

Daly City Library & Recreation Services
Active Adult/Senior Services
presents



Current Events with Frank Damon

Doelger Senior Center has been fortunate to have Frank Damon leading both our Current Events and History discussion groups for the last 6 years. During this time of physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank is sharing his current events discussion topics online. Starting on Monday, January 4, 2021 at 1:30 pm Frank will offer Current Events discussion groups each Monday on ZOOM.

Daly City Active Adult/Senior Services invites you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Current Events with Frank Damon

Time: 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm every Monday

Join Zoom meeting with following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87222786510?pwd=d0VucFhGYzhMMXVhSUNJTmdFWDNwdz09>

Meeting ID: 872 2278 6510

Passcode: 724368

Frank received his BA degree from the University of San Francisco with a dual major in Political Science and American History. He also earned his MA in Political Science and teaching credentials at USF. Over the course of his career, Frank taught in the San Mateo Union High School District and at Marin Catholic High School, Terra Nova High School, Golden Gate University, College of San Mateo, Skyline College and Canada College.

If you are interested in joining *Current Events with Frank Damon*, please go to www.dalycityseniors.org/current-events or contact Frank directly at frankdamon@my.smccd.edu.

Man in the News

He is a 53-year-old Democratic politician from California. He has served as the state's governor since 2019. He was born in San Francisco. After college, he became a successful businessman. He was elected to two terms as the mayor of San Francisco, and then served as the lieutenant governor of California for eight years. On September 14th, he faces a recall election. The petition — one of seven efforts to remove him from office — was started by state Republicans, on the basis of California's problems with homelessness, high taxes, and water rationing. The recall ballot asks whether or not he should be recalled, and (if so) who should replace him. If more than half of the ballots say "yes," then the new governor will be whichever one of the 46 replacement candidates gets the most votes.

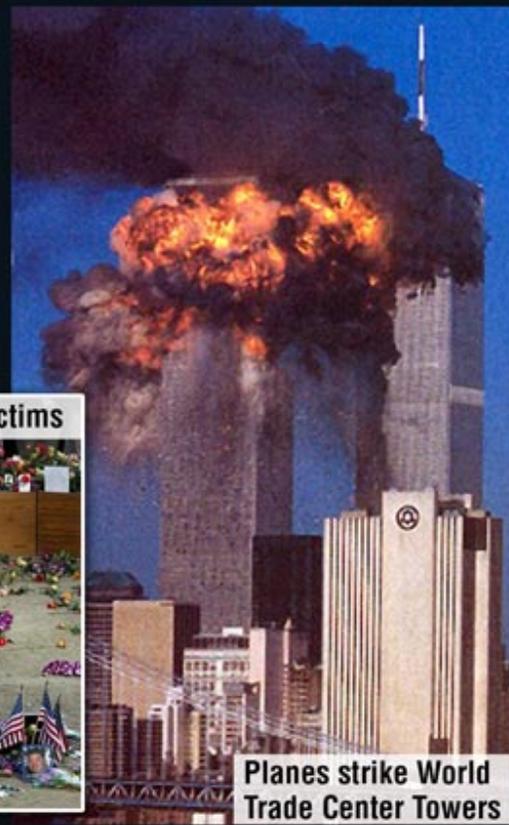


Who am I? (Gavin Newsom.)

The 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks

Twenty years ago this week, an event took place that changed the U.S. and the world forever. Nineteen terrorists, most of whom were from Saudi Arabia, hijacked four U.S. commercial airliners on Tuesday, September 11th, 2001. Many Americans watching morning news shows saw a scene that seemed unreal: two commercial airliners crashing into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, 18 minutes apart. Live footage showed the 110-story towers, the workplace of many thousands of people, burn and crumble. A third plane crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The fourth plane crashed into a field in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. From flight recordings, we know that some passengers fought back against the hijackers, who crashed the plane rather than lose control. Some people think the hijackers intended to crash that plane into the U.S. Capitol. Crews spent more than a year combing through the wreckage in New York City, termed "Ground Zero," and the other sites. In the end, it was determined that nearly 3,000 people, from several dozen countries, were killed. This number includes more than 400 first responders. It was by far the worst terrorist incident on American soil. It was hard for people to grasp that 19 terrorists could do so much damage to the most powerful country in the world.

The 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks



Planes strike World Trade Center Towers

Soon after 9/11, an extremist group called al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attacks. Al-Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden, were based in Afghanistan, sheltered by another extreme Islamist group that had seized control of the country. (The Taliban.) On September 20th, President George W. Bush declared a global “War on Terror.” Do you think a “war on terror” can ever be won? Bush issued an ultimatum to the Taliban: turn over bin Laden or face an invasion. When the group did not comply, the U.S. and other countries invaded Afghanistan. This coalition overthrew the Taliban’s government and destroyed al-Qaeda’s network there. Who knows the ultimate fate of bin Laden? (He remained at large until he was killed at the orders of the Obama administration in May, 2011 in Pakistan.)

While still fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, the White House turned its attention to Iraq. Officials in the Bush administration claimed that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was actively aiding Al-Qaeda. They also said Hussein had “weapons of mass destruction.” What does this phrase mean? (Nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons that could kill thousands of people.)

In 2003, the U.S. and several other countries invaded Iraq and overthrew Hussein. Did we find links to Al Qaeda or any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? (No.) Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis died in the eight years of this war. The war also made Iraq very unstable, which allowed terrorist groups such as the Islamic State, or ISIS, to gain a foothold there.



The National September 11 Memorial & Museum was built to commemorate the attacks and honor the victims. It is located in New York City at the World Trade Center site. The walls around the memorial contain the names of all the victims of the attacks. While most U.S. troops left Iraq in 2011, the War in Afghanistan lasted for nearly 20 years. What happened when the U.S. pulled out its troops this summer? (Taliban fighters quickly regained control of the country.) More than 8,000 U.S. military personnel died in Iraq and Afghanistan, and many more suffered serious long-term injuries. The wars also had a huge financial cost for the U.S. From the words here, how much will they end up costing? (More than \$6.5 trillion.) While the government has financed previous wars either through war bonds or tax increases, nothing similar was done for the recent wars. In fact, the Bush administration and Congress passed large tax cuts at the time, vastly increasing the national debt. These attacks also put a renewed focus on security in the U.S. The government created the Department of Homeland Security to deal with all threats to the U.S. It also pushed the USA Patriot Act through Congress six weeks after September 11th. This series of laws gave the federal government much more power to spy on American citizens' emails and phone calls without warrants. Many people saw these powers as a violation of basic privacy rights under the Constitution. Congress let the Patriot Act expire in December of 2020.

How did 9/11 change the U.S.?

U.S. soldiers fighting the Taliban



Photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Cameron Boyd, public domain



National September 11 Memorial in New York City

Photo: NormanB, CCA-SA-Lic. 3.0

- More than 8,000 U.S. troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Total cost of wars: \$6.5 trillion
- Department of Homeland Security created

Many Afghans flee the country after Taliban takeover

After 20 years of fighting in Afghanistan, the U.S. announced it would withdraw its troops by August 31st, 2021. After the withdrawal began, Taliban forces took control of cities across Afghanistan, finally reaching the capital, Kabul, on August 15th. The Taliban overtook Kabul quickly, leaving thousands of Afghans and Americans scrambling to evacuate. For people trying to flee, the only route out was Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport. The scene at the airport became chaotic with thousands of Afghan men, women, and children desperately trying to get on a plane out of the country.

Tragically, on August 26th, terrorists attacked one of the gates at the Kabul airport, killing 170 people, including 13 U.S. military members. Between August 14th and 25th, the U.S. and other countries helped 122,000 people, including 5,000 Americans, evacuate from Afghanistan. Many of the Afghans were people who had worked for the U.S. during the war. Sadly, thousands of Afghans who aided the U.S. were not evacuated by the August 31st deadline. However, the U.S. and many other countries are still working to help more Afghans escape the country. The Afghans who were evacuated are now refugees who will be resettled in many different countries around the world, including the U.S. and Canada.

Many Afghans flee the country after Taliban takeover



“We haven’t been able to bring everybody out and that has been heartbreaking. There have been some very challenging judgments that have had to be made on the ground.”

—U.S. General Nick Carter.

Tommy Marcus is a 26-year-old with a popular Instagram page. Going by the name “Quentin Quarantino,” Marcus posts memes and videos about politics and life during the COVID-19 pandemic. What is a meme? (A funny image or video that is copied, sometimes changed, and spread across the internet.) Recently, after witnessing the chaotic aftermath of the U.S leaving Afghanistan, Marcus decided he wanted to use his platform to help people. Many Afghan people were attempting to flee their homes before the Taliban took total control of the country. Marcus created a GoFundMe page and shared it with his more than 800,000 followers. GoFundMe is a website where users can raise money for charitable causes. Marcus originally set a goal of \$550,000. He planned to use this money to help send two or three flights to Kabul to get Afghan refugees out of the country. Marcus’s fundraiser was met with overwhelming support. He was able to raise more than \$6 million in less than two days, making his campaign one of the largest in GoFundMe history. Can someone read the quote here? Why do you think so many Americans are invested in this cause? Marcus didn’t have experience planning evacuation flights in other countries, so he enlisted several non-profit groups and former military members to help him. Marcus says that any money that didn’t go to emergency flights will be donated to the International Women’s Media Foundation, a nonprofit group that will help refugees settle in other countries.

Instagrammer raised millions for Afghan refugees



“The outpouring of support from everyday Americans is a signal that there are activated people invested in things like this happening, and they’re paying attention.”

—Becca Heller, executive director of the International Refugee Assistance Project

New study finds giraffes are as social as chimps and elephants

Recently, researchers at the University of Bristol in England made some amazing discoveries about the social lives of giraffes. Scientists have known for a long time that certain animals like chimpanzees and elephants have complex social behaviors. But giraffes have largely been considered solitary animals, that is, until now.

In August, the U.K. researchers published a paper combining the findings of hundreds of giraffe studies. The paper shows that giraffes have many complicated and subtle social behaviors. For example, some female giraffes can form bonds that last many years. Mother giraffes also create “daycares” with other giraffe mothers. These groups allow the giraffes to share the responsibility of feeding and protecting young giraffes. The researchers also found that some giraffes have specific friends that they prefer to eat meals with. Scientists believe that giraffes haven’t been considered social in the past because the animals communicate in ways that are hard for humans to see and understand. A recent study found that giraffes use low-frequency humming sounds to communicate at night, although experts still aren’t sure what purpose these sounds serve. Unfortunately, the giraffe population in Africa has been under threat for decades. Giraffes are currently listed as vulnerable to extinction by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The giraffe population has fallen by 40 percent over the last 30 years.

New study finds giraffes are as social as chimps and elephants



Photo: Charles J. Sharp, CC BY-SA 4.0



“I was really surprised to see that all the scientific books said that [giraffes] were completely non-social. I thought, ‘Well, hang on. That’s not what I see at all.’”

—Dr. Zoe Muller, wildlife biologist
at the University of Bristol.

Giraffes mainly live in Africa's dry woodlands and savannas. Giraffes are ruminants, like cows, sheep, and camels. What are the characteristics of ruminants? (They have hooves and chew cud, or partially digested, regurgitated food.) Giraffes are the tallest living land animal. Male giraffes are often 20 feet tall and weigh 3,000 pounds. Adults eat about 75 pounds of vegetation every day. Giraffes prefer to eat the leaves and twigs of acacia trees. To do this, they spend from 16 to 20 hours a day standing and walking, and sleep no more than two hours a day. Like most mammals, including humans, giraffes have seven bones in their necks. In giraffes, these bones are much longer, and supported by strong neck muscles. Giraffes have extra-large lungs to draw air through their large windpipes, and large, powerful hearts. A giraffe's heart can weigh more than 20 pounds and measure two feet across. Still, their necks aren't long enough to reach the ground easily. Fortunately, they can go days without drinking, because they get most of the water they need from the leaves they eat. Giraffes protect their young from predators by traveling in herds. How do you think giraffes fight off predators? (With their powerful leg-kick, which can kill a lion.) Their legs are so powerful that giraffes can reach speeds up to 35 miles per hour. Each giraffe sports a different pattern of spots, and no two individuals share the same pattern.



 Current giraffe populations



Giraffe facts:

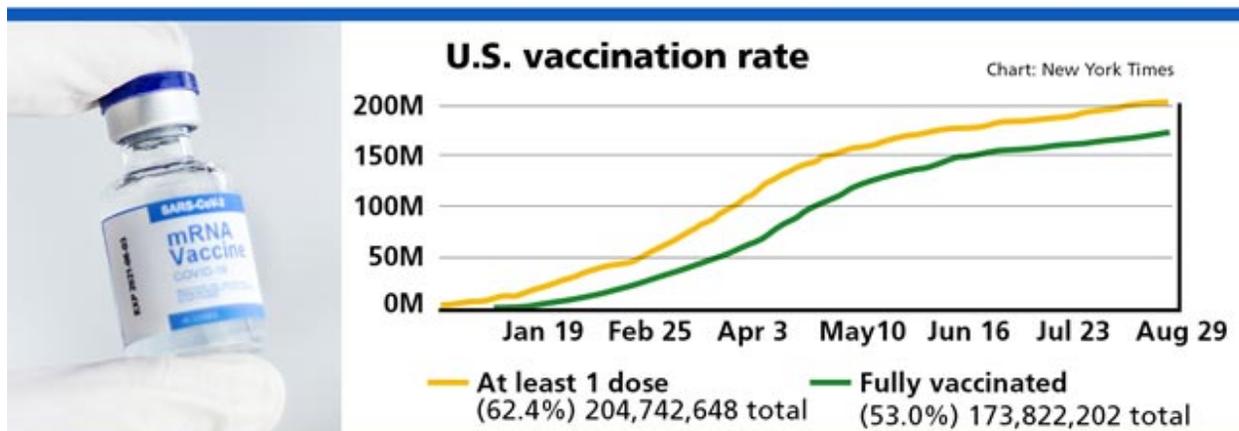
- Giraffes are the tallest living land animals.
- Giraffes eat 75 pounds of food every day.
- Giraffes can reach speeds up to 35 mph.
- No two giraffes have the exact same spot patterns.

FDA approves COVID vaccine as Delta variant spreads

On August 23rd, the Federal Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, announced that it had fully approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID19 vaccine. In December of last year, the FDA gave both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines emergency use authorization. This allowed public health groups to begin vaccinating people in early 2021. Both vaccines went through vigorous testing before being approved for emergency use. But the FDA needed to do more testing before granting full approval. The FDA hopes that the approval will encourage more people to get vaccinated. Why do you think the approval process took so long? (The FDA looks at hundreds of thousands of pages of data, while inspecting how vaccines are made. They also needed to study the long-term effects of the vaccines.)

Now that the vaccine has been approved, some organizations may require employees to be vaccinated. The U.S. Defense Department, for example, has announced a vaccine mandate. What does mandate mean? (A command to act in a certain way on a public issue.) And New York City announced that it would require all public school teachers to be vaccinated. Should businesses and government agencies require vaccinations? Why or why not? Pfizer is now asking the FDA to approve a booster shot for those who have already been vaccinated, as the immune response lessens over time. Boosters could help improve immunity against the more contagious Delta variant.

FDA approves COVID vaccine as Delta variant spreads



"If you are one of the millions of Americans who said they will not get the shot until it has full and final approval of the FDA, it has now happened. The moment you've been waiting for is here."

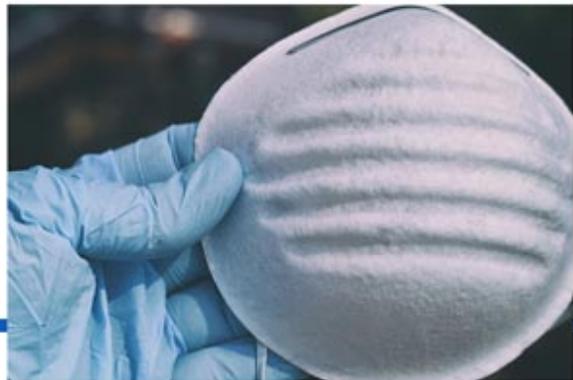
—President Joe Biden

Last year, scientists identified a new strain of the COVID-19 virus in India. This strain is a mutation of the COVID-19 virus called the Delta variant. As viruses spread, they sometimes change, or mutate. What is a mutation? (A change in the DNA structure of a cell.) In the case of COVID19, these mutations have made the virus more contagious. Since the Delta variant was discovered, it has spread across the world and is now the dominant strain of COVID in the U.S. From the graph, what percent of COVID cases were caused by the Delta variant in mid-July? (83.2%.)

Over the summer, the Delta variant spread rapidly across the southern U.S. States like Florida and Mississippi experienced case numbers as high as when COVID-19 first arrived in the U.S. At one point, Florida alone was responsible for 20 percent of all U.S. cases. Experts believe case numbers will soon begin to decrease in the South, but they expect new surges in Midwest states in September and October.

In response to the spreading variant, the Centers for Disease Control, or CDC, recently updated its mask recommendation. Earlier this year, the CDC said vaccinated people could gather indoors without masks, but now the agency has recommended that even vaccinated people continue to wear masks inside. Many states and cities around the country have reinstated their previously mask mandates.

Mask mandates return as Delta variant spreads.



Percentage of U.S. COVID cases caused by Delta variant

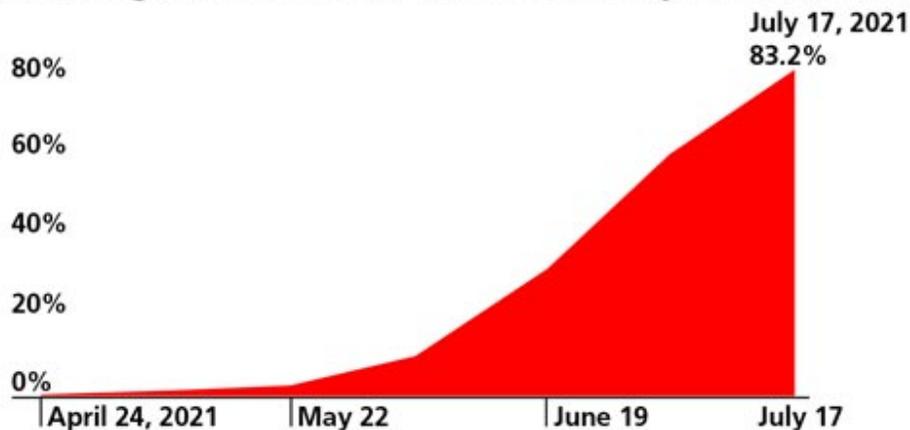


Chart: Fortune

Country of the Week: Germany

_____ Germany borders nine other European countries. Can you name any? (Poland, France, Austria, Belgium, and others.) It also borders two major bodies of water that are part of the Atlantic Ocean: the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. Tourists flock to Germany to see beautiful mountains and valleys, as shown here, as well as historic castles and other sites. Tourists also visit Germany's second largest city, Hamburg, and its capital and largest city, Berlin, to experience the rich culture, architecture, and famous food of Germany. Germany is about the size of New Mexico, but more than 82 million people live there. Germany has the world's fifth-largest economy, and leads the world in exports of cars, electronics, industrial equipment, and pharmaceuticals. It is also a leader in both coal mining AND solar and wind power. Germans enjoy a high standard of living. The government provides benefits that include high unemployment pay, universal healthcare, and inexpensive college tuition. Would you like to see the U.S. offer such benefits? Angela Merkel has been Germany's chancellor since 2005. She is often seen as the unofficial leader of the European Union due to her power and influence. She has also been a bold leader during Europe's refugee crisis, welcoming more than one million people from the Middle East and Africa into Germany. How will this help Germany's economy? (It provides a younger workforce for a country with an aging population.) Germany is having an election on September 26th; however Merkel has chosen not to run again.



Germany was once divided into locally ruled states. These states shared a common language and a vibrant culture, which produced many of the world's greatest authors, philosophers, and composers, including Ludwig van Beethoven. How many other famous Germans can you name?

In 1871, Germany became one nation. But expansion of the empire helped trigger World War One. Germany's loss in that war devastated its economy, helping a militant party to take power. What was it called, and what was its ideology? (The National Socialist German Workers' Party, or the Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, believed that white non-Jewish Germans were genetically superior to any other people on Earth.) The Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, setting off World War Two. They also started what later came to be called the Holocaust, during which they murdered ten million people, including six million Jews.

In 1945, the Allied Forces finally defeated the Nazis and divided Germany into four zones. The Western powers soon turned over their zones to German leadership. The Soviet Union, however, kept East Germany. What did it do to keep East Berliners from escaping to the West? (It built the Berlin Wall in 1961.) In 1989, in the face of huge demonstrations in East Berlin, the wall was brought down. East and West Germany formally reunited the next year. Today, Germany is one of the most tolerant and progressive countries in the world.



This Week in History

_____ On the first Monday in September, people in the United States observe the holiday known as Labor Day. Many people take advantage of the three-day weekend to get out of town, have a family gathering, or binge-watch their favorite shows. But amid all the fun, it is important to remember that Labor Day honors working people, and the labor unions that represent them. What is a labor union, and what does it do? (It is an organization of workers in a certain profession that advocates for better wages and safer working conditions.)

For many years, U.S. employers had all the power over their workers. They could hire or fire anyone for any reason, or no reason at all. Many employers expected staff to work six days a week, at least ten hours per day, in often-unsafe conditions. There were no laws preventing companies from hiring children for certain jobs. And wages, of course, were completely up to each individual business owner. If a worker didn't like their work situation, they had two choices: quit and look for something else, or keep their jobs by keeping their mouths shut. Should workers have a say in their own work conditions? Why or why not?

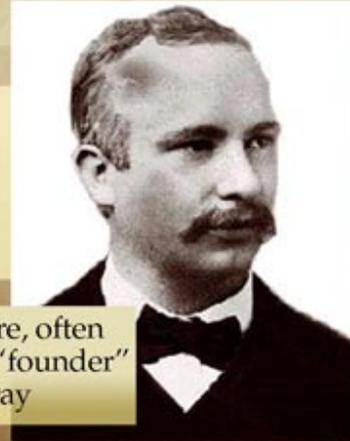


The first Monday in September: **Labor Day**

The U.S. labor movement helped create:

- Child labor laws
- Eight-hour workday
- Five-day work week
- Minimum wage
- Safety regulations
- and many more features of modern life

P.J. McGuire, often called the "founder" of Labor Day



"Breaker boys," Pennsylvania, 1911

In 1768, some tailors in New York became frustrated at having their wages cut. They got together and decided to stop working until the problem was fixed. What is this kind of action called? (A strike.) This was the first strike in the Americas. It prompted skilled workers in some

other industries to organize themselves into unions. But union membership really started to grow with the rise of factories after the Civil War.

Some business owners, threatened by the growing power of workers, fired any worker who tried to organize a union. Rich business people talked politicians into passing laws against strikes and other activities. These owners could then call the police — and their own private security forces — on their own workers. Some of these situations led to violent clashes, with deaths and injuries on both sides. How would you feel about this if you were a worker? How do you think owners felt about this?

As union membership grew, smaller unions started to join together to form larger organizations. The man shown here, P.J. McGuire, was a vice president of the biggest unions, the American Federation of Labor. In 1882, McGuire came up with the idea of a day to honor all workers, as well as the unions that represented them. He chose the first Monday of September because it was halfway between two other important holidays. What do you think these holidays are? (The Fourth of July and Thanksgiving.) This idea soon spread to states across the country before Congress made Labor Day an official federal holiday in 1894. In the 1930s, labor unions were able to win workplace improvements that we now take for granted. Some of these improvements are listed above. These fights helped workers to enjoy better and safer work conditions, better wages, and better lives.

Unions also battled for years to pass laws regulating child labor. What would it be like to work in dangerous conditions as a child, like the mine workers shown above? After several tries, Congress finally passed the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938. This law restricted the kind of jobs that could be done by people under the age of 16, as well as the number of hours they could work. Despite these gains, however, the number of Americans who belong to unions has declined from more than 30 percent in 1955 to about ten percent today.

Remembering When...

In the mid-1960s, many things were going on in the world. Can you think of some of them? (The Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, the Cold War, and many more.) Amid all this disruption, a new TV show offered us the possibility of hope and harmony — as well as lots of outer space action. And while it did not last very long at the time, this program started one of the most successful franchises of all time.

Let's talk about "Star Trek," which premiered 55 years ago this week on September 8, 1966. A TV writer named Gene Roddenberry created the original version of "Star Trek" in 1964. He approached several studios with his idea of a show about the crew of a spaceship called the U.S.S. Enterprise. This ship had a very loose mission statement. Finally, Roddenberry signed a deal with NBC and Desilu Studios. Who were the founders of Desilu Studios? (Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz.)

Remember When . . .
STAR TREK

The U.S.S. Enterprise

Credit: NASA, public domain

Gene Roddenberry, creator of "Star Trek"

Cast of original series

"Space: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds. To seek out new life and new civilizations. To boldly go where no man has gone before!"

“Star Trek” had two main characters. William Shatner played Captain James Tiberius Kirk, the commander of the Enterprise. Kirk’s brash and humanistic approach was balanced by the logical half-Vulcan known only as Spock, played by Leonard Nimoy. Other important characters included Chief Engineer Montgomery Scott, Dr. Leonard McCoy, and Nurse Christine Chapel. In an unusual move for the time, Roddenberry insisted on an ethnically diverse cast. George Takei played the Japanese-American helmsman, Mr. Sulu; Nichelle Nichols played Communications Officer Uhura from the United States of Africa; the Enterprise’s navigator was a Russian named Pavel Chekhov. Does it make sense that a future spaceship crew would be integrated in this way? Why do you think Roddenberry insisted on this?

Most episodes of “Star Trek” had a similar structure. The Enterprise would hear of an important situation on a nearby planet. They would “beam down” to the planet’s surface to encounter the aliens living there. What did “beaming down” mean? (It was a fictional way to travel, in which people’s atoms were sent through space and reassembled somewhere else.) There, the crew would try to solve problems, which often involved keeping themselves alive as well. Spock would try to look at situations logically, often infuriating the human characters with his lack of emotion. And if any of the aliens were female, Captain Kirk would often fall in love with them.

Science fiction fans loved this show immediately. Another early supporter was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who loved the positive image of Lieutenant Uhura. Can you see why this would have been inspirational to him? But overall ratings were never very strong, and “Star Trek ” was cancelled in 1969 after its third season. However, this was far from the end of the story. The show became even more popular once it went into syndication, winning new fans with its hopeful and exciting view of the future. An animated series did well, as did the first “Star Trek ” film in 1979. Three more movies proved the popularity of the original idea. In 1987, a new series called “Star Trek: The Next Generation” introduced the world to a new captain, the dashing Jean-Luc Picard, played by Patrick Stewart. Did you ever watch this show, which ran twice as long as the original series?

There have been several other “Star Trek” shows since then, and new episodes are still being made. The movie franchise was rebooted in 2009, making millions of dollars with three new “Star Trek” films.