

Baby boomers turn 50

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third and final segment in a series on baby boomers.

By Jennifer Bell

The Intelligencer

Ron Broadbridge says turning 50 this November won't bother him a bit.

The Prince Edward County resident will have membership in an exclusive club: the oldest of Canada's baby boom generation.

Broadbridge said growing up in a county village in the 1950s was something of an idyllic experience.

"We weren't rich, but we certainly didn't lack for anything. Life was simple back then."

The manager of the Belleville and District Chamber of Commerce grew up in Wellington and attended high school at Prince Edward County Educational Institute in Picton. He was the youngest of four children.

He and his classmates — the graduates of 1965 — followed pretty much the same straight and narrow

yearbook, Broadbridge can easily point out a dozen senior year classmates who still call the Quinte region home.

About 70 per cent of the senior students are still in southeastern Ontario.

In helping to plan a 25th reunion in 1990, Broadbridge discovered that while many of his classmates left town for bigger and better things after graduation, a surprising number have since come home to live.

"There wasn't the pressure then to go on to university, the way there is now.

"We were expected to do well in school, but with the job market being good, none of us really worried much about finding employment."

Nor were Broadbridge and his friends concerned about what the future would hold.

"We weren't what you'd call a socially activist group, for the most part. We certainly didn't think about retirement or financial security."

Today, however, is a different matter

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path as their counterparts across Canada: finished high school, pursued a college or university degree, got married, and had a family.

But not necessarily in that order.

Broadbridge, after Grade 13 graduation, thought about getting into the computer field, but instead joined the Peterborough Examiner as a proof boy.

"I didn't consciously choose a career in newspapers, but it agreed with me," he said of his years at the Examiner and then in advertising at the Intelligencer. In 1982, he moved to the chamber as manager.

In the interim, he married classmate Susan in 1969, had two children in the mid-70s, and picked up a correspondence degree in sociology from Queen's in 1978.

Leafing through a high school

"Back in school, especially elementary school, the teachers and the principal were revered. School was school, and parents were parents. The two didn't mix. Parents didn't question what went on in school, and likewise, the school educated you and left the rest up to your parents."

Broadbridge's teenage memories include occasional jaunts to drive-in restaurants like Fountain Park on what is now North Front Street in Belleville, cramming extra people into cars for drive-in movies, and listening to rock and

roll hits on Buffalo's WKBW radio

Family values seemed integral among his peers.

He remembers his parents buying a 17-inch black and white television "to keep us at home evenings, but it kind of backfired. We stayed home, all right, but all the other kids came over," he chuckled.

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Broadbridge said he appreciated the Quinte area much more "after having been away for a while.

"There's a real sense of belonging in a small town."

His circumstances are typical of many of his generation. With children in high school and university, aging relatives, and still another decade to go before retirement, Broadbridge and other boomers have seen the world change dramatically in the last 30 years.

The biggest difference he's seen is in the educational field.

Other freedoms enjoyed by today's youth came later for those early baby boomers.

It wasn't until Broadbridge's senior year that he obtained a license and occasional use of the

family's only car.

But he doesn't recall feeling deprived.

"We were busy and happy. My mom worked to help make ends meet, so the four of us really learned to take care of the house. There was no discrimination about male or female chores, that's for sure."

After discussion with a group of friends and classmates at PECEI's 30th reunion last year, Broadbridge said they may throw one big bash for all those turning 50.

"It's a great excuse for a party."

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BROADBRIDGE, Ron.