

Surprise—rain fell in torrents on Dec. 24, 1966

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Christmases previously. Norman Hacking shared his memories of a Christmas spent on the bridge of a corvette off the north of Ireland; the ship had gone out in a “howling gale” to rendezvous with a convoy.

Radio was still the medium that most Vancouverites turned to for news and entertainment. The newspaper’s “Around Your Radio Dial” listings included *Amos ‘n’ Andy*, *Superman* and *Big Town*, Christmas carols, the CBC news, and shows by Bob Hope and Red Skelton.

A DECADE LATER, Vancouver-based radio stations took out half-page ads in the Christmas Eve edition of the newspaper. C-Fun offered Christmas shows, while CKLG billed itself as airing “happy, lively melodies” that were “not jazzy, never soggy, just bright familiar tunes.”

Radio would soon lose ground, however, to a new entertainment medium: television.

A Dec. 24, 1956 *Vancouver Daily Province* article on Christmas shopping noted that sales of television sets were down, compared to last year’s “virgin market.” But the “On Your Screen Tonight” listings elsewhere in the newspaper regaled TV viewers with a whopping five channels’ worth of shows: *Burns and Allen*, *Robin Hood* and *The Mickey Mouse Club*. Christmas fare included a broadcast of midnight mass and the movie *The Miracle on 34th Street*.

One of the big gift items that Christmas was men’s electric shavers. Fathers probably had more of an eye, however, for the 1956 Chevrolet, which came complete with heater, defroster, signals and a free “custom de luxe push button installed radio”—all for just \$2,085 from the dealership Dueck on Broadway.

Elsewhere in the world, the newspaper reported, war in the Middle East had been averted by the pullout of British and French forces from the Suez. In Europe, Austrian border police were dealing with 751 Hungarian refugees and one “armed Russian tank soldier” who trudged across



Sanitary Market butcher shop at 2513 Main St. offered fowl and pigs for the Christmas dinner of 1918.

Dominion Photo Company Vancouver Public Library 20633

the snowy border, seeking asylum. The Hungarians, refugees from the failed revolution, were fed a Christmas dinner.

CHRISTMAS 1966 arrived in torrents of rain that saw the “crunch of buckling fenders” mingle with the “jingle of cash registers.” The *Vancouver Daily Province* of Dec. 24, 1956 reported a rash of minor traffic accidents as “Christmas shoppers jammed the streets, crammed the sidewalks and packed the parking lots as they made their last-minute rounds.”

Over in Southeast Asia, Christmas arrived with the chatter of machine guns and the thump of bombs. The Americans declared a 48-hour Christmas truce—one their Viet Cong enemies chose to ignore. Perhaps it was because, just prior to the truce, American B52 bombers had dumped a load on communist North Vietnam, or because U.S. troops had battled the Viet Cong “almost until the hour of the truce.”

In Surrey, B.C. Penitentiary guard Frank Newton experienced a similarly brutal Christmas. A present addressed to him turned out to be a bomb. When it exploded,

he lost both his hands. His 10-year-old son Norman was critically injured.

Vancouver Police, meanwhile, took aim at “lunch hour drinkers” with the city’s first daytime roadblock. Despite stopping 1,800 vehicles on Dec. 23, police made only one impaired driving arrest.

That evening’s roadblocks were more successful, with a dozen drivers arrested by midnight.

On Vancouver’s “skid road,” the Salvation Army’s Harbour Light Mission on East Cordova offered holiday dinners. According to the *Vancouver Sun* of Dec. 24, 1966, these were attracting some unusual attendees: beatniks.

“The whole face of the street is changing,” Major William Leslie was quoted as saying. “There are a lot of beatniks turning up at our services. They have beards and long hair and leather jackets, but they’re well behaved.”

BY THE TIME OF the Christmas Eve edition of 1976, the first glimmers of environmental awareness could be seen. Stories from the *Vancouver Sun* of

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