

July 1969

By Tom Bodle

July, 1969 greeted us with the 194th celebration of the independence of the United States. On a hot, humid Friday in northeast Ohio neighborhoods and parks were treated to parades, picnics and community activities. Along the shoreline of Lake Erie tens of thousands gathered on the beaches, cliffs and in their boats to view the "Festival of Freedom" fireworks at Cleveland's Edgewater beach, as well as fireworks displays at Lakewood Park and other cities.

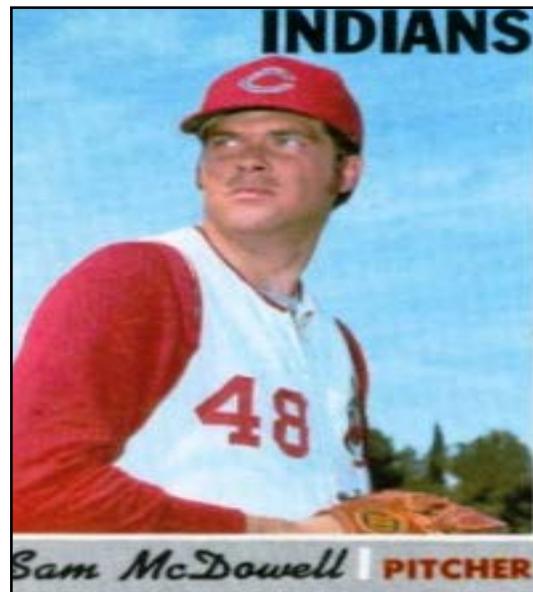


Surrounding St. Joes on the east side, the sounds of holiday fun were heard from Utopia Beach to Neff Rd. Park. At dusk, nature had other plans. Storms along a cold front kicked up over Lake Erie, but the emergency broadcast system failed to send out warnings. Tens of thousands of revelers were sent into a frenzy as they tried to dodge the storm. Winds at times reaching 100 mph tossed boats around which were anchored to view the fireworks, dashing many into the rocks along the shore. The storm cut a swath almost 200 miles wide from Erie, Pa. to Toledo, with Cleveland in the center. In the aftermath 42 people died, 5000 trees were felled, flooding damaged homes and fields and almost 250,000 people lost power across northern Ohio. Fortunately, there was minimal damage at St. Joes, although the cliffs on the lakefront took a beating from storm damage and hundreds of Viking families dealt with flooding and downed trees at their homes.



Several major world news items in July of 1969 featured the ongoing troubles in Northern Ireland as the British government clashed with the IRA. Derry in particular was the center of serious rioting. The United States began to withdraw troops from Vietnam after years of increasing forces.

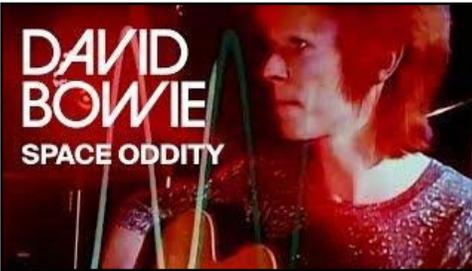
The mid-summer baseball classic, held at Washington's RFK Stadium, had the National League out scoring the American League 9-3. "Sudden" Sam McDowell was the lone Cleveland Indian all-star.





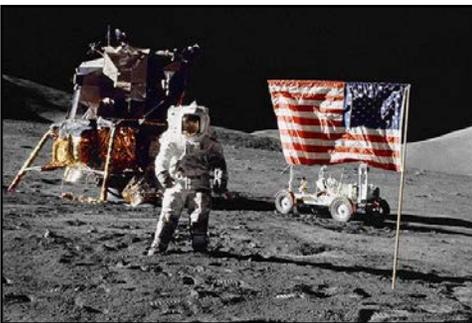
What was to become a pop movie classic premiered July 14th. “Easy Rider” featuring Peter Fonda and Jack Nicholson became an iconic movie representing the counter-culture of the “60’s.”

Three major music festivals created national entertainment attention as all three approached numbers of nearly 100,000. The Newport Jazz Festival and Pops festivals in Seattle and Atlanta, all held in July, were just a prelude to a major August festival yet to come.



On July 11th, British rocker David Bowie released his iconic album “Space Oddity”. Appropriately, this became a musical introduction to the hallmark event of our lifetime, the landing of men on the moon.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy set a goal and a promise that the United States would land a man on the moon by the end of the decade. In spite of his assassination, the Vietnam War and civil strife in the decade, the promise was fulfilled. On July 20, 1969 Neil Armstrong stepped on the lunar surface and declared “this is one step for man and a giant leap for mankind.”



The halls of the Viking Village were busy in July of ‘69. Hundreds of students were taking a variety of honors, remedial and elective courses. Mr. Roger Lancaster offered an elective literature class which included Tolkien’s “The Hobbit” and there was also Mr. Srp’s typing class to teach the “hunt and peck” typists the right way. Mr. John McMahon’s Drama Club enacted the hit play “The Fantasticks” starring Jim Kubala which dodged the storm to open July 5th, followed by four other performances.



FANTASTICKS — from left to right is Frank Deatsch, as one father, Elaine Bour as Louise Shaw as the mate, Jim Kubala as Matt and Jim Dourghty as the other father.

As July passed in 1969 we were all imprinted by two monumental memories, the “storm of the decade” and the “I know exactly where I was at” memory of the lunar landing.

We were also looking ahead to create our own imprint at St. Joes as our senior year was less than a month away.

