



History as witnessed
by depression babies

Description

The social and military events that shaped their formative years and beyond

By Byron Toben

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be useful for those who are now senior citizens to review the years and beyond.



U.S. 18th amendment establishing the **prohibition of alcoholic beverages**, which ironically encouraged organized crime to evade it.

1927 – **Sound in movies** was inaugurated with Al Jolson singing in ***The Jazz Singer***

1929 – In August, **The Great Depression** started with the stock market crash and lasted until 1939.

1932 – **Franklin D. Roosevelt** was elected as U.S. president in a landslide over Herbert Hoover on a promise of a “**New Deal.**”

1933 – On December 5, **U.S. Prohibition ended** with the abolishment of the 18th Amendment. However, organized crime, enhanced by it, lingered on, its breadth and scope not generally realized until the Kefauver investigations of 1950 and the Appalachian round-up of 1957.

1934 – On May 28, the **Dionne Quintuplets** were born to a poor French Canadian family on their Ontario farm. Their welfare, undertaken by the provincial government, became a bit of an international circus. Of the five quints, all girls, two still survive today, living in Quebec. They are Annette and Cécile. Deceased are Émilie (in 1954 at age 20), Marie (in 1970 at age 35) and Yvonne (in 2001 at age 67).

1934 – An organized “**Wall Street putsch**” to overthrow Roosevelt as a “traitor to his class” and install a fascist government was thwarted and exposed by courted General Smedley Butler who refused to go along with it.

1936 – On November 3, **Roosevelt was re-elected** over Alf Landan of Kansas and took further action to end the Great Depression.

1936 – On December 10, **Edward VIII abdicated** to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson, which turned out just as well as he evinced favourable inclinations to the growing Hitler regime in Germany. The ascension of his brother George VI to the throne led to the eventual coronation of post-war Queen Elizabeth II.



American Nazi party rally at Madison Square Garden – Image: frame from A Night at the Garden, courtesy of PBS

1939 – On February 20, the **American Nazi party rally** at Madison Square Garden in New York attracted 20,000 supporters with Seig Heil salutes.

1939 – On September 1, **the Nazis invaded Poland**, triggering WW II. England and France declared war on September 3, joined by Canada on September 10.

1940 – May 26 to June 4, the British Expeditionary forces trapped at **Dunkirk** were largely saved by hundreds of small boats crossing the English channel.

1941 – On December 7, the Japanese attack on **Pearl Harbor** was declared by Roosevelt as “A day that will live in infamy,” and the U.S. entered into WW II.

1941 – In December, the **Japanese overwhelmed Canadian soldiers in Hong Kong**.

1942 – On April 18, the **Dolittle air raid** on Tokyo boosted allied morale.

1942 – May 5 to 8, the **Battle of Coral Sea** demolished much of the Japanese navy in the Pacific.

1942 – June 4 to 7, the **Battle of Midway** demolished the rest of Japanese navy in a reverse ambush attack enabled by intercepted messages.



D-Day in Normandie – Image: [National Archives and Records Administration](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

1942 – In August, Canadian soldiers attacked **Dieppe**, France.

1942 – October 23 to November 11, the **Battle of El Alamein** in Egypt stopped German advances in Africa.

1943 – April 19 to May 16, the **Warsaw Ghetto uprising** resulted in the whole area being demolished and 13,000 Jews killed, many burnt alive.

1943 – In August, Allied forces, including Canadians, attacked Sicily in “**Operation Husky**.”

1944 – On June 6, **D-Day in Normandy** launched the Allied liberation of western Europe.



1945 – February 19 to March 26, the bloody battle at **Iwo Jima** island was won by U.S. forces with the iconic flag raising.

1945 – April to May, **Canadian forces helped liberate the Netherlands.**



Hiroshima Dome in ruins – Image: Shigeo Hayashi, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

1945 – On May 7, the **Allied victory in Europe** ended WW II there.

1945 – On August 6, the U.S. atomic bomb “Little Boy” was dropped on **Hiroshima** and on August 9, the U.S. H-bomb “Fat Man” was dropped on **Nagasaki**. Although these attacks led to the Japanese surrender on September 2 and thus the end of **WW II**, the possibility of nuclear warfare started by others is currently in the news.

1945 – On September 25, the **United Nations** was officially established after talks and negotiations began in 1943. The name was adopted by Roosevelt upon suggestion by Winston Churchill of a passage in Lord Byron’s 1818 poem *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*.



1945 – November 25 to October 1, 1946, the Allied **Nuremberg Trials** tribunal convicted two dozen Nazi leaders of war crimes.

1948 – The United Nations General assembly adopted the **Genocide Convention**, using a legal term devised by Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1944, based on his study of the Armenian massacres of 1915-16.

The year 1948 and onward saw many key moments in history that were beyond the formative years of the Depression Babies. Thus the Cold War, NATO, the Berlin Blockade, Korea, Viet Nam, Hungary, Women's Lib, Civil rights, etc., are not included above.

Feature image: migrant mother by [Dorothea Lange](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

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