

## The year 1968

This special retrospective issue of the Helix Courier Limited Messenger newsletter covers the year 1968, the year in which Helix was founded.

We hope you have enjoyed this series as much as we have enjoyed preparing it for you.

### Some Interesting 1968 Factoids:

- A basic Canadian stamp cost .05 cents.
- The **1968 Stanley Cup Final** was a best-of-seven series between the Montreal Canadiens and the St. Louis Blues. The Canadiens would sweep the series in four-straight games, in the first Stanley Cup series after the NHL expansion to 12 teams.
- Pierre Elliott Trudeau becomes the Prime Minister of Canada April 1968.
- In London, Ontario, the following buildings were constructed:
  - Royal Bank Building, 383 Richmond Street
  - C.N.R. Concourse, 197 York Street
  - Office Building, 195 Dufferin Avenue
  - Sir Frederick Banting Secondary School.

### Canada's First Heart Transplant

On May 31, 1968, Albert Murphy of Chomedey, Quebec became the recipient of Canada's first heart transplant. The 59-year-old retired butcher had been suffering from a degenerative heart disease for 15 years. "He was very glad... and very courageous" reported his wife, Lebea.

### Top Songs of 1968

- 1 "Judy In Disguise" ... John Fred & His Playboy Band
- 2 "Green Tambourine" ... Lemon Pipers
- 3 "Love Is Blue" ... Paul Mauriat
- 4 "The Dock of the Bay" ... Otis Redding
- 5 "Honey" ... Bobby Goldsboro
- 6 "Tighten Up" ... Archie Bell and the Drells
- 7 "Mrs. Robinson" ... Simon and Garfunkel
- 8 "This Guy's in Love With You" ... Herb Alpert
- 9 "Grazing in the Grass" ... Hugh Masekela
- 10 "Hello, I Love You" ... The Doors

### Top Movies of 1968

- |                                |                      |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 The Graduate                 |                      |
| 2 Guess Who's Coming to Dinner |                      |
| 3 Gone With the Wind (reissue) |                      |
| 4 The Valley of the Dolls      |                      |
| 5 The Odd Couple               | 6 Planet of the Apes |
| 7 Rosemary's Baby              | 8 The Jungle Book    |
| 9 Yours, Mine and Ours         | 10 The Green Berets  |

## The Johnny and June London Connection:

In 1956, June Carter met Johnny Cash when they were both part of the Opry company. By the mid-1960s, they were performing together as a duo. Their relationship heated up in 1965 when the couple was in Las Vegas for a performance.

In late February, 1968, Johnny proposed to June while onstage in London, Ontario. They were married a week later.

### Block Parent History

At a time when the City of London was experiencing serious problems with molestations and murders of children, the National Council of Jewish Women, London Chapter, became aware of a program called "Block Parent", which was operating successfully in some parts of the United States.

With the solid support of the London Police Service and the two London School Boards, the National Council of Jewish Women, London Chapter, started a pilot project in five schools in the Fall of 1968. By 1970, all elementary school areas in London were protected by the Block Parent Program.

Police noticed a drop in crimes against children and reported that the Block Parent window signs were acting as a deterrent to other crimes in the neighbourhood as well. While the crime rate in London declined, reports of child-related crimes in surrounding communities increased. Consequently, the Block Parent Program spread to St. Thomas, Sarnia, Hamilton, Ottawa and other cities.

### 1968 Olympics

The Games of the Nineteenth Olympiad in Mexico City were among the most controversial ever held.

Staged at 7,349 feet above sea level, where the thin air was a major concern to athletes from many competing countries, the Mexico City Olympics were another chapter in a year buffeted by the Vietnam War, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, the Democratic Convention in Chicago, and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Ten days before the Olympics were scheduled to open on Oct. 12, over 300 Mexico City university students were killed by army troops when a campus protest turned into a riot. Still, the Games began on time and were free of discord until black Americans Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who finished 1-3 in the 200-meter run, bowed their heads and gave the Black Power salute during the national anthem as a protest against racism in the U.S.

Locally, In 1968, the Western Rowing Club was founded; several of its members participated very successfully in the Olympic trials that year, a first for Western. Many of these men remained at Western until the early 1970s, and established the purple and white's winning tradition in university circles.

# The 'X' Factor

It was September of 1968. I was in my second year at the University of Western Ontario. Lost in thought, I was walking across the lawn and up the hill leading to University College when I noticed a pretty girl coming down the hill towards me. I recognized her, having seen her a few times at the St. Catharines Collegiate Institute where I had attended high school. I didn't actually know her, but I knew her name. We passed each other, but neither of us said anything. I don't know if she even knew who I was. That chance meeting, however, was important to me. I'll explain why, a bit later.

In April of 1968, I had completed my first year at Western. Like thousands of other students, I looked for a summer job to help me pay my bills. Jobs were hard to find and I found myself driving a cab for an independent owner who had his vehicle on the U-Need-a-Cab fleet. The cab owner was an understanding and cooperative guy and he agreed to allow me to spend time every day away from the cab. Most weekdays, between the hours of 10am and 2pm, I sat in the waiting room of the offices of Isard, Robertson, Easson & Co., Ltd., a local stock brokerage firm at the time, and watched stock symbols and prices scroll by on an electronic display mounted on the wall. When something caught my attention, I would place a small buy order, usually under three hundred dollars. I rarely held any stock more than three days because the third day was settlement day when the stock purchase had to be paid for. I made enough money to supplement my meager income as a cabbie and somehow managed to survive.

When I did drive my cab, I noticed that calls would come in from local businesses which needed something delivered right away. There were no messenger companies in London at the time. Local delivery or cartage companies would typically pick up whatever businesses sent out one day and then deliver it the next. I couldn't imagine why a dedicated messenger company didn't exist, so decided to start one. I gave up my cabbie job. I called my brother who was just about to leave Ontario for a job in Alberta, and asked him if he wished to be my partner in a new enterprise. He said yes and agreed to come to London, from St. Catharines. He was eighteen. I had just turned a ripe old twenty-three, having taken several years off during my high school years before being admitted to Western.

My brother Alfred manned the telephone at our new company and I continued at Western, but my heart wasn't in it. I was bored and felt unchallenged but didn't want to drop out of school. My biggest concern as I was walking up that hill at Western in September was trying to find a suitable name for our new company. I had been calling it Pedde Deliveries but wanted something 'cool' and memorable instead.

I have always liked the letter X. Xerox came to mind. What a great name that was. If only I could come up with a name that had an 'X' in it . . .

As I watched the girl come down the hill towards me, I thought back to my years in St. Catharines and remembered the great times I had there. I remembered founding the Club Unicorn, a weekend nightclub for teenagers that I started at age 17. I remembered my band, The Continentals, and the many happy hours we had spent playing together. I was just a bit homesick. With my mind on St. Catharines, I returned my attention to the girl and tried to remember her name. What was it? Penny. That's it. Penny . . .

Penny Helix was her name. I had one of those moments when you get a chill and realize that something important had just happened. As soon as I said her name to myself, I thought of grade eleven physics and discussion of the double helix in DNA. I had a name for our new messenger company. Helix.

That was over forty-two years ago. Soon after that day, I decided to leave Western and to devote myself to my company. I bought out my brother Alfred's interest eventually and today, Helix Courier Limited still provides local messenger services and overnight courier services to hundreds of customers.

Penny Helix, if you are out there somewhere, I never said thanks for your part in the Helix saga. Thank you, Penny. I wish you well, wherever you are, and hope that life has been good to you. *Sieg Pedde, President, Helix Courier Limited*

