



Back To The Futurists

On a clear day, they can see tomorrow

BY BROOKE KROEGER

Double-digit inflation; 52 hostages in Iran; OPEC's stranglehold on oil. Back in 1979, the crystal-ball gazers, mired in Jimmy Carter's "malaise," predicted that the eighties would be glum.

They warned of recession. They bet that oil would sell for an exorbitant thirty dollars a barrel. They foresaw a decline in consumer spending. And though "stagflation" was to grip the country for a couple of years as the decade got under way, no one today would say that was what the eighties were about.

A handful of seers, however, actually proved prescient. The late analyst Edson



Gould said that the Dow Jones index would rise to 2,500 or 3,000 by mid-decade. And *Changing Times* picked up on America's most powerful human force, its 76 million baby-boomers, correctly predicting that they would grow into a working, spending colossus. "Incomes will overtake inflation," the magazine said. "Business will flourish. Unemployment will fall. Living standards will rise."

But in late 1979, few divined the reign of Ron and Nancy or how it would affect American lifestyles and values. Who imagined that it would become acceptable to flaunt one's wealth, that junk bonds and LBOs would become part of many Americans' vocabularies? AIDS had not yet been identified. Heroin—not crack—was destroying the ghettos. The homeless were still called bag people. And back then, no one, not even a farfetched character in a film, would dare espouse the idea that greed was good.

Ten years later, the futurists still have

no direct satellite transmission to the one Reliable Reckoner—but the urge to try to make a business of predicting the mood of the marketplace in the next ten years is stronger than the fear of getting it wrong. See the many seers, armed with their divining rods—survey analyses, focus groups, tea leaves, and intuition. Most of them say that the nineties will bring a desperate need for balance and a desire to get work and family life in sync; a passion for the future of the planet and the education of our children; a younger-acting elderly population; a commitment to social concerns; boredom with buying for its own sake; an interest in collecting experiences rather than possessions; a spiritual stirring; a time of embracing the globe.

They think the age of greed is giving way to something, well, less self-centered.

THE NIMBY DYNAMIC

You'd expect Marshall Herskovitz, a

BROADCASTING TO BOOMERS:
The cast of "thirtysomething" and creators Marshall Herskovitz (left) and Ed Zwick

cocreator of the television series *thirtysomething*, to have a piercing take on the nineties. He and his partner, Ed Zwick, both in their late thirties, certainly got the eighties right, at least for their thirtysomething peers. They have an astounding number of baby-boomers wondering whether their bedrooms have been wired to feed the idea machine back at the show's offices (heavy on the glass brick) on the CBS-MTM lot in Studio City, California.

Marshall Herskovitz, however, insists that he and his partner did not set out to produce a show with sociological

resonance. "The program is very specific to the people in it and the people we know in our own lives," says Mr. Herskovitz, who has been married for eight years and has two young children. "I believe that when you are very specific you have the possibility of becoming universal."

And while the *thirtysomething* writers and producers are turning real-life angst into story lines about divorce, child rearing, homosexuality, and the death of one's parents, they are also voluntarily collecting the discarded scripts and wastepaper they generate and tossing them into special containers in the office and on the sound stages. The waste gets carted to a recycling plant weekly. Polystyrene cups, that ecological taboo, are banned.

"None of these actions are noble or great," says Mr. Herskovitz, who happens to serve on the board of Tree People, a nonprofit antideforestation group. "But they're a right step. It's a beginning of taking personal responsibility for the larger circumstances of society."

That the environment is one of the places the cast and staff of *thirtysomething* have decided to symbolize their caring is no surprise. Saving the planet has become the obvious and logical extension of the fury over medical refuse washing up on the beaches, toxic waste dumps in the neighborhood, and the little black particles that fall with the rain in East Hampton and turn the white wicker grey. Awareness of the mounting ecological menace is now taken very personally, and NIMBY—Not In My Backyard—is the new rallying cry.

Mr. Herskovitz believes that concerned mothers will be in the vanguard of this new activism because mothers as a group have become intensely conscious of the dangers to infants. They now routinely give up alcohol and smoking when pregnant and plan their babies' diets so that foods are introduced at exactly the right moment. "It's become an obsession," he says.

"But what's happening is that these mothers are realizing that the milk their babies drink and the apple juice and food and water are all contami-

EIGHTIES PEOPLE WITH NINETIES ATTITUDES



Trends from *American Renaissance: Our Life at the Turn of the 21st Century* (Cetron and Davies; St. Martin's Press; \$19.95).

TREND: PER CAPITA INCOME PROJECTED TO INCREASE 1.8 PERCENT ANNUALLY UNTIL 2000.



If multimillion dollar partners Peter Guber and Jon Peters, the new heads of Columbia Pictures, set the standard, income could increase a lot more.

TREND: PROTRACTED ADOLESCENCE.



And we all know who Malcolm is bringing to the prom.

TREND: COMPUTER COMPETENCE APPROACHES 100 PERCENT IN U.S. URBAN AREAS BY 2000.



That is, 95 percent among people and 5 percent among chimps.

TREND: AN INCREASE IN PERSONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY.



With his new career as product spokesman, Tip O'Neill is moving right along.

TREND: GROWTH OF CONSUMERISM.



Pat Buckley checks out the engine in a Cadillac Allanté.



ANTICIPATING THE WE DECADE: FCB/Leber Katz's Laurel Cutler (left) and Barnard College's Ellen Futter

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Poland than one citizen was able to do. "Basia Johnson did more herself," says Mr. Goldmark.

The futurists worry that the United States will be left far, far behind if Americans keep up their traditional isolation and chauvinism. "Where, nowadays, does one country end and another begin?" the voice-over asks in a short ad-agency film on the nineties. Comes the answer: "Ask the air."

The film, *Bridging*, produced by FCB/Leber Katz Partners, offers the agency's predictions of the currents that will make waves in the nineties. According to Laurel Cutler, the film's cocreator and cowriter and a vice-president of the firm, as the end of the century arrives, it is "bridging" that will drive the world into the new millennium.

"Bridging is movement. Flow," says Ms. Cutler. "The machinery of alliance between two strong sides." It's the secret of "sustainable success." For individuals, she says, it spells "the end of the 'myth of me.'" For countries, it's the end of borders.

The loosening of boundaries is evident in everything from the real and symbolic destruction of the Berlin Wall to the increase in travel. Travel to the United States has more than quadrupled since 1970, jumping nearly 18 percent between 1985 and 1986 alone. The world's wealthy and its poor and politically oppressed still pick the United States as their favorite

destination. The influence of Hispanic and Asian cultures in the U.S. will grow with the rise in the number of citizens from these backgrounds. Once-isolated areas of the world, such as China and Eastern Europe, have opened up to American businesses and tourists. And a small but growing number of Americans are forming an international business class for whom a deal—in any language, in any country—is a deal.

Mr. Goldmark believes this global impact will be felt in even larger ways. This generation, he says, is the first that has learned that all of us live on one planet. "Our generation will face the issue of whether we can stop destroying the biosphere—and that's going to require that we think and act as global citizens," he says. "That means it's not so much choosing whether to worry about the homeless in Grand Central or the Amazonian rain forest. It means developing an intellectual framework that sees them both as part of one set of problems. And that's something we have got to get to work on."

The Rockefeller Foundation, he explains, is developing a global environment program, funded up to \$50 million over five years, and he has urged the nation's other major foundations to follow suit.

GOING PUBLIC—NINETIES-STYLE

It's clear that nineties people will need a sense of social commitment at the core of their lives. Any chance of that happening? Yes, if the current

generation of Barnard College women are any indication. Ellen Futter, the college's president, has witnessed a change in attitudes and values on the prestigious campus over the past ten years.

The students who will be graduating in the nineties, she says, are very different from their eighties predecessors, whose focus was on success—"financial success," she clarifies. "It's not that young people have rejected the notion of working hard and being successful, but the arena I have heard and seen students terribly concerned with is public policy and public service.

"Our students are volunteering in droves—tutoring, working with public-school kids, the homeless, the elderly. They really care. And I think the whole mood is already moving beyond the younger generation and affecting the one just ahead of it."

Witness what happened in Prague, *New York Times* reporter R. W. Apple, Jr., stated recently. "Idealism is back," he said. "It was the students who got things rolling." Speaking of her contemporaries, Ms. Futter says, "You can't go anyplace without people talking about drugs and homelessness and education. That's everyone's experience."

But there is, for the time being, no hard evidence that the yearnings heard over and over again to find more to life than owning a Porsche will result in a groundswell of authentic social engagements beyond the extravagant social engagements that still pass for good works among the country's wealthiest residents. The Rockefeller Foundation's Peter Goldmark thinks that somewhere in the 1970s Americans picked up the "lazy habit of trying to do serious things without real effort or sacrifice. There's still the exaggeration, the sense of ostentation and competition that drives Manhattanites," he says. "I don't see yet the public leaders who will begin to rebuild the rhetoric and ideals of public service."

MIDLIFE CONSCIENCE

A recent survey about the nineties conducted by the market research and consulting firm Yankelovich Clancy Shulman revealed the possibility that

TREND: GROWING DEMANDS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

"The check is in the mail"—Basia Johnson.

TREND: MORE INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FOR BUSINESS AND PLEASURE.

As the Reagans know from their recent sojourn in Japan, some trips are more business than pleasure.

With his new pleasure yacht, the Limited's Leslie Wexner can soon ease congestion at the airport by delivering his own merchandise from Hong Kong.

TREND: INCREASE IN MARRIAGE-RATE AND DECREASE IN DIVORCE-RATE.

Does this mean Mercedes Kollogg and Sid Bass are forever?

TREND: MEMORY-RECALL DRUG AVAILABLE BY 2000.

Just in time for Oliver North's appeal.

TREND: RETIREMENT AGE RISES TO 70 BY 2000.

But that won't affect Barbara Walters, who will still be fifty-nine in the year 2000.

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the nagging social conscience will explode into action. "If it happens at all," says Barbara Caplan, a vice-president of the firm, "it will start with the country's leadership nine percent"—the nation's elite. They represent the most affluent, best educated, and most executive of the country's most influential population sector. Fifty-seven percent of these trendsetters are baby-boomers, and the style they set could have a pervasive impact on everyone else.

"At this point there is evidence to suggest that social consciousness is a possibility," Ms. Caplan says, adding that, for now, the preoccupation with enriching the quality of life is rooted in the needs of family. "The question is if that need to enrich one's life will begin to fan out to improve society itself so that the caring is beyond one's backyard. As yet, there is no evidence beyond the attitudinal that this is happening."

Perhaps no hard evidence, but there are intimations. Take a program such as the New York City School Volunteer Program. The organization received twice as many calls during 1988's fall recruitment drive than during 1987's. The current number of instructional volunteers (each of whom spends several hours a week with a stu-



THE VIEW FROM THE STREET:
Prudential Bache economist
Edward Yardeni

dent) stands at 5,100.

"And the kinds of people volunteering is changing," says executive director Susan Edgar. "It used to be only parents, then parents and senior citizens, who would volunteer to tutor. Now we've added employed professionals to our rolls, people looking for options that fit into their workday program or after work. We also have more high-school and college students." She cited a 1987 study by the J. C. Penney Company showing that 50 per-

cent of all adult Americans now are involved in some sort of volunteer effort.

THE SWINGING YOUNG OLD

The 76 million baby-boomers, who make up a third of the nation's population, will not be the only force of influence over lifestyles in the nineties. Another influence will be those in the fifty-five to sixty-four age group, a projected force of 24 million people in this decade. SRI International predicts these "young old" people will retain their role in shaping opinions and social trends in the nineties, just as they have for the past thirty years. They can be expected to continue in leadership positions.

Better health and more active lifestyles also mean that this new breed of older Americans will look and act younger. "Older people will generally be more active physically and psychologically throughout their lives than their predecessors have been," the SRI report says. Many will forego retirement and continue with their jobs because staying active is in vogue, their general health has improved, and in a number of cases they simply need the money. It's also likely that the past concept of retirement—a total absence of work—will change and come to mean some work or structured, regular volunteering coupled with more active leisure pursuits.

Some of the elderly will end up in the care of their children, who, because they themselves delayed starting families, will be involved in raising their own children and caring for their parents at the same time.

No wonder the futurists see the nineties as a time for needing spiritual relief.

QUALITY OF LIFE

In a nineteenth-floor office overlooking Manhattan's South Street Seaport sits

PRUDENTIAL-BACHE CAPITAL FUNDING

BETHMANN ARCHIVE



"People have a desperate need to be centered," says one futurist. "Money doesn't do it. They need peace and spiritual nurture."

been "down significantly since 1986 from its high in the preceding three years. The personal savings rate is climbing, he says, predicting it will hit 10 percent by 1993.

"There has been a frenzied demand for mortgage credit and general credit, and that is already subsiding," he says. "So you have a double whammy of borrowing at a slower pace and saving more. I see interest rates coming down to five percent."

Even though the baby-boomers are entering their peak earning period, Dr. Yardeni says, they've changed as consumers. "There's no compulsive need for the latest car with the latest gadgets anymore. The cars aren't big enough to accommodate a family going off on a vacation, and at some point you get tired of having your radio stolen."

As for always having to have state-of-the-art electronic toys, Dr. Yardeni says, "Everybody already has a VCR he doesn't know how to program."

The fact is, he sees a change in his

own life: "I'm starting to save."

THE SOFT SELL

What will move the consumer of the nineties to spend his savings? Thomas Mandel's SRI International report suggests a change from "high levels of material consumption toward a more balanced pursuit of quality" and a resurgence of interest in "elegance, refinement, and sophistication," but not the pursuit of luxury for luxury's sake.

"There is definitely some vulnerability at the high luxury end," says Barbara Caplan of Yankelovich Clancy Shulman. She calls the new value system "neotraditionalism"—not a return

fifties but a blending of the best of the old and the new.

In selecting goods, she says, the lust we have seen for the most expensive and most prestigious will pass. "It's the notion of 'good enough' [that will prevail], meaning that if something works and the price-value relationship is a good one and I am satisfied, then that's enough." FCB/Leber Katz Partners' executive vice-president Geoffrey Frost, who created and wrote the film *Bridging* with Laurel Cutler, states the consumer imperative another way: "Purchases will be important and well considered, or trivial and 'instant.'" And he foresees a rise in gambling as people aim to get rich quicker.

Ms. Caplan says the data her firm has collected also indicates there will be "much more emphasis on the experiential as opposed to



the materialistic." This has already begun to happen. Stanley P. Gold, forty-seven, president of Disney's Shamrock Holdings, recently forsook his new Malibu beach house to spend a week in Ecuador working on CARE projects. Outward Bound, a group geared to intense group and individual experience, regularly runs customized three-day wilderness outings for executives, a very effective fund-raising tool for its charitable programs.

The experience trip hasn't been fully exploited. Carmine Sant' Andrea, a futurist who serves as a consultant to Age Wave, Inc., anticipates a "spa of the nineties" that would serve up more than carrot juice—a place people would go for a deeper sort of detox. "We will see spas that deal with the psychological, emotional, physical, and financial future of the individual," says Mr. Sant' Andrea, who is working on a blueprint for such a place. "People have a desperate need to be centered," he adds. "Money doesn't do it. They need peace, tranquility, happiness, and spiritual nurture."

They might even go back to church. The SRI International survey confirms that church attendance is growing, though not to the all-time high levels of the 1950s. A lot of spiritual seeking is on the fringes. For all the televised hoopla, the number of self-described born-again Christians grew only 4 percent between 1981 and 1987. But the number of people expressing interest in extrasensory perception and astrology grew 12 percent in the same period.

Like astrology, futurism is not an exact science. But the field is ten years older and its practitioners more experienced than the seers of '79. That may bode well for the accuracy of today's forecasts. Accordingly, you may care to brand these key phrases in your memory: environmentally protective; globally connected; family oriented; socially caring; spiritually nurtured; experientially motivated; convenience seeking; quality demanding. And, oh yes, profoundly sophisticated.

It's the nineties. Ready? ■

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'90s



TREND: MORE TWO-INCOME COUPLES.

With Mike Nichols earning \$2.5 million per film and Diane Sawyer earning \$1.6 million annually, isn't it time they incorporated?

TREND: WITH THE WORKWEEK DROPPING TO THIRTY-TWO HOURS, THERE WILL BE AN INCREASE IN LEISURE ACTIVITIES.

TREND: THE URBANIZATION OF RURAL LAND.



Henry and Carolyn Kravis go farming.



Even with the forty-hour workweek, some people managed to increase their leisure time.

TREND: DECLINE IN BIRTHRATE.



When husband Stephan Weiss gave her the choice, Donna Karan started DKNY instead of having another baby.

TREND: MORE ENTREPRENEURS.

TREND: GROWTH OF THE DO-IT-YOURSELF MOVEMENT.



Good news for Marvin Traub, who can always open a boutique.



Who's going to tell Mike Tyson his pancakes are no good?

—compiled by Michael Bastian