



Decade 9: 1980-1989

1980

- Six US embassy aides escape from Iran with Canadian help (Jan. 29)
- US breaks diplomatic ties with Iran (April 7)
- Iraqi troops hold 90 square miles of Iran after invasion; 8-year Iran-Iraq War begins (Sept. 19)
- Robert Mugabe becomes prime minister of newly independent state of Zimbabwe
- Mount St. Helens, in southwest Washington erupts, killing 62 and spreading thick ash over an area of 250 square miles
- FBI's undercover operation "Abscam" (for Arab scam) implicates public officials (Feb. 2)
- US Supreme Court upholds limits on federal aid for abortions (June 30)
- Ronald Reagan elected president in Republican sweep (Nov. 4)
- Ted Turner launches CNN, first all-news network
- John Lennon murdered by deranged fan outside his apartment building on New York's Central Park West
- *Voyager I* reaches Saturn, returning data on its 14 moons and its more than 1,000 rings (November)
- *Diamond v. Shkrabarty*, US Supreme Court rules that genetically engineered organisms may be patented
- Philadelphia's Wistar Institute develops a new, less painful rabies vaccine
- "Miracle on Ice" as US ice hockey team beats Soviet Union
- Women's Sports Foundation establishes International Women's Sports Hall of Fame
- *Dallas*, top TV show
- *Hill Street Blues* debuts
- Nineteen-year-old artist Jean-Michel Basquiat wins critical and art-community acclaim for a collection of his paintings shown in a Manhattan exhibition of underground artists

1981

- China, the anti-foreigner Boxers occupy Beijing; international force ends both the siege and the Boxer Rebellion
- Royal wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana in England
- Personal computer (PC) launched by IBM
- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) identified
- President Anwar Sadat assassinated in Cairo
- Israeli jets destroy nuclear plant in Iraq
- After 444 days in captivity, 52 American hostages released on the day Ronald Reagan inaugurated as the 40th president

- John Hinkley, Jr. attempted to assassinate President Reagan
- President Reagan issued an executive order giving the CIA its first full authority to conduct domestic covert operations
- Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first female member of the U.S. Supreme Court
- *Columbia*, the nation's first space shuttle, launched
- Air traffic controllers strike and are dismissed by Reagan
- *Chariots of Fire* wins Oscar for best picture
- *Raiders of the Lost Ark* becomes the first film to draw over \$100 million in its first two weeks at the box office
- Top-selling song of the year, *Physical* by Olivia Newton-John

1982

- *Venera 13* sends first color photos from Venus
- Martial law ends in Poland; Lech Walessa released
- Gonzales becomes first socialist Prime Minister of Spain
- Falkland War between Britain and Argentina
- Israeli troops invade Lebanon
- President Reagan reinstated draft registration for young men ages 18 to 21
- San Francisco banned the sale and possession of handguns
- The Equal Rights Amendment failed to get the required ratification from 38 of the 50 states
- Seven deaths due to cyanide-filled Tylenol capsules led the government to impose new tamper-resistant packaging for over-the-counter drugs
- The first successful heart transplant takes place at the University of Utah Medical Center
- Comedian John Belushi died of an overdose of cocaine and heroin
- *Cats* and the musical version of *Little Shop of Horrors* open on Broadway
- *60 Minutes* returns to the #1 ratings spot on TV
- Elvis Presley's Memphis home, Graceland, opened to the public
- Singer Michael Jackson's album *Thriller* becomes one of the best-selling albums of all time
- Playwright Charles Fuller wins the Pulitzer Prize for drama for *A Soldier's Play*, which examines conflict among black soldiers on a Southern army base during World War II
- South African leader Nelson Mandela transferred from Robben Island to a maximum-security prison
- Lee P. Brown named first black police commissioner of Houston, Texas

1983

- 241 U.S. Navy and Marines personnel killed in a suicide bombing attack in Beirut; 7 Americans killed in embassy bomb attacks in Kuwait
- US forces invade Grenada to guard evacuations of US citizens after a Marxist takeover
- Compact disk launched
- First papal visit to Poland
- Lebanon expels Yassar Arafat
- Elizabeth Dole becomes Secretary of Transportation

- General Motors announces partnership with rival Toyota to produce fuel-efficient cars for the US market
- President Reagan challenges the country's weapons engineers to create a Star Wars system, which would ward off nuclear attack with armed satellites
- California's strongest earthquake in 12 years causes massive destruction in Coalinga and western Fresno County
- United American Bank of Knoxville fails, forcing the FDIC to pay off \$760,000,000 to depositors
- Sally Ride becomes first American woman in space
- 120 million viewers watch as *M*A*S*H* ends its TV run
- Michael Jackson awarded Grammys for Album of the Year for *Thriller*, Record of the Year for *Beat It* and Best Male Vocal for the song *Thriller*
- President Ronald Reagan signed law designating third Monday in January Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Reverend Jesse L. Jackson announces he will run for U.S. president; his campaign generated unprecedented fervor
- L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia becomes first African American elected governor
- Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* wins Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award
- Lt. Col. Guion S. Bluford, Jr. becomes first African American astronaut in space on the shuttle *Challenger*
- Vanessa Williams becomes first African American Miss America
- Harold Washington elected first African American mayor of Chicago
- State legislature of Louisiana repealed last racial classification law in the United States
- 250,000 participated in a 20th anniversary recreation of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s civil rights March on Washington

1984

- President Reagan orders the withdrawal of the U.S. Marines from Beirut
- Reverend Jesse L. Jackson negotiates release of 22 Americans with Cuban premier Fidel Castro
- During an audio level check prior to his regular radio address, President Reagan joked that the US had launched a nuclear attack on the Soviets; although the remark was not broadcast on all US radio stations, the Soviet Union went into a brief state of red alert because they were monitoring the White House's communications satellite channel
- US re-establishes full diplomatic relations with the Vatican; they had been suspended in 1867
- Texaco and Getty Oil enter into planet's largest corporate merger to date
- World Court labels US as an aggressor nation as the CIA mined ports in Nicaragua
- Macintosh computer with mouse launched
- US and French teams discover AIDS virus
- 25,000 Jews secretly airlifted from Sudan to Israel
- Indira Gandhi assassinated by Sikh bodyguards
- British coalminers strike all year
- Labor Secretary Raymond Donovan charged with 136 counts of fraud
- For the first time, American astronauts walk untethered in space and repair orbiting satellites during shuttle missions

- Former Vice President Walter Mondale names Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate following his Democratic nomination
- In the largest landslide for Republicans in U.S. history, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush re-elected by winning 49 states
- Dow and several other chemical corporations establish the Agent Orange Fund for Vietnam veterans who had been exposed to the herbicide
- President Reagan dedicates the Vietnam Memorial, a V-shaped wall of names designed by Yale student, Maya Lang Yin
- John Thompson becomes first African American coach to win NCAA basketball tournament
- Evelyn Ashford and Edwin Moses win gold medals in Olympic track and field events
- First episode of “The Cosby Show” airs
- Disneyland celebrates Donald Duck’s 50th birthday
- *A Chorus Line* broke the Broadway endurance record
- *Indiana Jones in the Temple of Doom* and *Beverly Hills Cop*, top two movies in box office receipts
- *Amadeus* receives the Oscar for Best Picture
- Highest rated broadcast of the year, TV movie, *The Burning Bed* starring Farrah Fawcett
- *Miami Vice* debuts, becomes an instant hit

1985

- The Israeli government publicly confirms rumors that some 10,000 Ethiopian Jews (Falasha) have been secretly resettled in Israel beginning in 1977
- People charged with spying against the US; most are past or present members of the CIA, FBI or US Navy
- President Reagan and Communist Party Leader Mikhail Gorbachev agree to work on a plan for strategic arms limitations at a summit meeting in Geneva
- Mother Theresa dedicates an AIDS hospice in New York City on Christmas Eve
- Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie co-write *We are the World*, which becomes an all-star performance under the direction of Quincy Jones.
- Palestinians hijack Italian cruise liner, Achille Lauro
- Outdoor portions of the Reagan/Bush inauguration cancelled due to extremely cold weather; the bitter cold wave responsible for at least 40 deaths
- Hurricane Gloria ripped through coastal communities from North Carolina to Rhode Island
- Hurricane Juan creates a billion dollars worth of damage along the Gulf Coast
- Dwight Gooden wins baseball’s Cy Young Award
- Coca Cola outraged its customers by introducing a reformulated version of the long-popular soft drink; 20 weeks later, the company announced it would bring back the old recipe under the name Coca Cola Classic
- Rock Hudson announces he has AIDS and died October 2
- *The Cosby Show* becomes America’s #1 TV show

1986

- Bomb explodes aboard a TWA jet en route to Athens from Rome
- Surviving crewman of a plane shot down over Nicaragua confirmed the CIA was running weapons to the Contras; three weeks later, it was disclosed that the U.S. had been secretly selling arms to Iran
- US Congress authorizes \$20 million in military aid to Honduras to protect Contras under attack by Nicaraguan invaders
- Chernobyl reactor disaster in Russia causes fallout throughout Europe
- Ferdinand Marcos flees Philippines
- Space shuttle *Challenger* exploded shortly after takeoff; elementary school teacher Christa McAuliffe, appointed to the mission by President Reagan, died in the blast as her students watched TV coverage in her Concord, New Hampshire classroom
- 6,000,000 participated in Hands Across America, raising money for programs for the country's homeless
- Celebration of 100th anniversary of Statue of Liberty takes place on Independence Day; statue had underwent a massive renovation before the event
- Oprah Winfrey becomes first African American woman to host a nationally syndicated talk show
- By a landslide vote, Republican Clint Eastwood elected mayor of Carmel, California
- *Fatherhood* by Bill Cosby tops bestseller list while his TV series remains #1
- Bruce Willis receives an Emmy for his work on *Moonlighting*
- *That's What Friends Are For* by Dionne Warwick & Friends (Gladys Knight, Elton Jon, and Stevie Wonder), number one song of the year
- *Phantom of the Opera* debuts in London
- Spike Lee's film *She's Gotta Have It* wins him the best new director award at ultra-prestigious Cannes Film Festival
- Bronze bust of Martin Luther King, Jr., first of any black American in the halls of Congress

1987

- During a visit to the Berlin Wall, President Reagan challenges Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall"
- Bangladesh's worst floods make millions homeless
- Z88 portable computer introduced
- Los Angeles area rocked by a 6.1 Richter scale earthquake
- Worst stock market crash since 1929 took place on October 19 as the Dow slipped 508 points, down nearly 23%
- Congress overrides President Reagan's veto of the Clean Water Act
- Tower Commission blames President Reagan for failing to understand the impact of selling arms to Iran and diverting the proceeds to Contra rebels
- TV Evangelist Jim Bakker, who with his wife Tammy Faye hosted the popular *PTL Club*, convicted of 24 counts of fraud and defrocked by the Assemblies of God church
- Greg Lamonde becomes first American to win the Tour de France cycling race
- Yuppie-drama *Thirtysomething* debuts
- Reginald Lewis becomes first African American to own a business with sales over \$1 billion, by taking over Beatrice International Food Company

- Ervin “Magic” Johnson named National basketball Association’s Most Valuable Player
- Frederick Drew Gregory, first African American to command space shuttle

1988

- President Roosevelt holds White House Conservation Conference, which leads to establishment of the National Conservation Commission
- US Supreme Court, in Danbury Hatters' case, outlaws secondary union boycotts
- South African government imposes a ban on all antiapartheid groups
- President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev sign an agreement to dismantle short-range nuclear missiles in Europe
- Transatlantic optical fiber telephone cables enter service
- Earthquake in Armenia kills 80,000, 500,000 homeless
- Ethnic Albanians demonstrate against Serbs in Kosovo
- Bomb destroys Pan Am 747 over Lockerbie, Scotland
- Ethiopia and Somalia sign peace treaty
- Arizona State Senate removed the governor, Evan Mecham, from office after he was convicted of lending \$80,000 in state money to his car dealership
- Attorney General Ed Meece resigns after an investigation claimed he had attempted to take a bribe from a company in exchange for defense contracts
- Puyallup Indians of Washington given \$162 million in exchange for dropping their claim to the city of Tacoma
- Michael Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen nominated at the Democratic National Convention
- On a platform, which includes a promise of “no new taxes,” George H.W. Bush won the Republican nomination, with running mate Dan Quayle
- Shuttle *Discovery* launched successfully
- John F. Kennedy, Jr. addresses the Democratic National Convention
- *Rain Man* garners Oscars for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor
- *The Cosby Show*, year’s most popular TV show for the fourth straight year
- *Roseanne* and *Murphy Brown* debut
- Roy Orbison, enjoying a comeback as a member of the Traveling Wilburys and as a solo act, died of a heart attack at 52
- Reverend Jesse L. Jackson campaigns for President a second time
- Bill Cosby announces his gift of \$20,000,000 to Spelman College; this is the largest donation ever made by an African American
- Pope John Paul II appoints Eugene A. Marino, S.S.J. as archbishop of Atlanta; Archbishop Marino becomes the first African American Catholic archbishop in the United States
- Overriding President Reagan's veto, Congress passes the Civil Rights Restoration Act, which expands the reach of non-discrimination laws within private institutions receiving federal funds
- Runner Florence Griffith Joyner captures three gold and one silver medals in Seoul Olympics

1989

- Japan begins 36-year occupation of Korea; Japanese prince Hirobumi Ito assassinated by Korean nationalist
- North Pole reached by American explorers Robert E. Peary and Matthew Henson
- *Exxon Valdez* ran aground in Alaska's Prince William Sound, creating the largest oil spill in history
- World Wide Web created by Berners-Lee
- Solidarity wins elections in Poland
- Hungary creates a multiparty democracy
- Berlin Wall demolished
- Thousands of students killed in demonstration at Tiananmen Square in China
- 97% of the buildings in St. Croix destroyed during Hurricane Hugo; the storm causes billions of dollars of damage to Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands and portions of the east coast of the US
- President Bush authorizes an invasion of Panama in an attempt to arrest General Manuel Noriega
- 6.9 earthquake shook the San Francisco-Oakland-Santa Cruz areas in California causing a double tiered freeway bridge to collapse; the quake struck as the third game of the World Series was about to begin; damage to the region estimated at \$10,000,000,000
- House Speaker Jim Wright resigns after the Ethics Committee accused him of accepting inappropriate gifts
- President Bush calls for an increase in income taxes to help curb the deficit
- Northern Spotted Owl added to the Endangered Species List
- Baseball superstar Pete Rose banned from the game for life by the Commissioner of Baseball for gambling on professional sports
- *Driving Miss Daisy* receives Academy Award for Best Picture
- *Cheers* becomes number one TV series
- *Law and Order* debuts
- Colin Powell appointed first African American chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- David Dinkins elected first black mayor of New York City
- Barbara Harris elected first woman bishop of the Episcopal Church
- Ron Brown becomes first African American person to head a major national political party, as chairman of Democratic National Committee
- Sculptor Martin Puryear is the sole artist from the United States chosen for the Sao Paulo Bienal in Brazil, and is awarded the exhibition's grand prize