What Was It Like?

Being a New York City Child, 1944–1954

SUBWAY FARE 10 CENTS JULY 1,
CITY SURFACE LINES 7 CENTS;
MAYOR, BOARD APPROVE RISE
Calendar of Events

1944-1954

These are events which occurred in New York City from 1944 to 1954. The events can be divided into six categories—Bobby Wagner, Jr., Government, Population, Schools, Sports, Transportation. Separate them into those six categories by placing the correct letters in the margin next to the event—

BW for Bobby Wagner, Jr.  
Gov’t for Government  
Po for Population  
Sc for Schools  
Sp for Sports  
Tr for Transportation

January 6, 1944: Bobby Wagner, Jr. is born at Doctors’ Hospital in New York City.

November 6, 1945: William O’Dwyer is elected the 100th Mayor of New York City.


April 15, 1947: Jackie Robinson becomes the first African American to play Major League baseball in the 20th century.

July 1, 1948: The subway fare in New York City goes from a nickel to a dime.

September 1949: Bobby Wagner, Jr. begins the first grade at the Buckley School in Manhattan.

November 8, 1949: William O’Dwyer is re-elected Mayor of New York and Robert F. Wagner is elected Borough President of Manhattan.

April 1, 1950: Census figures show New York City’s population is 7,891,957.

January 18, 1951: The New York City Board of Education approves funds for “dog-tags” to be worn by all children in city public schools for purposes of identification in case of a nuclear war.

October 3, 1951: New York Giants defeat the Brooklyn Dodgers in a special playoff to win the National League pennant on a home run by Bobby Thompson.


November 28, 1951: School children participate in New York City’s largest air-raid drill since World War II.

July 25, 1953: Subway fare rises to 15 cents and tokens are introduced for the first time.

November 3, 1953: Robert F. Wagner is elected the 102nd Mayor of New York City.

October 22, 1954: Bobby Wagner, Jr. gives a prayer for peace at the United Nations Day celebration, held at City Hall in Manhattan.

On the Cover: Photographs and newspaper headlines about New York City and of Bobby Wagner, Jr. from 1944 to 1954. To learn more about the materials on the cover, turn to the inside of the back cover.
What Was It Like?

Being a New York City Child, 1944–1954

This booklet is about the history of New York City from 1944 to 1954. In 1944, a famous boy named Bobby Wagner, Jr. was born in Manhattan. His grandfather was a United States Senator from New York. His father was also famous, and in 1953, when Bobby was nine years old, his father would be elected Mayor of New York City.

Do you know what New York City was like at that time? How much would Bobby Wagner have paid to go to a movie or to ride the subway, and what kinds of games did children like Bobby play? What did the streets look like? You will learn about those things in this booklet.

Television had been invented in the 1920s. But television sets still cost too much for most families to buy in the early 1950s. Most boys and girls listened to the radio. Bobby and many other New York children were also big fans of baseball. New York City had three teams at the time; only one of them still plays in the city.

When you finish with this booklet, you will know much more about what New York City was like from 1944 to 1954.
Look at the two pictures and then answer the questions.

1. Try to locate the gas station in 1946. What is the name of the station? ____________________________
   What is the name of the gas station in 1995? ____________________________

2. What are the changes in the traffic lights from 1946 to 1995? ____________________________

3. What are the changes in the street pavement from 1946 to 1995? ____________________________

4. What are the changes in the cars from 1946 to 1995? ____________________________
Look Like in 1946?

1995

30th Avenue at the corner of Steinway Street in 1995.

5. What did the store on the corner at the left sell in 1946? ___________________________ What does it sell in 1995? ________________

6. Why do you think there were no cross walks in 1946? __________________________________

7. What was the same about Astoria in 1946 and 1995? ____________________________

8. Do you think Astoria was busier in 1946 or 1995? ________ Why? ____________________________
How Much Did Things Cost in 1952?

This chart shows the prices for some of the products that Bobby Wagner and his friends would have used in 1952 and the prices for those same products in 1995. Most of the prices are already in the chart, but you will have to fill in some of them. Use the advertisements from 1952 and 1995 on page 5 to fill in the price for the correct product. For example, the price for basketball shoes for 1952 should be $3.44 and the price for skates in 1995 should be $49.96. Fill in the other prices by yourself and then answer the questions below the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRICES</th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Shoes</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skates</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's Movie Admission</td>
<td>30 cents</td>
<td>$4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coca-Cola</td>
<td>6 cents (6½ oz.)</td>
<td>75 cents (12 oz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pack of Chewing Gum</td>
<td>5 cents</td>
<td>25 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 oz. bag of Potato chips</td>
<td>10 cents</td>
<td>25 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Children's Allowance</td>
<td>$1</td>
<td>$5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What do the prices on the left side of the chart show? __________________________________________
   What do the prices on the right side of the chart show? ________________________________________

2. How many times more does a pack of gum cost in 1995 than it cost in 1952? _____________________

3. How much more does a bag of potato chips cost in 1995 than in 1952? ____________________________

4. Which went up more in price from 1952 to 1995, bicycles or basketball shoes? ____________________

5. If a child in 1952 purchased three bags of potato chips and two packs of gum, how many movies could he/she go to in a week using their allowance? ____________________________________________

6. How many weeks' allowance would a child have to save up in 1995 to buy a pair of skates? ______

7. Do you think an allowance bought more in 1952 or 1995? ____________________ Why? _______________
8. Do you receive an allowance? If so, how much do you receive?

9. Why do some children have an allowance?

10. What were the changes in the kind of skates people wore from 1952 to 1995?

11. What were the changes in the way basketball shoes looked from 1952 to 1995?
This graph shows the changes in the cost of riding the subway in New York City from 1904, when the subways first opened, until 1995. It also shows the four different tokens used during that period. Two of the tokens are already part of the graph, but you will have to place the other two tokens in the graph. Those two tokens are to the left of the graph. Cut them out and tape or paste them onto the right place in the graph. Then, answer the questions.

1. What do the numbers on the bottom line of the graph tell you? What do the numbers on the side of the graph indicate?

2. What was the subway fare in 1920?

3. What was the subway fare in 1980?
4. What was the subway fare when Bobby Wagner was born? ______ What was the subway fare when Bobby was 10 years old? ________ Hint: You might want to look at the introduction on page 1 of the booklet.

5. How many years did the subway fare cost a nickel? ______________________________________

6. How many years did the subway fare cost fifty cents? ______________________________

7. When was the first increase in the subway fare? ________________________________

8. When was the most recent increase in the subway fare? ________________________

9. How much did the subway fare increase from 1970 to 1975? ________________

10. What do tokens represent? ______________________________________

11. Do you like riding the subway? ______ Why, or why not? _________________________

12. Design a new token for the next fare raise.
The Subway Series: 1947–1956

Like many boys and girls in New York City in the 1950s, Bobby Wagner, Jr. was a baseball fan, and he could follow several teams. At the time, New York had three baseball teams. The Brooklyn Dodgers played at Ebbets Field and the New York Giants played at the Polo Grounds. Both of those teams were in the National League. The New York Yankees, who were in the American League, played at Yankee Stadium. Since all the teams were good, they played in the World Series many times.

This map of New York City in the 1950s shows the locations of the three stadiums and some of the major subway lines. It also shows many of the neighborhoods and the location of Gracie Mansion in Manhattan, which was where Bobby Wagner lived with his family after his father was elected Mayor of New York City in 1953. Use the map and the chart of the Subway Series to answer the questions below. You will need crayons for some of the questions.

1. Which neighborhood is in the northwestern corner of Queens? ____________________
2. Name the river which runs between Manhattan and Queens. ____________________
3. Which of the three baseball stadiums is located the furthest south? ________________
4. Which stadium is located in upper Manhattan? _______ Which team played there? ______
5. How many of the Series were won by National League teams between 1947 and 1956? ______
6. Which of the three New York baseball teams do you think was the best? ________________
   Why? _________________________________________________________________
7. How many teams from the 1950s are still playing in New York? ______
8. Why do you think the World Series played between the New York teams were called Subway Series? ____________________
9. How much did it cost to ride the subway to a World Series game at Yankee Stadium in 1952? _______ Hint: You might want to look at the previous lesson.
10. Use a blue crayon to trace the subway route that Bobby Wagner took from Gracie Mansion to go to a World Series game at Ebbets Field in 1955.
11. If you were living in your neighborhood in Queens in 1951, and you were going to a World Series game at the Polo Grounds, trace your subway route with a red crayon.
12. Do you see Shea Stadium on the map? ______ Why not? ____________________
   Using an orange crayon, draw a small x at the spot where Shea Stadium will eventually be located.
How Many Basketball Teams Were There in 1954?

February 1954

National Basketball Assn.
STANDING OF THE TEAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>38 22 .633</td>
<td>Phila.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>35 25 .583</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>33 27 .568</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WESTERN DIVISION</th>
<th>W. L. Pct.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>41 19 .683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ft. Wayne</td>
<td>32 26 .532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester</td>
<td>32 25 .561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>15 43 .293</td>
</tr>
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</table>

February 1994

N.B.A. STANDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EASTERN CONFERENCE</th>
<th>W. L. Pct.</th>
<th>WESTERN CONFERENCE</th>
<th>W. L. Pct.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Division</td>
<td></td>
<td>Midwest Division</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knicks</td>
<td>36 18 .692</td>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>37 13 .740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>31 20 .606</td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>39 15 .722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>27 25 .519</td>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>35 19 .648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nets</td>
<td>27 25 .519</td>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>26 27 .491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>20 33 .377</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>15 36 .254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>20 33 .377</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>7 46 .132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>16 37 .302</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Division</th>
<th>W. L. Pct.</th>
<th>Pacific Division</th>
<th>W. L. Pct.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>36 16 .692</td>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>37 14 .725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>36 16 .692</td>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>34 16 .680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>29 24 .547</td>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>32 21 .604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>26 25 .510</td>
<td>Golden State</td>
<td>31 21 .696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>23 28 .451</td>
<td>L.A. Lakers</td>
<td>19 31 .560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>15 36 .283</td>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>16 34 .346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>13 39 .255</td>
<td>L.A. Clippers</td>
<td>17 34 .333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What do these standings show?
2. Did the New York Knicks have more wins in 1954 or 1994?
3. How many more teams were there in 1994 than in 1954?
4. How many fewer teams were in the entire NBA in 1954 than there were in the Eastern Conference in 1994?
5. How many cities with teams in 1954 also had teams in 1994?
6. Why do you think there were so many more teams in 1994 than in 1954?
Using the standings on page 10, color in the squares on the map of the United States to show the locations of the basketball teams. Color the squares red for each city with a team in 1954, and color the squares blue for each city with a team in 1994. Be careful—some cities have teams in both 1954 and 1994, and one city has two teams for 1994. After you color in all the squares, answer the questions below the map.

1. What city is south of Orlando? ____________________________________________________________________
2. What city is north of Portland? ____________________________________________________________________
3. In which year did Denver have a team—1954 or 1994? ____________________________________________________________________
4. Which team was located the furthest west in 1954? ____________________________________________________________________
5. Which was located the furthest west in 1994? ____________________________________________________________________
6. Which state had the most teams in 1954? ____________________________________________________________________
7. Which state had the most teams in 1994? ____________________________________________________________________
8. Which region of the country—Northeast or Southeast—had more teams in 1954? ____________________________________________________________________
9. Which region of the country—East or West—experienced the greatest growth in teams from 1954 to 1994? ____________________________________________________________________
10. If you were going to pick a place to put a new team in 1995, which city would you select? ____________________________________________________________________
   Why? ____________________________________________________________________
What Did Children Do for Fun?

In the early 1950s, Bobby Wagner and other boys and girls often listened to programs on the radio. One of the popular programs was called *The Adventures Of Superman*. Your teacher has a tape recording of an episode of *Superman* from January 1950 called "The Voices Of The Dead." You will listen to the program as a class. After you listen to the program, answer the questions below.

1. Describe Dr. Roebling. What does he look like? What did he invent? What happens to him in the episode? 

2. What kind of jobs do Lois Lane and Clark Kent have? Do you think you would like to have that job some day?

3. In the program, Clark Kent and Lois Lane travel a long distance by train. Have you ever traveled a long distance by train? What are the differences between traveling long distance by train and airplane?

4. What was the school crisis mentioned in an announcement on the program? Do you think that is still a problem in schools today?

5. Would you call Superman a hero? Why, or why not?

6. Why do you think children in the 1950s would have liked *Superman*?

7. How is *Superman* like the children's television shows that you like today? How is it different?
How Were the Classrooms Different?

Class at an elementary school in Queens, 1951.

Based on this photograph, answer the questions below.

1. What do you think the students at the front of the room are doing? ____________________________
2. What grade do you think these pupils are in? ________________ Why did you choose that grade?
   _____________________________________________________________
3. What do you think the chart at the top right corner of the board which reads Reg. B. G. T. stands for? ________________ Why do you think it was there? ________________________________
   ________________ Does your teacher still use such a chart? __________________
4. What time of year do you think this is—fall, winter or spring? ____________________________
   Why? ____________________________________________________________________________
5. How do their desks differ from yours? _________________________________________________
6. What are the differences between the clothing the children in the picture are wearing and the
clothing students are wearing in your classroom today? _________________________________
Robert F. Wagner, Jr.

Robert F. Wagner, Jr. was born at Doctors’ Hospital in New York City on January 6, 1944. As a boy he was called Bobby by everyone. Bobby came from a well known family. His grandfather was a United States Senator from New York. When Bobby was born, his father, who was named Robert F. Wagner, was in Europe with the Air Force fighting in World War II. Bobby saw his father for the first time in 1945.

Bobby grew up with his father, his mother Susan and his younger brother Duncan in an apartment on East 86th Street in Manhattan. In 1949 he started first grade at a school called the Buckley School. Bobby’s favorite subject in school was arithmetic.

His favorite sport was tennis. He also liked to play baseball, and once he had a narrow escape while playing. Bobby was up at bat. He turned his head for a moment and the pitcher threw the ball at him. Bobby turned around, quick as a flash, and ran so the ball did not hit him. Bobby also liked to watch professional baseball games. His favorite teams were the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants.

For fun, Bobby spent time listening to radio programs, making model airplanes and drawing. He also liked to ride his bicycle. When he grew up, he wanted to be a doctor.

In 1953, Bobby’s father wanted to become Mayor of New York City. Bobby helped his father run by walking in front of his apartment building with a sign that read “Wagner For Mayor.” Bobby’s father won the election and became Mayor. After he won, the family moved into Gracie Mansion, the large house in Manhattan where the Mayor lives. Bobby became famous as the son of the Mayor, and he took many trips to other parts of the United States and to foreign places with his family.

1. Where was Bobby’s father when Bobby was born? __________________________ Do you think it made a difference that his father was away in his first year? _________________________

2. What was Bobby’s favorite subject in school? ________________________________
What is your favorite subject in school? ________________________________

3. Name Bobby’s favorite baseball teams. ________________________________
Do you have any favorite baseball teams? ___________ Why do you like them? ___________

4. Describe Bobby’s narrow escape. __________________________________________

5. Do you think it is fun to be the son of a public official? ___________ Why, or why not? ________
Write Your Autobiography

Use the space below to write your autobiography. Here are some ideas that you can include if you like:

When and where were you born?
Describe your family.
What do you like best about school?
Describe some narrow escape you had.
Do you remember something happy or sad from your childhood?
What do you do for fun?
Do you have ideas about what you want to be when you grow up?
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Credits

COVER

Photo of basketball playoff game:
Courtesy of AP/Wide World Photos, Inc.

Photo of Jackie Robinson:
Courtesy of National Baseball Library and Archive, Cooperstown, New York

Photo of 21st Street in Long Island City:
Courtesy of the Office of the Queens Borough President

Newspaper headlines:

Photo of 30th Avenue, Astoria, in 1946:
Courtesy of the Office of the Queens Borough President

Photo of Queens elementary school in 1951:
Courtesy of NYC Board of Education Archives, Teachers College, Columbia University

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New York City, 1944-54
A Collage

These captions will help you understand the materials on the front and back covers of the booklet. Many of these events are also in the Calendar of Events on the inside of the front cover.

1. Newspaper headline about the subway fare going up from a nickel to a dime in 1948.

2. Nat (Sweetwater) Clifton, #8, of the New York Knicks battles a Syracuse Nationals player for a rebound in an NBA playoff game in April 1952.


4. An advertisement for a movie from a newspaper in 1951.


7. Newspaper headline about an air raid drill in New York City in 1951.

8. Bobby Wagner, Jr. cuts the ribbon to officially open a tunnel in lower Manhattan in 1951. With him are, left to right, Deputy Mayor Charles Horowitz, his mother Susan Wagner and his father Robert F. Wagner, who was Manhattan Borough President at the time.


10. A view of 21st Street in Long Island City, looking south from 41st Avenue, in 1948. On the right side is Queensbridge Houses.