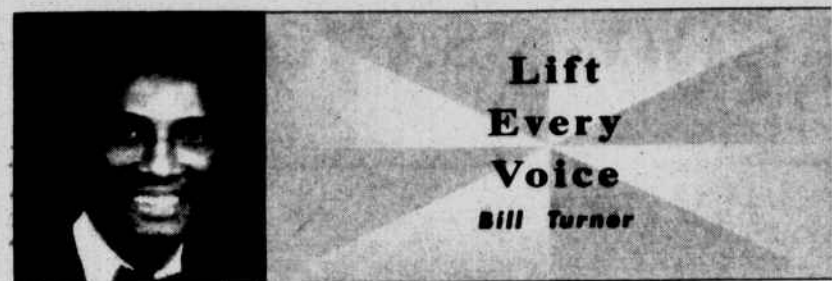


# FORUM

## The Lost World of Boone's Farm

Collectively, those of us who came of age during the 1960s are known as "baby boomers." Commonly, our generation — most now between our mid 40s and mid 50s — is recognized as having advanced some of the most significant and tumultuous social changes known in world history.

In the 1960s, one of the most familiar and dominant themes — expressed throughout American culture, especially in music and arts — was that of helping other people. Back in the 1960s, we did a lot of



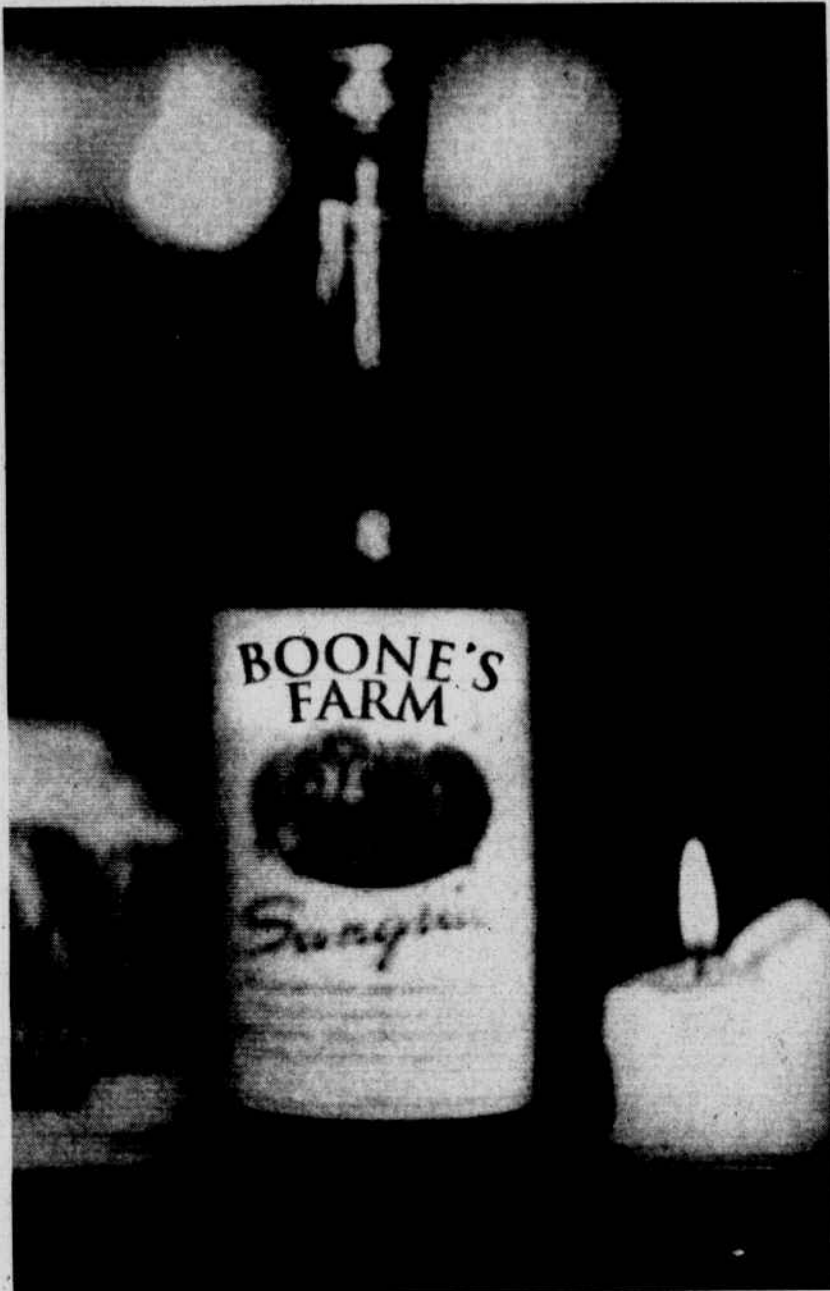
talking about supporting causes to change the status quo. Often, in fact, more often than not, while braving the ins and outs of social changes, we were helping ourselves to generous helpings of Boone's Farm Apple Wine.

In the 1960s, drinking Boone's Farm was as American as an Afro hairdo and a peace symbol. Even those who were not interested in helping others in the 1960s, at least wore bell-bottomed pants and drank Boone's Farm Wine.

Recently, in a joyful gathering to raise money to support those with AIDS, the host — while offering up wine — lay a trap for three dozen baby boomers. She served Boone's Farm, in plastic cups! Those whose economic mobility and palates had long since forgotten or repressed the thought of Boone's Farm Wine began to compulsively knee-slap, as in "Hot diggidy dog!" Joyful shirks went up as folk reclaimed the unmatched sweet twang (is it the sulfites?) of Boone's and the meaning it held for them. College in the mid-1960s and Boone's Farm went together like the mid-1960s went with social change.

Guests exiting luxury foreign cars bearing fine wine in designer bags abandoned them for an All-American icon of their generation: Boone's Farm. The inquiry of "Where did you find this Boone's Farm?" rang as though people were seeking to know the source of an exotic piece of art. "Did you get this in America?"

Today, like everything else, a bottle of Boone's — Modesto, the



makers, dropped "Farm" from the name — costs about \$3. It used to be 99 cents. One can now enjoy Boone's in such quaint Baby Boomer-sounding mixtures as Cranberry Raspberry, Kiwi Strawberry, Pear

Wine, Snow Creek and Sangria.

Before you could say "Boone's rather than Chardonnay," many of the guests were relishing anew what Boone's meant to their times. A very proper lady with a patrician nose and her hair cut "just so" who "hadn't had any of that stuff" since she pledged her sorority 30 years ago, was on the floor doing the Shin-a-Ling to Sam and Dave's "Soul Man." Boone's Farm brings out the best in the best people.

Two graying fraternity brothers from Greensboro who claimed to have "been there and done that" at the first sit-ins were about to do the classic 1960s ritual: share the Boone's from the bottle. Among companions of choice — especially soulmates who met in a jail cell from a common civil rights march — drinking out of the same bottle of Boone's was quite all right. One of their wives interceded. But for her, they may have devised a new way to help somebody. Now, we'll never know.

Another guest, after three glasses of Boone's, led a group of harmony-gettin' doo-wop crooners in what is today called a Kareoke-style sing-along of the Temptations' "My Girl." Now a master music teacher and accomplished church musician, his wife of 25 years didn't seem to mind that he was on the verge of embarrassing himself. After all, the song was dedicated to her. And, in the 1960s, nobody assumed one had a basic personality flaw when they began to sing aloud after three cups of Boone's. How did we spell relief?, B-O-O-N-E-'s.

Drinking some Boone's Farm for the first time in 25 years took me into yet another well-remembered *deja vu*. A few of us dinosaurs — steadfast deviants — had to signal each other and retreat to a far corner of the yard to smoke: cigarettes, of course. We peered through our nicotine-induced stupor at our friends.

There they were: baby boomers, politically correct all, amicably talking about ways to help people. Public schools are resegregating as the racial divide remains continental. Welfare reform is an oxymoron and our men and women in the military are being caught out of uniform.

There they were, very responsible people, downing Boone's Farm, responsibly, of course, and dancing to the Staple Singers' "I'll Take You There." How blessed we were to have lived in the exciting 1960s and to relive briefly some of our dreams and the things we did.

Soul on Ice was there. Boone's Farm on ice was there too. Far out, man. Yeah, those were hip and cool and transforming times, man! Maybe again in our 60s! Don't forget the Boone's!

(Bill Turner is a freelance columnist for the Chronicle.)

## Why Empowerment Zones Aren't Working

There has been an inordinate and superfluous amount of publicity and hype given to empowerment zones in Chicago, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia/Camden, Baltimore, Atlanta and the Mississippi Delta. These targeted areas are supposed to be the renaissance, or rather the genesis, of capitalism in communities with a predominance of blacks and others living in poverty. Such programs are certainly needed throughout the nation, but so far, this endeavor has been a complete flop. But is another federally funded flop a surprise? Not really when you consider that a nation whose theme is "do for self" will never be able to legislate or mandate a level playing field. In reality we are providing false hopes with this idea of empowerment zones.

Let's look at some of the main reasons why this concept is becoming yet another governmental "dry well."

A program just to have a program: Each administration seems to believe that it must come up with a new "hook" to designate its contribution to the future. It doesn't matter what the hook is. Enterprise zones, hundreds across the nation and none a success, were the precursor to empowerment zones. The failure of the former did not discourage the designers of the new venture. After all, it sounds good and gets good press. And, most importantly, the report card will come in long after the current administration is gone, so what the heck?

The "cooks" are incapable: The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), AKA the House of Urban Decay, has proven itself to be incompetent at business development and economic development. The best business and job growth program at HUD has been its Section 3 initiative which is 29 years old and virtually ignored. How is it going to institute a new high-powered program when it ignores the best one it has? Of all the federal agencies, the Department of Agriculture is probably the most institutionally racist; as a result, black farmers are an

endangered species. Despite the above, guess who the main contributors to empowerment zones are? HUD and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It's a classic case of the foxes watching the hens. It just is not going to work! Why doesn't the Small Business Administration and the Dept. of Commerce oversee this program? Wouldn't that be logical?

No water in the well: The key to business growth and job production is capital access. However, empowerment zones are based mainly on tax abatements. What good are tax abatements if there is no revenue or



### Guest Column

Harry C. Alford

income to tax? The only businesses that will be attracted by tax breaks are viable, large businesses in pursuit of reinvestment with the luxury of tax avoidance. What does tax abatement mean to a business that has no start-up capital? Thus, the same problem that exists in stressed communities still lingers in these empowerment zones — no capital access. There is a lot of hype about financing, but when you get down to it, if there is no significant collateral or assets to leverage, it isn't going to happen.

Politicized Request for Proposals (RFP's): The seven empowerment zones were awarded to friends of the administration. Favorite mayors, congressmen, etc., were anointed. The "politicos" and business allies

were given a shot, not the new entrepreneur. These included in Chicago — University of Chicago; Baltimore — John Hopkins University and the University of Maryland and in Detroit — Fortune 100 auto-related companies.

So, what in fact has taken place are business plans mildly adjusted to qualify for the tax abatements in the empowerment zones. Countless black entrepreneurs are being spurned by local empowerment zone committees because they simply have no local political ties or connections. Business development is outweighed by popular social initiatives.

I'm still asking for an example of an empowerment zone that has produced a certifiable new black-owned business that has in turn produced 40 new jobs. To date, it hasn't happened. There have been some businesses moving into empowerment zones to exploit the tax abatements, free rent, etc., but no new business. There is even a Kmart in New York, and Johnson Controls has moved into the hood of Detroit.

Each empowerment zone is looking at others to see how it's supposed to be done. I applaud the candor most of them show about their confusion, all except the example in Detroit where Mayor Dennis Archer is going around saying how great the city is doing with its empowerment zone. Don't believe it! Go there and check out the infrastructure that made this city infamous in the 70s and 80s. It's still there.

So what's the answer to this tricky problem? Capitalism is the key, my brothers and sisters. Pure capitalism with a minimum of good government and an absence of typical politics. So in the interest of a productive affluent society, will the business leaders please step forward and the politicians lay down their tools and go away?

(Harry C. Alford is the president and CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.)

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