

An invasion that would change the world

Kathy Hedberg/Lewiston Tribune

The German Congregational Church my family attended in Paul, Idaho, held two services every Sunday - one in English, the other in German.

Normally we went to the later English service, but occasionally circumstances forced us to sit through the German worship, which was OK with me. I didn't speak German, so not understanding the language gave me a good excuse to hunker down in the hard wooden pew and turn my attention to the Nancy Drew mystery I had tucked inside the hymnal.

Mine was not a particularly religious family, and we had no strong allegiance to any denomination. My mother chose the churches we went to based on how well she liked the minister. Dad said he judged a church on the quality of the potlucks and, oh my, those German ladies certainly could cook.

The Rev. Huber was a nice guy - about my parents' age, but was fervent for the Lord. A mild-mannered minister most of the time, once in the pulpit he could catch fire, and this Sunday - Feb. 9, 1964 - that's what was happening.

I looked up from my Nancy Drew novel to watch the Rev. Huber, red in the face, waving his arms and shouting something in German - then lapsing into English - about an invasion.

That was scary. We'd done Cold War drills in school. Were the Soviets on the way, I wondered?

I caught something about some insects and then a final word in English: "Don't let your young people watch this," he exclaimed.

My parents were subdued on the way home, and when I asked them what the sermon was about, they said something about some British rock 'n' roll band on the "Ed Sullivan Show" that night.

I was not quite 10 and more interested in baseball than pop culture, so I hadn't heard of the Beatles. As I think back, I realize I was lucky that my parents were not overly religious; otherwise I might have missed that moment when Ed Sullivan introduced the Beatles to 73 million Americans and the British invasion began.

I watched in amazement as the teenage girls in the audience went wild, screaming, crying, flinging their arms into the air. I couldn't quite understand the frenzy, but the music was good. Interesting to hear singers interpose "Yeah, yeah, yeah," as part of the lyrics. Not good grammar, but somehow it made me want to dance.

When it was over, my dad shrugged and went outside to do his chores. Mom picked up her crocheting and I went back to my Nancy Drew mystery.

There are moments in a person's life when you can tell immediately it's going to be something you'll never forget. Only a few months earlier, the assassination of President Kennedy was one of those moments - a time when time stopped.

Other times, it takes awhile before the reality sinks in that you've witnessed something historic. I went to bed that night wondering why the Rev. Huber had thought a bunch of long-haired boys singing a few catchy tunes was going to be the ruination of the younger generation.

Hedberg may be contacted at kathyhedberg@gmail.com or (208) 983-2326.