

RAINBOW ROWELL

Drippy hippies won't go away

Hippies have been in the news quite a bit lately.

First, there was all that Woodstock nonsense. The media were full of retrospectives and pictures of half-naked hippie sprites frolicking in the mud.

Everyone kept referring to the "Woodstock generation," even though only 250,000 people were there.

For the umpteenth year in a row, the latest in fashion and music is being hailed as part of the neo-hippie movement.

Hippie this, hippie that. I've had to deal with this pesky hippie issue my entire life. I can't count how many times I've introduced myself and have been asked, "So, like, were your parents hippies, or what?"

When I moved into Abel Hall three years ago, the first person I met on my floor asked me, "Are you one of them hippie chicks?"

"No," I said.
"Good, cause I hate them tree-huggers."

But what really is a neo-hippie? Someone who recycles? Someone who wears Birkenstocks?

For that matter, what made a hippie a hippie back in the 1960s and '70s? Hollywood tells this story:

After the war, many babies were born. They grew up wearing saddle shoes and listening to Pat Boone albums. They were innocent and hung out in bomb shelters on the weekends. They teased their hair.

Then John F. Kennedy died. Everyone took time out to remember where they were and what they were doing. Then they started doing drugs.

They spent their teen years wearing bell bottoms, painting flowers on their bodies and taking acid. These activities took place on communes, on university campuses and in Vietnam. They often said



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"groovy."

After that they started snorting cocaine and hanging out in discos owned by drug dealers who looked like Al Pacino.

In the eighties, the boomers became greedy yuppies. They sometimes still snorted cocaine and they made lots of money. And they said, "me, me, me" all the way home.

I've often wondered how the free lovin' drug addicts of the late '60s had the time, energy and youth to become the successful young urban professionals of the '80s.

I know a lot of boomers: teachers, parents, etc. And none of them fit the aforementioned mold.

Sure, some of them did hippie-ish things. I've seen pictures of them wearing bellbottoms. They still have scratched Simon and Garfunkel albums. Some even have that "you bet I inhaled" look in their eyes.

But they weren't caught up in any all-encompassing movement. And they didn't become money-hungry yuppies. They cut their hair, got normal jobs, had kids, bought homes.

My research indicates that very few people — very, very few Nebraskans — were the shameless hippie-dippy lovechildren portrayed on television. A lava lamp and a Santana album do not a hippie make.

Sometimes I think the Boomers

have deliberately manipulated history to place their entire generation in the center of every important movement.

Ten years from now, the obligatory boomer movies will include lengthy segments — set to "All Along the Watchtower" or "California Dreaming" — showing how the baby boomers brought down the Berlin Wall and dissolved the Soviet Union.

The entertainment industry will probably tell the story of my generation in the same manner. I guess they've already started.

After the war, many babies were born. They grew up watching LOTS of television. (They could do what they wanted because their parents were busy snorting cocaine and buying junk bonds.) They played Pac-Man.

During puberty, they did two things. During the day, they wore Guess? jeans and legwarmers. They said, "Gag me with a spoon" a lot.

At night, they put safety pins in their noses and listened to the Sex Pistols. They were very selfish. They watched MTV.

Their parents paid for their college education. They were disillusioned. They did drugs and wore dirty clothes. They never voted. Some committed suicide. The rest lived in their parents' basements.

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