

Media From a 1951 Perspective

Dalton Straus is my grandpa; he was born in 1931. When he was 20 years old it was 1951. The Korean War had started, and he enlisted in the military on February 5, 1951. The way he consumed media at 20 years old was drastically different than how I do at the same age. I spend a good amount of time watching TV and movies, reading books and scrolling online. When my Grandpa was my age he was too busy training and learning how to serve his country to worry about the media. The differences in how we consume media throughout our lives have made us into very different people.

The way he got his news when he was in the service was mostly through word of mouth. Straus says there were a few newspapers provided on base but you could only read them if no one else got to them first. There were no televisions and there were no radios in the barracks. Straus says, “They wanted you to focus on your training and not be distracted.”

They had Troop Information and Education (TINE) meetings once a week. These meetings were when one person would give a large group of military members an overview of the news happening in the world. The meetings were about an hour long and in the year 1951, the information given was mostly about what was happening in Korea. One person got to decide what was important enough to share with everyone else.

About a year into Straus’s military career he would be assigned to lead these meetings. He had to tell all the senior officers what was going on in the world. As Division Troop Education Officer he would read through the newspaper and research to decide what was relevant for him to include in these lectures. Because of this, he started to pay a little more attention to the news than he did before.

There wasn't much time for entertainment. During this year he was almost always working and training. Straus spent most of this year in California however he was in training camps around the country as well. Occasionally, he would go to the theater. During this time there was a newsreel that came on before every movie. Straus says, "This wasn't how I got most of my information but I think it was really good they had that because a lot of folks didn't have much access to news." In many of the smaller towns he was placed in, he recalled there not being much as far as local news goes and access to national news was also sparse.

Up until recently, my grandpa would read the newspaper every morning. However, the local newspaper has moved to a digital format. He has a subscription to The Rouge Valley Times because it's similar to what he used to read but it's online. He misses reading the local newspaper every morning because he says, "It was something I really looked forward to." Now that he gets his news online there is a surplus of information to sift through. It's more difficult for him to find the articles he cares about. Straus also said that he has always liked reading human interest stories but he doesn't have a ton of time especially when he's trying to pay attention to the important information first.

My grandpa is a stubborn person who still wakes up at 5:30 a.m. every day even though his days of working the ranch and waking up in the barracks are both long gone. Even so, he's managed to adapt to the changes that have come with the media. He has a Facebook account that he mostly uses to keep track of people's birthdays and what they are up to. I've caught him scrolling on Facebook reels a couple of times. When it comes to entertainment he watches sports on TV and sometimes reads books. For the most part, he hasn't let go of many of his old ways of consuming media but he has added to them.

The role that the media has played in my grandpa's life is very different from the role it has played in mine. His media consumption was mostly informational. He has never had much time to consume media for entertainment. He didn't grow up with all of the entertainment that I did. He was working the ranch from a very young age, got an education, joined the military, and had a family. Similarly to the rest of his generation, he was taught to work hard. From what I know about his life he has never taken a break from working. At the age of 94, he continues to bale hail.

The little free time he has had throughout his life is often spent at various social events or with the people he loves. My grandpa's generation has stronger ties to the people they are physically close to because they didn't have the capability of communicating with as many people farther away. Their family and community values are strong.

My generation grew up with knowledge at our fingertips. I think that we place a lot of value on knowledge and learning through the media. But also in the appreciation of media as an art. Movies, music, television and books are talked about constantly. There is so much of it that it can be a never-ending conversation. Entertainment is constantly being consumed. You no longer have to drive to the theater to watch a film or drive to the library to get a book. You can put a movie on your TV in a few clicks, and pull up a book on your phone in a few clicks. Media is being consumed at a rapid rate which can be difficult to keep up with when that's not what you're used to.

The consumption of media is also rapid when it comes to the news. My generation has constantly been confronted with stories about what's going on in the world. I think that this has made us hyper-aware of the issues, and how things have changed. All of this combined has made

this younger generation more socially conscious, more realistic and more curious about what is going on in the world outside of their inner circle.

My Grandpa and I are vastly different people. A lot of this has to do with the way we grew up and the time that we grew up in. We did everything differently from each other including the way we consumed media. The shifts in values, from local community focus to global awareness, and the shift in skills, from hard-working to adaptive, show how media continues to shape who we are.