

From Woodstock to Wisdom: What Eight Decades Teach About Purpose

FROM WOODSTOCK TO WISDOM

A Boomer's Journey to 80



Vicki Thomas

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Vicki Thomas turned 80 this year, making her one of the first members of the Baby Boom generation to reach that milestone. She marked it the way she has marked most of the chapters of her life: by writing about it. Her new book, *From Woodstock to Wisdom*, draws on eight decades of living to make a case that American culture has not yet fully accepted: that the lessons accumulated over a long and fully engaged life are not just personal. They are social. And they are worth sharing.

Eight Decades Is a Long Time to Learn Things

There is a version of aging that treats the later years as a slow retreat from the world. Fewer responsibilities, fewer demands, fewer stakes. A kind of gradual stepping back from life as it was.

That version does not describe most Boomers. And it does not describe Vicki Thomas.

Thomas is a speaker, author, and Chief Purpose Officer of [My Future Purpose](#), the Connecticut-based membership organization she co-founded with career development specialist Joyce Cohen. She has spent her career in media, marketing, and purpose-driven work, including winning a \$100,000 Purpose Prize from Encore.org for raising awareness for Purple Heart Homes, a nonprofit providing housing for older veterans. *From Woodstock to Wisdom* draws on her own life and the lives of the people around her to make a point that her organization has built its entire mission around: eight decades of living is eight decades of learning, and those lessons have real value for the people who come after.

What Wisdom Actually Looks Like

Wisdom is one of those words that gets used a lot and defined rarely. It tends to show up in graduation speeches and greeting cards. But the kind of wisdom Thomas is talking about in her book is more specific and more useful than that.

It is knowing what matters and what does not, and being able to tell the difference without flinching. It is understanding that most crises are survivable, because you have survived enough of them to know. It is the ability to hold two things at once: the urgency of the present and the perspective of someone who has watched enough decades unfold to know that most situations have more room in them than they appear to.

That is not something you can read about and acquire. You have to live it.

The Boomer Story Is a Story About Perspective

The Baby Boom generation grew up in the middle of social upheaval on a scale that most generations do not experience. The civil rights movement, Vietnam, second-wave feminism, the environmental movement, the AIDS crisis, the digital revolution, these were not background events for Boomers. They were the actual texture of life as it was being lived.

And then there were the personal experiences. Career pivots that nobody asked for. Marriages that held and marriages that did not. Children who thrived and children who struggled. Illness, loss, recovery. Financial setbacks and financial recoveries. The full range of what a human life can hold.

All of that adds up. Not always in ways that are easy to articulate, but in ways that show up in how a person thinks, advises, reacts, and decides. The perspective that comes from living through that much is one of the things younger generations have the most to gain from, if there are structures in place to pass it along.

The Gap Between Generations That Nobody Talks About

There is a real disconnect in how American culture handles the relationship between older and younger generations. The tendency is to treat those generations as separate markets, separate demographics, separate conversations. But the things younger people are working through, questions about identity, purpose, career, meaning, are the same questions that older people worked through decades ago. The answers are different for everyone, but the experience of sitting with those questions is something that can be shared.

My Future Purpose was built, in part, to create more of those connections. The twice-monthly Pause for Purpose discussion groups bring together people who are working through the questions of later life, but the conversations that happen in those groups have relevance well beyond any single age bracket. The tools the organization has developed, including the Pathways to Purpose workbook and card deck, are structured around the idea that clarity about what matters is something you work toward deliberately, not something that arrives on its own.

What Thomas Learned at 80

Thomas has said that one of the things eight decades teaches you is that the chapters of life are not as separate as they seem while you are living them. The activism of the 1960s and the career of the 1980s and the purpose-driven work of the 2020s are all connected. The thread running through them is the same one that has always mattered: the desire to do something that counts. That thread is what *From Woodstock to Wisdom* follows.

What It Means to Age Purposefully

Aging purposefully is not about staying busy. It is not about proving that you are still relevant by doing more than anyone expects. It is about staying connected to what has always mattered to you, and finding ways to offer that to the people and communities around you.

My Future Purpose offers one-on-one coaching, workshops, retreats, and community events for adults who are ready to think seriously about what the next chapter of their lives is going to hold. The organization's seven pathways, advocacy, entrepreneurship, turning loss into good, volunteering, pursuing interests, working with a purpose-driven organization, and following what matters on your own terms, give people a starting point for a conversation that most families and communities have not yet learned to have.

The Lesson That Keeps Coming Back

After eight decades, the lesson that surfaces again and again is this: purpose is not a destination. It is a practice. It is something you return to, especially during the times when life pulls you away from it.

From Woodstock to Wisdom is available at myfuturepurpose.com, where readers can also explore everything My Future Purpose offers for adults who are ready to figure out what comes next.

About *From Woodstock to Wisdom*

From Woodstock to Wisdom by Vicki Thomas is available at myfuturepurpose.com. Part memoir, part generational portrait, the book reframes aging as a powerful and purposeful stage of life with real impact and real contribution still ahead.

About My Future Purpose

My Future Purpose is a Connecticut-based membership organization founded by Joyce Cohen and Vicki Thomas. The organization supports adults in later life through community, coaching, workshops, and tools designed to help people discover and act on purpose. Annual membership is \$99. Learn more at myfuturepurpose.com.

Contact:

Vicki Thomas

vicki@myfuturepurpose.com

203-984-2138

Media Contact

My Future Purpose

*****@myfuturepurpose.com

203-984-2138

<https://myfuturepurpose.com>

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