



Fifty Years Ago Again

Ten years ago I wrote a Whither Zither about 1957, when I was ten, fifty years previously. So now, ten years later, here's a look back at 1967, when I was twenty, fifty years previously.

In Madison, the first "be-ins" (free festivals without a focus) were held on Picnic Point in 1967. I remember Madison's **White Trash Blues Band** playing one, and Alan Ginsberg attending, with his little harmonium or whatever it was called. He sat on the ground and chanted. We had dope and booze, and I still have 72 black and white negatives of the band, all taken from the same spot, very far away. I rode my bicycle there, with no tires on the rims. Having had two flat tires, I just took off the tires and tubes and rode on the metal.

If my memory serves me, guitar maker Phil Buss had a shop on State Street, where, in a small upstairs room, someone from the local **Amazing Grace Jug Band** would bring in blues musicians and sell \$5 tickets to the show which would get you in and supply you with unlimited beer. I remember seeing the great Bukka White there from a distance of about eight feet.

Thirteen of us lived in a second floor apartment on Mifflin Street. We had jam sessions in the filthy kitchen; I played a bit of mandolin, until someone sat on my instrument, and 12-string guitar. My brother Jeff who lived there too was great on the guitar, and I think Lou (my current music partner and then wife-to-be for a few years) hauled out her banjo sometimes. I actually wrote a good number of songs on Mifflin Street, influenced very much by Roger Miller and Donovan.

Donovan's album **Mellow Yellow** was released in 1967. Whenever I hear that album, I think of the liverwurst sandwiches and Kool-Aid that I lived on back then. The Beatles' **Sgt. Pepper** arrived in June and blew my mind along with everyone else's. Folk music was not in the news as much as rock, but Arlo Guthrie's **Alice's Restaurant** (the album) was released. Ian and Sylvia released two albums and were also doing a weekly TV show in Canada. The

original Kingston Trio had their last gig in June '67. Peter Paul and Mary released **Album 1700** which went platinum.

Phil Ochs released the album **Pleasures of the Harbor**, and performed tirelessly at anti-war rallies around the country. Because things were going crazy. The US and the USSR were testing their nuclear bombs pretty much monthly, in a nuclear pissing contest. Toward the end of the year, China joined the nuclear bomb gang. There were 159 race riots all over the country, including a major one in Milwaukee. As an example of how divided and weird things became that year, the summer that was known as the "Summer of Love" because of the blossoming of Haight Ashbury into a hippy scene, **Sgt. Pepper** coming out, and all the be-ins and love-ins everywhere, was also known as the "Long Hot Summer" because of all the race riots.

In addition, there were anti-draft and anti-war demonstrations nationwide. In Madison, the "Dow riot" of October completely reversed the fairly mellow mood of the summer. Dow Chemical, a manufacturer of napalm and Agent Orange, was on campus, recruiting potential employees. There was a protest, the police reacted violently, it escalated. I still remember people coming back to our place on Mifflin St. from the riot, half of them ready to find weapons and fight the police, the other half wanting to get as far away from the violence as they could. And there was great violence in the world; almost twelve thousand US soldiers died in Viet Nam in 1967 alone.

The country was going mad. Carl Wilson of the Beach Boys was indicted for draft evasion, as was Mohammad Ali. Keith Richards and Mick Jagger spent a month in jail. Members of the Grateful Dead were arrested by narcotic agents. The Doors' Jim Morrison was arrested on stage for disturbing the peace. Joan Baez was arrested in October 1967 for blocking the entrance to the Armed Forces Induction Center in Oakland, and spent a month in jail. And in an unrelated but heartbreaking tragedy, also in October, Otis Redding, four months before his "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay" reached number one on the pop charts, was killed in a plane crash in Madison's Lake Monona at age 26.

Meanwhile, US TV shows were an odd and eerily benign mix, for the most part. **Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood** was first pro-

duced. **Gilligan's Island** was still playing for most of the year. **Star Trek** had its popular and silly "Trouble with Tribbles" episode. **Petticoat Junction**, **My Three Sons**, **The Beverly Hillbillies**, the **Monkees** were all popular TV shows. **The Carol Burnett Show** started up in 1967. The two most watched shows were **The Andy Griffith Show** and **The Lucy Show**.

Thankfully, the funny but politically edgy **Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour** was born that year. Pete Seeger was taped for the show, singing his famous antiwar song, "Waste Deep in the Big Muddy," but CBS banned it (though it was shown in 1968). Ed Sullivan had the Rolling Stones change "Let's Spend the Night Together" to "Let's Spend Some Time Together." Incidentally, Walter Cronkite was the main news guy; I remember jamming into the Rathskeller in the UW Student Union to watch his national coverage of the Madison riot.

I worked at Star Photo for a while when I first came to Madison, then got a part time job as a television graphic artist at WHA TV (it was still in black and white), the local public television station. I dropped out of school that year, at which point the draft board became very interested in me. After I took a few rudderless trips across the country, Lou and I were married in December and prepared to move to London Ontario, which we did early the next year. We stayed in Canada for five years and stayed married for about seven.

I didn't know her very well at the time, but I have learned since that my current wife Kristi booked up and left the country for Mexico in 1967, though she was back to see the Packers win the infamous Ice Bowl on New Year's Eve, when the temperature dropped to thirteen below zero.

Oh, and one more peculiar fact about 1967: That year, Wisconsin became the last state to throw out the laws making the sale of yellow-colored margarine illegal.

As those of you who were around during that long-ago weird year know quite well, I've barely skimmed the murky surface of it here. I do believe that 1967, when I turned twenty years old fifty years ago, was the strangest, most topsy-turvy, most life-changing year of my days so far. But I have to admit, it had a great soundtrack.