

THE FORUM

Boomers may drool, but they still rule

By Joyce Madelon Winslow

Welcome to the world, millennium babies. A different world from the one that welcomed your baby boomer grandparents — but our world still.

You're going to have trouble catching up with us baby boomers, my little darlings, because there are 82 million of us who were born between 1946 and 1964 — almost 40% of U.S. adults today. By the time you're 25, we're told, 25% of American adults still will be calling themselves baby boomers.

So make no mistake: This may be your childhood, sweet ones, but it's our second childhood — and we mean to enjoy it.

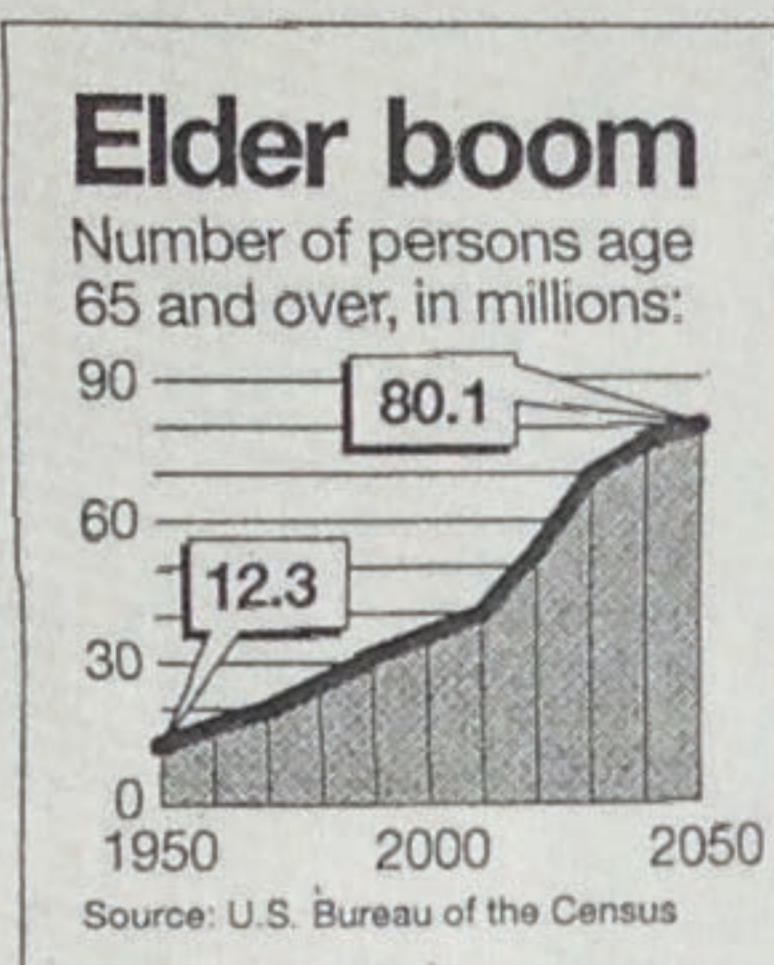
Of course, you'll have advantages we never had. Your mom can take you toy shopping without bundling you in the winter leggings and padded snowsuit that made our February outings look like a space walk. "Mouse," you'll say before you get your first tooth, and you'll point and click at eToys.com. What fun!

When we baby boomers were small, we took our nickel allowance to Woolworth's. Woolworth's is bankrupt now, and a nickel allowance is as outdated as a hope chest. The money we spent on that big cedar box would have been better put toward a good pre-nup, darling. Grandma knows; she's on her second marriage, as are millions of other baby boomers, some of whom have moved on to No. 3 or 4. It's why you'll get a lot of birthday presents from more than the standard number of grandparents.

If your dad and mom divorce, all of us will be in court fighting for visitation rights. You're that precious.

Let's drive home from the hospital in Grandma's minivan. Grandma wanted a red sports car, but now that your aunt and her children are living with Grandma, she needs a minivan. Like those of so many boomer grandparents, Grandma's home houses several generations.

Your stepsiblings — your stepbrother and stepsister — are from your parents' first marriages. Yours is one of 19 million blended families in America — families whose teens still listen to music your granny's generation created: Beatles, Dylan, Stones, Springsteen. We rule, sweetheart. Bruce and Paul and Mick — all Grandma's age.



By Genevieve Lynn, USA TODAY

Advice for the pre-toddler set

My generation made it possible for you and other babies to grow up to be whatever you want, from homemakers to astronauts. When your mommy, now on maternity leave, returns to the career track, you're off to pre-nursery school, where you'll listen to Beowulf tapes in your crib. The latest thinking says that we have to set those neural learning paths early.

In my day, my mommy merely played piggly-wiggly on my toes. Later, we watched tadpoles squiggle in the water. But frogs seem to be disappearing now. Perhaps we'll clone new ones. We're growing corneas in labs, and we've just discovered which 300 genes are needed to create life. Never mind marrying a doctor when you grow up, babycakes. Aim for the owner of a cloning lab, where doctors will line up for livers and lungs.

I bought you *Charlotte's Web* to read when you're older. I hope you will read the book before you see the movie so you'll learn to make good use of your own imagination. Imagination has taken a beating from television, computer games and movies. I want you to learn to visualize your own thoughts and dreams, as Grandma does when she's jogging. Meditation, exercise and pesticide-free foods will keep you young.

Putting the 'baby' back in 'boomer'

Notice Grandma did not say "will keep you from getting old." "Old" is not a word we ever use, sweet face. Grandma is at "mid-life" and likely to remain there until she is 65. Baby boomers will live forever, darling. If we don't, well, we'll be too dead to know we were wrong.

I hope when you're a young woman that there will still be bluebirds and fields where you can lie down with your beloved in tall grass to contemplate the sky. So much land is getting paved for shopping malls. Unfortunately, you've inherited my generation's penchant for cementing things over for profit, and our two most life-changing inventions: the Internet and the nuclear bomb. If you try to contain either of these, Grandma can teach you the passive-resistance tactics that worked when she was a young woman.

We'll all need them. Like you, baby, we're thrashing through a myriad of life-changing events. While you're teething and learning to walk, we're divorcing, relocating, getting downsized, burying our parents and contemplating mortality. That's why looking at your calm, new face is such a pleasure.

Yes, welcome to the world, millennium baby. When you scrunch your little fist like that — why, you look just like your grandmother.

Joyce Madelon Winslow lives in Washington, D.C.