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Growing Up Levittown: In a Time of Conformity, Controversy and Cultural Crisis

Steve Bergsman

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Growing Up Levittown: In a Time of Conformity, Controversy and Cultural Crisis Steve Bergsman One of the most successful and daring real estate developments in U.S. history was the building of Levittown, Long Island, in 1947. Although it became the prototype modern suburb, it was more reviled than appreciated during the first three decades of its existence. Intellectuals and critics attacked Levittown unmercifully, essentially calling it a boring environment that crushed the spirit of its population. Popular authors, such as Richard Yates, author of Revolutionary Road, used the modern suburb as a metaphor for creative sterility. When Pete Seeger sang, "Little boxes on the hillside, Little boxes made of tickytacky; Little boxes on the hillside, little boxes all the same," everyone knew he was talking about Levittown and all that it begot. As it turned out, the intellectuals and the critics got it all so very wrong from the start. Not only wasn't Levittown dullsville, but a surprising number of creative people passed through here, including songwriter Ellie Greenwich, singers Eddie Money and Billy Joel, Zippie The Pinhead cartoonist Bill Griffith, children's book illustrator Jon Buller, radio host John Gambling, TV political commentator Bill O'Reilly, Maureen Tucker and Sterling Morrison of the Velvet Underground (the house band for Andy Warhol's factory), and Steve Bergsman, journalist and author. Steve Bergsman grew up in Levittown during those early years and looking back now as an aging baby boomer, he thought it a wonderful place to have spent a childhood. Growing Up Levittown: In a Time of Conformity, Controversy and Cultural Crisis is a love letter to this quintessential suburb. Juxtaposed against a prevailing history of criticism and literary slander, Growing Up Levittown is a memoir of a happy childhood.

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