

Good Ol' Summertime Memories

Marked Improvement

IN THE 1930s, at Crane Lake Camp in Maine, our camp director, Ralph Davidson, insisted that the name of every camper, all 200, must appear in the camp's newspaper, *The Crane*, in a positive way.

This was an onerous task, and the camp staff spent long hours assigning magical feats and accomplishments to each kid: winner of the swimming relay; made a hand-tooled leather belt for Dad; all bull's-eyes on the archery target; made eggs Benedict on a camping trip; caught a 4-pound lake trout; canoed solo across Crane Lake; and on and on.

After 6 hours, 199 campers were in print—all except one kid.

This boy couldn't do anything! He couldn't swim, couldn't identify a sparrow and made no arts or crafts. He even threw up in his sleeping bag on an overnighiter.

The newspaper finally came out, and the name of every camper appeared for an outstanding accomplishment or achievement.

Finally, we got to the aforementioned boy and read: "Honorable mention goes to...He doesn't wet his bed as much as he used to!"
—Art Candell, Silver Springs, Florida

Summers at Ebbets Field

UNTIL THEY deserted us, the Brooklyn Dodgers and their archrivals, baseball's New York Giants, captured our hearts.

Our boys would get out their baseball equipment, and the entire family would walk from our home at Grand Army Plaza and across Brooklyn Botanic Gardens to Ebbets Field for a day at the game.

On one memorable day, my husband, Will, was struck on the head by a flying beer can as we entered Ebbets Field, and he was bleeding.

After Will was treated at the first-aid station, our family was escorted to the best box seats in the house as guests of the ball club. The boys and I remember the royal treatment; Will mostly recalls the headache he suffered that day.

After the game, it was our habit to dine at Lee's of Chinatown on nearby Flatbush Avenue, where they kept a special corner table for our family. We felt honored, but thinking back, it's easy to believe that seating our three sons somewhat out of the way was a defensive measure on the part of the management.

Following dinner, we often went next door to the Patio Theatre to take in a vaudeville show. Finally, the walk home in the evening hours would take us through Prospect Park, past the zoo and the Sheep Meadow.

These are perfect memories of near-perfect days in Brooklyn, as we knew it.

—Sara Hewitt Riola, Lakewood, New Jersey

Meet Us at the Corner Drug

THE CORNER DRUG, in the resort town of Clear Lake, Iowa, was all a teen could hope for in the 1940s and '50s.

Most of us never looked beyond the soda fountain, and there was nothing low-cal about anything served up by Nancy or Mary Jo. My favorites were cherry and lemon Cokes. Some preferred a Green River, but that was too sour for me.

In wooden booths at the rear of the store, carved initials were always a topic of conversation. If you didn't spend all of your nickels at the soda fountain, you fed the rest into the jukebox—my favorite groups were the Four Freshmen, the Four Lads, the Diamonds, and

Bill Haley and His Comets.

I also have fond memories of the tobacco counter. At some point during my family's Sunday after-dinner checkers games, my uncle would send me to the Corner Drug with a quarter for two Roi-Tan Panetta cigars (I got to keep the extra nickel).

Another treat for teenage boys was to be found in the Corner Drug's basement, where Floyd charged a nickel a stick to make like Minnesota Fats. The only female patron I ever saw in the place was the Salvation Army lady who would appear daily at 4 p.m. to take up a collection, at which time we'd make it a point to hide in the bathrooms.

Out of nickels and full of cherry Cokes, we'd climb the stairs to the entrance railing and find a place to perch. Because Clear Lake was a resort town, passing girls were in no short supply. What a wonderful world we had!

—Larry Andersen, Austin, Minnesota

Bottoming Out

MY TOWN, Martinsville, Indiana, did not have a swimming pool, so one day in 1950, when I was 12, I accepted an invitation to swim in a public pool in Franklin, 23 miles away.

It marked my first experience with a water slide, and I spent all afternoon sliding down it. While in the pool late in the afternoon, my bottom felt wet and I felt back there. I had completely worn out the seat of my bathing suit!

Horrified and embarrassed, I walked over to the side of the pool, got out with my back to the wall, lay on my back and slithered to the side wall. I stood up with my back to the wall, walked sideways to the dressing area, retrieved my clothes and got dressed

Afterward, I wondered what the kids had thought coming up the

slide steps behind me—what a view!

—Bill Johnson, Ft. Myers, Florida

Crime and Punishment

WE DIDN'T really regard the stealing of watermelons as thievery. It was our rite of passage in the mid-1930s.

Our plan was to sneak through the barbed-wire fence and snatch a bunch of ripe watermelons in the large melon fields on the outskirts of a nearby South Dakota city. We never cut fences; that would have been unsporting.

Jean was the best “thumper” to determine melon ripeness, and she passed the melons to Tim, the “hoister.” Tim handed them over the fence to Fred, Ernie and me, who packed them into Fred's old jalopy.

Concentrating on our roles, we failed to notice two dark shapes approaching from each end of the country road. Just as we prepared to leave, spotlights, blinking lights and the unholy din of sirens surrounded us.

It could have been worse, I suppose, but we were forced to sit on the curb outside the police station and eat every last bit of stolen melon, with a policeman seeing to it that we ate clear into the rind. He even refused to let us go to the restroom.

Mother heard about it somehow, and I'm sure she knew I was involved. All she said when she mentioned the matter was that she always felt any punishment should fit the crime.

—Dorothea Weybright, Tequesta, Florida

Shallow-Sea Divers

COULD IT BE that a male friend and I were among the first amateur scuba divers?

I was 16 years old, then Bernice Petty, and visiting Seattle, Washington's Alki Beach in 1933. The sea-diving tank was made from the top of a water heater, and the hose to supply air was connected to a tire pump.

We'd carry 50 pounds of weight around our waists when in the water, and we did this from a rowboat at a depth of about 20 feet.

We stopped doing this when my friend almost drowned. I was trying to pull him into the boat and pump air to him at the same time.

—Bernice Weldon, Loveland, Colorado