

Time Capsule 1940

Take a “Fond Flashback” as we look at the people, places and events that made headlines in 1940.

The Year in Review: In 1939, German chancellor Adolf Hitler signed a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, then invaded Poland from the west while Soviet troops invaded from the east.

After Poland’s fall, German authorities ordered all Jews to identify themselves by wearing a Star of David on their clothing.

This year, Poland’s new German governor creates ghettos in large cities and forces Jews to live in them. Since the Jews cannot leave the ghettos to work, they depend on a German food ration of about 250 calories per person a day; Poles get 670 calories, Germans 2,300 calories. Thousands of Jews begin to die of starvation and disease.

German forces march into Denmark, Norway, France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands in a blitzkrieg, or “lightning war,” as World War II begins. Italy joins the war on Hitler’s side.

During the German march through France, several hundred thousand Allied troops are trapped on the French and Belgian coasts near Dunkirk. About 700 merchant marine, fishing and pleasure craft help ferry troops to larger vessels offshore. The rescue of more than 300,000 soldiers is a great morale-booster for a nervous Great Britain.

Britain’s Royal Navy attacks and sinks three French warships berthed in Algeria after the French refuse to scuttle the ships themselves to prevent their falling into German hands.

The Germans set their sights on Great Britain, and German

bombing attacks come with increasing frequency. At one point, London suffers heavy bombing attacks daily for almost 2 months.

The Royal Air Force valiantly takes to the air defensively in the Battle of Britain. Winston Churchill, who has recently become prime minister, praises the RAF, saying, "Never...was so much owed by so many to so few."

Across the Atlantic, Americans are stunned by the war developments. President Franklin D. Roosevelt announces the buildup of a peacetime army and signs legislation requiring men to register for a draft.

Defense plants pop up everywhere as the U.S. begins to prepare for its inevitable entry into the war. One item created for the Army is a small reconnaissance and general-purpose four-wheel-drive vehicle that becomes known affectionately as the jeep.

On the medical front, concerns mount over the needs of large numbers of wartime casualties in Europe. Donors give blood, from which plasma, the liquid component of blood, is removed; it can be more easily preserved and stored than whole blood and used as a substitute.

In other research, scientists discover the Rh factor in the red blood cells of many people. The knowledge prevents the unexplained deaths of many infants.

Names in the News: German-born theoretical physicist and Nobel Prize winner Albert Einstein becomes an American citizen, having moved to Princeton, New Jersey in 1932. He had left Germany after Hitler removed Jews from many jobs.

Leon Trotsky, a Soviet revolutionary and proponent of socialism and communism, is assassinated at his exile home in Mexico.

At age 5, the 14th Dalai Lama is enthroned in Lhasa, Tibet and

begins rigorous training. He was identified 3 years earlier as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama when Tibetan religious leaders visited him and he passed tests, including choosing items that had belonged to his predecessor. The fervent Buddhists of Tibet believe that when someone dies, the immortal soul passes to another person.

Dick and Mac McDonald open their first hamburger stand in San Bernardino, California, establishing the principles of modern fast-food restaurants.

Radio: During the first season of Captain Midnight, which features numerous giveaway premiums, more than a million kids gain membership in the show's Flight Patrol.

The Adventures of Superman is a hit with kids and adults alike, and another new show, The Quiz Kids, has high-IQ children showing up college professors.

Also new is Truth or Consequences, with the consequences of incorrect answers being outrageous stunts for the participants.

Listeners are glued to their radios for a variety of crime dramas, such as Big Town, with Hollywood star Edward G. Robinson playing a crusading newspaper editor, and The Shadow, with the famous opening "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!"

Shows that are tops with overall audiences include Fibber McGee and Molly, The Chase and Sanborn Hour, The Aldrich Family, The Kate Smith Hour, One Man's Family and Jack Benny's and Bob Hope's programs.

Music: Billboard magazine introduces its "Best Selling Retail Records" chart, and the first national No. 1 record listed is I'll Never Smile Again by Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra, with vocals by

Frank Sinatra. Dorsey and Sinatra also team up on other popular songs like Say It (Over and Over Again) and Indian Summer.

A flurry of hit records for Glenn Miller's band include Pennsylvania 6-5000, Fools Rush In, In the Mood, The Woodpecker Song, Imagination, Tuxedo Junction and even When You Wish Upon a Star, the big hit from the Walt Disney movie Pinocchio.

Bing Crosby croons hits like Only Forever, Sierra Sue and Trade Winds, while brother Bob Crosby's band also goes high on the music charts with Do You Care? and You Forgot About Me, both sung by the Bob-O-Links, featuring Johnny Desmond.

Other popular singers include The Andrews Sisters, Bob Eberle, Helen O'Connell, Billie Holiday, James Rushing, Martha Tilton, The Ink Spots, Helen Forrest, Dinah Shore and Gene Autry, with his hit Back in the Saddle Again. Also popular is You Are My Sunshine, written and first sung by Louisiana gubernatorial candidate Jimmie Davis.

Among the names introduced at Minton's Playhouse, a popular jazz club in Manhattan, are Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk and Kenny Clark, who help popularize bebop music. Influential electric guitarist Charlie Christian performs and records with Benny Goodman.

Movies: Eight Oscars go to the sweeping epic Gone With the Wind when Academy Awards are presented for the previous year's films.

First-line stars Katharine Hepburn, Jimmy Stewart and Cary Grant team up in their film version of the hit Broadway comedy The Philadelphia Story, and Charlie Chaplin does a not-so-subtle satirical portrayal of a leader resembling Hitler in The Great Dictator.

The rigors of America's dust bowl drought are revealed in The Grapes of Wrath, based on the John Steinbeck novel and starring Henry Fonda.

Director Alfred Hitchcock serves up suspense with Rebecca and Foreign Correspondent, and Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Claudette Colbert and Hedy Lamarr bring their blockbuster names to Boom Town.

On the lighter side, W.C. Fields stars in The Bank Dick and is joined by Mae West in My Little Chickadee. Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Dorothy La-mour also keep audiences laughing in Road to Singapore, the first in a series of "Road" films to come.

Sports: "Seabiscuit," ridden by jockey John "Red" Pollard, wins the top prize of \$121,000 in the Santa Anita Handicap to become horse racing's all-time leading money-winner.

Time magazine reports that the University of Chicago, once a Big Ten football powerhouse, has asked to be released from its games set for 1940 and '41 following a miserable 2-6 season.

Due to World War II hostilities, the winter and summer Olympics are canceled indefinitely, and the Wimbledon, Davis Cup, French Open and Wightman Cup tennis events are called off.

Joe Louis, the youngest heavyweight champion in boxing history to date, successfully defends his title four times. Wilbur Shaw earns his third Indianapolis 500 checkered flag in 4 years, and Cornelius "Dutch" Warmerdam becomes the first pole vaulter to clear 15 feet.

Champions include the Cincinnati Reds in major-league baseball, the Chicago Bears in a 73-0 pro-football trouncing of the Washington Redskins, Minnesota in college football, USC in college football's Rose Bowl for the second straight year, Colorado (NIT) and Indiana (NCAA) in college basketball and the New York Rangers in pro hockey.

New in '40

- Dairy Queen

- Rain-Blo gum ball
- York Peppermint Patty
- Brenda Starr

Popular Books

Fiction

- The Cardinal, Henry Morton Robinson
- Across the River and into the Trees, Ernest Hemingway
- Star Money, Kathleen Winsor
- The Parasites, Daphne du Maurier
- Jubilee Trail, Gwen Bristow
- The Adventurer, Mika Waltari
- The Disenchanted, Budd Schulberg

Nonfiction

- The Baby, Simon & Schuster, Editors
- Look Younger, Live Longer, Gayelord Hauser
- Mr. Jones, Meet the Master, Peter Marshall
- Your Dream Home, Hubbard Cobb
- The Mature Mind, H. A. Overstreet
- Campus Zoo, Clare Barnes Jr.

A Few Prices

- Annual wage, \$1,315
- Plymouth two-door sedan, \$739
- Man's tweed suit, \$25
- Emerson tabletop radio, \$9.95
- Woman's wool dress, \$3.98
- House paint, \$2.69 a gallon
- Gold Medal flour, 83¢ per 24-1/2-pound bag
- Nail polish, 60¢ a bottle
- Bayer aspirin, 59¢ per 100-count bottle
- Roast beef, 29¢ a pound
- SPAM, 25¢/12-ounce tin
- Pabst-Ett cheese, 24¢ for two packages

- Welch's grape juice, 22¢ a pint
- Sugar, 21¢ per 5-pound bag
- Gasoline, 18¢ a gallon
- Toilet paper, 15¢ a roll
- Bananas, 5¢ a pound
- First-class stamp, 3¢

Fantasia: A Symphony of Innovation

WHAT BEGAN as a Walt Disney venture to save Mickey Mouse's career evolved into the inspired 1940 animated movie "Fantasia."

Disney, concerned with the declining popularity of his once-mighty mouse, decided to star Mickey in a cartoon version of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." The fairy tale, interpreted from a poem by Goethe and accompanied by music from French composer Paul Dukas, was to feature Mickey wreaking havoc with the misuse of a sorcerer's powers.

Leopold Stokowski, conductor for The Philadelphia Orchestra and an advocate for "great music" in motion pictures, was chosen to produce the soundtrack. There would be no dialogue.

As animation continued, the film broadened to more segments and eight classical pieces. These were used in harmony with animation depicting such themes as the four seasons, nature, Heaven and Hell, prehistoric times, dancing animals (who can forget the cavorting hippos?), light vs. darkness, mythology and legend.

To enhance the moviegoer's enjoyment of the music, Disney developed a revolutionary sound system called Fantasound. With such innovation, additional music production and a workforce of 1,000 people, the cost to produce "Fantasia" rose to more than \$2 million—four times the cost of a live-action film.

"Fantasia" premiered in just 14 theaters willing to install the Fantasound system. The U.S. government then stopped Disney from producing the

equipment, claiming that national defense had a higher priority for the technology.

RKO Radio Pictures distributors also forced Disney to cut the footage from 125 minutes to 81 minutes.

Criticism came from music purists who saw the soundtrack as nothing more than abridged versions of the classics, while many moviegoers were not interested in hearing what they saw as high-society music.

While the film failed initially, it won two Oscars for its ingenuity and has been rereleased numerous times while reaching its star status of today.