



GUTHRIE
THEATER

Wurtele Thrust Stage / April 7 – May 27, 2018



Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

by TODD KREIDLER

based on the screenplay *Guess Who's*

Coming to Dinner by WILLIAM ROSE

directed by TIMOTHY BOND

PLAY GUIDE

Inside



THE PLAY

Synopsis, Characters and Setting • 3

Inspiration for *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* • 4, 5

THE PLAYWRIGHT

The Playwright: Todd Kreidler • 6

The Screenwriter: William Rose • 6

THE PLAY

Glossary: Timeline • 7-10

Glossary: Concepts, Words, Ideas • 11-22



Play guides are made possible by



Guthrie Theater, 818 South 2nd Street, Minneapolis, MN 55415
ADMINISTRATION 612.225.6000
BOX OFFICE 612.377.2224 or 1.877.44.STAGE TOLL-FREE
guthrietheater.org • Joseph Haj, artistic director

The Guthrie creates transformative theater experiences that ignite the imagination, stir the heart, open the mind, and build community through the illumination of our common humanity.

Guthrie Theater Play Guide

Copyright 2018

DRAMATURG Jo Holcomb

GRAPHIC DESIGNER Akemi Graves

CONTRIBUTORS Jo Holcomb

All rights reserved. With the exception of classroom use by teachers and individual personal use, no part of this Play Guide may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers. Some materials published herein are written especially for our Guide. Others are reprinted by permission of their publishers.


The Guthrie Theater receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts. This activity is made possible in part by the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature. The Minnesota State Arts Board received additional funds to support this activity from the National Endowment for the Arts.



SET DESIGN BY MATT SAUNDERS

Synopsis

It's the spring of 1967 in San Francisco - a time wedged between Timothy Leary's Human Be-In and the Summer of Love. The country is torn apart over the ongoing war in Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement is reaching a peak in the minds and heart of the American people. In a stunning house on a hill overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge, Matt Drayton, an aging, somewhat left-wing newspaper man and his gallery-owner wife, Christina, await the arrival of their daughter, Joanna from Hawaii, where she has been studying. What a surprise when she arrives with a fiancé in tow, and a doctor! But Dr. John Prentice Jr. is not at all what the Draytons expected for a son-in-law.

If this story sounds familiar, it is because it is the plot of the iconic 1967 film, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. The play is adapted from the film for the stage by Todd Kreidler. Like the film, the play examines questions around interracial marriage and the reality of our levels of tolerance when faced with these questions in our own lives. What will Matt and Christina do in response to Dr. Prentice's requirement that he and Joanna will marry only with her parents' blessing? And what will happen when his parents arrive unexpectedly for dinner only to find that their son's choice in a spouse is not who they hoped for? 

CHARACTERS

Matilda Binks (age 55), black. "Tillie" has worked 27 years as a domestic for the Draytons

Hilary St. George (age 43), white. Associate Director of the Drayton Gallery

Christina Drayton (age 64), white. Runs the Drayton Gallery

Matt Drayton (age 67), white. Publisher of San Francisco newspaper, *The Guardian*

Joanna Drayton (age 23), white. "Joey" recently interned for a medical research hospital in Hawaii

Doctor John Prentice (age 34), black. A medical research doctor

Monsignor Ryan (age 75), white. Longtime family friend of the Draytons

John Prentice Sr (age 64), black. Schoolteacher

Mary Prentice (age 59), black. Department store clerk

SETTING

Set in the spring of 1967 in the home of the Draytons, a house on a hill in San Francisco

Inspiration for *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*



Turning the screenplay (by William Rose) of a film he refers to as “iconic” into a play was not (Todd) Kreidler’s idea. In fact, he was at first “skeptical.” The value of a stage adaptation was “something I didn’t see immediately.” The idea to do it came from Kenny Leon, Artistic Director of True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta. Both Leon and Kreidler had worked with August Wilson during the last years of Wilson’s life, and Leon subsequently invited Kreidler to be Associate Artistic Director at True Colors. Now, five years after Kreidler’s first draft, a year and change after a production at True Colors, and after (“long story”) the burst of the housing bubble scuttled potential commercial productions, Kreidler has become convinced.

The first hurdle was formal: film is one thing, “stage is a whole different kind of animal.” Kreidler said it was relatively easy to conflate the action so that it occurs in a single setting. Also, the plot involves an ultimatum that propels the action, a “ticking clock”; it’s “hard for it to drag with that.” Kreidler talked about how, once he was pushed into examining the idea, he came to embrace the opportunity to take a rarefied cultural artifact, about which many who know it have “strong opinions” in both directions, and discover the ways in which its sensibility and voice speak to us today. This involves a delicate balancing act, preserving the film’s “iconic moments,” which some in the audience will arrive expecting, while making a work which is “very much of 1967” relevant to a 2013 audience.

For anyone too young to remember the movie, or familiar only with its title, which has attained wide usage as code for almost any big and unexpected surprise, it can be capsulized pretty easily. A young woman stuns her upper middle class, liberal white parents by bringing home an African-American fiancé. And, speaking of iconic, the parents were played by Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn, not only huge Hollywood stars on their own, but together one of the most enduring and successful of romantic screen teams. This was their ninth picture together over a twenty-five year period. Neither had made a film for about five years, mostly due to Tracy’s deteriorating health and Hepburn’s care-giving. (The two, though not married to each other, became off-screen as well as on-screen partners.) The fiancé was played by Sidney Poitier, an icon in his own right, who had been breaking barriers for years, becoming, four years earlier, the first African-American actor to win the Best Actor Oscar.

Race was as important a part of the cultural conversation of the time as it was of the political conversation. The Oscar ceremony that year was dominated by another film starring Poitier, *In the Heat of the Night*, which had race central to its concerns. In addition to Best Picture and Best Director, that film’s

other star, Rod Steiger, won Best Actor over Tracy (a previous two-time winner who, posthumously, had been nominated again; Hepburn did win Best Actress, the second of her four wins). Steiger, accepting the award mere days after the assassination of Dr. King, memorably addressed Poitier directly and quoted the anthem of the civil rights movement: “We shall overcome.”

The film was directed by Stanley Kramer (*The Defiant Ones*, *Inherit the Wind*, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *On the Beach*), known for earnest, socially conscious films that struck his admirers as daring and important and his detractors as sanctimonious. The film builds to the climax during which Tracy, as the voice of paternal wisdom, gives his blessing to his daughter’s interracial marriage, as Hepburn looks on with adoring, as well as wise, support. Many people who haven’t seen the entire film will have seen that speech, or excerpts from it. As Tracy speaks of his devotion to his wife, a public aware of the Tracy/Hepburn off-screen relationship (a Catholic, Tracy never divorced his wife) listened to the speech through that prism and the scene was assured a special place in Hollywood history.

... In 2013, without those mega-stars in those roles, and after so much in our society has changed while so much is still unresolved and frequently charged, how is that scene going to play? Will it seem like a relic of a past era? Will the paternalism (sexual as well as racial) evident in the climax sound as tin-eared now as do recent tweets presuming the end of racism? ... The ending does change, Kreidler told me. But the speech is definitely there. “They’ll hang you if you touch the speech!” Well, he hedged, the “spirit” of the speech is there. He has preserved “the DNA of the story.” He told me that he didn’t approach the project with a sense of “what can I bring from the outside” but rather that he wanted to “work within the material” and engage it in the “spirit of discussion.”

At this point in our conversation, Kreidler held his cards closely. He wanted to avoid “spoilers.” However, he let me know that there’s a “new button” to the show on stage; the Tracy character is not “the last person to come to the table.” He talks about the sense at the end of the film: “We’ve solved racism!” (Gee, thanks, Spence and Kate.) Reacting to that sense, though, Kreidler said there had been a voice missing, there’s a conversation we still need to have: “Coming through the door is someone else.” ... As he stressed that the issues raised “provoke a conversation we still need to have,” he implied that

the stage play has swapped out a pat resolution and taken the opportunity to “push back” at the film’s sense of “comfort and ease,” to opt for something “a little more complicated,” for a resolution that is more “open-ended.”

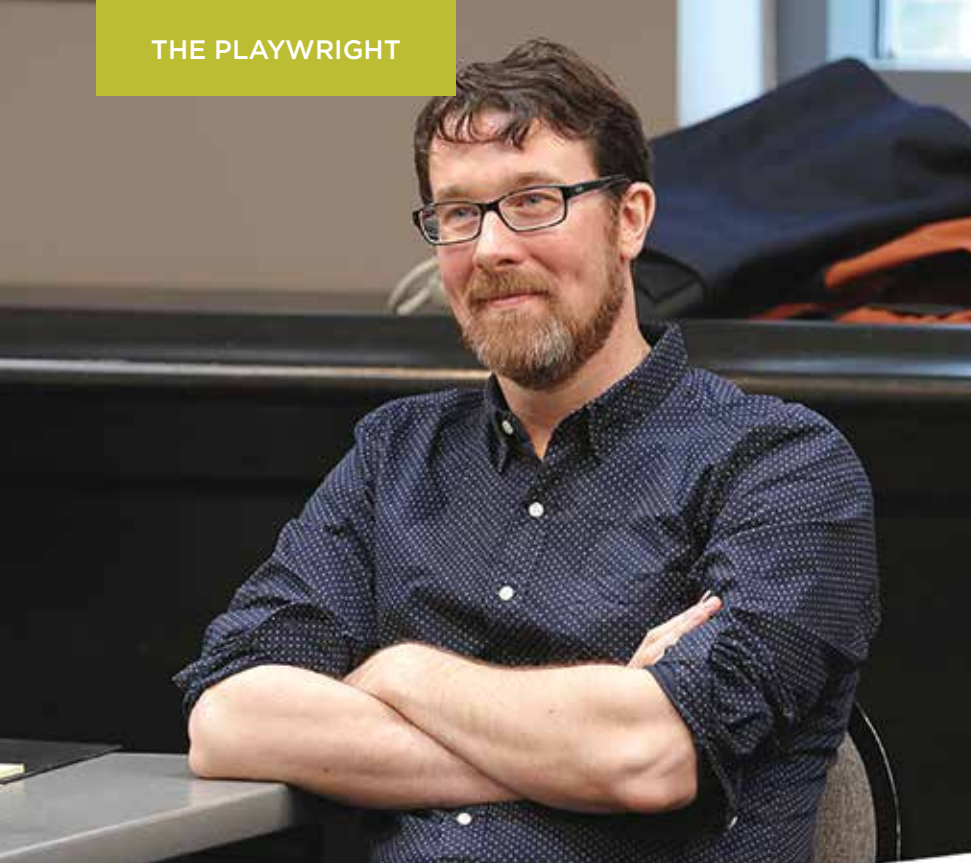
If that “button” is closely held in order to avoid spoilers, Kreidler is more forthcoming about other tinkering. Telling me that he looked at the film early on in the process of adapting the screenplay, but not since, he made distinctions between the film and the new play. Regarding the “Father Knows Best” aspect of the film, he assured me that the “husband and wife thing has been worked.” He talked about “opening up” scenes between the fiancé and his parents. (As those who have seen the film will remember, the fiancé is not only drop dead gorgeous Mr. Poitier, but a professional, a doctor, the kind of profession that would make the archetypal Jewish Mother ecstatic.) He talked also about how the single setting of the play affects the discussions within the fiancé’s family, now that they occur in the home of the white family. And he pointed out that the relationship between the young couple in the film was “never physicalized.” Whereas a 60s audience could deal with the concept of an interracial relationship more easily than with an actual expression of affection between the couple, that kind of hypersensitivity need not apply to an audience at Arena in 2013.

Most interestingly, Kreidler has changed what he calls the “prince and princess” aspect of the film script, which involves the love-at-first-sight, whirlwind dimension of the key relationship, where the young couple has only known each other for ten days. So, on stage, the two have had a much longer platonic relationship that evolved during the ten days prior to the action of the play into a romantic relationship.

Similarly, he addressed the “turnaround” of the Doctor’s initially skeptical Mother. One of the twists in the film is that the prospective African-American in-laws are more strongly against the mixed marriage than are the white family. Kreidler asked, “What does she see [that changes her attitude] that we don’t see in the film?”

Christopher Henley, “Todd Kreidler on re-writing *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* for the stage,” *DC Theatre Scene*, December 11, 2013.

Photo: JaBen Early, Maeve Moynihan and Regina Marie Williams in *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*. (Dan Norman)



The Playwright: Todd Kreidler

Todd Kreidler is a playwright, dramaturg, and director. His adaptation of the film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* premiered at the True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta in 2012.

As an accomplished Broadway dramaturg, Kreidler worked with August Wilson on his plays *Gem of the Ocean* and *Radio Golf*. He developed and directed Wilson's one-man show *How I Learned What I Learned* when Wilson performed it at Seattle Rep in 2003. He co-founded the August Wilson Monologue Competition, a national program aimed at integrating August Wilson's work into high school curriculum. Kreidler's stage adaptation of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* premiered at True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta in

2012. He wrote the book for the 2014 Broadway musical *Holler If Ya Hear Me* featuring the rap music of Tupac Shakur. He is currently working on several projects, including *The Heroin Diaries*, a musical with Mötley Crüe bassist Nikki Sixx based on Sixx's memoir and music, and a one-man show with songwriter-producer David Foster.

The Screenwriter: William Rose

William Rose (1914-1987) was born in Missouri. Before the United States entered World War II, he volunteered for the Canadian Black Watch regiment. After the war, he stayed in England and took a screenwriting course. He wrote several successful British comedies, earning Oscar nominations for *Genevieve* (1953) and *The Ladykillers* (1955). Although he was American by birth, William Rose's screenwriting work displayed a uniquely English voice. But he was equally adept at writing on home territory, winning an Academy Award for *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* in 1967.

In the 1960s he returned to the US, where he found renewed success with hectic ensemble comedy *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1966), swiftly followed by the satirical *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner: Timeline

SPRING, 1967

1967 was a notable year for change, upheaval, protest and new lifestyles throughout the world. San Francisco could easily be remembered as being at the forefront of it all. The spring would usher in the Summer of Love. Music, drugs, war and war protests, long hair and new attitudes toward the human body were all part of it.

1966-1968

The San Francisco Diggers became one of the legendary groups in the Haight-Ashbury during the years 1966 to 1968. Shrouded in a mystique of

anonymity, they took their name from the original English Diggers of the 1640s. The San Francisco Diggers combined street theater, anarcho direct action, and art happenings in their social agenda. Their most famous activities revolved around free food (every day in the Panhandle), and the Free Store (where everything was free for the taking). They produced a series of events that mark the evolution of the hippie phenomenon from a homegrown face-to-face community to the mass-media circus that splashed its face across the world's front pages and TV screens.

1967 SO FAR:

January '67

- Ernesto "Che" Guevara began organizing the National Liberation Army in Bolivia.
- Pope Paul VI announced his Apostolic Constitution (*Indulgentiarum Doctrina*). He also established this day as World Peace Day.
- Ronald Reagan was sworn in as Gov. of California.
- Some 16,000 US and 14,000 South Vietnamese troops started their biggest attack on the Iron Triangle, northwest of Saigon. They launched Operation Deckhouse V, an offensive in the Mekong River delta.
- Edward W. Brooke, R-Mass., the first black elected to the U.S. Senate by popular vote, took his seat.
- Sonny and Cher's "The Beat Goes On" peaked at #6 on the pop charts. In 1999 the TV special "And the Beat Goes On: The Sonny and Cher Story," written by Sonny Bono (1935-1998), was produced.
- The New York Times* reported that the US Army was conducting secret germ warfare experiments.
- The great Human Be-In was held in Golden Gate Park and drew national attention to the Haight-Ashbury scene. Allen Cohen, editor of a paper called the Oracle, came up with the idea. It was here that Timothy Leary proclaimed "Turn on, Tune in, Drop out." At the Gathering of the Tribes Allen Ginsberg is credited with coining the term "Flower Power."
- The Rolling Stones appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show.
- Some 462 Yale faculty members called for an end to the bombing in North Vietnam.
- Gov. Reagan met with FBI agents at his governor's mansion in Sacramento, Ca., for information on UC campus radicals.
- In the SF Bay Area a massive racial confrontation between armed white and black convicts at San Quentin prison was broken up after guards threw up a wall of fire to keep

JANUARY '67 CONT'D

- some 1400 whites separated from some 1000 African Americans.
13. Clark Kerr, president of the UC system, was fired by Gov. Reagan and the UC Regents for being too soft on student protesters at Berkeley
 14. During a launch pad test of the Apollo I (AS-204) mission at Cape Kennedy, a flash fire suddenly broke out in the vehicle's command module and killed its crew, Lt. Col. Edward White, II (U.S. Air Force), Lt. Col. Virgil "Gus" Grissom (U.S. Air Force) and Lt. Cmdr. Roger Chaffee (U.S. Navy).
 15. The US signed the Outer Space Treaty with Russia. More than 60 nations signed a treaty banning the orbiting of nuclear weapons. All weapons of mass destruction were banned from orbit, as was military activity on the moon and other celestial bodies.
 16. Thirty-seven civilians were killed by a U.S. helicopter attack in Vietnam.

1967 SO FAR:

February '67

1. The US Federal Hourly Minimum Wage was set at \$1.40 an hour.
2. "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour" premiered on CBS TV.
3. The US military said American casualties in the Vietnam War now number 50,529. This included 8,790 killed since January 1, 1960.
4. Ramparts Magazine published an ad in *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* saying: "In its March issue, Ramparts magazine will document how the CIA has infiltrated and subverted the world of American student leaders over the past fifteen years."
5. Thirteen US helicopters were shot down in one day in Vietnam.
6. Beatles released "Penny Lane" & "Strawberry Fields." Strawberry Fields was a children's home run by the Salvation Army.
7. Barbara Garson's "MacBird!," a notorious counterculture drama, premiered in NYC. It satirically depicted President Lyndon Johnson as Macbeth and his wife, Lady Bird Johnson, as Lady Macbeth.
8. More than 25,000 US and South Vietnamese troops launched Operation Junction City, aimed at smashing a Vietcong stronghold near the Cambodian border. In order to deny the Vietcong cover, and allow men to see through the dense vegetation, herbicides were dumped on the forests near the South Vietnamese borders as well as Cambodia and Laos. The operation continued to May 14.
9. In Mississippi 19 were indicted in the slayings of three civil rights workers in 1964. Samuel H. Bowers and 6 others were convicted on federal charges in 1970. Bowers was released in 1976.

1967 SO FAR:

March '67

1. San Francisco police estimated that there were now some 4,000 hippies in the city and that some 100,000 were expected this summer.
2. At the 9th Grammy Awards: "Strangers in Night" by Frank Sinatra won Record of the Year and "Michele" by the Beatles won Song of the Year. The song "Winchester Cathedral" by the New Vaudeville Band won the Grammy best contemporary recording category.
3. US Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson announced his plan to establish a draft lottery.
4. The Los Angeles-based Doors made their 2nd trip to SF and performed for a mid-week engagement at the Matrix ahead of a weekend performance at the Avalon.
5. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. called the Vietnam War the biggest obstacle to the civil rights movement.
6. A North Vietnamese spokesman unequivocally rejected a new peace plan proposed by UN Sec. General U Thant (1907-1974) on March 14.

1967 SO FAR:

April '67

1. Pres. Johnson appointed Ellsworth Bunker (1894-1984) as the new ambassador to Saigon, South Vietnam. Bunker replaced Lodge and continued as ambassador to 1973.
2. An Israeli-Syrian minor border incident escalated into a full-scale aerial battle over the Golan Heights.
3. Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead," was performed by the Royal National Theater at London's Old Vic Theater. It had premiered on Aug 26, 1966, in Edinburgh, Scotland.
4. In the SF Bay Area Aaron Charles Mitchell (37) was executed in San Quentin's gas chamber for the 1963 killing of a policeman.
5. In San Francisco thousands marched from the Ferry building to Kezar Stadium against the Vietnam war. The marchers filled the 40,000 capacity stadium.
6. It was disclosed that an employee at the San Francisco Mint had walked out of the facility at least two months earlier with a 21-pound gold bar valued at \$12,000.
7. Heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali refused to be inducted into the Army and was stripped of his boxing title.
8. Gen. William C. Westmoreland told Congress the United States "would prevail in Vietnam."

1967 SO FAR:

May '67

1. The Stockholm Vietnam Tribunal opened and continued to May 10. The formation of this investigative body immediately followed the 1966 publication of Bertrand Russell's book, "War Crimes in Vietnam." It condemned US aggression in Vietnam and Cambodia. A 2nd session of the tribunal was held at Roskilde, Denmark, Nov 20 - Dec 1, 1967.
2. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved a resolution designed to discourage a mass invasion of hippies into the Haight Ashbury district.
3. The United Kingdom re-applied to join the European Community. It was followed by Ireland and Denmark and, a little later, by Norway. General de Gaulle was still reluctant to accept British accession.
4. H. Rap Brown (b.1943) replaced Stokely Carmichael (1941-1968) as chairman of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and announced that the organization will continue its commitment to black power.
5. A 2-day Spring Mobilization Conference opened in Washington D.C. The gathering of 700 antiwar activists was called to evaluate the antiwar demonstrations that had taken place on April 15, 1967 in New York City and San Francisco. The conference set another antiwar action for the fall of 1967 and created an administrative committee to plan it. That committee was the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (MOBE).
6. In San Francisco Ott's Drive-in became the first fast food spot in the city after installing the only automated ordering system in the Bay Area. In 1971 the city announced plans to demolish Ott's and build a hotel at the 550 Bay St. location.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner: Words, concepts and ideas

All Italian marble.
The entire foyer ...
not a stone from
Danby!

HILARY

The famous **Danby** Marble Quarry in Vermont's Dorset Mountain has been producing breathtaking marble for over 100 years. In fact, it was the first marble quarry in the United States and it's the largest underground marble quarry in the world.

There are eight different types of Danby Marble and some are said to rival the most beautiful Italian white marbles. One side of the quarry yields Imperial, Eureka, and Royal Danby marbles. On another front Mountain White, Olympian White, MontClair, Crystal Stratus, and Appalachian Gray are mined. (www.marbleandgranite.com)

Where's the new
William T. Wiley?

CHRISTINA



William T. Wiley (1937-) is a contemporary American artist. Maintaining an eclectic practice that has been associated with the Funk Art movement, Wiley incorporates drawing, painting, sculpture, performance, and filmmaking into his work. His paintings act as an aggregate and are composed of a wide range of obsessive marks, materials, and mediums, frequently layered on top of a map or other information-coded images. Often featuring illustrations of fantastical universes, his works contain both historical literary references and integrate geometric abstraction. Born in Bedford, IN on October 21, 1937, he earned both his BFA and MFA from the California School of Fine Arts shortly before joining the UC Davis Art faculty in 1963. Wiley has enjoyed widespread acclaim and success, participating in both the Venice and Whitney Biennials in 1980 and 1983, respectively. His work is held in many important collections, such as the Art Institute of Chicago, The Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. The 2009-2010 exhibition "What's It All Mean: William T. Wiley in Retrospect," offered a comprehensive retrospective of Wiley's career.

<http://www.artnet.com/artists/william-t-wiley/>

Sampling of Wiley's work from the 1960s (all from <http://www.williamtwiley.com>)

Charles had one of
the four Platters sing
for us.

HILARY

With classics such as "The Great Pretender," "Only You," and their rendition of "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," the **Platters** were one of the preeminent doo-wop groups of the rock & roll era. The Platters churned out hit after hit during the 1950s, bridging the gap between more traditional vocal-group stylings and the popular R&B grooves of the early '50s. Their sound was unique, marked by lead singer Tony Williams' powerful vocals. Although competing versions of the Platters confused the public for many years, original founding member Herb Reed eventually solidified his rights to the name and the group continued recording and performing in the 2010s.



The Platters started out in 1952 as a Los Angeles-based doo wop group who made a few records for Federal, a subsidiary of Cincinnati's King Records. What changed their fortunes boils down to one very important name: their mentor, manager, producer, songwriter, and vocal coach, Buck Ram. Ram took a standard doo wop vocal group and turned them into stars - one of the most enduring and lucrative groups of all time. After getting them out of their Federal contract, Ram placed them with the burgeoning national independent label Mercury, automatically getting them into pop markets through the label's distribution contacts alone. Considered the most romantic of all the doo wop groups (that is, the ultimate in "make out music"), hit after hit came tumbling forth in a seemingly effortless manner: "Only You," "The Great Pretender," "My Prayer," "Twilight Time," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "Harbor Lights," all of them establishing the Platters as the classiest of all.

In 1961, Williams struck out on his own. (this is likely the reference Hilary is making) By the decade's end, the group had disbanded, with various members starting up their own version of the Platters. Decades of competing versions ensued, until original member Herb Reed finally won a series of court cases. Reed, who died in 2012, restarted the group and patterned them on the original.

Chuck's doing serious damage supporting this war. Our country hasn't been this wrong since we stole Texas.

MATT

Following Texas' war of independence against Mexico in 1836, President Martin van Buren refrained from annexing Texas after the Mexicans threatened war. Accordingly, while the United States extended diplomatic recognition to Texas, it took no further action concerning annexation until 1844, when President John Tyler restarted negotiations with the Republic of Texas. His efforts culminated on April 12 in a Treaty of Annexation, an event that caused Mexico to sever diplomatic relations with United States. Tyler, however, lacked the votes in the Senate to ratify the treaty, and it was defeated by a wide margin in June. Shortly before he left office, Tyler tried again, this time through a joint resolution of both houses of Congress. With the support of President-elect Polk, Tyler managed to get the joint resolution passed on March 1, 1845, and Texas was admitted into the United States on December 29.

While Mexico did not follow through with its threat to declare war if the United States annexed Texas, relations between the two nations remained tense due to Mexico's disputed border with Texas. According to the Texans, their state included significant portions of what is today New Mexico and Colorado, and the western and southern portions of Texas itself, which they claimed extended to the Rio Grande River. The Mexicans, however, argued that the border only extended to the Nueces River, north of the Rio Grande.

In July, 1845, Polk, who had been elected on a platform of expansionism, ordered the commander of the U.S. Army in Texas, Zachary Taylor, to move his forces into the disputed lands that lay between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers. In November, Polk dispatched Congressman John Slidell to Mexico with instructions to negotiate the purchase of the disputed areas along the Texas-Mexican border, and the territory comprising the present-day states of New Mexico and California.

Following the failure of Slidell's mission in May 1846, Polk used news of skirmishes inside disputed territory between Mexican troops and Taylor's army to gain Congressional support for a declaration of war against Mexico. On May 13, 1846, the United States declared war on Mexico. Following the capture of Mexico City in September 1847, Nicholas Trist, chief clerk of the Department of State and Polk's peace emissary, began negotiations for a peace treaty with the Mexican Government under terms similar to those pursued by Slidell the previous year. Polk soon grew concerned by Trist's conduct, however, believing that he would not press for strong enough terms from the Mexicans, and because Trist became a close friend of General Winfield Scott, a Whig who was thought to be a strong contender for his party's presidential nomination for the 1848 election. Furthermore, the war had encouraged expansionist Democrats to call for a complete annexation of Mexico. Polk recalled Trist in October. Believing that he was on the cusp of an agreement with the Mexicans, Trist ignored the recall order and presented Polk with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which was signed in Mexico City on February 2, 1848. Under the terms of the treaty, Mexico ceded to the United States approximately 525,000 square miles (55% of its prewar territory) in exchange for a \$15 million lump sum payment, and the assumption by the U.S. Government of up to \$3.25 million worth of debts owed by Mexico to U.S. citizens.

While Polk would have preferred a more extensive annexation of Mexican territory, he realized that prolonging the war would have disastrous political consequences and decided to submit the treaty to the Senate for ratification. Although there was substantial opposition to the treaty within the Senate, on March 10, 1848, it passed by a razor-thin margin of 38 to 14.

source: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/texas-annexation>

Operator, this is Pacific eight-o-o-two-o. Could you give me the switchboard to The Guardian please?

MATT

Possibly a reference to the San Francisco Bay Guardian. The San Francisco Bay Guardian was a free alternative newspaper published weekly in San Francisco, California. It was founded in 1966 by Bruce B. Brugmann and his wife, Jean Dibble. The paper was shut down on October 14, 2014. It was relaunched in February 2016 as an online publication. The Bay Guardian was known for reporting, celebrating, and promoting left-wing and progressive issues within San Francisco and around the San Francisco Bay Area as a whole.

I was raised on Ralph Waldo Emerson. Self-reliance

JOANNA

Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803-1882) essay "Self-Reliance" embodies some of the most prominent themes of the transcendentalist movement in the 19th century. First published in 1841, "Self-Reliance" advocates for individualism and encourages readers to trust and follow their own instincts and intuition rather than blindly adhere to the will of others.

One of seventy thousand packed in Yankee Stadium. I was a reporter then, covering the fight. I'd like to say in my heart I knew Louis would win but Schmeling looked giant. Hitler's great Aryan. That night the devil wore purple trunks. We were all so damned scared. Everybody knew war was coming soon. Joe Louis fought for America that night.

MATT

America forgot all about Joe Louis. Left him in the desert. Now he's a doorman in Vegas.

JOHN

Here **Joe Louis** poses at age 62, in 1977, in the casino of Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

Although one of the greatest prizefighters in American history, Louis was, by that time, almost as well known for his struggles with the Internal Revenue Service and for the damage he sustained in the ring, before the long-term dangers of brain injury in boxing and other sports were better understood.

The old "Brown Bomber" was merely a vestige of the 24-year-old world heavyweight champion who, at Yankee Stadium in June 1938, had knocked out his German opponent, Max Schmeling, within two minutes and four seconds.

Louis, who had held his title for a year heading into the bout, had told reporters he would not actually feel like a world champion until he disposed of Schmeling, who had knocked him out in the 12th round in 1936.

With more than 70,000 spectators, including Clark Gable, Gary Cooper and J. Edgar Hoover, watching from the stands, and an estimated 70 million people following by radio — which some called the largest listening audience of the time — it was a signal night for geopolitics. Although Schmeling had not joined the Nazi party, Hitler had promoted him as an avatar of Aryan greatness. At the White House, Franklin D. Roosevelt had grasped Louis's biceps and emboldened him in his duty. "Yeah, I'm scared," Louis told a friend. "I'm scared I might kill Schmeling." In Archery, Ga., 13-year-old Jimmy Carter witnessed African-Americans, standing outside his family's house, listening to Louis's victory from a radio perched on the windowsill. As Carter later wrote, the visitors "walked silently out of the yard, crossed the road and the railroad tracks, entered the tenant house, and closed the door. Then all hell broke loose, and their celebration lasted all night."

The quiet, genial Louis modestly said later that when told of what he meant to his people, he thought to himself, "Jesus Christ, am I all that?" In January 1942, after World War II began, he gave the United States Navy Relief Society a check for \$89,092, which was said to represent the profits, including his own, from his bout that month with Buddy Baer. Enlisting in the segregated United States Army as a private, he made morale-building visits to American bases but would brook no discrimination. During an appearance in his birth state of Alabama, the military police accosted him after he refused to sit in a "colored" waiting area.

Louis played himself in the 1943 World War II film "This is the Army," in which Ronald Reagan appeared; Louis said on-screen, "All I know is that I'm in Uncle Sam's Army and we are on God's side."

Although he earned a fortune during his almost 12-year reign as world champion, Louis fell into a deepening chasm of personal debts and I.R.S. demands for back taxes (which included disallowance of deductions he had taken for buying G.I.s tickets to his exhibitions), as well as penalties and compound interest. "I made five million," he later said, "and wound up broke, owing the government a million."



The aging Louis declared his retirement in 1949, then concluded that he could not afford to stop boxing. But he failed in comeback attempts against Ezzard Charles and Rocky Marciano.

In 1951, Dr. J. M. Houston, the Illinois State Athletic Commission's medical adviser, who had examined Louis twice during the previous 18 months, told The Associated Press that Louis's reaction time, reflexes and coordination had deteriorated.

"No one knows at just what point one slips over the line into a mentally impaired condition," Houston warned, adding that Louis has "now absorbed enough blows on the head so that he could be considered on the threshold of danger." But, looking to pay his bills, Louis took up wrestling.

The connection between the decades of being pummeled and Louis's later physical and mental challenges will never be able to be precisely established. But in 1970, reportedly suffering from pneumonia, cocaine dependency and emotional problems, including delusions and paranoia, Louis was removed by a Denver sheriff for five months — at the behest of his third wife Martha and son Joe Jr. — to the local veterans hospital and a Colorado psychiatric hospital.

As if out of a Frank Capra screenplay, Louis's saving grace ultimately turned out to be the friends who would not let him depend on the kindness of strangers.

Thanks to Ash Resnick, the Army chum who managed its casino, Caesars Palace lent Louis a house in Las Vegas and hired him as a \$50,000-per-year "host in residence"; Louis explained, "My main job is shaking hands," noting, only half in jest, that one of his assignments was assuaging high rollers who lost big money to the house.

When Louis suffered cardiovascular problems, some of which ultimately damaged his speech and his ability to walk, Frank Sinatra, his friend since the 1940s, called Martha and told her "not to worry about the cost" of his medical care; he insisted that the Champ "have the best." Sinatra had Louis flown in his personal jet to Houston, where he was operated on by the renowned cardiac surgeon Michael DeBakey.

In April 1981, Louis was wheeled to the edge of the ring in Las Vegas to watch Larry Holmes fight Trevor Berbick. The next morning, at the age of 66, Louis collapsed and died of cardiac arrest. President Reagan waived rules so that the man he called "my friend" could be buried with honors at Arlington National Cemetery. Helping to pay for Louis's funeral costs was Max Schmeling.

"Joe's not broke," his wife Martha had insisted during her husband's financial traumas. "He's rich — rich with friends. If he said he needed a dollar, a million people would send him a dollar and he'd be a millionaire."

Michael Beschloss, "Knocked Down by Life, Joe Louis Could Rely on His Friends,"
The New York Times, October 17, 2014

Have you ever seen American Bandstand? Look at the kids dancing. Who do you think are the better dancers? Tell me truly what you think.

Dick Clark transformed himself and a local Philadelphia television program into two of the most culturally significant forces of the early rock-and-roll era. His iconic show, American Bandstand, began broadcasting nationally in 1957, beaming images of clean-cut, average teenagers dancing to the not-so-clean-cut Jerry Lee Lewis' "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" to 67 ABC affiliates across the nation.

The show that evolved into American Bandstand began on Philadelphia's WFIL-TV in 1952, a few years before the popular ascension of rock and roll. Hosted by local radio personality Bob Horn, the original Bandstand nevertheless established much of the basic format of its later incarnation. In the first year after Dick Clark took over as host in the summer of 1956, Bandstand remained a popular local hit, but it took Clark's ambition to help it break out. When the ABC television network polled its affiliates in 1957 for suggestions to fill its 3:30 p.m. time slot, Clark pushed hard for Bandstand, which network executives picked up and scheduled for an August 5, 1957 premiere.

Renamed American Bandstand, the newly national program featured a number of new elements that became part of its trademark, including the high school gym-like bleachers and the famous segment in which teenage studio guests rated the newest records on a scale from 25 to 98 and offered such criticisms as "It's got a good beat, and you can dance to it." But the heart of American Bandstand always remained the sound of the day's most popular music combined with the sight of the show's unpolished teen "regulars" dancing and showing off the latest fashions in clothing and hairstyles.

American Bandstand aired five days a week in live national broadcast until 1963, when the show moved west to Los Angeles and began a 24-year run as a taped weekly program with Dick Clark as host.

No, that's not it at all. It's because it's our music. It's our dancing. We brought it here. I mean — you can do "The Watusi" — but I am the Watusi. The dance floor would look entirely different if everyone was dancing the polka.

The Watusi is a dance that enjoyed brief popularity during the early 1960s. It was one of the most popular dance crazes of the 1960s in the United States. "Watusi" is a former name for the Tutsi people of Africa, whose traditions include spectacular dances. The naming of the American dance may have been inspired, in particular, by a scene in the 1950 film King Solomon's Mines which featured Tutsi dancers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ai9i9FbHkjs>

JOHN

There are towns — cities in this country where you cannot, by law, drink from the same goddamn water fountain. Hell, it's in the Supreme Court right now — there are states where what you propose to do is illegal! Regardless of the law ... laws won't protect you when you get pulled over. You cross the wrong county line ...



Loving v. Virginia was a Supreme Court case that struck down state laws banning interracial marriage in the United States. The plaintiffs in the case were Richard and Mildred Loving, a white man and black woman whose marriage was deemed illegal according to Virginia state law. With the help of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Lovings appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled unanimously that so-called “anti-miscegenation” statutes were unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment. The decision is often cited as a watershed moment in the dismantling of “Jim Crow” race laws.

MISCEGENATION

The Loving case was a challenge to centuries of American laws banning miscegenation, i.e., any marriage or interbreeding among different races. Restrictions on miscegenation existed as early as the colonial era, and of the 50 U.S. states, all but nine had a law against the practice at some point in their history.

Early attempts to dispute race-based marriage bans in court met with little success. One of the first and most noteworthy cases was 1883's Pace v. Alabama, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that an Alabama anti-miscegenation law was constitutional because it punished blacks and whites equally. In 1888, meanwhile, the high court ruled that states had the authority to regulate marriage.

By the 1950s, more than half the states in the Union — including every state in the South — still had laws restricting marriage by racial classifications. In Virginia, interracial marriage was illegal under 1924's Act to Preserve Racial Integrity. Those who violated the law risked anywhere from one to five years in a state penitentiary.

RICHARD AND MILDRED LOVING

The central figures in Loving v. Virginia were Richard Loving and Mildred Jeter, a couple from the town of Central Point in Caroline County, Virginia. Richard, a white construction worker, and Mildred, a woman of mixed African American and Native American ancestry, were longtime friends who had fallen in love. In June 1958, they exchanged wedding vows in Washington, D.C., where interracial marriage was legal, and then returned home to Virginia.

On July 11, 1958, just five weeks after their wedding, the Lovings were awoken in their bed at about 2:00 a.m. and arrested by the local sheriff. Richard and Mildred were indicted on charges of violating Virginia's anti-miscegenation law, which deemed interracial marriages a felony. When the couple pleaded guilty the following year, Judge Leon M. Bazile sentenced them to one year in prison, but suspended the sentence on the condition that they would leave Virginia and not return together for a period of 25 years.

RICHARD AND MILDRED LOVING'S CHILDREN

Following their court case, the Lovings were forced to leave Virginia and relocate to Washington, D.C. The couple lived in exile in the nation's capital for several years and raised three children — sons Sidney and Donald and a daughter, Peggy — but they longed to return to their hometown

In 1963, a desperate Mildred Loving wrote a letter to U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy asking for assistance. Kennedy referred the Lovings to the American Civil Liberties Union, which agreed to take their case.

THE LOVING V. VIRGINIA SUPREME COURT CASE

The Lovings began their legal battle in November 1963. With the aid of Bernard Cohen and Philip Hirschkop, two young ACLU lawyers, the couple filed a motion asking for Judge Bazile to vacate their conviction and set aside their sentences.

When Bazile refused, Cohen and Hirschkop took the case to the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, which also upheld the original ruling. Following another appeal, the case made its way to the United States Supreme Court in April 1967.

During oral arguments before the Supreme Court, Virginia's Assistant Attorney General Robert D. McIlwaine III defended the constitutionality of his state's anti-miscegenation law and compared it to similar regulations against incest and polygamy. Cohen and Hirschkop, meanwhile, argued the Virginia statute was illegal under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees all citizens due process and equal protection under the law.

During one exchange, Hirschkop stated that Virginia's interracial marriage law and others like it were rooted in racism and white supremacy. "These are not health and welfare laws," he argued. "These are slavery laws, pure and simple."

The Supreme Court announced its ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* on June 12, 1967. In a unanimous decision, the justices found that Virginia's interracial marriage law violated the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. "Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual, and cannot be infringed by the state," Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote.

The landmark ruling not only overturned the Lovings' 1958 criminal conviction, it also struck down laws against interracial marriage in 16 U.S. states including Virginia.

<https://www.history.com/topics/loving-v-virginia>

Think if the freeway revolt had won. I-80 wouldn't be here. How long would your drive have been then?

JOHN

Interstate 80 (I-80) is a major east-west route of the Interstate Highway System, running between the U.S. states of California and New Jersey. The highway has its western terminus in San Francisco. From there it heads east across the Bay Bridge to Oakland, where it turns north and crosses the Carquinez Bridge before turning back northeast through the Sacramento Valley. Throughout California, I-80 was built along the corridor of US 40, eventually replacing this designation entirely. The prior US 40 corridor itself was built along several historic corridors in California, notably the California Trail and Lincoln Highway. The route has changed from the original plans in San Francisco due to freeway revolts canceling segments of the originally planned alignment. Similarly in Sacramento, the

freeway was re-routed around the city after plans to upgrade the original grandfathered route through the city to Interstate highway standards were cancelled.

Is this Candid Camera? Is that what this is? Where's the smiling white guy hiding?

JOHN, SR.

It took the miracle of a talking donkey to set Balaam straight. When the stubborn donkey spoke he said, "I am here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one."

MONSIGNOR RYAN

Candid Camera is an American hidden camera/practical joke reality television series created and produced by Allen Funt, which initially began on radio as The Candid Microphone on June 28, 1947. After a series of theatrical film shorts, also titled Candid Microphone, Funt's concept came to television on August 10, 1948 and continued into the 1970s. Aside from occasional specials in the 1980s and 1990s, the show was off air until making a comeback in 1996. This incarnation of the weekly series ended on May 5, 2004. Beginning on August 11, 2014, the show returned in a new series with hour-long episodes.

Reference is to Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) Numbers 22:22-35, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Balaam, the Donkey, and the Angel

22 God's anger was kindled because he was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the road as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23 The donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand; so the donkey turned off the road, and went into the field; and Balaam struck the donkey, to turn it back onto the road. 24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. 25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it scraped against the wall, and scraped Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck it again. 26 Then the angel of the LORD went ahead, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. 28 Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" 29 Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me! I wish I had a sword in my hand! I would kill you right now!" 30 But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I been in the habit of treating you this way?" And he said, "No."

31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed down, falling on his face. 32 The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? I have come out as an adversary, because your way is perverse before me. 33 The donkey saw me, and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let it live." 34 Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now therefore, if it is displeasing to you, I will return home." 35 The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men; but speak only what I tell you to speak." So Balaam went on with the officials of Balak.

A reasonable man? ... Since the seminary, I've always preferred Augustine over Aquinas. It's that faith in reason alone-

MONSIGNOR RYAN

Augustine and Aquinas are both famously known for their philosophical and theological explorations, with Augustine writing in the late fourth to early fifth century and Aquinas in the thirteenth. While they are both known for attempting to reconcile ancient philosophy with Christianity, they went about this task in different ways. Augustine is known for taking a Platonic route, whereas Aquinas was much more Aristotelian. The two both explored the faith and reason dichotomy, the nature of the soul, and knowledge. Faith is seen by both philosophers as a trust in scripture and one's own personal belief that God exists. Reason would be a more rational approach to the proof of God, with appeal to evidence and logic. Augustine believed that faith and reason had an interdependent relationship in understanding God, but also that faith would always be the truest way to God. Additionally, both faith and reason were only accessible due to divine grace of God. Augustine was very much a Neo-Platonist. He believed because the Platonists studied the eternal and unchanging that these ideas were beneficial to understanding and clarifying the Christian faith. Thomas Aquinas took a fairly different stance on the faith and reason dichotomy. He did not make as clear a distinction between faith and reason, as Augustine did, but did believe that all creation and truth is emanated from God. Aquinas did not believe that reason and faith conflicted, though there are truths that reason cannot attain that faith can. Aquinas called this idea a "two fold truth". He held that something can be true of faith, false or inconclusive in philosophy, but never the other way around. This idea supports the idea that while reason can lead one to a greater understanding of the world, it cannot lead to attainment of the higher truths that faith can. Aquinas believed that faith and reason, are essential and not contradictory, in fact, knowledge is essential in the act of faith. He asserts that faith is the intellectual act, and its object is truth. Thus, any truth will necessarily lead to faith. Aquinas claimed that while people cannot comprehend God as an object, the intellect can grasp his existence indirectly, and this grasp comes through reason.

Don't give me that god making footprints in the sand crap.

MATT

There are several versions of a poem referring to God making footprints in the sand, the original dating back to 1936 and titled "Footprints in the Sand" by Mary Stevenson:

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.
Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only.
This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord, "You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?" The Lord replied, "The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you."

**Is it all hid? (No, No!)
Is it all hid? (No, No!)
I went down to the
Devil's town,
Devil knocked my
daddy down
Is it all hid?**

JOHN

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=khtYp3KLgO4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khtYp3KLgO4)

**Run home children,
More room there
Run home children,
More room there**

TILLIE

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=bnxsQhJ1oIO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnxsQhJ1oIO)

**In Dublin's Fair City
Where the girls are
so pretty
I first set my eyes on
sweet Molly Malone ...**

MONSIGNOR RYAN

**San Francisco in
the 1960s**



PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM MARSHALL/DIGITAL COLORIZATION BY LORNA CLARK/PERMISSION OF JIM MARSHALL L.L.C. FREE FOR ALL THE CHARLATANS PERFORM IN GOLDEN GATE PARK.

The song appeared in 1883, published in Cambridge (Massachusetts, USA). A year later it was also published in London and identified as written and composed by James Yorkston of Edinburgh.

As the style of the song fits into the music hall genre of the Victorian period, this points towards a fairly modern origin. Apologists immediately point out that it may be based on folk tradition ... but neither the text nor the music resembles any Irish tradition.

There is, however, a tantalizing mention of "sweet Molly Malone" in a collection of songs called "Apollo's Medley", published around 1790. But this Molly Malone lived in Howth (at that time far from Dublin's fair city) and the content of the song is quite different too. There is no proof of a historical figure of Molly Malone in Dublin, although in 1988, as part of the Dublin Millennium Commission, a statue of Molly Malone was unveiled and an official Molly Malone Day was declared for June 13. Not much attention is paid to the legend or the statue, fondly referred to by Dubliners as "the tart with a cart".

San Francisco in the 1960s had a population of around 725,000. The shipping industry was moving to nearby Oakland, the city began to lose industrial jobs, and tourism emerged as the city's most important economic factor. As large segments of the white population left the city, the suburbs experienced rapid growth, and San Francisco experienced an increasing wave of immigration from Asia and Latin America. At the same time, San Francisco became a magnet for America's counterculture, including ethnic minorities, hippies, flower children, and gays and lesbians.

1967 - The Summer of Love

The most significant historical event in the city in 1967 was the Summer of Love, when as many as 100,000 people, mostly hippies (and aspiring hippies), converged in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. Inspired by the Beat Generation of authors, who had flourished in the North Beach area of San Francisco in the 1950s, those who gathered rejected the conformist and materialist values of modern life; there was an emphasis on sharing and community. James Rado and Gerome Ragni have said that their experiences in the Summer of Love helped to inspire their musical *Hair*.

The Vietnam War



WAR ZONE 'C' - AMBUSH OF THE 173RD AIRBORNE, 1965. TIM PAGE

The Vietnam War is only briefly mentioned in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, but it was a deeply significant ongoing presence in every American household throughout the 1960s.

The Vietnam War lasted from 1959 to 1975. More than 1.4 million military personnel were killed in the war (approximately 6% were members of the United States armed forces), while estimates of civilian fatalities range from 2 to 5 million. The war was fought between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) and the United States-supported Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam).

U.S. military advisers first became involved in Vietnam in 1950, assisting French colonial forces. In 1956, these advisers assumed full responsibility for training the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. President John F. Kennedy increased America's troop numbers from 500 to 16,000, and President Lyndon Johnson dispatched a large number of troops beginning in 1965. At various stages the conflict involved clashes between small units patrolling the mountains and jungles, amphibious operations, guerrilla attacks on villages and cities, and large-scale conventional battles. U.S. aircraft also conducted massive aerial bombing, targeting North Vietnam's cities, industries, and logistical networks. Cambodia and Laos were drawn into the conflict. Large quantities of chemical defoliants were sprayed from the air, in an effort to reduce the cover available to the enemy. Opposition to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War began slowly and in small numbers in 1964 on various college campuses in the United States. This happened during a time of unprecedented student activism – reinforced in numbers by the demographically significant baby boomers – but grew to include a wide and varied cross-section of Americans from all walks of life. The growing opposition to the Vietnam War was also partly attributed to greater access to uncensored information compared with previous wars and extensive television media coverage of what, ultimately, became America's longest combat war so far. Likewise, a system of conscription (the draft) that provided exemptions and deferments more easily claimed by middle and upper class registrants—and thus inducted disproportionate numbers of poor, working-class, and minority registrants – drove much of the protest. By the end of 1967, as U.S. troop casualties mounted and the war ground on with no end in sight, public opinion polls showed a majority of Americans were opposed the war and wanted it to end.

Almost all U.S. military personnel departed after the Paris Peace Accords of 1973. The last American troops left the country in 1975. The war ended with American withdrawal, the defeat of the South Vietnamese forces, and unification of Vietnam under the communist government of the North.