



### 1968 REMEMBERED

by Sandra McCleaster RRT

**R**ewind four decades: 1968 was a very tough year in modern American history. The Vietnam War captured the headlines. It was a war the United States actually believed it was winning until the North Vietnamese overran our southern allies in a relentless three-week attack that became the Tet Offensive. In response, President Lyndon Johnson extended an olive branch to the North Vietnamese and backed out of American politics forever more.

Martin Luther King had been assassinated in April, leading to race riots in hundreds of American cities. Two months later, Bobby Kennedy, then a New York state senator, was cut down by an assassin's bullet in Los Angeles. To put it mildly, the nation was jolted to its very core.

It seemed that riots and assassinations were the major events of a country divided and torn. And as if all of this turmoil wasn't bad enough, we were living with an in-your-face drug culture that put being stoned on LSD and pot as being all about mind enhancement and personal expression.

Any look-back to the year 1968 and you'll see that institutions of higher education were at the vanguard. The combined forces of war, race and power began to define college students, to the extent that their campuses became the front lines of battle. Protests quickly became the order of the day, prompting the media to coin the term "Student Power." Sit-ins obscured the day-to-day activities of academia. (A sit-in is described as a direct action that involves a group nonviolently occupying an area until being physically evicted.) And sit students did, as well as march, demonstrate, and otherwise occupy college administration buildings.

Yes, dissent for the Vietnam War dominated, but college students were also rallying for racial equality, feminism, and a ban on nuclear weapons. (The anti-nuclear movement of the 60s is what actually planted the seeds for today's ecological concerns.)

During 1968 New York University was experiencing some of the country's most volatile student activism. The Students for a Democratic Society (the SDS), a New Left student activist organization, sponsored the International Student-Faculty strike to "Bring Troops Home, End the Draft and Racial Oppression." This event was one full week of anti-war protests and discussions, culminating in a boycott of classes and a Saturday march down New York City's famed 5th Avenue. In February, students from Harvard,

Radcliff and Boston University held a four day hunger strike to protest the war. A few weeks later, students at Columbia University protested the school's alleged racist ways. Three school officials were taken hostage for 24 hours. This was just one of a number of Columbia protests that year.

Also during this time, a well-organized black student movement proactively convened. The goal was to form activist organizations which they believed would effect changes in "curricula, politics and structures." In one infamous incident, a crowd of black students gathered on the South Carolina State University campus to protest segregation at the city's bowling alley. Students lit a bonfire on a street in front of the campus. Tensions escalated and police officers opened fire into the crowd. By the time it was over, three students were dead and twenty-seven were wounded. A month later, students in South Carolina organized a sit-in at a local lunch counter that ultimately spread to fifteen cities.

The wave of rebellion that rocked college campuses in 1968 wasn't just limited to the United States, but was in fact, occurring throughout the world. In Paris for instance, student discontent erupted in student strikes and Italian student protests closed the University of Rome for twelve days. Japanese students acted out against the presence of the military in Japan because of the war.

Here on the home front, the coming-of-age Baby Boomers were shamelessly bucking the pristine social order that had grown out of the post World War II 1950s. They hated the status quo and distrusted authority. "Don't trust anyone over 30" became their rallying cry. Never before or since has there been such a generation gap.

It's easy to use 1968 as a benchmark. Obvious comparisons can be made between the events of '68 and those of today. It's been forty years and we're again fighting a very unpopular war and plodding through an unpopular presidency. A drug culture continues to plague us and sadly, racism remains alive and well in our inner cities.

Certainly students are still concerned and proactive. Many oppose the war in Iraq, and many champion social change on the home front. But not in ways that are quite so confrontational. Modern day students aren't taking over their college's administrative offices and unless I'm missing something, the radical groups like the 60s Students for a Democratic Society aren't making a mark on college campuses today. In fact, politically active groups don't appear to have any noticeable presence on college life nowadays.

**In 1968, the nation was jolted to its very core and University students led the way**

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Several college civics groups tell us that today's college campuses tend more toward localized grassroots issues. Organized student groups are focused on volunteering and public service efforts. The Center for Research on Civic Learning recently released a study entitled "Millennials Talk Politics." (The Millennials are those young folk who were born after 1985). The study cites a growth in volunteer and public service efforts among today's college-aged youth and explains it as a desire by students to do service that yields timely and tangible results. Millennials have been dubbed the "quiet" generation noticeably less radical and less politically involved than were their predecessor groups.

1968 ultimately ended on an upswing when Apollo 8 circled the moon ten times. This event goes down in history as our country's premier success in space, a technological triumph that managed to pull us together as a nation, at least for that time being. But for those of us who lived through 1968... well, we'll surely never forget it and we still wonder how we managed to survive the tumult. During this 40th anniversary year, let us be grateful that we haven't seen its likes again.

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**MRI Safety...** *Continued from page 12*

- Have a specially trained staff person who is knowledgeable about the MRI environment accompany any patients, visitors and other staff who are not familiar with the MRI environment inside the MRI suite at all times.
- Annually, provide all medical and ancillary staff that may be expected to accompany patients to the MRI suite with safety education about the MRI environment and provide all staff and patients and their families with appropriate materials (e.g., guidelines, brochure, poster) that explain the potential for accidents and adverse events in the MRI environment.
- Only use equipment (e.g., fire extinguishers, oxygen cylinders, and physiologic monitors) that has been tested and approved for use during MRI scans.
- Never attempt to run a cardio-pulmonary arrest code or resuscitation within the MR magnet room itself.

The complete text of this Sentinel Event Alert, Issue 38, February 14, 2008, "Preventing accidents and injuries in the MRI Suite", is available on The Joint Commission's website at: [http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea\\_38.htm](http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea_38.htm)

This Sentinel Event Alert is the latest release in the Sentinel Event Alert series that The Joint Commission began in February 1998. The information contained in the Sentinel Event Alerts is compiled from information voluntarily reported to The Joint Commission. Healthcare organizations must implement the recommendations in the Sentinel Event Alert or reasonable alternatives. For more information regarding all Sentinel Event Alerts, visit the Joint Commission International Center for Patient Safety website at [www.jcipatientsafety.org](http://www.jcipatientsafety.org).

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