

WELCOME TO THE SEVENTIES???

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At recurring ten-year intervals, it is convenient to mark off another decade much in the manner as one files away a just-bound volume of old medical journals, placing it on the shelf to gather dust and be referred to at infrequent intervals. Yet here is a continuity to the passage of time that defies neat pigeon-holing, and none can argue rationally that the last December of one decade could differ significantly from the first January of the next.

Nevertheless, the custom remains, and now that we have closed the book on the Sixties there is need to label it appropriately. We've had the Roaring Twenties, the Depression Thirties, the War-torn Forties, the Fabulous Fifties. One magazine has already dubbed the recent decade euphemistically as the Startling Sixties. But a number of other alliterative adjectives for the Sixties come to mind, none of them very complimentary. To name just a few: Sad, Shallow, Suffering, Sorry, Stupid, Sloppy, Shameful, Sensual, Salacious – take our pick.

It is paradoxical that a nation which has wallowed in ten years of uninterrupted prosperity and material luxury could derive so little benefit or satisfaction from them. We have filled the air and streams with pollution and waste. We became embroiled in the non-war of Viet Nam. We have agonized over the racial dilemma. We have watched helplessly as rioters burned and ravaged our major cities. We have spawned a hard core of anarchistic revolutionaries bent on the destruction of social order. We have made a mockery of such concepts as law and order, patriotism and national pride. We have cultivated the extremes of ugliness in fashion, behavior and personal appearance. We have witnessed the steady disintegration of moral fiber to the point where we attempt to argue logically the merits of perversion, homosexuality and pornography. The adult population, once hopeful of great accomplishments to come, has become embittered, frustrated and divided. The bumper crop of young, whose prospects seemed so right ten years ago, has turned into a confused harvest of drifters, college malcontents and drug users who seek nirvana in the ragged costumery of make-believe.

But the sixties are over and, however apprehensively, we should extend a welcome to the years ahead. It would be a great comfort to be alive and writing on this day ten years from now, to look back once again, and be able to paste a label of Sensible on the Seventies.