

1950s* Culture Day* Documents*

TV *happiness shared by all the family!*



TELEVISION

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

- In the 1950s, children's programs and the benefits that television could bring to the family were major selling points for television sets.
- By 1951, networks' schedules included up to 27 hours of children's programs. Television offerings for children continued radio's tradition of action-adventure themes and a pattern of late afternoon and evening broadcasts.
- Half-hour live-action shows such as *The Lone Ranger*, *Sky King*, or *Lassie*, and host/puppet shows such as *Howdy Doody* and *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* were popular.
- By the mid-1950s programs had found their place on Saturday morning, and by decade's end the thirty-minute, once-a-week format was established.

OWN A
Motorola
AND YOU KNOW YOU
OWN THE BEST

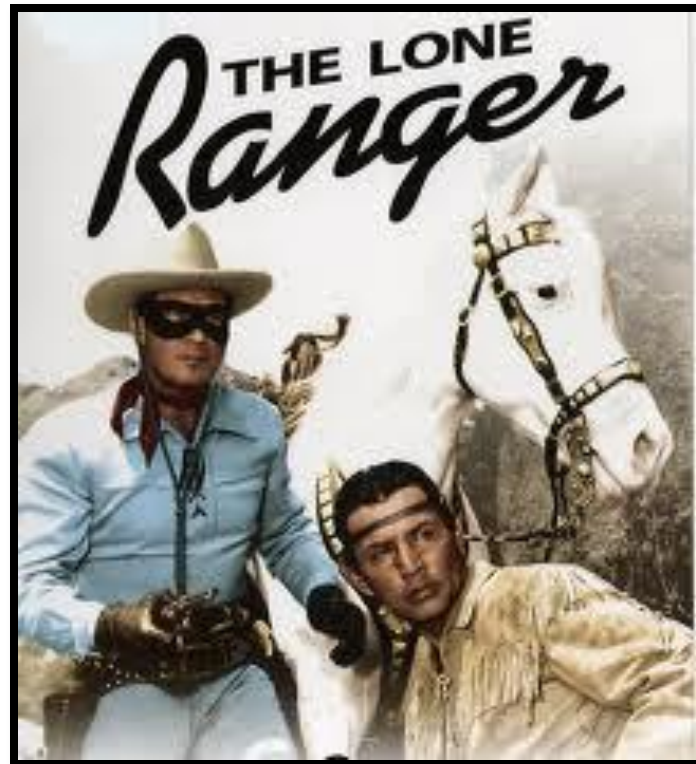
**HOW
TELEVISION
BENEFITS YOUR CHILDREN**

Motorola, leader in television, shows how TV can mean better behavior at home and better marks in school!

**Motorola
TELEVISION**

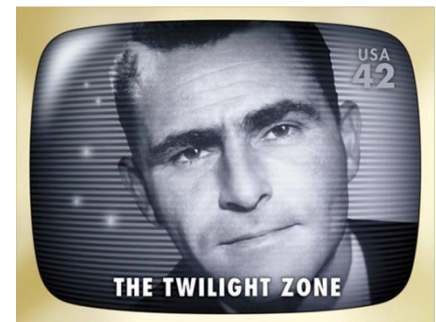


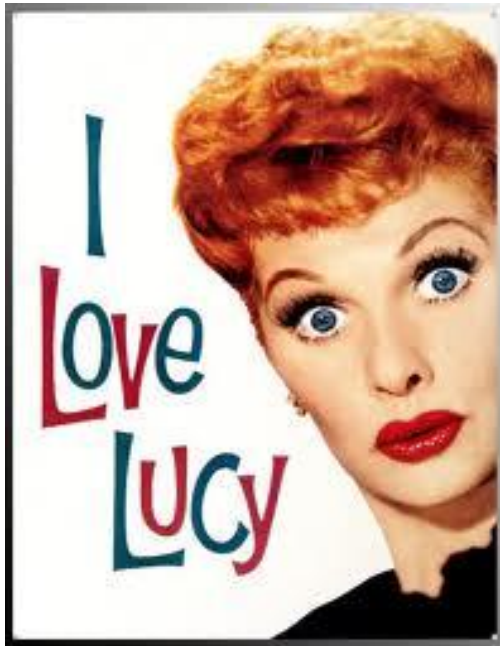
Howdy Doody



THE GOLDEN AGE OF TELEVISION

- Every 1950s family tried their best to get hold of a TV set, as it was one of the sources of cheaper, simpler entertaining media.
- Programs such as *I love Lucy*, *Father knows Best*, *Our Miss Brooks* and *Burns & Allen* were some popular shows in the fifties.
- Towards the mid-fifties, live performances of reality TV shows were broadcast for the first time ~ this created a different form of television entertainment (Reality TV!)
 - These programs of reality television like *Candid Camera* broke the monotony of scripted drama.





- *I Love Lucy* debuted on CBS in October 1951 and was an immediate sensation.
 - It spent four of its six prime-time seasons as the highest-rated series on television and never finished lower than third place.
 - Eisenhower's presidential inauguration in January 1953 drew twenty-nine million viewers, but when Lucy gave birth to her son Little Ricky in an episode broadcast the next day, forty-four million viewers (72% of all U.S. homes with TV) tuned in.
-



Elvis' dance moves were too scandalous, so ...

...by his 3rd appearance, he could only be shown from the waist up.



- *The Ed Sullivan Show* set itself apart by capitalizing on teenage obsession. Host Ed Sullivan introduced rock 'n' roll on TV, bringing in teenage viewers.

THE ORIGINAL REALITY TV

Kennedy-Nixon Debates

- First televised Presidential Debate: September 26, 1960
- Nixon hoped to expose Kennedy's inexperience
- Kennedy had been coached by TV producers – *looked better & spoke better than Nixon*
- Kennedy's success helped launch the television age
- “That night, image replaced the printed word as the natural language of politics.”

–Journalist Russell Baker

The Civil Rights Movement

- From the 1955 Montgomery bus boycotts to the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, television brought the non-violent civil disobedience campaign of the Civil Rights Movement and the violent reprisals of Southern law enforcement agents to a new mass audience.
- During this period television made it possible for civil rights workers to be seen and heard on an international scale.



Nixon



Kennedy, who won the election of 1960 by 83 electoral votes





THE SUBURBS

THE AMERICAN DREAM

- Pieces of the American Dream were a hot commodity in post-World War II America, and nobody could sell them like **William Levitt**. When he marketed his mass-produced homes in beautiful color brochures, thousands of young families wanted to buy.
- Families relocated to the **suburbs** to own their own home, cook with their own appliances, mow their own lawn. They had GI loans in hand, babies on the way, and a '50s brand of pioneering spirit.



William Levitt
and his brother
Alfred, who
designed
Levittown
homes

- The first houses ready for residents came in only two styles, a rancher with a front door facing the street and a variant with the main entry facing the side of the house next door.
- Eventually, Levitt added two-story Cape Cods and colonials to style choices.



THE LEVITTOWN HOUSE
 PRICE: \$7990
 All interiors are identical.
 These are the
 5 architectural styles.

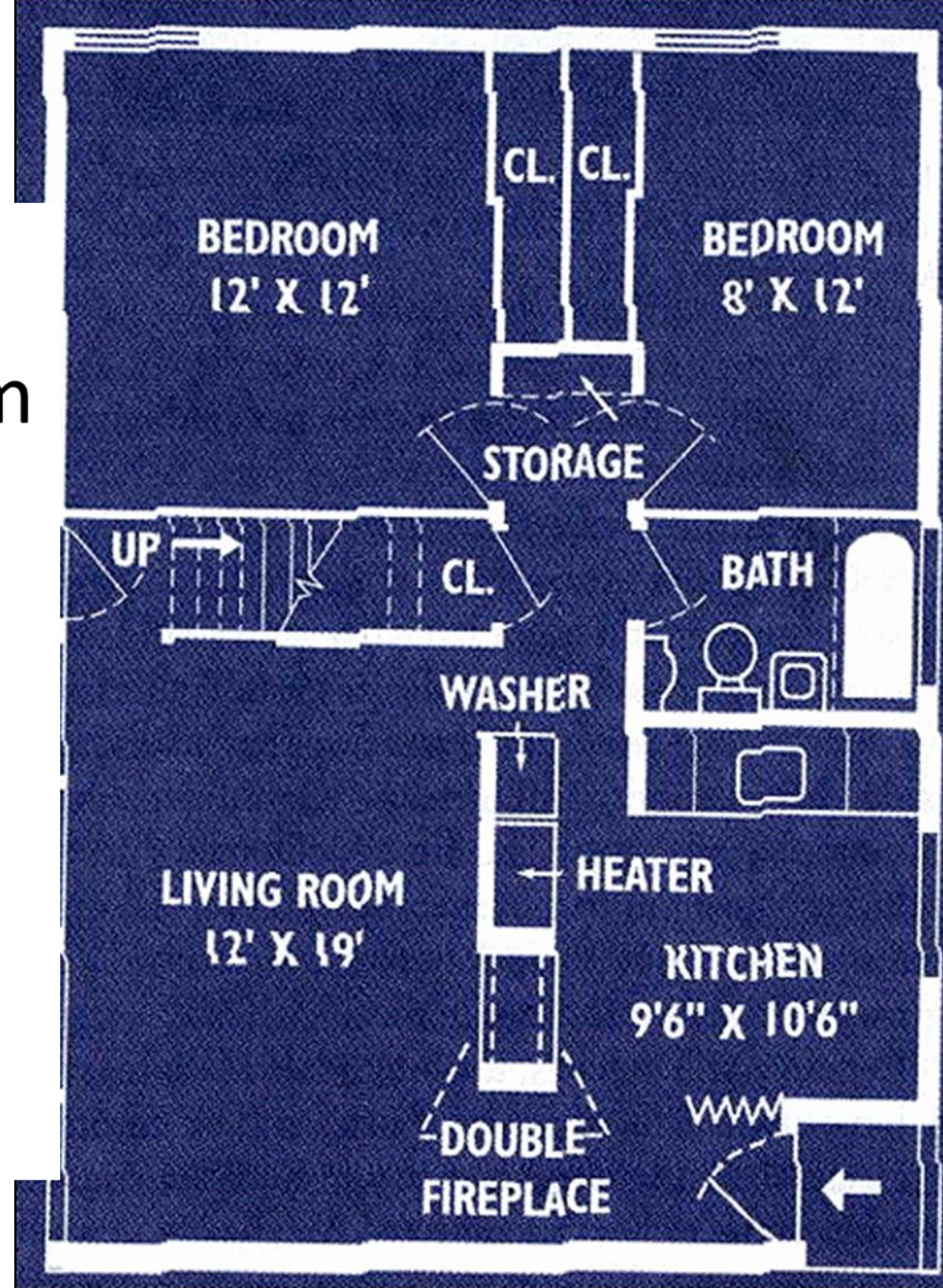
BUILDING THE AMERICAN DREAM

- In the fall of 1947, Levitt opened his first model house, a Cape Cod he called the "Levittowner." It came with radiant heating, roofed carport, Bendix washer and General Electric stove. There was no basement, no second story. The price was \$7,990.00 with no down payment required for veterans (GI BILL)
- **Volume, volume, volume** was the key to profit for the \$200 million Levittown, NY., project.
- A truck would pull up to one plot of land and pour the concrete for a house foundation.
- Then, it would move on to the next lot, and the next, and the next. A construction team would be following behind, hammering wood frames into place.
- At this rate, **30 Levittown homes could be built in a single day.**
- Between 1947 and 1951, Levitt built over 17,000 homes in New York

In 1994, William Levitt died penniless.



- 1 story high
- 12'x19' living room
- 2 bedrooms
- tiled bathroom
- garage
- small backyard
- front lawn





- Low-cost and low-interest loans allowed the working class to flee dense cities for the new suburbs, while cheap cars and cheaper gasoline supported their long commutes to urban workplaces.
- Three-bedroom houses, two cars in the driveway? The suburbs were about having **more**, and **more** became the American Dream.

THE 1950S AMERICAN DREAM





LEISURE TIME

Time Saving Devices

- More than ever before, people owned washing machines, lawn mowers, clothes dryers and dishwashers



Advertising

- 1950: advertisers spent \$6 billion
- 1955: advertisers spent \$9 billion

- Most powerful tool = the television
- Advertisers appealed to people's desire for status and “belongingness”

Goal: get Americans to buy things they didn't really need!



100% Mild Palmolive Soap Helps You Guard that
Schoolgirl Complexion Look!



Palmolive's Beauty Plan is Far Better For Your Skin Than "Just Average Care" With Any Leading Toilet Soap!

The better, healthier skin that you desire is yours with Palmolive's Beauty Plan. Palmolive's Beauty Plan is a complete skin care system that includes Palmolive Beauty Plan soap, Palmolive Beauty Plan cream, Palmolive Beauty Plan lotion, Palmolive Beauty Plan powder, Palmolive Beauty Plan lipstick, Palmolive Beauty Plan perfume, Palmolive Beauty Plan hair cream, Palmolive Beauty Plan hair oil, Palmolive Beauty Plan hair spray, Palmolive Beauty Plan hair cream, Palmolive Beauty Plan hair oil, Palmolive Beauty Plan hair spray.



Drink **Coca-Cola**
Delicious and Refreshing

The pause that refreshes ...at home

Housework brings that urge to pause and relax in an easy chair. Do it...with invincible Coca-Cola. It adds to relaxation what relaxation always needs...pure, wholesome refreshment.

Now Millions Know! ONE **KING SIZE** tops 'em all for TASTE and COMFORT!

Your throat can tell it's **PHILIP MORRIS**

CALL FOR **PHILIP MORRIS**

Even Junior likes to do the dishes with **DISHMASTER**

MARRIED?—No reason to neglect stockings!

Husbands admire wives who keep their stockings perfect

Lovely stockings add so much to a woman's appearance. Don't risk constant rest, sticky seams and wrinkles.

SAVE ELASTICITY—Cut down on rest and wrinkles with Lux! Write to Luxette Brothers Co., Dept. 16, Cambridge, Mass., for a free Lux of Lux. (Only good in U.S. and Canada only.)

Don't waste the elasticity that makes stockings fit and wear. Take soap rubbing and soap with harmful alkali weaker elasticity!

for stockings **LUX**

He wears the cleanest shirts in town
...his "Missus" swears by **TIDE**!

Be sure the cleanest shirts in town... "There's no soap made that will clean and whiten like Tide." "Cleaner than ever... it's Tide!"

Tide GETS CLOTHES CLEANER THAN ANY SOAP!

Yes, Tide washes cleaner

...and whitens

P.S. PREFER TO SHIRT RINSING?

For a better start in life start **COLA** earlier!

How soon is too soon? Not soon enough. Laboratory tests over the last few years prove that babies who start drinking soda during that early formative period have a much higher chance of gaining acceptance and "fitting in" during their awkward pre-teen and teen years. So, do yourself a favor. Do your child a favor. Start them on a strict regimen of sodas and other sugary carbonated beverages right now, for a lifetime of guaranteed happiness.

The Soda Pop Board of America
1500 W. Hubbard - Chicago, Ill.

IT'S DELICIOUS!

AND AS EASY TO MAKE AS TEA

Put into a warm pot one heaped dessertspoon of coffee for each cup required, and pour on briskly boiling water. Stand 5 minutes, strain and serve.

FROM ALL GROCERS
BUY A JAR - TO-DAY

Sunbeam
Waffle Baker

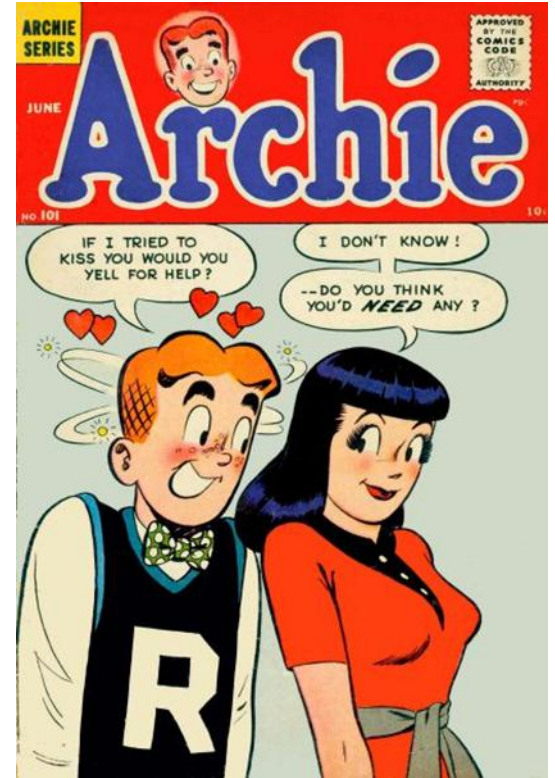
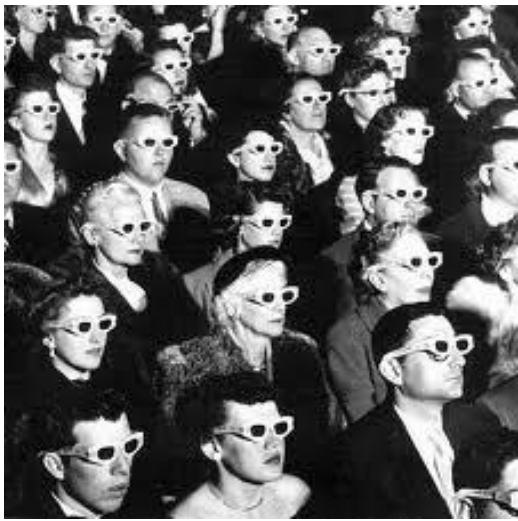
Makes 4 delicious good-stored waffles of one time... Automatically



Fads & Trends



- 1953: Americans spent \$30 billion on leisure goods and activities
 - Sales of comic books reached a peak in the mid-1950s
 - 3-D movies, hula hoops, Barbie dolls, and silly putty became new fads
- Poodle Skirts, blue jeans & saddle shoes
- Rock & Roll



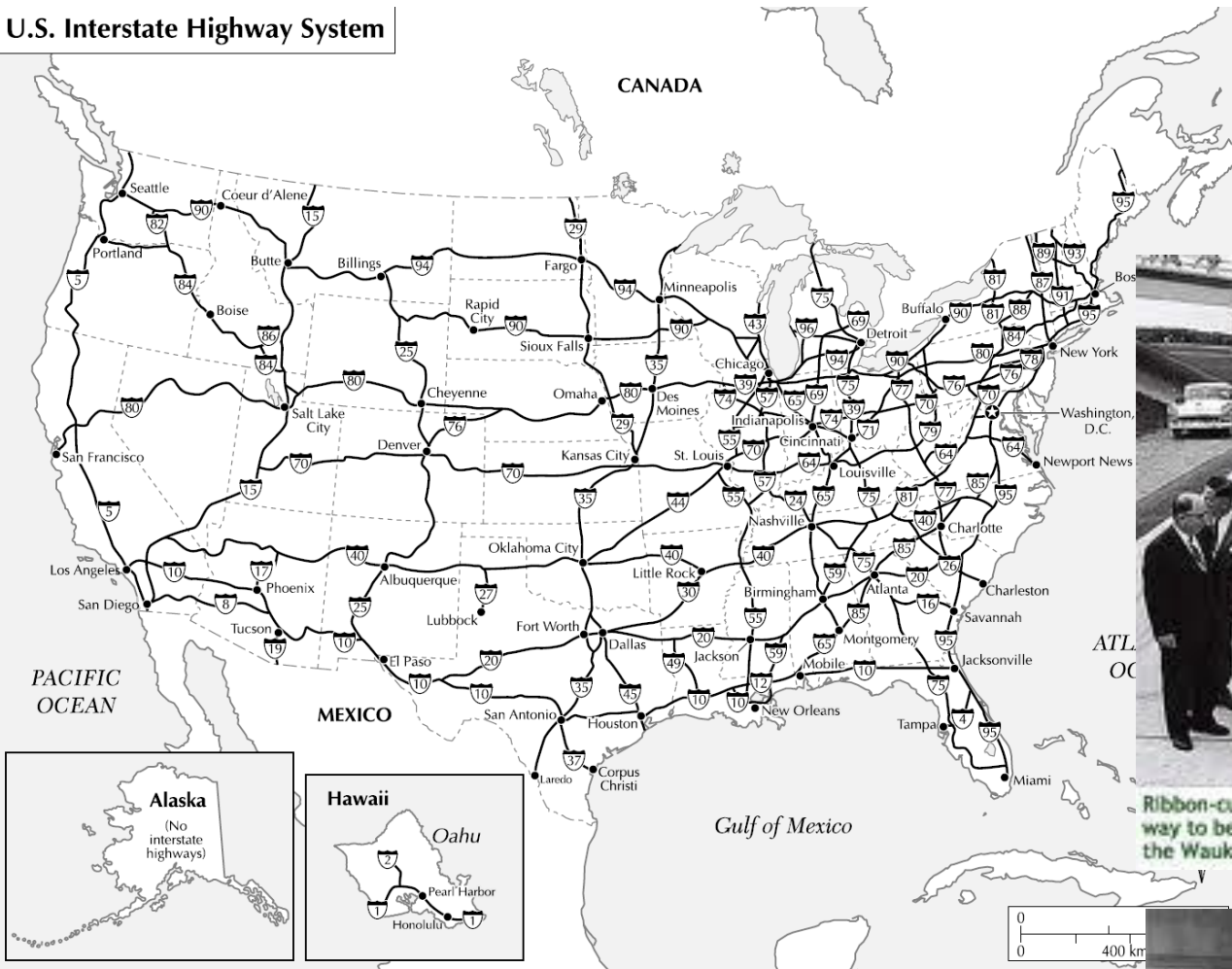


THE AUTOMOBILE & THE INTERSTATE

The Interstate Highway Act

- President Eisenhower signed the Interstate Highway Act in 1956
 - Authorized the construction of a nationwide highway network
 - 41,000 miles of expressways
- This encouraged the growth of suburbs and the rise of the automobile industry
- Made long-haul, high-speed hauling possible (led to a decline in rail use)
- Helped unify the nation

U.S. Interstate Highway System



Ribbon-cutting ceremony along the first portion of Interstate highway to be completed in Wisconsin on September 4, 1958—I-94 in the Waukesha area. (Photo courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.)



“Automania”

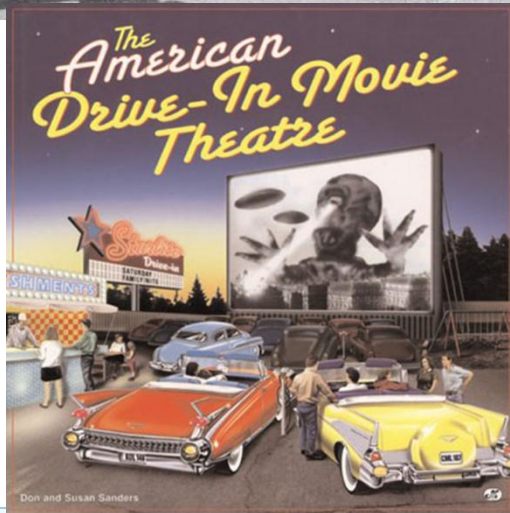
- Suburban living made owning a car necessary
- Schools, churches, doctors’ offices, stores were not always within walking distance
- Encouraged local and state governments to build new roads
- New roads encouraged the growth of more suburbs
- Cars, affordable gas and new highways caused Americans to hit the road
 - Mountains, lakes, national parks, amusement parks and historic sites became popular sites for family vacations



Cultural trends (*drive-in movies, franchise restaurants, etc.*) emerged alongside new highways



“Automania” transformed America



Americans were more mobile, took long-distance vacations, & lived further from their jobs



- **Cadillac Convertible 1959**

Tailfins the ultimate car with tailfins produced by Cadillac with the chrome to go with it and a 325 Horsepower engine and power anything and everything

Prices From \$5,400

- **1958 Nash Metropolitan**

The Metropolitan foreign small car with sports car flavor

Prices From \$1,626



1958 Metropolitan
(32 hp)
photo: Bob Scott
Taken at the Chrysler Museum



FAMILY LIFE

The GI Bill of Rights offered returning soldiers cheap loans for new homes & tuition for college



Women's Roles



- The role of homemaker and mother was glorified in popular magazines, movies & TV programs
- The homemaker was “the key figure in all suburbia, the thread that weaves between family and community – the keeper of the suburban dream.” (*Time* magazine)
- Career opportunities limited to nursing, teaching, and office support



The "M.R.S." Degree

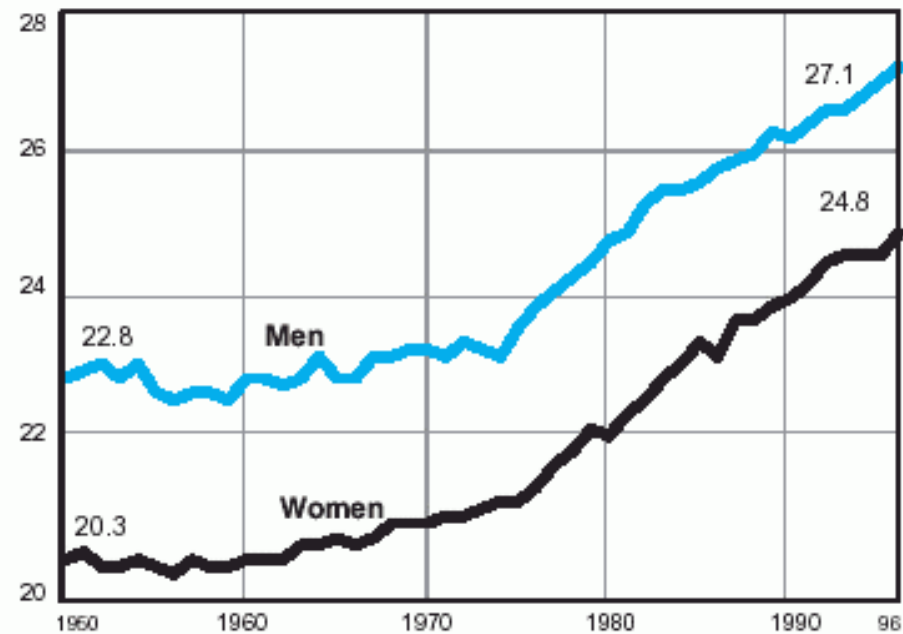
- In the 1950s, women felt tremendous societal pressure to focus their aspirations on a wedding ring.
- The U.S. marriage rate was at an all-time high and couples were tying the knot, on average, younger than ever before. Getting married right out of high school or while in college was considered the norm.
- A common stereotype was that women went to college to get a "Mrs." (pronounced M.R.S.) degree, meaning a husband. The idea promoted in the culture and media at the time was that a husband was far more important for a young woman than a college degree.
- If a woman wasn't engaged or married by her early twenties, she was in danger of becoming an "old maid."



© Alamy

Figure 2.
Median Age at First Marriage, by Gender: 1950 to 1996

Age



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The Baby Boom

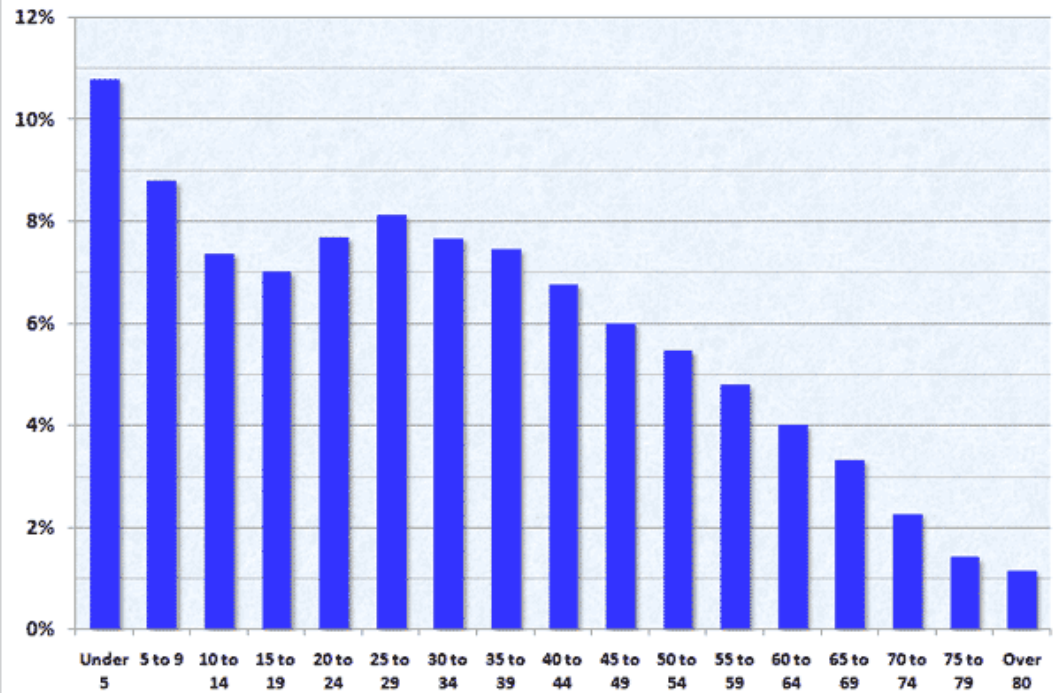
- An unprecedented population explosion following WWII

In 1957, one infant was born every 7 seconds
(4,308,000 babies for the year)

- Parents advised not to spank or scold their children (solution = “family meetings”)
- 1958: toy sales reached \$1.25 billion
- Led to a sharp increase in school enrollment
 - In California, a new school opened every 7 days!



**Population Distribution by Age
1950**



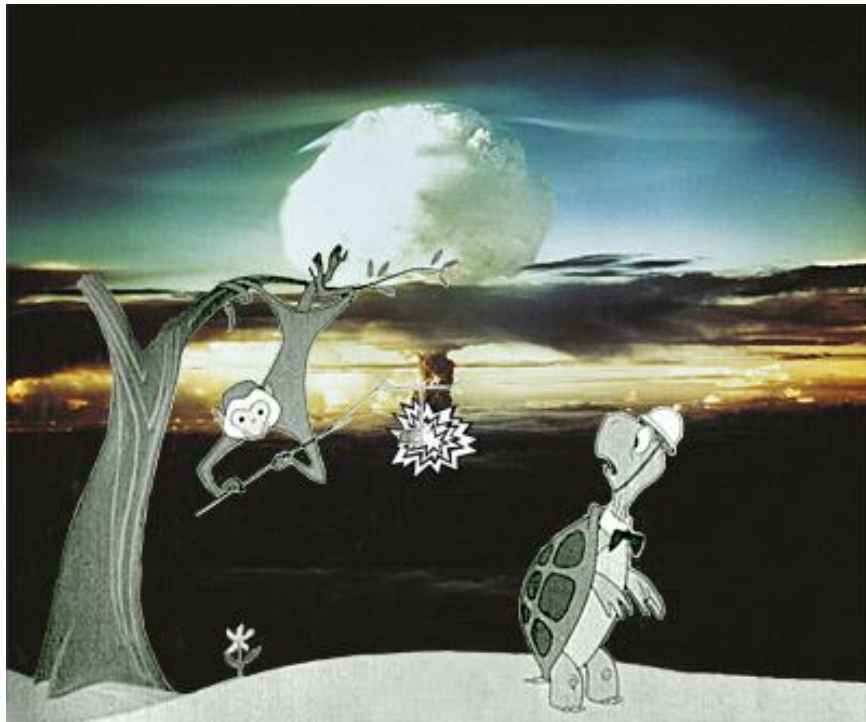
<http://www.calculatedriskblog.com/>



THE COLD WAR AT HOME

Duck & Cover

- After the Soviets exploded their first hydrogen bomb, Americans grew increasingly nervous about the threat of nuclear attack.
- The Federal Civil Defense Administration was created to educate Americans about how to survive an atomic attack
- Teachers in selected cities were encouraged to conduct air raid drills where they would suddenly yell, "Drop!" and students were expected to kneel down under their desks with their hands clutched around their heads and necks.
 - Some schools even distributed metal "dog tags," like those worn by World War II soldiers, so that the bodies of students could be identified after an attack.
- *Duck and Cover* was an educational film that used animation to teach children when and how to take cover



The naive attempts of Bert the Turtle to survive the firecracker of his monkey nemesis in the 1952 film *Duck and Cover* were overshadowed by the reality of the 1954 H-Bomb.



The Hollywood Ten

- 10 motion-picture producers, directors, and screenwriters who appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in October 1947
- They refused to answer questions regarding their possible communist affiliations, and, after spending time in prison for contempt of Congress, were blacklisted by the Hollywood studios.
- The 10 were Alvah Bessie, Herbert Biberman, Lester Cole, Edward Dmytryk, Ring Lardner, Jr., John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Samuel Ornitz, Adrian Scott, and Dalton Trumbo.



The Cold War in Pop Culture

- Music:

- Jazz and Folk singers (like Bob Dylan) were influenced by the threat of nuclear war
- Popular songs: “Masters of War”, “A Rain’s a-Gonna Fall Hard”, & “Eve of Destruction”



- Sports:

- After WWII, the Olympics became a symbol of political power and legitimacy
- 1948 games in London: Japan & Germany not invited, USSR didn’t participate
- 1952 Helsinki Games: Eastern bloc athletes had separate housing facilities

