

OUR CENTURY

1961

AT A GLANCE



Freeway construction created easy access to the suburbs.

Schools bulge with boomers

Like the Old Woman in the Shoe, school superintendents had so many children they didn't know what to do.

Cleveland's William Levenson greeted 139,000 pupils in September — 4,300 more than in 1960 and 1,300 more than predicted. The baby boom was engulfing high schools. West Technical opened to 3,089 students, making it temporarily the largest in the state. A day later, Parma High opened with 3,090.

Cleveland finally had enough teachers to end split sessions, but the buildings were inadequate. The Board of Education rented space from churches for "relay" classes in Glenville.

Ohio college rolls jumped 13.5 percent to 136,000, including 43,000 freshmen.

It was getting easier to reach the suburbs. The Inner Belt Freeway opened to W. 14th St., relieving congestion on the other bridges over the Cuyahoga. In September, the Bureau of Public Roads approved the Outer Belt South and the Clark Freeway, which would run through Shaker Heights to the Outer Belt East. In Brook Park, opponents collected petitions for a referendum to block the North-South Thruway, later known as Interstate 71.

The city's blacks were unhappy with what they felt was a lack of concern for their problems. The schools with split sessions or relay classes were largely black. In August, residents of the Garden Valley complex were unable to get action on dump trucks from the "Big Dig" — the Public Hall excavation site — which traversed their street as late as 3 a.m. They formed a human blockade and clashed with police who tried to break it.

In December, a crowd at E. 95th St. and Cedar Ave. stood by while a policeman was beaten by a robbery suspect. A citizens committee in Central told city officials that police needed better community-relations training to win trust. The next day, an NAACP delegation demanded a program to protect the rights of citizens. "There is a feeling in the Negro community of resentment and a feeling we are not adequately protected in the way of civil liberties," said Dr. Kenneth Clement.

Days later, the Press reported: "In the same week in which two delegations came to City Hall to ask for better community relations, the group officially charged with community relations responsibility had to cancel its meeting for the third straight time."

Among the no-shows: the ex-officio chairman of the Community Relations Board, Mayor Anthony Celebrezze.

Albina Cermak, a former customs collector for Cleveland, the first woman mayoral candidate, was the Republicans' sacrificial lamb against Celebrezze. Wearing her trademark pillbox hat, she assailed him over air pollution and urban-renewal problems. Celebrezze piled up nearly 75 percent of the vote to win an unprecedented fifth term.

The glory days were fading memories for Cleveland sports teams. The Barons finished third and were eliminated quickly in the playoffs, though goalie Les Binkley was a standout. George Steinbrenner bought the Cleveland Pipers of the Industrial League and won the championship of the new American Basketball League, but attendance was abysmal.

Frank "Trader" Lane was gone, but the Indians were still sinking. They finished 30 games out of first, and Jimmy Dykes was fired as manager. The Browns had a new owner — a young media executive from New York named Arthur B. Modell. Skeptical fans dismissed him as a carpetbagger. The Browns were still the creature of General Manager Paul Brown, but the old football genius seemed to be losing his touch. The team finished third in the East, though Jim Brown led the league in rushing for the fourth straight year.

The steel industry was thriving. Jones & Laughlin Corp. started work on a \$60 million hot strip mill. Republic Steel Corp. converted to basic oxygen furnaces. By year's end, Republic installed electrostatic precipitators to stop "red dust," which coated the Broadway area. Clevelanders were becoming pollution-conscious. Reacting to environmentalists' complaints that Lake Erie was dying, the Public Health Service sent scientists to study water quality.

Cold War heats up

Bomb shelters and hysteria proliferate

By Fred McGunagle

Some would later call it "hysteria," but Clevelanders in 1961 had reason to be scared. For the first time in 100 years, there was a real threat that war would come to America. It would arrive with little notice through the skies. The safest place was underground.

The Cold War had warmed up. In August, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev threatened to block access to Berlin as the Soviets did in 1948, but this time there would be no airlift; the Soviets would shoot down the planes. If that happened, said President John F. Kennedy, the United States would use atomic weapons. Meanwhile, the U.S. Army beefed up patrols escorting convoys on the Autobahn.

East Berliners, sensing a last chance, deserted to the West by the thousands. The East German government shut the border, first with barbed wire and then with a wall. Those who tried to escape were shot.

In September, the Soviets broke a three-year moratorium on atomic tests by setting off 25-megaton bombs in Central Asia. The United States resumed its own atomic tests. Kennedy said he would send 40,000 more troops to Germany. Two Cleveland Army Reserve units with 280 men were called to active duty.

In a Page One editorial, The Plain Dealer declared, "There's a steady thud of nuclear explosions in Soviet Russia, and our own West trembles underground."

It called on all Americans to fly the Stars and Stripes "as a token that we stand together in an increasingly frightened world."

The Ohio Department of Health recorded 1,000 times the normal amount of radioactivity in the air. U.S. Rep. Charles Vanik asked for federal funds to equip the addition to Public Hall under construction on the Mall as a fallout shelter.

A Sept. 15 spread in Life magazine reported that 97 percent of people in shelters would survive an attack, adding, "A subway system or any city tunnels would be an excellent shelter." But it advised building home shelters: "Every family shelter will contribute to the nation's total deterrent. For if the U.S. is so well prepared that it cannot be knocked out, the enemy may never attack."

John Pokorny, Cuyahoga County Civil Defense director, said 2,000 people had called his office asking about shelters. Only a few said they were building one.

"They feel that if they say they have a shelter they'll be considered crackpots," Pokorny explained. "And too, the guy that builds one probably doesn't want to say so because if there's an attack the neighbor who's scoffing at the idea may want to drop in with him."

Some were willing to show off their shelters. One family posed in its new \$3,225 shelter in Mentor Township; until it was needed, it would be a good place for their teenage daughters to play rock 'n' roll records. A Chardon family promised to welcome as many friends and neighbors "as they could stack up" in their \$3,500 shelter.

In October, Soviet tanks rolled into Berlin. American tanks confronted them. The Soviets revealed that they were building a 100-megaton bomb —



Mr. and Mrs. William T. Heil oversee the construction of a bomb shelter in their Mentor Township back yard.



Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev addresses the U.N.

3,000 times as powerful as the one that destroyed Hiroshima. Scientists said it could start fires over an area larger than Vermont.

Civil Defense authorities estimated 100,000 shelters were being built across the nation. Local officials held an open house at a model shelter in Cleveland Heights. The Plain Dealer reported: "The chief topic of conversation was Friday night's television drama, 'Twilight Zone,' which showed how a group of neighbors panicked during a nuclear bomb alert and tried to force their way into the only shelter in the area."

Adeline Zingale, Cleveland Heights' Civil Defense director, passed out literature to visitors, but warned them: "Actually, this kind of shelter would not be much good if a nuclear bomb exploded on Cleveland. But it would protect you from radiation if Toledo or Detroit or Chicago got a direct hit."

Police in East and West Berlin fought with grenades at the Wall. American and Soviet tanks confronted one another at Checkpoint Charlie. Paul Briggs, Parma schools superintendent, formed an emergency committee to recommend ways to make schools safer from fallout.

The federal government distributed 25 million copies of a booklet telling how to build a shelter and stock it with supplies, including can openers and toilet paper. In case of an attack, it said: "Your first warning could be the flash of an explosion. Don't look at it. If you are inside, dive under or behind the nearest desk, table, sofa or other piece of sturdy furniture."

"Try to get in a shadow: It will shade you from the heat. Lie curled up on your side with your hands over the back of your head, knees tucked against your chest. . . . Get rid of such quick-burning things as oily rags, curtains and lampshades. Shut off your main electric and gas lines. Fill buckets, sinks and the bathtub with water."

The standoff in Germany remained tense. In December, 50 volunteer



East German soldiers turn away an elderly couple trying to cross into West Berlin just after the border was closed in August 1961.



Barbed wire and barriers set before the Brandenburg Gate were later replaced by the Berlin wall.

families were locked in Newton D. Baker Junior High School while officials tested a fallout shelter recreation program to "keep young and old busy and interested while, in theory, death and destruction rain on the outside world."

The Plain Dealer began an eight-part series called "Target: Cleveland." Headlines included: "Where Enemy Would Explode Nuclear Bombs in This Area;" "20-Megaton Damage Could Reach 48 Miles;" "Bomb's Heat Wave Can Burn Exposed Skin 26 Miles Away;" and

"New Data Questions Value of A-Shelters."

As the year ended, President Kennedy told reporters there was no reason for thinking we had made significant progress in easing our difficulties with Russia. The headline on The Plain Dealer series was "CD Fallout Shelters May Be Death Traps."

Clevelanders looked forward to an even more tense 1962.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Jan. 20: John F. Kennedy becomes the nation's youngest president, imploring Americans in his inaugural address to, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

March 21: Kennedy announces an increase in aid to governments battling

communist-led rebels in Southeast Asia.

April 12: Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin becomes the first man in outer space.

April 25: In the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion supported by the U.S. government, Anti-Castro exiles fail miserably in their attempt to over-

throw the Cuban government.

May 25: Alan Shepard becomes the first American in outer space.

Sept. 18: United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld dies in a plane crash in Northern Rhodesia.

Oct. 1: Roger Maris hits his record 61st home run of the season in the New York Yankees' last game of the

regular season.

Born: Boy George, George Clooney, Lea Thompson.

Died: House Speaker Sam Rayburn, Ernest Hemingway, Gary Cooper, American journalist Dorothy Thompson, writer James Thurber, painter Grandma Moses.