

PBS Looks Back At A Generation That Transformed America—And Leaps Forward To Predict Their Future—In *The Boomer Century: 1946-2046*

Rob Reiner, Oliver Stone, Erica Jong, Tony Snow, Dr. Andrew Weil, Eve Ensler, Julian Bond, Lewis Black & More Featured with Expert Host Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D.

Visionary Two-Hour Documentary Premieres March 28, 2007 @ 9 p.m. ET/PT on PBS

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The Who famously sang “I hope I die before I get old” to their fellow Baby Boomers in “My Generation,” but with one of this demographic group’s 78 million members turning 60 every eight seconds, they will soon be the largest elder population in American history. Will the nation’s most closely observed generation simply kick back in its later years, or keep breaking the rules? An eye-opening new two-hour PBS documentary, *The Boomer Century: 1946-2046*, says boomers will rewrite traditional retirement and redefine aging, as they have transformed every other stage of their lives. With an unflinching look at the Baby Boom past, present and future, experts from across the academic, health, entertainment and business spectrum paint a visionary portrait of the unprecedented challenges society will face as Americans born between 1946 and 1964 get older – as well as the opportunities that lie ahead. *The Boomer Century* premieres Wednesday, March 28th, 2007, at 9 p.m. ET/PT, on PBS (check local listings).

Hosted by leading researcher Dr. Ken Dychtwald, a nationally renowned gerontologist and psychologist (and a boomer himself) who has studied this population phenomenon for more than three decades, *The Boomer Century* is produced by Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Joel Westbrook and Neil Steinberg and written by two-time Academy Award winner Mark Harris. The film is designed not as a nostalgic reliving of youth, but as a fast-paced and extremely engaging three-part story that will appeal to viewers of all generations. The film does feature an entertaining and enlightening look back to establish why Boomers have the generational characteristics they do, but it also reveals how those traits have evolved into today’s lifestyle, marketplace and workforce trends, and perceptively probes what lies ahead. “One of the things that surprised me the most in making this documentary is how misinterpreted, mislabeled and misunderstood this generation is,” says Dychtwald. “The film attempts to show viewers what really makes this generation tick – the good and the bad – and how its unique personality will help determine how this massive generation will continually re-shape society over the coming decades.”

Interspersed throughout *The Boomer Century* are candid and insightful interviews with dozens of prominent boomers--academics, entertainers, authors, sociologists, economists, political figures – and voices of their generation, including filmmakers Oliver Stone and Rob Reiner; civil rights pioneer Julian Bond; author Erica Jong; futurist Alvin Toffler, healthy aging doctor Andrew Weil; playwright Eve Ensler, White House press secretary Tony Snow, political analyst David Gergen, “emotional intelligence” visionary Dr. Daniel Goleman and human genome scientist J. Craig Venter, among others.

The film's foremost expert, however, is Dychtwald, who, in 1986, founded Age Wave, a company that has emerged as the nation's leader in tracking and analyzing this "pig in a python" population. He sets the stage by first taking viewers on a VIP tour inside the boomer past, as millions of babies are born against the backdrop of post-war prosperity and the flourishing consumerism of the 1950s. Using archival images, interviews, and specially created sets to evoke the various eras, the audience enjoys a wild ride through the defining moments of boomer history from childhood to parenthood. Throughout their lives, the boomers have been anti-authoritarian, idealistic, self-empowered and willing to embrace change, Dychtwald explains. Those characteristics, combined with their overpowering numbers, mean that they continue to influence and affect society as they move through every stage of life.

By the time boomers reach their current age range of 40-60, or what Dychtwald calls "middlescence," their lifetime frustration with the "status quo" and their desire for continued personal re-invention means they are often searching for new careers, new travel and leisure experiences and new ways to love, learn and to enjoy life. Some are already moving back to cities instead of heading to isolated retirement communities, and many plan to do everything possible to postpone physical aging.

But when the film looks ahead to the boomers' future, it's clear that this large, influential and quirky generation may be heading toward its greatest challenges. Dychtwald and several renowned economists explain how the longevity revolution and lengthening lifespans will overtax the nation's healthcare and Social Security systems, how the boomers may have to work longer due to their notorious spending and lack of savings, and how the burden and cost may fall on younger generations – possibly even leading to "age wars." *The Boomer Century* also shares practical take-away tips that can help boomers and generation Xers prepare for their future, including suggestions for better financial and retirement planning.

The documentary also provides a sobering call to action: beyond the Botox and adventure vacations, boomers must try to find purpose and meaning in the last third of their lives, says Dr. Dychtwald: The "Me" generation, he explains, must become the "We" generation, using their insight, time and opportunity to protect the country's future. There is already a growing desire among boomers, for example, to return to their civic activism roots – 25 million of them already volunteer. Dychtwald remains hopeful that the notion of "Giving Back" and the spirit of contribution will expand even further.

Will the Baby Boom years be considered a golden era of new freedoms, new ideas and new beginnings? Or will this population be remembered as a self-centered generation who are siphoning off resources? Boomers, the documentary concludes, will soon be choosing their ultimate legacy.

This film is based on the works of Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D. Underwriters: Vanguard. Producer: Alexandria Productions, Inc. and Generation Entertainment, Inc. Presenter: KQED Presents, San Francisco, CA. Executive producer: Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D.

Producers/Directors: Neil Steinberg and Joel Westbrook. Writer: Mark Jonathan Harris.
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