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The Baby Boom: How It Got That Way, And It Wasn't My Fault, And I'll Never Do It Again

The
BABY
BOOM

*How It Got That Way
And It Wasn't My Fault
And I'll Never Do It Again*

**P. J.
O'Rourke**



Synopsis

P.J. O'Rourke began writing funny things in 1960s underground newspapers, became editor-in-chief of National Lampoon, then spent 20 years reporting for Rolling Stone and The Atlantic Monthly as the world's only trouble spot humorist, going to wars, riots, rebellions, and other "Holidays in Hell" in more than 40 countries. Now O'Rourke, born at the peak of the Baby Boom, turns his keen eye on himself and his 75 million accomplices in making America what it is today. With laughter as an analytical tool, he uses his own very average, if sometimes uproarious experiences as a key to his exceptional age cohort. He writes about the way the post-war generation somehow came of age by never quite growing up and created a better society by turning society upside down. *The Baby Boom: How it Got That Way And It Wasn't My Fault And I'll Never Do It Again* is at once a social history, a group memoir of collectively impaired memory, a hilarious attempt to understand his generation's messy hilarity, and a celebration of the mess the Baby Boom has made.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Baby Boom compiles a lifetime of clichés from birth, childhood, adolescence, teen, college, and adulthood. It is introduced with these sage words: "I am - it is a writer's vocation and the matter of his age cohort - full of crap." O'Rourke describes his generation as the first to have too many answers. As high schoolers, everyone wanted to never change from that state. O'Rourke asks us to imagine the world if that had happened. It would be exactly as it is. The generation that invented tackle basketball is now running things. Are there any other questions? It's a tongue-in-cheek one-up of The Greatest Generation - the Baby Boom's uptight, boring parents. O'Rourke claims the Baby

Boom generation is the greatest, and spends the entire book disproving it, while still claiming it. What it all comes down to is nothing- we're still just humans, doing a middling to lousy job of it. Generation labels notwithstanding. The book operates at three levels. At the lowest and least sharp, O'Rourke relives his own life, with his various friends, neighbors and family being the butt of his humor. The middle level is how they all fit into postwar and new (Viet Nam) war America, with its hypocrisy, politics and prejudice. The top level is by far the best. It is paragraphs of sweeping uncalled for generalizations about the Baby Boom, the Boomers, and American Society. There he swings for the fences, while at the other levels he has to settle for forced clever. So it's all over the place, sometimes wild, sometimes flat, but always trivial. David Wineberg

Classic O'Rourke, maybe a little less humorous than previous books, but a little more thought provoking. As someone born at the very end of the Baby Boom generation, I still don't consider myself a baby boomer, but don't feel like a part of Gen X either, so this was a good primer of what I should be feeling/dealing with as a boomer.

The arrival of a new book by P.J. O'Rourke is always a cause for celebration. He is, hands down, one of the funniest, most insightful living writers. *The Baby Boom: How It Got That Way (And It Wasn't My Fault) (And I'll Never Do It Again)* continues his string of great humor, great social commentary, and great thinking. O'Rourke fans will not be disappointed. In the style of a rambling memoir, O'Rourke recounts his own life as a mirror of his generation. Much has been written about baby boomers, none of it as funny as *The Baby Boom*. Randomly open the book and you will, without fail, find some laugh-out-loud one liners. But reading the book cover to cover and seeing the themes and running jokes develop make this much more than a collection of jokes and anecdotes. I devoured the book and found plenty to love, but I am still nostalgic for some of his past books. I don't know of a better book on our system of government than *Parliament of Whores*. And no one breaks down international economic theory better than O'Rourke in *Eat the Rich*. *The Baby Boom* is more like *CEO of the Sofa*, a loosely structured stream of consciousness. O'Rourke is a national treasure. Long may he make us laugh.

Who has lost a few miles per hour on his fastball, but can still be counted on to get you some quality innings. As some of the reviews have stated, it isn't quite as sharp or biting as he used to be, but this book has it's moments. His wry observations about the similarities between time periods (comparing the prattle of his aunts writing his mother 60 years ago to Twitter, for instance) are

insightful and interesting. One particular fault is that while he talks about the Baby Boomer generation as encompassing a fairly long time period, and even talks about the four sub-groups within it, he tends to focus on the older ones...which, I guess, is understandable. As a "Freshman" of the Baby Boomer I could appreciate some of it, but he could have done a bit more on how the later 'Boomers reacted differently to the same issues. In general, however, the book is a good read, especially those over 50...and I suspect the older, the more you will appreciate the observations.

I have read all of O'Rourke's books over the years and this one, like the others, does not fail to provide the usual mix of semi-tragic insightful humor and merciless, critical self-reflection that made me alternate between laughter and tears. Here, he ambitiously paints the generation from 1946 to 1964 with a broad brush from the perspective of a rambunctious midwestern middle class kid raised in a milk toast neighborhood who eventually gets caught up in left wing campus drug, sex and political activism scenes. He takes on an entire generation's ideals and pretentiousness, its material excesses and its self-indulgence, its creativity and its hypocrisy, and its power to control and change the world. Whether or not the changes were for the better are debatable. The best part of the book is the first half, where he hilariously describes miscellaneous "boys will be boys so get out of their way" antics to which most middle class American kids from that era will be able to relate. The second half is more serious, and though still peppered with wickedly biting humorous reflection, includes more controversial commentary and off-hand barbs against everything from the Viet Nam war to the burgeoning national debt, without offering much in the way of point counterpoint. The book is definitely politically incorrect and adult-oriented, guaranteed to offend almost everyone, and thus is not for people who take themselves too seriously. You will likely laugh out loud in many parts, so it would be rude to read it on redeye flights where others are trying to sleep.

More a stream of consciousness about the generation. Certainly not any effort at literary prose. It seems the author was doing little more than readying himself for a book tour. I have read other O'Rourke books and liked them....there are phrases in this book that will bring a laugh, but basically it's just random thoughts. If the topic appeals to you, read *Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* by Bill Bryson. WAY more on the topic, and actually a book.

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