

*Viva the Vital*

## **Boomers Should be Thankful about What's Ahead**

**Matt Thornhill**

By now almost all in the boomer generation have reached age 50. You know, “midlife.”

Comedienne Rosanne Barr has an honest perspective on this being the middle of life. On her most recent (and probably last) HBO Special, she reflected that at age 53 she wasn't at midlife: “C'mon, I ain't living to age 106, so I am waaaay past the halfway point,” she joked.

Okay, fine, she's right; we aren't all going to make it to age 100. So?

Well, for millions of boomers, the “so” in life is actually ahead of them. That's because boomers at age 50, 60 and now 65 are themselves realizing they are not yet in “old age” and could very well live another 25 or 30 years. As a result our generation is destined to change forever the idea of “old age.”

Think about it: Previous generations of 65-year-olds reached that milestone with a sense that the end was near. They likely thought they might live to age 75 or so. Thanks to advances in medicines and medical technology, living longer with multiple chronic conditions or with replacement joints or organs is not only possible, it has become the norm. Today's seniors got a “longevity bonus,” but at the end of their lives, after retirement.

Boomers, on the other hand, see the “longevity bonus” now, ahead of them. Knowing this, then, what are they going to do with this extra 20 years?

### **You Don't Keep Promises, You Live Them**

At the Boomer Project, we believe that boomers are going to fulfill their “promise” as a generation by individually living out their own personal promise, or agenda.

The rallying cry for the boomer generation going forward will be “live your promise.”

All three words are important components to the idea. The “*live*” is an action-oriented command to stay engaged, vital and necessary. Not to simply grow older and “age.” Our opportunity to really change the world is now, ahead of us.

This quest to live longer and more vital lives, *Viva the Vital*, means boomers are actively and intentionally focusing on aspects of life that enable them to remain socially, politically, spiritually and physically involved.

The “*your*” is relevant to our “self”-centered generation. A core generational trait of boomers is an approach to life based on answering the question “what's in this for me?” Boomers are not self-absorbed, like perhaps they were in their youth, but driven by the need to take care of their own needs, make their own way, follow their own path and set their own agenda above all else.

Going forward, it is personal promises that will be addressed by individual boomers that will make the difference. Of course, the promises are not all going to be self-centered. Quite the opposite, most will be outwardly focused.

The word “*promise*” compels boomers to assume ownership and responsibility for their actions. In our view, and this is important, a *promise is not something you keep, but something you fulfill*, daily.

You shouldn't keep promises, but live them.

The "*promise*" that each of us needs to live will range from the micro to macro. It could be to contribute to the upbringing of our grandchildren. It could be fixing a local social issue like education or housing in our community. It could be addressing health problems globally like Bill and Melinda Gates are doing. It could be writing the next important novel. It could be all of these things and 76 million more.

It will most certainly be transformative, another trait we see hard-wired into the DNA of boomers.

### **The Road Ahead**

In 2010, TV anchorman Tom Brokaw, author of *The Greatest Generation*, hosted a documentary called BOOMER\$. At the end of the show, Brokaw was asked by a group of Boomers what his overall impression was of the generation.

"Unrealized," Brokaw answered. He asserted that the dreams and ambitions to change the world that boomers espoused in their youth in the 1960s had not happened and the opportunity had been squandered.

We beg to differ. Importantly, Brokaw doesn't understand that the ultimate judgment of boomers is premature. It's what we do next, over the coming twenty years, using our collective wisdom and experience from our ever-increasing trips around the sun. Our legacy as a generation is in front of us.

The potential of boomers remains limitless. The impact this generation will have on companies, organizations, governments, each other and other generations is remarkable, and will continue for many years to come.

All boomers will be thankful if you go forth and *Live Your Promise*.