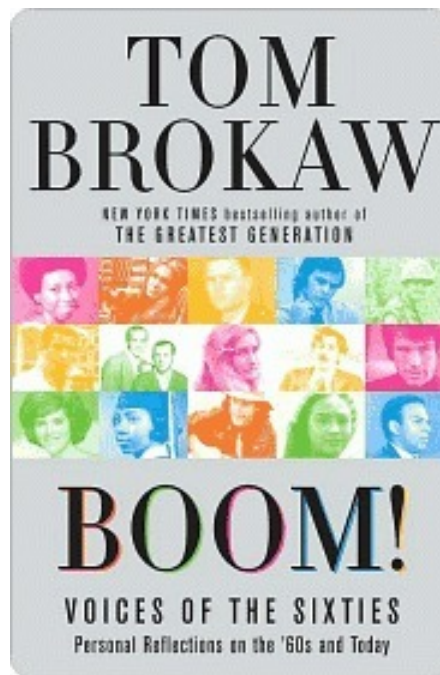




Boom!: Voices of the Sixties Personal Reflections and Lessons for Today

Tom Brokaw

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In *The Greatest Generation*, his landmark bestseller, Tom Brokaw eloquently evoked for America what it meant to come of age during the Great Depression and the Second World War. Now, in *Boom!*, one of America's premier journalists gives us an epic portrait of another defining era in America as he brings to life the tumultuous Sixties, a fault line in American history. The voices and stories of both famous people and ordinary citizens come together as Brokaw takes us on a memorable journey through a remarkable time, exploring how individual lives and the national mindset were affected by a controversial era and showing how the aftershocks of the Sixties continue to resound in our lives today. In the reflections of a generation, Brokaw also discovers lessons that might guide us in the years ahead.

Boom! One minute it was Ike and the man in the grey flannel suit, and the next minute it was time to "turn on, tune in, drop out." While Americans were walking on the moon, Americans were dying in Vietnam. Nothing was beyond question, and there were far fewer answers than before.

Published as the fortieth anniversary of 1968 approaches, *Boom!* gives us what Brokaw sees as a virtual reunion of some members of "the class of '68," offering wise and moving reflections and frank personal remembrances about people's lives during a time of high ideals and profound social, political, and individual change. What were the gains, what were the losses? Who were the winners, who were the losers? As they look back decades later, what do members of the Sixties generation think really mattered in that tumultuous time, and what will have meaning going forward?

Race, war, politics, feminism, popular culture, and music are all explored here, and we learn from a wide range of people about their lives. Tom Brokaw explores how members of this generation have gone on to bring activism and a Sixties mindset into individual entrepreneurship today. We hear stories of how this formative decade has led to a recalibrated perspective—on business, the environment, politics, family, our national existence.

Remarkable in its insights, profoundly moving, wonderfully written and reported, this revealing portrait of a generation and of an era, and of the impact of the 1960s on our lives today, lets us be present at this reunion ourselves, and join in these frank conversations about America then, now, and tomorrow.

From the Hardcover edition.

Boom!: Voices of the Sixties Personal Reflections and Lessons for Today Details

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Today Tom Brokaw**

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Ken says

It's a long book that was interesting most of the time, and at times highly insightful, but also reference-like, with many short interviews with individuals who were living in the 1960s. They offered their perspectives on events then and up to 2006 or 2007, especially about the war in Iraq, which came up several times. One gets a sense that if the book were written in 2015, the nature of the interviews would be a bit different because of electing a black president, the economic meltdown, and the aftermath of the war in Iraq and the rise of ISIS, homosexual marriage, etc.

The world has changed a lot since the 1960s, and the look back through the eyes of people who were there, celebrities and politicians, musicians, shows that the idealism of the 1960s became diffuse and never went away, but was channeled into many different things. But the conservative backlash was the strangest thing to come out of the decade, brought on by a larger population that was simply tired of all the turmoil.

I liked the book, but was left a bit dissatisfied, longing for a lot more more depth, less journalistic flourishes. Even some of Brokaw's personal views seemed out of place. I almost wish he had created a short chapter summarizing his views like all the other people interviewed. Another title for the book could have easily been "Everyone who survived the 1960s is a winner" or "The 1960s were fun, except when they weren't".

Cheryl says

Excellent book! If you're a Baby Boomer it will sound like your life. Mr. Brokaw has it all. Civil Rights, Vietnam, Women's Rights, the music and the sounds of the 60's and the 70's.

If you are a child of a Boomer, read it to understand your parents!

Like his book "The Greatest Generation", Mr. Brokaw has interviewed those who were at the forefront of the many movements of the 60's. He also offers his view of this generation. He was a young newsman during the time and just starting his career. He was in the enviable position of being both a part of and an observer of the events that really did change America.

Anyone who lived in the 50's and early 60's (and their parents) can tell you how much America has changed in the last 40 or so years. Almost all of those changes began in the 60's.

Toby Zidle says

I loved Tom Brokaw's newscasting and reporting style. I can't say as much for his writing. I found it rather dry and often preachy. It seemed overly repetitious. The book could have been better with 200 fewer pages.

I'm about Brokaw's age. I went to college and started my professional career in the 60s. I passed my draft physical and was classified 1-A for the draft until my employer got me a II-A deferment. I remember clearly the events Brokaw writes about.

Yet the book never 'grabbed' me. I often thought 'Is this book ever going to end?' -- like beating a dead horse.

Near the end, in discussing aging songwriters who had led the anti-Vietnam war protesters with their music, Brokaw seems to castigate them about their silence in taking a stand against the Iraq war.

Why should they protest the Iraq war? The Vietnam protests were by students (largely) who were likely to be sent against their will to fight a war they were against. The Iraq war was fought by a volunteer army. No one had to go unwillingly. This is a major difference barely mentioned by Brokaw. The songwriters were of a demographic segment personally very vulnerable at the time. At the time of the Iraq war, they had no vulnerability; thus, no incentive to protest.

The Iraq protests were lead by mothers like Cindy Sheehan, who had lost a son in the war. There lies the vulnerability -- not with the old songwriters.

Unable to bring the book into a current context, Brokaw's "Boom!" reads like an old memoir, not a living document.

Rachel Brady says

This helped me learn more about an era I've always been curious about. I was born in the mid-seventies and missed this important epoch in American history. Brokaw explores the civil rights struggles, feminism, the sexual revolution, the war in Vietnam, and America's disillusionment with its political leaders. Learning about the Sixties through interviews with some of its key figures was helpful. Brokaw also tied the Sixties into the current political climate. This book was published right before the 2008 political election so the references to the war in Iraq were timely. I appreciated getting the arguments for and against drawing parallels between Vietnam and Iraq.

Katrina says

Good overview of those who influenced and were influenced by the events of the sixties. Brokaw gives an effective survey of many different individuals and personalities, avoiding the polarized views of the decade, and rather showing the complexities of a rather pivotal ten years. The result is a whole lot of anecdotes, without much deep analysis. Written in an engaging style, weaving his own personal experience in and out of the profiles. One complaint is that the book focuses more on the famous and less on ordinary people. I would have liked to seen a few more profiles of urban, small town and suburban folk who were not in the spotlight, and how the decade influenced their lives. One good connection he draws is to the particular trends and similarities that relate the first decade of the 21st century to the 60s: with the US involved in a unwinnable, unpopular war and the Bobby Kennedy-esque inspiration that Obama gives to younger voters (2004 was the first election to turn out a record number of younger voters since 1971 [when the 26th Amendment made 18 the legal voting age:]). While some of the references to people or events went over my head (I was born in 1982!), this was still an interesting and worthwhile read.

Robert says

Tom Brokaw returns to the well of generational stories for this document of the lives of a time much more difficult to characterize than the WWII generation, that of the 1960s. Brokaw doesn't take sides in the resulting 40-year cultural debate and wisely qualifies this dispassionate stance by saying that whatever side

one falls on, the Sixties were a complex time of cultural change. Merely commenting on the significance of that change and acknowledging that history is still judging the Sixties leaves the reader to decide for himself whether that change was for better or worse. Boom!'s greatest asset, however, doubles as its main shortcoming: the analytic feel that keeps it from oversimplifying the events of the time keep the reader from developing much of an emotional attachment to a time that was nothing if not emotional. Brokaw would have been better served telling fewer stories and going into greater detail. As a factual account of the 1960s, Boom! is a well-written, if clinical, account. But to get the facts without the grit is to miss the full story of the Sixties.

Erik says

My first stab at Tom Brokaw's writing came with his quick-read of a memoir, "A Long Way from Home", which transported me to a time that I can only recall from stories told to me first-hand from my grandmother, born in South Dakota like Brokaw, and my father, who is about ten years junior to Brokaw. In this his second large-scale attempt to define an important American generation, Brokaw deftly weaves up-close and personal profiles of a multitude of American cultural and political icons – baby boomers all – and confronts the awkward ambiguities of the far-reaching affects of the Vietnam War, women's lib, and the civil rights movement – not to mention the seminal events of 1968, that annus horribilis in which Bobby Kennedy and MLK were both assassinated within mere months of one another.

Although I certainly don't envy those dangerous and fearful times – which I missed, obviously, as I was born in '72 -- I couldn't help but agree with many of those profiled in this hefty book that some sense of righteous indignation of the still-lingering social injustices has been lost. Or maybe they've just been commodified and marketed to numb us to taking direct action. (Think of those silly "show you care" applications on Facebook that really don't mean a thing, other than the vain attempt to look cool in the hopes of impressing your friends.) In any event, just when you think that you've heard everything there is to know about that most tumultuous of decades the Sixties, along comes a book to put you in your place. And put me in my place, Brokaw has.

Dan Holt says

Really good overview of those who influenced and were influenced by the events of the sixties. Brokaw gives an effective survey of many different individuals and personalities, avoiding the polarized views of the decade, and rather showing the complexities of a rather pivotal ten years. And written in an engaging style, weaving his own personal experience in and out of the profiles. My only complaint is that the book focuses more on the famous and less on ordinary people. I would have liked to see a few more profiles of urban, small town and suburban folk who were not in the spotlight, and how the decade influenced their lives.

Written before the election--I bet he kicks himself for not interviewing William Ayers!

Jackie "the Librarian" says

Tom Brokaw talks to people he knows from the 60's and groups them into different sections - women's movement, Vietnam, politics, etc. The result is a whole lot of anecdotes, without much deep analysis. I

enjoyed meeting all of Tom Brokaw's friends, and found myself quite envious of his social life! I kind of wanted more pictures, more info on the more interesting personalities, and definitely a few more conclusions.

Larry Bassett says

I think it is saying something good about an author when after you read one book you want to immediately go on and read another. Tom Brokaw had that effect on me. When I finished listening to this book I immediately went to the audible.com website to get his previous book titled The Greatest Generation.

Tom Brokaw is a star TV journalist. I think that means he is fairly discrete in showing what he really thinks. I don't think he really wants to make the world a better place in the global sense but mostly wants to make his world a better place. I don't think he takes many risks and considering how exciting the 1960s were he portrays it with a little too much blandness.

I love the 1960s. I graduated from high school in 1964 and from college in 1968. Vietnam is my era. So I was excited to happen upon this book and enjoyed the page after page of recollections about the 60s. But it turned out the book was as much about how the 60s affected people in the period after the 60s as much as it was directly about the 60s.

In some ways I thought the book was superficial. It did not delve too deeply into what was going on in the 60s and the following decades. There was not really a lot of analysis or debate. A lot of people were touched upon but not for too long or too intensely. But if you lived through the 1960s you will probably find it enjoyable because it will be familiar and extremely reminiscent for you. Person after person and event after event will be rolled by you for your amazement and amusement.

My biggest disappointment with the book was that nothing really grabbed me and brought out any emotions. The traumatic events of the time zipped by so quickly. The overall experience was being entertained by the familiarity of the story. Familiarity had a trouble because the book ended in the middle of the first decade of the 21st-century and of course we remember what happened after that and I wanted to get into the 2008 election and Obama. You get the impression the Tom Brokaw knew and maybe even was friends with some of the people he was talking about but he wanted to maintain his journalistic distance for the most part. He did allude to his life going on in the midst of the period he was covering but it seemed somewhat awkward.

But the book was about the 60s and also the impact of the 60s and that meant I was just about guaranteed to like the book because I like reading about the 60s. And I think the fact that it was an audible book for me made it even better.

Donna says

A little lifestory confession: I was in high school from 1967 to 1971. Had I been 4 years older and in college during those years, I would have seen "the 60's" up close and personal. While I vividly remember those times, it was as a younger "hippie-wannabe" rather than as a participant in the events. Nevertheless...

I really enjoyed this book. It's not just a look back on the 60's, but Brokaw interviews many of the more interesting "movers and shakers" of the period to reflect on how the issues of that period continue to play out today. The 2008 Presidential Election has been seen as a potential point of resolving some of the 60's

ideological splits: between Vietnam veterans and draft resisters, between drug users and nonusers, between rebellion and tradition. If you want to understand some of Obama's let's get beyond all that" message, this book gives a context to "beyond all that" to which he is referring. Highly recommended.

Rex says

As one born in the 80's, I welcomed this opportunity to gain a broad perspective of the 60's. I listened to the audiobook, which is skillfully narrated by Brokaw himself.

Brokaw guides the narrative by introducing many individuals who lived during the period. Brokaw's extensive interviews and connections make for intriguing listening.

At times, Brokaw recounts the events as they occurred in the 60's. Other times, he inserts interviews from people who provide a retroactive perspective of the time period.

His interviews include numerous rock and roll icons, environmentalists, politicians, activists, television personalities and more.

The topics addressed include:

Rock and roll icons, Motown music
Woodstock
Drug culture
Civil Rights
MLK "I have a dream speech"
MLK assassination
Black Panthers
Civil Rights bill
Jackie Robinson
Watts riots
Vietnam
Working class fight a war they don't understand
Upper class/college protests
The draft
Jim Webb and John McCain
NASA
Assassination of JFK and RFK
Feminist Movement
Betty Friedan
Gloria Steinem
Females in the workplace
Television
Late-night comedy
Women anchors

I walked away with a better understanding of the complexity and culture of the 60's. Several questions from the 60's seem pertinent today: To what extent does having the elite class largely immune from combat affect national policy and foreign relations? What effect would a mandatory draft have on this debate? What motivates our generation like the space race? What will be the effect of the youth culture of today?

Amy says

Boom! Voices of the Sixties was an incisive and balanced look back on the major events happening in the sixties. The majority of the book covers politics, Vietnam and civil rights. Also included, to a lesser extent are music, lifestyles, women's rights and space exploration.

Brokaw has a nice flow to his writing which makes the book (despite its length) an easy read. The book is divided into sections by topic and then reflects on the prominent people of each. Several pages are devoted to the person with a highlight reel of their achievements and then quotes from recent interviews Brokaw had with each (the book was published in 2007) in which they provide their opinion on their own take-away from the 60s and how they feel it effects the US today.

For those important figures in the 60s that are either no longer with us, or not available for interview, Brokaw looks at different sides of their legacies and provides his own reflections on their impact.

While I enjoyed the book, I wish I would have paid more attention, beforehand, to the subtitle "Personal Reflections on the '60s and Today". Not having grown up in the sixties, I was hoping for more background information on the events of the decade and much more detail on events, public sentiment and major figures of the time. I also thought the "Voices of the Sixties" would refer to what was said then, rather than now. But alas, this is my own fault; the book truly is as the full title states and while not what I was expecting, was a compelling read all the same.

As a side note, the book was written on the heels of the presidential election for 2008 and Obama and Clinton are briefly mentioned as front runners for the democratic nomination, along with the question of whether America was ready to vote Democrat again. And in the wake of our most recent election, it is certainly shocking and more evident than ever, what a difference a decade can make.

Leslie says

Writing a non-biased book about the politically and socially charged sixties is a near-impossible job. But Brokaw pulls it off (with one glaring exception). The book's format features then-and-now interviews with survivors of all sides of the sixties experience. There's something here to offend everybody, but it gets the history pulled together when the interviews are taken as a whole.

The only exception to the honest reporting is the story of Senator Bob Kerrey. On page 181 Brokaw angrily attacks the Vietnamese for claiming Kerrey committed atrocities in Vietnam: "The U.S. government should lodge a protest to Vietnam, not just for Kerrey but to assure veterans of other wars, including Iraq, that they will not be abandoned to the propaganda of the enemy after the fighting is over." He interviewed Kerrey and lauded him for his role in Vietnam. But here's a small part of what Kerrey said in 1998 (quoted in Wikipedia):

"Kerrey's SEAL team first encountered a villager's house. Later, according to Kerrey, the team was shot at from the village and returned fire, only to find after the battle that some of the deceased appeared to be under 18, clustered together in the center of the village. "The thing that I will remember until the day I die is walking in and finding, I don't know, 14 or so, I don't even know what the number was, women and children

who were dead", Kerrey said in 1998. "I was expecting to find Vietcong soldiers with weapons, dead. Instead I found women and children."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Ker...

The story is told in gruesome detail in the NY Times.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/25/mag...>

"Senator Bob Kerrey's hands trembled slightly as he began to read six pages of documents that had just been handed to him. It was late 1998; the papers were nearly 30 years old. On the face of it, they were routine "after action" combat reports of the sort filed by the thousands during the Vietnam War. But Kerrey knew the pages held a personal secret -- of an event so traumatic that he says it once prompted fleeting thoughts of suicide.

Pulling the documents within inches of his eyes, he read intently about his time as a member of the Navy Seals and about a mission in 1969 that somehow went horribly wrong. As an inexperienced, 25-year-old lieutenant, Kerrey led a commando team on a raid of an isolated peasant hamlet called Thanh Phong in Vietnam's eastern Mekong Delta. While witnesses and official records give varying accounts of exactly what happened, one thing is certain: around midnight on Feb. 25, 1969, Kerrey and his men killed at least 13 unarmed women and children. The operation was brutal; for months afterward, Kerrey says, he feared going to sleep because of the terrible nightmares that haunted him.

Kerrey laid the documents down. He was clearly unsettled not just by their contents but also by the realization that four members of his Seals team had already spoken about the mission. I had heard about Thanh Phong indirectly from one of those men, Gerhard Klann. Klann, the most experienced member of Kerrey's Seals squad, had been so disturbed by his memories of that night that he confided in a commander who, many years later, told the story to me. That in turn spurred the search for the documents. Those were found after a three-month examination of thousands of pages of classified and unclassified Seals reports and communique's that had been boxed up since the war in the Navy's archives."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/03/wo...>

"Mr. Kerrey admitted 15 years ago that he and the team of commandos he led in the Mekong Delta in 1969 killed innocent women and children during a midnight raid in the village of Thanh Phong. Survivors of the attack said 20 civilians were killed, including 13 children and a pregnant woman. Mr. Kerrey was awarded a Bronze Star after his squad falsely reported that it had killed 21 Viet Cong guerrillas."

Alison says

This book was absolutely fascinating. It is a bit lengthy, but it was well worth every hour spent reading it. I learned so much about the sixties and our country during that time and the impact that it has had on our political climate today. It covers topics from JFK's assassination, the Vietnam war, drugs, women's rights, civil rights, MLK's assassination, Bobby Kennedy's assassination, music and Watergate and so much more.

What made the book so great was that Brokaw acknowledges from the beginning where he stands politically and that he has some bias because of it. But the variety of people he interviews and gives mini-bios of drown out any bias that could exist.

There are statements from people who worked closely with Ronald Reagan, statements from Karl Rove, Bill

Clinton, John McCain, Hillary Clinton, Dick Cheney, Collin Powell, Jim Webb, Joan Baez, Paul Simon, Warren Beaty, Kris Kristofferson... the list goes on and on. Each of these people gave their personal take on the sixties and how it has shaped their lives and professional careers.

I learned more about Vietnam than I can remember learning in school. The strong words and opinions on that war by those who fought in the war and those that avoided the war are haunting.

And I learned so much about what effect the assassination of Bobby Kennedy had on the country. So much attention is given to JFK that I have never really known much about this man, but this book gives many interesting details about him and those that knew him. His death came only three short months after King's and five years after his brother and the country as a whole was devastated. It was very eye-opening to read.

I also found out many random facts that I probably never would have known, like the fact that Karl Rove went to Olympus high school in Utah. Who knew?! He also attended the UofU but never actually got a college degree -and yet, look at the career he has had- amazing!

I fully recommend this book, it is only a small glimpse into what the sixties were all about, but it has given me more of an understanding about that time period than just Hippies in tie-dyes singing songs and doing drugs.
