Wednesday at £3.4 billion."

^v See Ameren's website for details: http://ameren.com/Environment/ADC_AmerenRenewable.asp