Short Memories

Doing the Dunes

EVERY SUMMER in the 1950s and ’60s, my parents, Art and Loretta Pearson, rented a cottage on Silver Lake, located near Mears, Michigan.

The owner of the cottage had a dune buggy made from an old Mercury (right) and would give us rides over the sand dunes between Silver Lake and Lake Michigan.

Today, Silver Lake State Park is still a popular place for recreational vehicles.

—Jeanette H., Grand Rapids, Michigan

Good Ol’ Summertime

GROWING UP on Indian Trail in the Silver Beach Gardens section of Bronx, New York, I had a Huckleberry Finn-Tom Sawyer childhood in the 1930s.

In the summer, I’d awaken at dawn, put on my bathing suit and run off to the beach, which was about 30 yards away, staying all day. Then I’d change, put sandals on and walk with Mom, who pushed the baby carriage, to meet Dad at the bus stop. Once a week, we’d go to the open-air movies and stop at Benny’s Ice Cream Parlor on the way home for a treat.

We also had parades and decorations all the time. I won first prize fora float in the 1936 Labor Day parade on Sunset Trail. My father, pulled the float.

—Gus R., Old Bridge, New Jersey

He Missed the Boat

AT ABOUT age 10, in the mid-1930s, I was among 14 groups of boys using 14 tents at the YMCA camp on Santa Catalina Island in

southern California. Each tent was assigned a rowboat to use in the ocean.

One boy's parents anchored the family's yacht about 100 yards off-shore. One day, it was planned to tie each rowboat behind another and have them towed behind the yacht about 5 miles down the coast to an isthmus. There, we would go ashore to eat our lunches and take a swim.

We were told that to ride in our rowboat, we each had to be a good enough swimmer to reach a diving float 25 yards from shore. Well, I never swam that far before, but I was sure that if I had to, I could do it. So I told my counselor that I could swim the distance and was allowed to ride in the rowboat.

However, to my huge disappointment, I found out later that those who were not good swimmers got to ride in the yacht.

—Mercer C., Oakdale, California

The Boys of Summer

FROM 1928 until America's entry into World War II, in 1941, the "15th Street boys" living between Atkinson Avenue and Capitol Drive in Milwaukee, Wisconsin played baseball, football, catch, horseshoes and strikeout. This was mostly in an empty lot, since we lacked a nearby playground.

I remember kite flying, snowball fights, "sugar baby" and other made-up games that kept us out of trouble. We'd even have timed runs around area streets.

Another favorite game involved trying to kick a football over a streetlight on 15th Street.

Lemonade stands (far right) were tried, but we seldom made any money.

The war ended all the fun and games, and never again would this elite group assemble. But five of us did on June 14, 2005 (below), and we could almost hear the yells after making a homer or touchdown.

—Max A., Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin