

Revisiting 1963 on its 50th anniversary

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The 1960s were a hive of activity in an evolving North American culture.

They were filled with important, historic events, some of which shaped the world forever.

Happy 50th to all those things with roots in 1963. What an action-packed year it was!

November 22, 1963 was likely the most memorable day of the year, overshadowing almost everything else that happened. It's a tragedy that lives on today.

Much like September 11th, 2001, this day 50 years ago changed the U.S. and perhaps all democratic countries.

Many who were around will remember where they were when they heard the news. My mom told me she remembered that day well.

At noon that day in Dallas, Texas, Lee Harvey Oswald shot President John F. Kennedy and Texas Governor John Connally in a motorcade in Dallas Texas. An hour later, President Kennedy was pronounced dead at Dallas Texas Hospital. Lyndon Baines Johnson was sworn in as the 31st President on Air Force One that evening.

The following day, nightclub owner Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald.

Newspaper articles, books, movies and controversy followed, and the events of those days still draw interest to this very day.

The infamous prison Alcatraz closed that year, after 29 years as a federal maximum security prison in San Francisco Bay.

On Aug. 28, 1963 Martin Luther King Jr. addressed over 250,000 people from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in what has become known as the "I Have A Dream speech." It became the catalyst for both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which ended apartheid in the American South. If you haven't heard it, find a clip on the Internet ??it's a must for all ages.

Cosmonaut Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova became the first woman in space.

Ah yes, television. Boy has it changed.

The most watched shows in the 1963/64 season were The Beverly Hillbillies, Bonanza, The Dick Van Dyke Show, Petticoat Junction, The Andy Griffith Show, The Lucy Show, Candid Camera, The Ed Sullivan Show, The Danny Thomas Show, My Favorite Martian and The Red Skelton Show.

Leave it to Beaver ended in 1963. I remember watching those black and white reruns as a pre-teen ??very wholesome family viewing.

The world was exposed to wildlife, up close and personal, thanks to Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom with Marlin Perkins and assistant Jim Fowler.

Youth predominated the culture of the 1960s. The post World War II Baby Boom had created 70 million teenagers for the sixties, and these youth swayed the fashion, the fads and the politics of the decade. California surfers took to skateboards as a way to stay fit out of season, and by 1963, the fad had spread across the country.

Barbie dolls, introduced by Mattel in 1959, became a huge success in the '60s, so much so that Hasbro introduced G. I. Joe, the first action figure for boys.

How about that big '60s hair! The 1960s began with crew cuts on men and bouffant hairstyles on women. It was really an amazing

time for hairstyles. Women ended their nights using the [best hair rollers](#) to set their hair so they can have the high stylish do in the morning. While men only needed to visit the local barbershop once every month. Men's casual shirts were often plaid and buttoned down the front, while knee-length dresses and polyester leisure suits were required wear for women in most public places.

By mid-decade, miniskirts or hot pants, often worn with go-go boots, were revealing legs.

Men's clothing had a renaissance. Bright colors, double-breasted sports jackets, polyester pants suits with Nehru jackets, and turtlenecks were in vogue. By the end of the decade, ties, when worn, were up to 5 inches wide, patterned even when worn with stripes. Women wore peasant skirts or granny dresses and chunky shoes. Unisex dressing was popular, featuring bell bottomed jeans, love beads, and embellished t-shirts. Clothing was as likely to be purchased at surplus stores as boutiques.

Remember cassette tapes??Philips introduced the compact audio cassette in Europe in 1963, and in the United States in 1964 under the trademark "Compact Cassette." It was used primarily for dictation and was not until the early 1970s that the sound quality of the tape and the players made it viable for hi fidelity music.

Many young girls had an Easy-Bake Oven, North America's first working toy oven. From Kenner Products (now a division of Hasbro) it sold 500,000 in the first year for a hefty price at the time of \$15.95.

Harvey Ball invented the smiley face (happy face)?symbol, one that is going strong today.

Roche Labs brought valium on the market in 1963. It became the largest selling pill of the era.

Every decade, and every generation, has its favourite music.

The '60s did produce some notables:

It's My Party, Leslie Gore; Heat Wave, Martha and the Vandellas; Surfin U.S.A., Beach Boys; My Boyfriend's Back, the Angels; Little Duece Coupe, Beach Boys; He's So Fine, Chiffons and Blue Bayou by Roy Orbison.

The Beatles' debut album, Please Please Me, was released in Britain March 1963. It was recorded in one day. It begins with the rocker, I Saw Her Standing There.

In the last week of December, I Want to Hold Your Hand and B-side I Saw Her Standing There sold a million copies in the U.S. officially launching "Beatlemania."

The movie, The Great Escape starring Steve McQueen, hit the screen.

It was a memorable year for Toronto hockey fans. The Toronto Maple Leafs won the Stanley Cup, defeating the Detroit Red Wings 4 games to one.

So, for all "creations" of 1963, I salute you and wish you a happy 50th!