

1949

Harry Truman

Harry S Truman became U.S. President when President Roosevelt died in 1945. He was responsible for dropping the atomic bombs on Japan and ending World War II. Truman initiated the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after the war.

He started his second term in 1949, defeating Thomas Dewey. A famous picture shows him smiling and holding up the Chicago Tribune newspaper with the headline "Dewey Defeats Truman".

During his second term, he brought the United States into the Korean War.

Doris Day

Doris Day was born in 1924. She started singing and touring with the Les Brown Band at age 16. She made her first movie in 1948 and soon became a popular movie star and singer.

Red China

Communists took control of China after a struggle that started before World War II and renamed the country the People's Republic of China. It was called *Red China* by the United States to indicate they were Communists.

Red China entered the Korean War in the 1950s, when it looked like the U.N. forces would defeat Communist North Korea.

Johnnie Ray

Partially deaf singer, whose song *Cry* was a number-one hit. Ray actually cried in performing the song. He was a top star in 1949 and 1950 with his other hit songs *The Little White Cloud that Cried* and *Walking in the Rain*.

South Pacific

South Pacific was a highly popular Broadway musical and hit movie.

Walter Winchell

Walter Winchell was a top gossip reporter, whose newspaper column and radio show could make or break a celebrity.

Joe DiMaggio

Joe DiMaggio was a popular baseball player for the New York Yankees. In 1941, he set a Major League record of hitting safely in 56 straight games. He was affectionately known as "Joltin' Joe" and "The Yankee Clipper" until he retired in 1952. DiMaggio married actress Marilyn Monroe in 1954, but the marriage lasted only 9 months.

In the 1980s, he became known as "Mr. Coffee" because of his TV ads for that brand of coffee maker. He was also mentioned in the song *Mrs. Robinson* by Simon and Garfunkel.

1950

Joe McCarthy

Joe McCarthy was a Senator from Wisconsin. He was best known for his work chairing the Senate Committee on Government Operations, which focused on suspected communists in the government. He even investigated the Voice of America,

He was known for his brutal interrogations of suspects, resulting in ruining the lives of both guilty and innocent people. It was later noted that McCarthy would be careful not to interrogate suspects who might resist his efforts. Usually, he picked on people with weak personalities.

While investigating possible communists in the U.S. Army, the Army's attorney general Joseph Welch responded to McCarthy's interrogation of a young soldier. He told McCarthy, "Let us not assassinate this lad further, senator. You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?" Since the hearings were broadcast on national television, millions realized that these interrogations were not right. The hearings soon ending and McCarthy was left in disfavor.

Richard Nixon

Richard Nixon was a member of the House of Representatives from California when he became involved in the trial of Alger Hiss, who was accused of being a Communist and a spy. Nixon presented evidence that help prove Hiss guilty in 1950. This advanced Nixon's political career, and he soon ran for the Senate and won. Nixon later became Vice-President under President Dwight Eisenhower. Years later, he became President of the United States.

Studebaker

Studebaker was a popular car in 1950. The styling consisted of a torpedo front end and read window. People joked that the car looked like it was going backwards. The company went out of business in 1966.

Television

Television became popular in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Most large cities had only one station. Sets in those days had 10 inch screens and were in black and white. Color was introduced in 1951, but it was years later until color television became universally popular.

North Korea / South Korea

Korea was split into north and south after World War II. North Korea became established as a Communist dictatorship by Soviet Union and Red China, after Japan was defeated.

In 1950, North Korea attacked South Korea, starting the Korean War. The United Nations entered the war to defend South Korea. The Soviet Union made the mistake of walking out on the U.N. vote, allowing the measure to pass. Since declaring war was not acceptable without the approval of Congress, President Harry S. Truman declared the fighting a "police action" to allow the entry of American troops. The war resulted in a stalemate, and Korea is still divided to this day.

Marilyn Monroe

Marilyn Monroe was a popular "sex symbol" movie star. She was married to baseball hero Joe Dimaggio and later author Arthur Miller. She also was rumored to have relationships with President John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, as well as mafia boss Joe Gianconna. She died under suspicious circumstances.

1951

Rosenbergs

The Rosenbergs were a husband and wife who were arrested and executed for selling secrets of the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union.

H-bomb

The hydrogen bomb was developed under the guidance of Dr. Edward Teller. It was many times more powerful than an atomic bomb and in fact required an atomic bomb to detonate. The United States exploded the first H-bomb and a few years later the Soviet Union then exploded their version of the bomb.

Sugar Ray

Sugar Ray Robinson was the middle-weight boxing champion of the world. At the time considered pound-for-pound the best boxer ever. He was also highly personable and popular.

Panmunjom

Panmunjom, Korea is where negotiations between the United Nations—led by the United States—and the Communist North Koreans to end the Korean War took place. The separation between North Korea and South Korea was originally the 38th Parallel, but the new truce decided on a boundary between the countries that was more defensible. The countries also exchanged prisoners-of-war as a result of the Panmunjom negotiations.

Brando

Marlon Brando became a top movie actor. He was famous for his brooding and mumbling acting style. He received an Academy Award for his role in "On the Waterfront" that brought him to be a top box-office draw. Many years later, he starred in the "Godfather" movie.

The King and I

The King and I was a popular Broadway play and later turned into a movie starring Yul Brunner and Deborah Kerr.

The Catcher in the Rye

The Catcher in the Rye was an extreme popular book among teens, as it epitomized their attitudes and feelings.

1952

Eisenhower

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower ("Ike") had been Supreme Commander in the World War II fight against the Nazis. He later became a popular president of the United States. "I like Ike" was the motto of his followers.

Vaccine

The vaccine to the dreaded disease polio was discovered by Jonas Salk and distributed to the world.

England's got a new Queen

On February 6, 1952, Queen Elizabeth 2 ascended to the throne upon the death of her father, King George 6. Her coronation didn't take place until June 2, 1953. This was a great event, not only in Britain but in all the countries of the British Commonwealth. It was also big news in the United States and many other countries as well. Filmed documentaries of the event circulated in Commonwealth countries for a long time after the event and every school child was taken to organized cinema screenings in school time.

Marciano

Rocky Marciano was the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. He retired undefeated.

Liberace

Liberace was a popular pianist and entertainer, who had his own TV show in the 1950s. He was known for wearing sequined tuxedos and having a candelabrum on his piano. He is credited with advising singer Elvis Presley to also wear "fancy clothes" during his performances. Women adored Liberace, because of his sweet smile and wavy hair.

Santayana good-bye

Famed philosopher George Santayana died in 1952

1953

Joseph Stalin

Joseph Stalin was the dictator of the Soviet Union. He was a harsh leader who had millions of his people executed or sent to labor camps in Siberia. On his way to political power, he changed his name to *Stalin*, which means "steel" in Russian.

Malenkov

Georgy Malenkov was a Soviet politician and Communist Party leader, and a close collaborator of Joseph Stalin. He briefly became leader of the USSR (March 1953-February 1955) after Stalin's death.

Nasser

Gamal Abdel Nasser was the second President of Egypt after Muhammad Naguib. He was considered one of the more influential Arab leaders in history.

Prokofiev

Sergei Sergeyeovich Prokofiev was the most prolific Russian composer, pianist and conductor of the twentieth century. His works include such widely heard works ballets from *Romeo and Juliet* and *Peter and the Wolf*. He died in 1953.

Rockefeller

Nelson and Winthrop Rockefeller were grandsons of oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller.

In 1953, Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed Nelson as chair of the President's Advisory Committee on Government Organization. He served as Governor of New York from 1959 to 1973. He was the 41st Vice President of the United States of America from December 19, 1974 to January 20, 1977.

Also in 1953, Winthrop Rockefeller—who was known as a playboy and hard drinker—moved from Florida and New York to Arkansas. It was jokingly said he moved there because he loved playing the banjo. Winthrop became Governor of Arkansas in 1966 and was said to be a great influence on future Arkansas Governor and U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Winthrop was probably the Rockefeller that Billy Joel was referring to, since his playboy antics were more in the news than things that Nelson was doing.

Nelson and Winthrop Rockefeller were the only brothers in U.S. history to serve as governors at the same time until the late 1990s when George W. Bush and Jeb Bush became governors or their states.

Campanella

Roy Campanella was the all-star catcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team. His career was cut short by a paralyzing car accident.

Communist bloc

USSR and their satellite countries formed what was called the Communist bloc.

1954

Roy Cohn

Roy Cohn was the advisor to Senator Joseph McCarthy during the McCarthy Hearings on Communists in the movie industry and government.

Juan Perón

Juan Perón was a popular leader in Argentina, elected first in 1946 and then again in 1952. Perón pursued social policies aimed at empowering the working class. His wife Evita was known for helping the poor. He was strongly anti-American and anti-British, confiscating much of the British and American-owned assets in Argentina. In 1955, he was overthrown by a military coup. It wasn't until 1973 that he returned to power. He died shortly afterward in 1974.

Toscanini

Arturo Toscanini was a world-famous conductor, considered to have been one of the greatest classical conductors of all time. On April 4, 1954, while conducting a radio broadcast of the NBC Symphony at Carnegie Hall in New York, Toscanini suffered a memory lapse during the performance. That was the last time he conducted live in public. He died at the age of 89 in 1957.

Dacron

A new wonder-material Dacron hit the market.

Dien Bien Phu falls

The French lose control over Indo-China—now known as Vietnam—with the fall of the city Dien Bien Phu

Rock Around the Clock

Bill Haley and the Comets came out with what was considered the first rock-and-roll hit song, *Rock Around the Clock*. It was the theme music for the popular movie *Blackboard Jungle*.

1955

Einstein

Albert Einstein developed the Theory of Relativity in 1903 and was considered one of the world's smartest scientists. He became a popular figure in the later years of his life. He died in 1955.

James Dean

James Dean was a movie star who became a symbol of young people for his role in the movie *Rebel Without a Cause*.

After completing his next movie *Giant*, Dean decided to drive his new 1955 Porsche Spyder to Salinas, California to enter in a sports car race there. His mechanic rode with him. On the way there, Dean's car was struck by another vehicle which crossed the centerline. James Dean was the only one killed in the accident. The driver of the other car had minor injuries, while the mechanic was thrown from the car and suffered some broken bones.

Brooklyn's got a winning team

The Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team finally won the World Series over the New York Yankees. They later moved to Los Angeles.

Davy Crockett

Actor Fess Parker starred in the highly popular TV series *Davy Crockett*. The novelty song *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* became the number-one song in 1955. Coonskin caps—like Davy Crockett wore—also became popular among young boys.

In the late 1950s, the U.S. military created what they called the M-29 Davy Crockett weapons system. This was a tactical nuclear recoilless gun, intended to fire at enemy troops in the case of war with the Soviet Union. They probably gave it that name as a result of the television series.

Peter Pan

Peter Pan was a top Broadway play starring Mary Martin, who flew through the air as Peter Pan.

Elvis Presley

Singer Elvis Presley became a national phenomenon with such number-one hit songs as *Heartbreak Hotel*, *Don't Be Cruel* and *Hound Dog*. He was called "Elvis the Pelvis" because of the way he shook his hips while dancing. Many religious leaders and school officials banned his songs, which only made them more popular. He later went on to be nicknamed "The King" as the most popular singer ever.

Disneyland

Disneyland opened in 1955 in Anaheim, California. It was a theme park, developed by Walt Disney and based around his cartoon characters. It was designated as a place for family entertainment.

An interesting and little-known fact is that although Disney forbade the serving of alcoholic beverages in Disneyland, he had a private suite in the park where bartenders would serve drinks to his personal guests.

1956

Bardot

Brigitte Bardot was a popular French "sex-kitten" movie star.

Budapest

Anti-communist riots took part in Budapest, Hungary. Soviet troops put down the revolt and arrested many Hungarians, especially students.

Alabama

In 1955, African-American Rosa Parks sat in a Montgomery, Alabama bus seat designated "for whites only". She was then arrested for her act of defiance. That arrest resulted in demonstrations and a boycott of Montgomery buses by African-Americans that lasted until December 1956.

Since the boycott was costing downtown stores and white businesses considerable money, negotiations were made to stop the action. But it took a Supreme Court ruling in November 1956 that segregation on transportation is unconstitutional to finally integrate the buses.

This event was also a starting point for the Civil Rights movement of Martin Luther King and others.

Khrushchev

Nikita Khrushchev emerged as a leader in the Soviet Union after the death of dictator Josef Stalin. In 1956, he advocated reform and indirectly criticized Stalin and his methods. He became the Premier of the Soviet Union from 1958 to 1974.

Princess Grace

Actress Grace Kelly left Hollywood to marry Prince Ranier of Monaco. She then attained the title of Princess Grace.

Peyton Place

The book *Peyton Place* became the number-1 best-seller. Teens often marked the "good parts" in the book, as they passed it among each other.

The book is quite tame according to today's standards.

Trouble in the Suez

After Britain and the USA withdrew their financial support for the Egyptian Aswan dam project, General Nasser nationalized the important Suez Canal. Egypt was then invaded by British, French and Israeli forces. Under pressure from the United States the invaders left Egypt and a UN emergency force was sent to Egypt.

1957

Little Rock

Nine African-American students enrolled at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Governor Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard to surround Central High School to keep the nine students from entering the school, because he believed black and whites should be segregated, despite Federal laws on integration. President Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered the 101st Airborne Division into Little Rock to insure the safety of the students. The crisis gained world-wide attention.

Pasternak

Boris Pasternak was a Russian poet and writer. He is best known in the West for his monumental novel on Soviet Russia, *Doctor Zhivago*. The book was also made into an award-winning movie.

Although he was celebrated in Russia as a great poet, his book was banned in the Soviet Union for many years.

Mickey Mantle

Mickey Mantle was a great baseball player for the New York Yankee team. He batted both left- and right-handed, hit at a leading batting average, as well as led the league in home runs.

In 1957, he was voted the most valuable player (MVP) for the second consecutive year.

Kerouac

Jack Kerouac was the author of the best-selling book *On the Road*, which epitomized the Beat Generation of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Upon achieving fame, Kerouac became a serious alcoholic and died at an early age.

Sputnik

Sputnik was the name of the first orbiting satellite sent into space by the USSR. Turmoil over its launch in the United States initiated the race for supremacy in space.

Chou En-Lai

Chou En-Lai (Zhou Enlai) was the Premier and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China (also called Red China by Western journalists). He was a popular and practical administrator during the "Great Leap Forward" of 1958 and later pushed for modernization to undo damage caused by the "Cultural Revolution" of 1966 to 1976. Zhou was largely responsible for the re-establishment of contacts with the West during the Nixon presidency.

Bridge on the River Kwai

The Bridge on the River Kwai was a 1957 Academy Award winning movie about a World War II Japanese prisoner-of-war camp.

1958

Lebanon

U.S. President Eisenhower ordered U.S. Marines into Lebanon at the request of Lebanese President Chamoun to help stop riots that were occurring in the country.

Charles de Gaulle

Charles de Gaulle returned to power as the leader of France.

California baseball

The Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team moved to Los Angeles Dodgers and the New York Giants moved to San Francisco.

Starkweather homicide

Charles Starkweather was a serial killer who made the news 1958 because of his gruesome murders. Starkweather and his girlfriend, Caril Fugate, went on a killing spree of 11 to 15 people over a span of a month and a half. They were captured and he was executed in 1959.

Children of Thalidomide

Thalidomide was a medication intended for pregnant women to combat morning sickness and as an aid to help them sleep. Unfortunately, inadequate tests were performed to assess the drug's safety. Between 1957 and 1962, children of women who took the drug thalidomide during pregnancy were born with severe deformities, including only stubs for arms. Because of this tragedy, the drug was taken off the market in 1962. Of the 10,000 children born with birth defects, only 5000 lived beyond childhood.

After years of research on the uses of thalidomide, it was allowed to be used to prevent nausea in chemotherapy patients, as well as treating painful skin conditions. In 2006, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted approval for thalidomide in special cases.

1959

Buddy Holly

Buddy Holly was a popular singer and leader of the Crickets rock group. He was killed in a plane crash, along with singers The Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens. In 1971, the hit song *American Pie* referred to his death in the line "...the day the music died."

Ben Hur

Ben Hur was a spectacular movie starring Charlton Heston. It was set around the time of Christ.

Space Monkey

Starting in 1948, a number of monkeys had been sent into space in various rockets, but unfortunately all died during their flights. It wasn't until 1959 that Able, a rhesus monkey, and Miss Baker, a squirrel monkey, became the first monkeys to successfully travel in space and successfully return to Earth.

The most famous "space monkey" was Ham, who was sent up in an American space satellite for a suborbital flight, as a prelude to sending a man in space. Ham was not really a monkey, but a chimpanzee. The actual year he went into space was 1961.

Note: He was a mean little guy who would often try to bite the workers who put him in the space capsule.

Mafia

Mafia leaders met in upstate New York to get better organized.

Hula Hoops

Hula Hoops became a national fad. Everywhere, you would see children and even adults trying to spin the large plastic hoop around their waist. TV celebrities would also display their skills with the hoop. The fad peaked and died out quickly.

Castro

Fidel Castro had been a wealthy lawyer, advocating social justice and protesting the influence of the United States in Cuba. He became involved in political activism and led the revolution to overthrow Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959. He was then sworn in as the Prime Minister of Cuba. Moving toward Communism, he alienated the United States.

Castro was also known for his long-winded speeches.

Edsel is a no-go

Ford Motor Company came out with a new car, the Edsel. The car was named after Edsel Ford, who was Henry Ford's son. The car was to fit in between the Ford and Mercury, but it was the wrong car at the wrong time and lasted only a few years until it was discontinued.

1960

U-2

The United States had been sending the secret U-2 high-flying spy plane over the Soviet Union to take pictures and gather information, when one was shot down by a Russian missile. The pilot Francis Gary Powers was taken prisoner and later released in an exchange for a Soviet spy who had been arrested in the U.S.

An interesting note is that Kennedy assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was stationed at the military base where Powers' U-2 took off for the flight. No connection was ever made, but it did seem suspicious,

Syngman Rhee

Syngman Rhee was the first President of South Korea, serving from 1948 to 1960. His method of rule became unpopular, and he was forced to resign by a student-led democratic movement.

Payola

Many disk jockeys were exposed for taking bribes to play certain songs on the radio, thus biasing the record sales. Top national disk jockey Allen Freed was convicted of payola. American Bandstand TV dance show host Dick Clark was accused of payola but found innocent.

Kennedy

John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960. He was assassinated in Dallas, Texas on 22 November 1963.

Chubby Checker

Singer Chubby Checker came out with the song *The Twist*, which started a national dance sensation. Soon, not only teens but also adults were doing the twist. The dance was responsible for popularizing "fast dancing" or rock-and-roll among adults. Chubby Checker's name was a spin-off of the name of the popular rock singer Fats Domino.

Psycho

Psycho was a thriller movie directed by Alfred Hitchcock. A young woman, Marion Crane—played by Janet Leigh—steals some money from work and leaves town, getting a room at the Bates Motel. A shy man, Norman Bates—played by Anthony Perkins—runs the motel with his domineering mother.

The most memorable scene is when the character Marion is stabbed to death while taking a shower, apparently by the mother. But in the end, it was Norman who was "psycho" and took on the character of the mother to kill women who stopped at the motel.

Belgians in the Congo

The country of Belgian Congo gained independence from Belgium in 1960 to become simply the Congo. For the next several years there was civil strife, resulting in 100,000 deaths, as Congolese political parties fought for power.

1961

Hemingway

Famous author Ernest Hemingway committed suicide.

Eichmann

Former Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann was arrested in Argentina and brought to Israel, where he was convicted of war crimes and executed.

Stranger in a Strange Land

Stranger in a Strange Land was an award-winning fictional book by Robert A. Heinlein about Valentine Michael Smith, who was born during the first manned mission to Mars and was the only survivor. He is raised by Martians, and when he arrived on Earth he had no knowledge of anything about the planet or its cultures. In fact, he had never even seen a woman. But he was the legal heir to an enormous financial empire. He then explored human morality and the meanings of love and founded his own church, preaching free love. Many young rebels of the 1960s selected *Stranger* as their counterculture bible.

Dylan

Singer Bob Dylan led the folk music craze.

Berlin

The Soviets erected the Berlin Wall, dividing the city into the Russian-controlled part and the area controlled by the U.S., British and French.

Bay of Pigs Invasion

In 1960, the Eisenhower Administration created a plan to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba. In April of 1961, newly-elected President John F. Kennedy allowed the attack on Cuba. Armed Cuban exiles sailed from Florida and landed at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. Because of poor planning by Kennedy, as well as spies and U.S. government leaks, Castro was ready for the attack. The exiles were all either captured or killed. President Kennedy was greatly criticized for the failure of the mission.

1962

Lawrence of Arabia

The movie *Lawrence of Arabia* starring Peter O'Toole won the Academy Awards.

British Beatle-mania

British rock group the Beatles took over the music scene, with numerous hit records on the Top-40 charts.

Ole Miss

University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) admitted its first black or African-American student, James Meredith, with U.S. Marshals enforcing the rules to integrate the school.

John Glenn

John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth in 1962. He had previously been a U.S. Marine test pilot, but in 1959 he was assigned to NASA as one of the original group of Mercury astronauts. After he piloted the first American manned orbital mission aboard the *Friendship 7* spacecraft, he was considered an American hero and given a tickertape parade. He later became a U.S. Senator.

Liston beats Patterson

Boxer Sonny Liston easily defeated Heavyweight Champion Floyd Patterson to gain the title. Liston was a large, mean-looking boxer that struck fear in the hearts of his opponents. He was finally defeated by Cassius Clay, who after the fight changed his name to Muhammad Ali

1963

Pope Paul

Pope Paul VI was pope—or leader—of the Catholic Church from 1963 to 1978. He followed Pope John and completed the implementation of the goals of the Second Vatican Council. He became the first pope to visit six continents, but he also known to be an indecisive leader. His views were important to the world's Catholics.

Malcolm X

Malcolm X came into the news when he preached separation of the races as part of the Black Muslim teachings. His real name was Malcolm Little, and he was the son of a lay Baptist minister. His family had been harassed by white-supremacists a number of times. Apparently, three of Malcolm's uncles and his father were killed by white men. After his mother was institutionalized as insane, Malcolm grew up in foster homes. He was discouraged in school from wanting to be a lawyer, because his white teacher said it wasn't a realistic goal for black people.

He quit school and drifted through menial jobs, until he was arrested for burglary and sent to prison for 10 years. There, Little became a voracious reader and soon converted to the Islam religion. After leaving prison, he worked for the Nation of Islam—also called the Black Muslims in the popular press.

He dropped his "slave name" and changed his name to Malcolm X. A compelling public speaker, Malcolm X gained publicity for the Nation of Islam and their concepts that whites were "devils" and that separatism was the best for his people. In 1963, he commented that he was not sad that President Kennedy was assassinated. This brought outrage from most of the white public. But he also started to separate from the Nation of Islam and its radical views.

He moved toward orthodox Islam and started to champion economic and social equality for blacks. This brought about respectability among all races, but then members of the Nation of Islam made death threats to Malcolm X for separating from their movement. Then in February 1965, he was assassinated. Three members for the Nation of Islam were arrested and convicted of the murder.

British politician sex

A sex scandal rocked British Parliament. Secretary of State for War John Profumo was highly respected and married, but after it was discovered that he had a several week affair with a showgirl named Christine Keeler, he was forced to resign. Not only did he lie to the House of Commons about the affair, but it was also found out that Keeler had also had a relationship with a senior naval attaché at the Soviet Embassy in London.

JFK blown away

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas in 1963. Kennedy was riding in an open-top automobile in a presidential motorcade when Lee Harvey Oswald shot him through the head with a sniper rifle from a sixth floor window of a nearby building. Oswald was arrested eighty minutes later after killing a Dallas police officer. He was captured hiding in a movie theatre. He claimed he was innocent of killing Kennedy and was being set up as a patsy. Later, it was found that he confessed his guilt to his brother, who visited him in jail. Oswald was killed two days later as he was being transported to the Dallas County Jail. Nightclub owner Jack Ruby shot Oswald in front of police officers and a national television news audience.

1964 to 1989

Note: Billy Joel didn't put the following events quite in order by year. So we couldn't separate them out easily.

Birth control

Birth Control became an issue with the advent of the birth control pill. Later, abortion was legalized.

Ho Chi-Minh

Ho Chi-Minh was the leader of the Communist North Vietnamese, who first fought the French and then the Americans.

Richard Nixon back again

After losing the election for President to John F. Kennedy in 1960 and then losing his bid to be Governor of California in 1962, former Vice President Richard Nixon fought back to regain prominence in national politics. One interesting thing he did was to be a guest on the popular television comedy show *Laugh-In*. Nixon repeated the show's running gag-line, "Sock it to me" a number of times. It gave the impression that he was not such a dour person after all. Nixon was elected President in 1968.

Moon shot

The United States landed the first man on the moon.

Woodstock

A farmer in the Woodstock area of New York state donated his land for a rock concert. Surprisingly, 600,000 rock fans showed up, making it the biggest rock concert ever held.

Watergate

Supporters and staff of U.S. President Richard Nixon were accused of breaking into the Democratic headquarters in the Watergate hotel. Nixon tried to cover up the fact and soon he forced to resign from office because of that cover up. Several of his staff members were sent to prison as a result of the affair.

Punk Rock

Punk rock hits the music scene with such groups as the Sex Pistols, who would spit at the audience.

Begin

Begin was Prime Minister of Israel.

Reagan

Former movie actor Ronald Reagan became President of the United States.

Palestine

Palestinians protested unfair treatment by the Israelis.

Terror on the airlines

Numerous airline hijackings were in the news.

Ayatollah's in Iran

The Shah of Iran—who was supported by the United States—was overthrown and Ayatollah Khomeini took over the country. Hostages were taken at the US embassy in Tehran and finally released 444 days later.

Russians in Afghanistan

The Soviet Union entered Afghanistan to "protect" Communist interests in the country. Rebels were supported by the United States, and finally after a long, costly war, the Soviets were forced to withdraw from the country. Ironically, the Afghan rebels later used the arms supplied by the U.S. to fight the Americans.

Wheel of Fortune

The *Wheel of Fortune* TV show became a favorite.

Sally Ride

Sally Ride became the first American woman in space as a member of the Space Shuttle crew in 1983. Valentina Tereshkova of the Soviet Union was the very first woman in space in 1963, orbiting the Earth 48 times.

Heavy metal, suicide

One viewpoint is that Billy Joel had two topics here: **Heavy Metal**, where heavy metal rock comes on the music scene, and **Suicide**, where the suicide rate among young people seemed to be rising.

(Billy Joel's website states: "heavy metals, suicide")

However in the 1980s, there were lawsuits against heavy metal groups of Ozzy Osbourne and Judas Priest, claiming that their lyrics encouraged and caused some young people to commit suicide.

Foreign debts

Foreign debts were causing an increase in inflation, as well as a burden on American taxpayers.

Homeless Vets

Many veterans of the Vietnam conflict became homeless. A major problem with them was drug addiction or alcoholism.

AIDS

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) disease started to spread throughout the world.

Crack

A potent form of the highly addictive drug cocaine called "crack" or "rock" had been rapidly spreading in the United States, especially in troubled neighborhoods.

Bernie Goetz

Bernie Goetz was a New Yorker who was concerned about crime in the city. After he got on a subway in the afternoon, four African-American youths approached Goetz and demanded \$5 from him. He pulled out a gun and shot all four. Then he shot one of the youths again, as he lay on the floor, severing the spinal cord and paralyzing him.

Goetz escaped but later turned himself in. Many N.Y. citizens deemed him a hero. The case brought about the debate as to whether people have the right to take the law into their own hands. Goetz was convicted only of illegal possession of firearms and sentenced to 8 months in prison. Afterwards, the youth he paralyzed sued and won a \$43 million judgment.

Hypodermics on the shore

News reports showed how hundreds of carelessly discarded hypodermic needles had washed up on the New Jersey shoreline.

China's Under Martial Law

In June 1989, thousands of protesters marched in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China. Many were killed and China went under martial law until order was restored.

Rock and Roller Cola Wars

Pepsi and Coke battle for supremacy in the marketplace. Each hired musicians to promote their drink. Coke hired Paula Abdul, while Pepsi had Michael Jackson. They then started to try to outdo each other by getting other musicians and celebrities to help promote their drinks.