

When History Echoes — From The Eagles to Thoreau

Not long ago, I wrote about generations — how they rise, overlap, and pass wisdom forward in ways we don't always recognize in real time. That column ran in *The Buffalo News* on November 24, 2024. In it, I referenced something Linda Ronstadt once observed: that no one connected generations quite like the Eagles. At the time, I was thinking about music — the soundtrack of my youth somehow finding its way into the playlists of my children and even brushing up against the digital world of my grandchildren.

My college buddies and I saw the Eagles live at the Buffalo Memorial Auditorium — floor seats that we still talk about decades later. For years I remembered it as “early '80s,” but history has a way of sharpening memory. The show was October 15, 1979, during *The Long Run* era, when Timothy B. Schmit had just joined the band. It felt like a small reminder that our personal timelines often blur until something brings them back into focus.

Then life handed me one of those moments where themes converge.

I was watching Don Henley on a recent Jane Pauley segment, reflecting on the Eagles' final tour. Forty-six years after I first saw him live, I found myself watching him again. What caught my attention wasn't just the nostalgia — it was Glenn Frey's son performing alongside the band forty-six years later. A literal passing of the torch. One generation stepping forward while another begins to ease into the background. Toward the end of the interview, Henley said something that stayed with me: he was ready to sail off into the sunset with Henry David Thoreau, someone I realized I knew very little about.

The name felt like an unexpected bridge between worlds — classic rock and a more reflective way of thinking about life, somewhere between modern spectacle and quiet observation.

Curiosity sent me down a familiar path: reading, revisiting history, and connecting dots. Then, on February 12, 2026, I opened *The Buffalo News* again and read an article about multigenerational workplaces and the rise of reverse mentoring — younger employees teaching seasoned professionals about emerging technologies while learning leadership and perspective in return. It felt strangely familiar, almost like an echo of ideas I had explored months earlier.

That's when it hit me:

History doesn't just repeat itself — it resurfaces in new forms, waiting for someone to notice.

The Generational Thread

Music, literature, business — they all tell the same story if you listen closely. Mark Twain once suggested that history may not repeat itself, but it often rhymes.

When the Eagles first dominated the airwaves, they weren't trying to bridge generations. They were simply creating something authentic. Yet decades later, their music still resonates because authenticity travels farther than trends. Watching Glenn Frey's son on stage reminded me that legacy is rarely about standing still; it's about continuity. I'm even hoping to make a visit to the Sphere someday to see them one more time — a full-circle moment from the Aud to Las Vegas.

In the workplace, we're rediscovering the same truth. Companies are formalizing reverse mentoring programs, acknowledging that wisdom flows in both directions. Younger generations understand the speed and language of the digital world, while older generations carry the depth of experience that can't be downloaded or summarized in a thirty-second clip. It isn't new. It's just newly named.

Thoreau in the Age of Noise

Henley's reference to Thoreau made me pause because Thoreau represents something many of us struggle to preserve today: deliberate thinking. The willingness to slow down, to read deeply, to step away from constant noise and reflect on what truly matters.

In a world that rewards immediacy, Thoreau reminds us that insight often comes from patience. His words weren't written for headlines or algorithms. They required time — the same kind of time it takes to read a dense history book or wrestle with a novel that refuses to reveal itself quickly.

What I've since come to learn is that Thoreau lived during the Lincoln era and the turbulence surrounding the Civil War, and that realization came to me after finishing Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals*. While the book vividly captures Lincoln's world, it doesn't deeply explore Thoreau's role or beliefs during that same period. That absence only sparked my curiosity further — and it reminded me why I keep returning to history: not to find final answers, but to keep asking better questions.

I've spent decades reading works that don't lend themselves to shortcuts — *Atlas Shrugged*, biographies of Harry Truman, histories of how the Brooklyn Bridge was built. These books don't

exist to be skimmed or performed for social media applause. They ask something of the reader: attention, endurance, and a willingness to engage with complexity.

And yet we're living in an era where reading itself can become performative. Quotes are shared without context. Titles are displayed without the work behind them. It's easy to signal intellectual curiosity; it's much harder to cultivate it.

I was fortunate to embrace reading in the early 1990s, when books became my early-morning companions long before the dopamine rush of instant information. That tension between depth and immediacy says as much about our culture as it does about our habits.

The Irony of Modern Learning

What fascinates me most is the irony.

We are surrounded by more information than any generation before us, yet genuine understanding can feel harder to achieve. Younger professionals bring incredible fluency with technology — and they should; they've grown up immersed in it. At the same time, seasoned leaders carry a quieter form of literacy: the ability to see patterns across decades, to connect events that might seem unrelated at first glance.

When Henley mentions Thoreau, when a newspaper article highlights generational collaboration, when a documentary revisits historical voices — it all reinforces the same lesson: progress doesn't erase the past. It reframes it.

History becomes a mirror, reflecting who we are and who we're becoming.

Sailing Toward Perspective

Maybe that's why Henley's closing remark stayed with me. The idea of "sailing into the sunset with Thoreau" isn't about retreating from the world; it's about stepping back long enough to see it more clearly. Each generation believes it is living through unprecedented change, yet history reminds us that the deeper rhythms — curiosity, conflict, reinvention, and renewal — have always been present. What changes are the tools; what endures are the values.

As I watch my children, my sons- and daughters-in-law, and my grandchildren move through a digital landscape I could never have imagined, I don't see a divide so much as a continuum — a long relay where each generation carries the baton for a while before passing it forward. The

Eagles' *Greatest Hits* may be measured in record sales, but their real legacy is the way their music still creates common ground across decades. And maybe that's what history is really asking of us: not to keep up with every trend, but to recognize the threads that bind us together — relationships, learning, and the quiet discipline of paying attention.

In the end, reading history — whether through Thoreau's reflections, Ken Burns' documentaries, or the stories unfolding around us — offers a simple but enduring reminder:

The past isn't behind us. It's walking alongside us, waiting for those willing to slow down long enough to notice.



In closing, I've been fortunate to know and spend time with all four of my grandparents — part of a generation that shaped my earliest understanding of history and legacy. Together they had 72 grandchildren. I never knew any of my great-grandparents, yet my mom Eloise, now 94, has 13 great-grandchildren — the oldest Eloise is now twelve — who will someday be able to say they knew not only their grandparents, but a great-grandparent as well. That quiet continuity reinforces that history isn't something distant or abstract; it lives within families, stories, and shared experiences

passed down over time. Maybe someday Great Grandma Eloise and Eloise will sit together and watch the Eagles perform at the Sphere — even if it's just on YouTube — and see what once felt like my generation's music become part of theirs.

And as the Eagles sang in one of my favorite lines —

“Take it to the Limit... One More Time.”