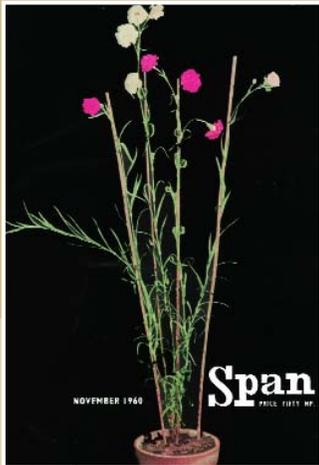


The first cover of SPAN.



President John F. Kennedy takes the oath of office.



Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru with Representative Dalip Singh Saund.

A LOOK BACK Years Ago

45

By DEEPANJALI KAKATI

1961 marked the beginning of a new era for America with the inauguration of **John F. Kennedy**, the 35th President of the United States and the first to be born in the 20th century. Kennedy's inaugural address on January 20 stirred not only America with his clarion call of, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." The world in general was inspired to ask not what America would do for them, but what together they could do for the freedom of man.

Kennedy was already familiar to India as the co-sponsor of the Kennedy-Cooper resolution in the Senate, providing long-term aid to India. He called for increased assistance to developing countries. In one address in Washington in 1959 he said: "India follows a route in keeping with human dignity and individual freedom."

In November 1960, the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi launched **SPAN** magazine. It was to serve, as a note to readers explained in the first issue, as "a span of words and images to link [India and America's] common hopes, our common pleasures and delights, our common goals and values." For the past 45 years SPAN has been publishing articles by

leading American and Indian writers and helping promote greater understanding and people-to-people contact.

In a recommitment to its tradition of extending help to people trying to make a better life, recover from a disaster or live in a free and democratic society, the U.S. Congress, on September 4, 1961, passed the Foreign Assistance Act. It reorganized foreign aid and on November 3, 1961, President Kennedy established the **U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)**. The agency unified already existing U.S. aid efforts through various agencies in different countries, including India.



Alan Shepard, Jr. went where only one man, Russian Yuri Gagarin, had gone before. On May 5, 1961, the Freedom 7 spacecraft launched Shepard beyond the earth's atmosphere, making him the first American in space. The former U.S. Navy test pilot, who made a 15-minute suborbital flight, five of those minutes in space, prophetically called it "just the first baby step, aiming for bigger and better things."



Dalip Singh Saund rose to a position that no Indian American had reached before. The pioneer from Punjab went from being a foreman of a cotton-picking ranch in California to U.S. Congressman when he was elected to the House of Representatives in 1956 from the 29th congressional district, representing Riverside and Imperial Counties in California. Saund was re-elected for his third term on November 8, 1960. In July 2005, the U.S. Senate unanimously voted to honor Saund by naming the post office at 30777 Rancho California Road in Temecula, California, after him. Then in December the U.S. House of Representatives authorized the commissioning of a portrait of Saund, which will be placed at Capitol Hill.

A majority of Americans were hooked on **Wagon Train** in 1961. The highest-rated show of the year, the NBC series followed the adventures of pioneering families as they traveled from Missouri to California soon after the American Civil War. Each episode was built around the story of a passenger in the convoy of covered wagons, pulled by horses. The cast included John McIntire, Robert Fuller, Robert Horton and the show attracted top guest stars like Ernest Borgnine, Shelly Winters, Lou Costello and Jane Wyman.

William Shakespeare traveled to New York City in the movie **West Side Story**. The riveting tale of feuding gangs—whites against Puerto Ricans—won 10 Academy Awards in 1961, including for best picture and best directors. Inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*, it combined racial conflict, juvenile delinquency and inner-city problems with electrifying music and highly stylized dance sequences.

It was one master's tribute to another. On the occasion of Nobel laureate **Rabindranath**

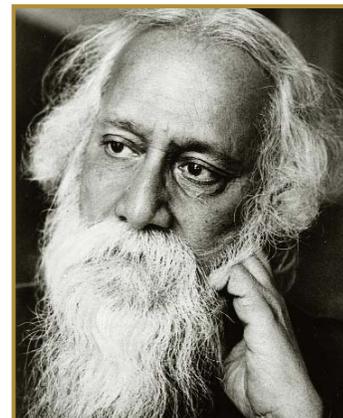
Tagore's birth centenary in May 1961, Satyajit Ray made *Rabindranath Tagore*, a documentary which wove together dramatized moments from the writer's life with rare documents and images. It won the President's Gold Medal in New Delhi. As part of his tribute, Ray also made *Teen Kanya* (Three Daughters), an anthology film adapted from three short stories by Tagore.

On January 26, 1961, the United States issued a unique tribute to India. It dedicated two new stamps of the American Champions of Liberty Series, which commemorates international leaders in democracy, to **Mohandas K. Gandhi**. The stamps were dedicated in a Republic Day ceremony held in the reception room of the U.S. Postmaster General J. Edward Day in Washington, D.C. A drawing by Indian artist R.L. Lekhi provided the basis for Gandhi's image on the stamps.



A Portuguese colony for about 450 years, **Goa** became a part of India in 1961, after Operation Vijay by Indian troops ended on December 19, 1961. It was part of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu until 1987, when Goa became a separate Indian state.

Zubin Mehta, Indian-born American conductor, made his debut in the United States in the late summer of 1960, conducting the Lewisohn Stadium Symphony Orchestra in New York City and the Robin Hood Dell Symphony Orchestra in Philadelphia. Famous for his interpretations of composers Anton Bruckner, Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler, the flamboyant conductor went on to serve as the musical director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra (1962-78) and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (1978-91), among others. □



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From top: Alan Shepard, Jr.; Rabindranath Tagore; Goanese people welcome Indian troops; Wagon Train.

West Side Story



Zubin Mehta

