1956: A radical sect of Seventh Day Adventists open a portal to Heaven from the 103rd floor of the Empire State building, above the observation deck. Marines quickly retake the building. A cover story is spun involving a bomb detonated by extremists. The 103rd floor is cut off from the rest of the building and remodeled so as to hide the portal, even as the first expeditionary forces begin exploring the vast and hauntingly empty realm of Heaven. While there is some debate among those who know about it whether it's *actually* Heaven, the naming sticks (though it's never referred to as such in the top-secret official paperwork).

1957: The United States Army invests heavily in dirigible technology, and begins making use of the mooring points on the Empire State Building. The dirigibles are mostly used to patrol the eastern seaboard, though of course their secondary purpose is to disguise troop and personnel movements in and out of the portal. A forward base is established in Heaven, and the project is codenamed BLUE STAIRS.

1958: BLUE STAIRS, and the existence of the portal itself, is known to only a small group of people who have been sworn to absolute secrecy. Funding for the program comes through the United States Armed Forces, and personnel are mostly taken from their ranks. The exception to this is a small group of congressmen and senators, who oversee the project from secret committees. Among them is Robert Kennedy. During a routine trip through Heaven, Kennedy touches an unknown artifact, which fuses to him within a matter of minutes. Thereafter his skin glows golden, and he manifests a suite of supernatural powers. Robert Kennedy resigns from his position as senator and disappears from public view, becoming codename STARMAN, the world's first superhero, who works in absolute secrecy.

1959: The BLUE STAIRS program shifts from exploration and experimentation to exploitation. Over the next four years, more than two hundred men will be granted a wide variety of powers thanks to the artifacts found and recovered in Heaven. Almost all of the artifacts are unique, their original purpose opaque, and their effects manifold but almost always beneficial. Within their small clique, the men who have been granted powers are known as Blues.

1961: President John F. Kennedy, one of the small group of people to originally be granted BLUE STAIRS clearance, secretly signs into law the complex and arcane Special Tactics And Member Specialization Act on his first day of office. Small groups of Blues enter into the service of multiple government departments, generally without much direct oversight. Thanks to intervention from the Blues, the Bay of Pigs invasion is successful, though this mires the armed forces in peacekeeping operations in Cuba for many years afterwards.

1963: While crossing Dealey Plaza in a presidential motorcade, five shots are fired at President Kennedy. He is not struck, thanks to the intervention of two Blues, which is witnessed by more than a hundred people and caught on multiple cameras. Public uproar over the secrecy and nature of BLUE STAIRS follows, which doubles and then triples as more details come out. Warrantless mind-reading of American citizens, wet work in Latin and South America, and civilian endangerment all contribute to the public's growing anger with the federal government,

and Kennedy in particular.

1964: Soviet aggression increases in response to BLUE STAIRS being uncovered and the worry that the doctrine of mutually assured destruction has come to an end, along with the fear that conventional Russian weapons no longer outclass the might of American Blues. The Civil Rights Act quietly dies in committee, even as an investigation is launched into JFK's personal life, which has not been handled as discreetly due to the absence of his brother Robert. Two months before the election, a special report is released, and Barry Goldwater narrowly claims the Presidency with George Romney as VP.

1965: Goldwater triples funding for BLUE STAIRS. In northern Siberia, at a remote installation, Soviet philosopher scientists manage to open a portal to Hell while trying to match parity with the American Blues. Unlike Heaven, Hell appears to be quite full, and a great many demons are brought forth under heavy guard. An incident occurs, the details of which are not fully known, and the demons and devils escape into the countryside. As a rule, they are brutal, violent, greedy, selfish, and hedonistic. As soon as the United States learns of their emergence, the Soviet portal is codenamed RED STAIRS, and a week later is closed thanks to the heroic sacrifices of dozens of Blues - but not before thousands of demons have made their way out. Civil rights protests quietly fail to happen in Alabama.

1966: The extent to which the demons have taken over control of the Soviet government is unclear, but the ones that appear on television claim that they are stalwart allies to communism. Various reports filter through about the more startlingly abhorrent demons. Attrition rates for Blues begin running high, as encounters with Reds in the upper atmosphere become common. Malcolm X is shot to death by members of the Nation of Islam. Frederick Detweiler is made associate justice of the Supreme Court following the retirement of Tom C. Clark.

1967: Tensions rise as satellites start being destroyed by both sides. Space programs have long since stalled out, even as the cost of putting material into orbit has plummeted thanks to powers. In late July, during a particularly tense stand-off between powered individuals of both sides above the North Pacific, a fight breaks out, which in turn triggers a series of escalations which lead to a limited nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union. Blues in the United States manage to stop the ICBMs flying towards America, at the cost of more than three hundred Blues. Starman is seen shining like a second sun over Los Angeles, power radiating in all directions, and millions are witness to him shattering into particles of fine, glowing dust as he vaporizes the missiles out of the air. In Russia, no such heroics take place, and more than five million Soviets perish in Moscow and Leningrad. There is talk within the White House of finishing Russia off once and for all, but the risk of nuclear winter and worldwide radioactive contamination (and damage to international relations) is deemed to be too high. Following the death of his brother, John F Kennedy is found dead of a drug overdose in his Massachusetts home.

1968: The United Nations disbands, primarily for the same reasons that the League of Nations

disbanded: an abject failure to achieve its goals. Across the United States, people begin to exhibit powers even without the influence of heavenly artifacts. It is unknown whether this is related to the nuclear winds over the pacific from Russia, demonic influence, the deaths of so many Blues, or a side effect of the portal in New York being open for so long. Shortly after his narrow re-election against Robert Byrd, Goldwater signs into law the Special Class Draft Act, which serves to conscript the host of new powered individuals into government service. These new recruits are known to most as “Seedies” (SCDs), due to the fact that powers are the only consideration for entrance into service, above and beyond any other concerns. The Seedies are placed into government agencies with strict oversight, though some exemptions are allowed (mostly due to power and connections, though sometimes because of demeanor or nature of powers - and even those who aren’t in the service of the government are technically in reserve).

1969: Tensions between the Soviets and the United States remain high. It is now clear that the doctrine of mutually assured destruction is dead. The Soviet-American War, as it is now called, has entered into a different phase. Now attacks are almost entirely made with powered individuals, most with absolute secrecy and plausible deniability. While the war has heated up, it is widely acknowledged that conventional warfare between the countries has been rendered impossible. Late in the year, a peace accord is signed between the two countries, though there is widespread pessimism about whether it will last. The United States faces widespread domestic problems, both because of the stunted civil rights movement, which has turned to violence, and because of the anti-war movement. Woodstock does not happen on schedule.

1970: The number of Seedies in the population swells. They now outnumber Blues nearly five to one. It is discovered that powers can be induced in roughly one in a thousand people through traumatic events, though the exact nature varies from person to person. Some “breakout” when a train is about to hit them, others when trapped in a burning building, when taking LSD, etc. Particularly among the counterculture and youth, there is a strong desire to acquire powers, and so “breakout parties” start occurring where people engage in dangerous things in order to release latent powers - though this is only very rarely successful. Meanwhile, the European Union forms twenty years early, primarily because (though they are nominally under the protection of the United States) there is a great fear that little stands between them and Russia. Rumors swirl that the Soviet demons are engaged in parascience, much like the Americans are, as one weapons race replaces the other.

1971: The campaign takes place.

Things that did not happen (yet), a non-exhaustive list:
The moon landing
Woodstock
The Civil Rights Act
The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.
Bloody Sunday
The Cuban missile crisis

Kent State shooting