

1950

- North Korea invades South Korea and captures Seoul in the first weeks of the conflict. At the United Nations, the Soviet Union is boycotting proceedings, so the U.S. is able to push through a resolution to fight back against North Korea. The **Korean "Conflict" begins** with U.S. General Douglas MacArthur as commander of U.N. troops.
- Nationalist China leader Chiang Kai-shek establishes an anticommunist government on the island of Taiwan (Formosa) after being defeated on the mainland.
- The **Soviet Union begins putting nuclear missiles on submarines.**
- U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin tells President Truman that the State Department **is infiltrated with communists and communist sympathizers. This initiates a period of witch hunts and blacklists.**
- Former U.S. State Department official Hiss is convicted of perjury and sentenced to five years in prison. He was accused of **being a Soviet spy in 1948.**
- Israel's new "Law of Return" grants automatic citizenship to any immigrant Jews from around the world. Iraq's Jewish community migrates to Israel, as do many others. The Arab League institutes an economic boycott of Israel.
- Palestinian refugee camps are set up overseen by the UN Relief and Works Agency. They are given a budget of just \$27 per person.
- **The postwar baby boom dramatically increases birthrates in North America, Europe, Australia and Asia.**
- There are 1.5 million television sets in the U.S. this year. By 1951, there are 15 million – ten times as many in one year. By 1960, Americans own 85 million TV sets. **In 1950, CBS broadcasts the first TV program in color.**
- The **Diner's Club card** is introduced and becomes the **first "credit card"** accepted at multiple retail establishments.



A gun crew, fires a 75mm recoilless rifle, near Oetlook-tong, Korea, 1951. [NARA]

1951

- **General Douglas MacArthur is relieved of his command by President Truman after the General criticized Truman's policy of limiting the war to the Korean Peninsula.** A stalemate in the Korean Conflict begins to take shape.
- **The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is passed, limiting the president to a maximum of two terms in office.** Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected to four terms beginning in 1932. He died within months of beginning his fourth term. He was the first and only president to be elected to more than two terms.
- The **UNIVAC is introduced as the first commercial computer.** It's sold by Remington Rand, a typewriter maker. It gains fame by crunching the numbers that allow pollsters to predict the winner of the 1952 presidential election.
- **Electric power is produced from the first atomic power reactor in Arcon, Idaho.** The U.S. tests nuclear weapons in Nevada and the South Pacific throughout the 50s.
- **Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are sentenced to death for espionage against the U.S. for selling classified information about the atomic bomb to the Russians. They are executed in 1953.**
- **Cleveland disc jockey Alan Freed coins the term "rock-and-roll."**

1952

- **Dwight D. Eisenhower is elected president of the United States, the first Republican president in 20 years.** Richard Nixon is his Vice-President.
- King George VI of England dies, and he is succeeded by his young daughter, Queen Elizabeth II.

- **Japan regains official independence, ending over six years of American occupation.** Japan and the U.S. put into effect a security treaty that makes these former enemies into allies.
- Israel and Germany agree on restitution for damages done to Jews by the Nazis before and during World War II.
- Mother Teresa opens the Home for Dying Destitutes in Calcutta, India.

1953

- **The Korean War ends after three years of inconclusive fighting.** An armistice is signed and the boundary between North and South Korea is drawn at the 38th parallel.
- Nikita Khrushchev is appointed First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party after Joseph Stalin dies. He will rule the Soviet Union through the most turbulent years of the Cold War. He was succeeded by Leonid Brezhnev in October 1964.
- **The Soviet Union detonates its first hydrogen bomb with much more power than the atomic bomb.**
- Cambodia gains independence from France. Next door, the French fight to hold onto Vietnam.
- Heavy flooding in Holland kills 2,000 people.
- The Shah of Iran is returned to power in a coup that is supported by the U.S. and Great Britain. The former prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh, had taken over western-owned oil companies and was becoming a Soviet ally.
- **Cigarette smoking is reported to cause lung cancer for the first time.**
- **British physicist Francis Crick and American biologist James Watson publish their famous paper on the double-helix structure of DNA, the material in chromosomes that control heredity.**
- **Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay become the first humans to reach the summit of Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain.**

1954

- **U.S. President Eisenhower formulates the domino theory that says that once one country falls to a communist regime others in the region will be vulnerable, too. It is this theory that will be invoked by President Lyndon Johnson to escalate the war in Vietnam.**
- The **Brown v. Board of Education** decision is handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court saying that "separate but equal" school systems are unconstitutional. **An era of desegregation of schools is instituted.**
- A rebellion against French colonial rule begins in Algeria. It will last for eight years before Algeria wins independence.
- Vietnamese communists take Dien Bien Phu and occupy Hanoi, forcing a complete French withdrawal from Indochina. In July, at a conference in Geneva, the country is divided into North and South Vietnam along the 17th parallel.
- The U.S. enters into the SEATO Treaty, the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization, to oppose communism in Asia. The mutual defense organization included Australia, Thailand, the Philippines, New Zealand, Pakistan, France, England and the U.S. The treaty was disbanded in 1977.
- China's Yangtze River overflows, killing 40,000 and forcing 10 million people to evacuate.
- **First human trials of "the pill" oral contraceptive for women.**
- **RCA introduces the first color TV sets, and NBC begins regular broadcasts in color.**
- The U.S. launches the **first nuclear powered submarine, the Nautilus.**

1955

- Winston Churchill resigns as Prime Minister in England and is defeated for re-election.
- The Soviet Union and its satellite communist regimes in Eastern Europe ratify the **Warsaw Pact**. Later, Churchill calls this act the equivalent of forming an **"Iron Curtain" across Europe. The Cold War deepens.**
- **Rosa Parks, an African American woman, is arrested after refusing to give up her bus seat to a white person in Montgomery, Alabama. Her arrest sparks a bus boycott led by local minister Martin Luther King, Jr., and sets the American civil rights movement in motion.**
- Sony – then known as Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering – produces the first pocket-size transistor radio. Before that, all radios had to have tubes and were large, heavy machines.

1956

- Dwight Eisenhower reelected as President of the United States. That same year, he signs the Interstate highway into law.

- **Nikita Khrushchev tells Western ambassadors, "We will bury you."** He also begins "de-Stalinization," releasing millions of political prisoners and liberalizing Soviet politics. Still, Soviet troops invade Hungary to crush an uprising against the Communist government there.
- The second Arab-Israeli war is fought after Egypt seizes the Suez Canal from the British. Israeli invades Egyptian territory east of the Canal with British and French help. However, eventually the UN declares the canal Egyptian property.
- Pakistan becomes an Islamic republic.
- Former colonies gain independence – Sudan from England, and Tunisia and Morocco from France.
- **Elvis Presley releases the first of more than 170 hit songs, "Heartbreak Hotel."**
- American movie star Grace Kelly marries Prince Rainier of Monaco.

1957



A Soviet R-7 rocket like this one launched Sputnik into orbit setting off a missile race with the U.S.

- **The Soviet Union launches the Sputnik satellite, the first man-made object to orbit the earth.** About the same time, the Soviets test their first Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) that's capable of delivering nuclear warheads in minutes to the U.S.
- North Vietnam, through the Viet Cong, begins a guerilla war against South Vietnam.
- **Arkansas governor Orval Faubus calls the National Guard to prevent nine African American students from integrating Little Rock's Central High School. He defies the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.**
- Martin Luther King, Jr., forms the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to promote nonviolent solutions to segregation.
- Ghana gains independence from Great Britain.
- **In the U.S. the baby boom peaks as 4.3 million Americans are born, the highest number in 30 years. During the 50s, 29 million babies are born.**
- The British allow women to become members of the House of Lords for the first time.

1958

- The U.S. and Canada develop NORAD, a radar system close to the North Pole to detect and provide the U.S. with an early warning of a Soviet missile attack.
- **In Cuba, Fidel Castro launches a revolution against the**

Batista government. Batista flees in 1959, and Castro becomes premier of Cuba.

- **The European Economic Community – also called the Common Market – is begun to give Europe the same economic leverage as the U.S. and the Soviet Union.**
- Iraq's King Faisal is assassinated by the army. Iraq becomes a republic, withdraws from the Baghdad Pact and allies itself with the Soviets.
- The former colonies of Madagascar, French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa gain their independence but maintain ties to the French Community.
- **NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, is founded and starts the Mercury project to take the first Americans into space.**
- Charles de Gaulle is elected president of France, in large part because he is in favor of allowing former colonies gain independence. He proposes the creation of the French Community giving former colonies the right to independence.

1959

- **Fidel Castro installs the first communist regime in the Western Hemisphere.** The U.S. breaks off diplomatic relations in 1961.
- **In Vietnam, the first U.S. noncombatant military advisers die in a Viet Cong attack.** In 1961, the U.S. agrees to supply South Vietnamese troops.
- **Alaska and Hawaii become the 49th and 50th states in the United States.**

- Yasser Arafat establishes the militant Arab group al-Fatah that is dedicated to building a Palestinian state and the destruction of Israel.
- **Xerox introduces the first commercial photocopier to the market.**
- American Airlines launches the jet age in the U.S. transportation industry with the first transcontinental flights with a Boeing 707 aircraft.
- **The Soviet Union's unmanned Luna 2 rocket reaches the moon. This same year, the U.S. launches into space and safely retrieves two monkeys.**
- **Albert Sabin develops a live-virus polio vaccine that can be taken orally and offers longer immunity than the Salk vaccine.**

1960

- John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon run against each other for the U.S. presidency. **In the first televised presidential debate, Kennedy is credited with winning the debate. In November, Kennedy wins a close election becoming the youngest person ever elected president.**
- Leonid Brezhnev become president of the Soviet Union.
- **A U-2 high altitude spy plane from the U.S. is shot down over the Soviet Union. The pilot, Gary Powers is captured and later exchanged for the Russian spy Rudolf Abel.**
- The Irish Republican Army (IRA) begins guerrilla fighting against the British to reunite six North Ireland counties still under British control. Ireland became a republic in 1949.
- **The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is founded with most of its members from the Middle East.**
- Several African colonies gain their independence, including Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, Niger, Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Chad, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin Bourkina Fasso, Cameroon, Gabon, the Central African Republic and Madagascar.
- **Students protest segregation in Greensboro, North Carolina, by staging "sit-ins" at whites-only lunch counters.**
- **"The Pill," an oral contraceptive, is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Some say it ushers in a new age of sexual freedom.**
- Former Gestapo chief Adolf Eichmann is arrested in South America and extradited to Israel where he is found guilty of war crimes in a Jerusalem trial in 1961. He is hanged in 1962.

1961

- **U.S.-trained Cuban exiles attempt to overthrow the Castro government in Cuba with an invasion at the "Bay of Pigs." The invasion fails badly. It's a major embarrassment to the Kennedy administration.**
- **The Berlin Wall is constructed to prevent East Berliners from defecting to the West.**
- Sierra Leone gains independence from Great Britain. South Africa, independent since 1910, withdraws from the British Commonwealth and becomes a republic. It's official policy is apartheid, or separation and subjugation of black Africans.
- The **Peace Corps is established by President Kennedy** encouraging young people to volunteer to help third world countries. Over the years, more than 187,000 people have served as Peace Corps Volunteers in 139 countries.
- In the American South, "freedom riders" descend. African American and white volunteers, many of whom were college students, rode on interstate buses into the segregated South to test the 1960 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Boynton v. Virginia* that outlawed racial segregation in interstate bus stations and railroad terminals. A total of 436 freedom riders were arrested by local authorities for trespassing, unlawful assembly and violating state and local Jim Crow laws.
- **First men in space – Yuri Gagarin of the Soviet Union becomes the first man in space, beating the U.S. astronaut Alan Shepard by one month.**

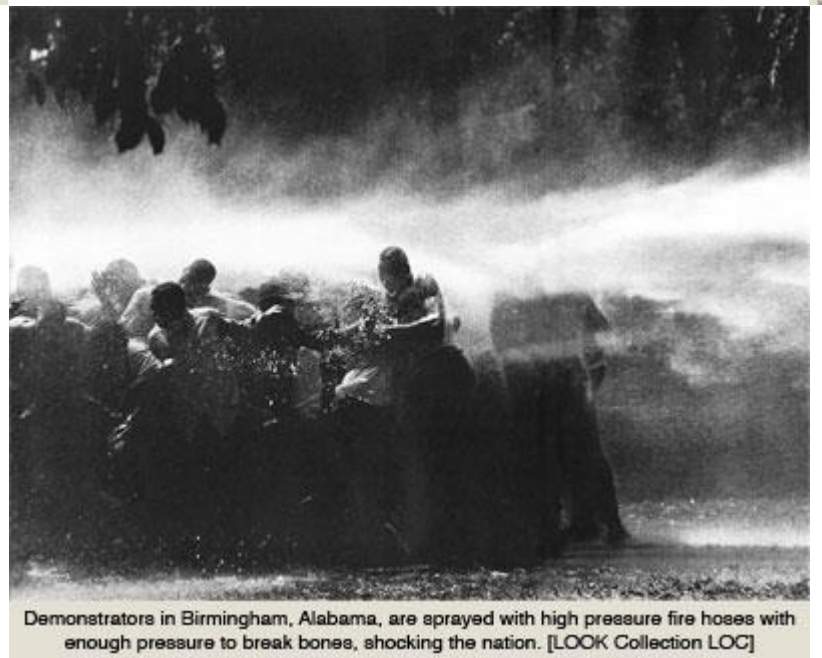
1962

- **The Cuban Missile Crisis. U.S. President John F. Kennedy wins a standoff with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who reverses plans to install missile bases in Cuba.**
- Nelson Mandela, deputy president of the African National Congress (ANC), is arrested in South Africa for agitating against apartheid laws.
- Algeria become independent, ending their eight-year rebellion against France. Uganda and Tanganyika gain independence from Great Britain, as do Rwanda and Burundi from Belgium.

- **Astronaut John Glenn is the first American to orbit the earth when he goes around the earth three times and returns successfully.**
- The Wal-Mart discount store is opened by Sam Walton in Bentonville, Arkansas.
- **The U.S. Supreme Court rules against compulsory prayer in public schools citing Constitutional prohibitions of state sponsored religion.**
- **Telstar, the first telecommunications satellite, goes into orbit carrying telephone, television and high speed data signals. Two years later, the Tokyo Olympics become the first event broadcast live around the world via satellite.**
- Labor Leader Cesar Chavez begins organizing California grape pickers and forms the United Food Workers union.

1963

- **President John F. Kennedy is assassinated on November 22 in Dallas, Texas, by Lee Harvey Oswald.** Lyndon Johnson is sworn in as president and wins reelection in 1964.
- South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem is assassinated in a military coup.
- In May, young demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama, were attacked by police dogs and sprayed by fire hoses strong enough to break bones. Photographs and television news film of the event shocked the nation. **In August, 250,000 freedom marchers descend on Washington, DC, and hear Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.**
- The U.S. and the Soviet Union set up a hotline between the White House and the Kremlin to avoid communication problems that were evident in the Cuban missile crisis.
- Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns are featured in a New York exhibition of "Pop Art."
- **The Beatles release their first album, *Please Please Me*.**
- Russian Valentina Tereshkova become the first woman in space.
- Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique* a milestone for the women's liberation movement.



Demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama, are sprayed with high pressure fire hoses with enough pressure to break bones, shocking the nation. [LOOK Collection LOC]

1964

- **U.S. destroyers are allegedly attacked by North Vietnamese patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. In response, President Johnson pushes through Congress a resolution allowing him to greatly increase U.S. troop levels in Vietnam. The escalation of the war begins.**
- **The U.S. Civil Rights Act is passed, ending legal discrimination in public places, promising equal voting rights and creating the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).**
- Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev becomes Communist Party Secretary, replacing Khrushchev, who is forced to resign after the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- King Saud of Saudi Arabia is deposed and replaced by his son, Faisal, who modernizes the country's administration.
- Kenya becomes an independent republic with Jomo Kenyatta as president. Zanzibar and Tanganyika unite to form Tanzania. Rhodesia splits with the north becoming the independent republic of Zambia.
- **The Beatles make their U.S. television debut on "The Ed Sullivan Show." The next morning practically every newspaper wrote that the Beatles were nothing more than a "fad," and "could not carry a tune across the Atlantic." They couldn't have more wrong.**
- **The French detonate their first atomic bomb, which is part of their plan to become independent of U.S. military protection.**
- **China explodes its first atomic bomb.**
- Israel diverts water from the Sea of Galilee and Jordan River to the coast and northern Negev, a project that "makes the desert bloom."

1965

- President Lyndon Johnson announces his Great Society program, **creating Medicare** and expanding his "war on poverty." Also, the U.S. Congress passes the **Voting Rights Act**, attacking voting restrictions aimed at African Americans. But, Johnson refuses to raise taxes to pay for both the social programs and the Vietnam War.
- **The first U.S. ground troops arrive in Vietnam when 3,500 Marines land in Da Nang. Before that, the U.S. had stationed military advisors in Vietnam.**
- Martin Luther King, Jr., leads 4,000 people on a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. On March 7, 600 civil rights marchers are attacked by state and local police with billy clubs and tear gas. Only the third, and last, march successfully makes it into Montgomery. In New York, Black Muslim leader Malcolm X is assassinated.
- **The U.S. Supreme Court, citing the Constitutional right to privacy, strikes down a Connecticut law that prohibits married couples from using birth control pills.**
- **Soviet Cosmonaut Alexei Leonov is the first person to "walk" in space**, spending ten minutes outside the Voskhod 2 spaceship.
- **The Gemini missions carry the first two-man crews into space and enable the first spacewalk by an American – Ed White – and the first space rendezvous of two manned crafts.**
- The St. Louis Gateway Arch is completed.

1966

- In China, Chairman Mao launches the Cultural Revolution that lasts until 1969. Students and workers join the Red Guard and begin purging so-called intellectuals and imperialists, who are believed to be opposed to Mao's socialist vision.
- **The Soviet Union lands the unmanned spacecraft Luna 9 on the moon. The U.S. lands Surveyor I on the moon and transmits TV images of the moon's surface back to Earth.**
- **Miranda rights come into being after the U.S. Supreme Court overturns the conviction of a confessed rapist because he had not been properly informed of his right to counsel and to not testify against himself.**
- **Sony produces the first integrated radio circuit.**
- **Betty Friedan and 27 other women and men attending the Third National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women found the National Organization of Women (NOW).**
- Indira Gandhi, the daughter of Nehru, become prime minister of India.