

1970: YEAR OF THE RIP-OFF

by Michael J. Ferguson

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In 1970, an astonishingly swift and petrified year, is behind us. It was a year filled with changes, some subtle, some startling. It was also a year of altering consciousness, of culmination, perhaps. Twelve months dramatically marked by the spreading of the Viet Nam war into Cambodia, death on college campuses, and the passing away of world leaders and contemporary heroes.

In many respects, 1970 served as epitaph for the '60's. During 1970, this generation, which five short years ago set out to change the world with love, truly became "outlaws in the eyes of America." And while '70 served as epitaph, it was also a matrix of sorts - the beginning of our race toward some kind, any kind it seems, of inevitable apocalypse.

America in 1970 slipped into a dangerous slipstream of complacency. It was a most crucial year, a point in time which might well have determined the future. This was a year in which it was essential that our most positive forces unite and create meaningful and workable solutions to the devastating problems of a hellish war, choking pollution, hard drug abuse, racial prejudice, moral decadence, this plastic netherworld in which we try to find some shred of value. It was indeed a time for America to acquire a true vision which might save this hungry planet. Instead, America and her people stumbled on, ignoring ills with quasi-determination, with political (in the worst sense) rather than practical awareness.

Altamont closed the '60's and acted as a harbinger of things to come. Filling the air with tension and violence, Altamont swept us away from our dreams of love and flowers and into a dance of death. With blood on the moon, we crept into the Age of Aquarius.



Photo by Dreyer

-Bewilderment-

1970 was a complex year, with several diffuse elements surfacing and creating a very real maze of non-reality. The individual found himself isolated and helpless as the lines between people at once widened and confounded. Leaders moved with awkward caution and confusion. It was-is a bewildering world in which to live.

The major events of 1970, when digested fully, perhaps best demonstrate the disconcerting nature of life in the 20th Century:

In 1970, the previously successful American space program, which had put men on the moon a year before, met with near tragedy when the Appollo 13 mission experienced a technical failure and three astronauts had to be rescued from the eerie depths of space.

-Environment-

The rapid and shocking deterioration of our environment became a major issue, both socially and politically. Several ecology-minded groups formed and made headway; political candidates were literally forced to include the problems of ecology in their campaigns. Despite all this, the problem, undoubtedly the single greatest reason for concern in the 1970's, continues to threaten our existence, while Nixon still pushes for the development of the SST.

The Viet Nam war, the most controversial issue in American life during the '60's, continued and spread into Cambodia, despite mounting opposition from political leaders, students, and a surprising segment of middle America. While troop reductions have begun and less people are killed weekly, that nebulous war remains the severest alienating factor in American life.

-Violence-

Campus violence - mostly in reaction to the war - became almost as much of an American tradition as apple pie in 1970. On May 4, during protests against President Nixon's Cambodian announcement-decision, four Kent State (Ohio) students were killed by Ohio National Guard. This caused nationwide protests.

On May 15, two Jackson State (Miss.) students were killed when police and guards opened fire on school dorms, following several days of protests at that school.

A Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest reported that while both students and guard had acted in haste in both instances, the killings were unjustified. The commission's report was ignored, however, and twenty-five Kent State students were indicted by the Ohio Grand Jury for their participation in the riots.

-Court Rooms-

The courts made the news often in 1970.

At Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, N.C., there was the military hearing involving Green Beret Capt. J.R. MacDonald.

masterminded by Angela Davis) took over a court room, held the judge at gun point, and later lost a gunfight with police which left the judge and all but one Black dead.

Airplane hijacking became a popular American pastime and many unsuspecting travelers got free vacations in such scenic spots as Jordan and Cuba.

Revolutionary kidnapping became a favorite device of the radical left across the world. Governmental figures in Canada, Guatemala, Argentina, Uruguay and Spain were held as hostage by various underground radical networks. Murder sometimes accompanied the kidnappings, most dramatically in Canada.

-Leary-

LSD high-priest Timothy Leary, in jail for the possession of marijuana, was sprung loose by The Weathermen and ended up in Algeria with Eldridge Cleaver. Leary, once the advocate of peace and flowers, wrote several violent revolutionary manifestos.

Bombings became a vigilante tactic among the New Left. Several buildings in New York were bombed and it is believed that several radical leaders were killed "in the cause of freedom."

General Charles DeGaulle, a French hero and one of the last of the Old Guard, passed away quietly. Despite his last wishes, France accorded him a hero's farewell. Gamal Abdel Nasser, longtime President of Egypt, died unexpectedly.

Rock and Roll Superstars Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix died from drug overdoses.

Spiro T. Agnew and Martha Mitchell became the self-appointed Co-Speakers for the Silent Majority.

1969 was The Year of the Festival (Woodstock). '70 was The Year of the Non-Festival, as concerned community members halted most scheduled events and Atlanta (much to Lester Maddox's chagrin) and Love Valley (!) lamely tried to evoke those three legendary days of peace, music

Bob Kennedy Jr. got busted for grass. So did Gov. Bill Cahill's (N.J.) son. Twice. N.J. has since made possession of the evil weed a misdemeanor (first offense and limited quantity).

The Pope, visiting Asia, was nearly an assassin's victim.

The Beatles, an English rock and roll band famous long ago who had great influence on American youth in the '60's, became men and stopped holding our hands. Cont. On Page 4

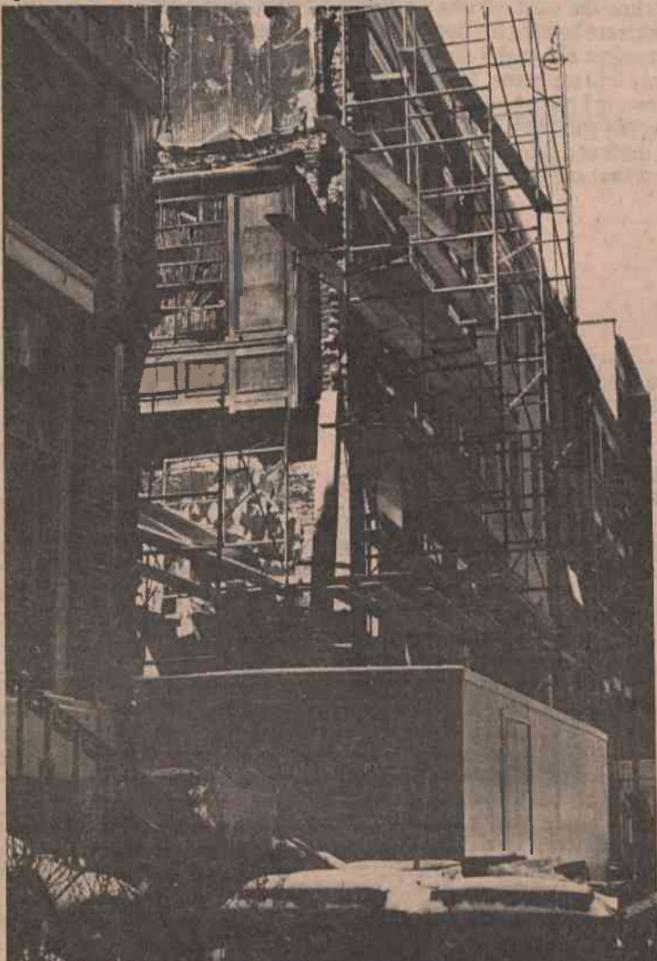


Photo by Dreyer

N.Y. Bomb Factory: "... in the cause of freedom"



AP Wirephoto

"When dissent turns to violence, it invites tragedy" - President Nixon