

LIFE BEFORE 1950...FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Close your eyes and go back: Before the Internet or the MAC and PC's...
Before semi-automatics and crack
Before SEGA or Super Nintendo
Before the Millenium...
BEFORE the 1950's...
Wa-a-ay Ba-a-ck.....

I'm talking about:

Hide and Go Seek at dusk.

Sitting on the cold cement porch, bare-legged, bare-foot-- watching the world go by....
(Sometimes it didn't matter if the world went by or not -- if we had friends over and were playing
Jacks or Monopoly, SORRY!, Old Maid, Pick Up Sticks, Chinese Checkers, Double Solitaire,
Rummy...)

Flour tortillas wrapped up around frijoles and goat cheese from the delicatessen ...OH, those
heavenly 'burros!'

'Hidden House' Ice Cream.

Milk Shakes. Malteds. Sodas. Cokes. Ginger Ale. Root Beer. Green River. Remember floats?
(Just add a scoop of ice cream...)

'Cokes' from the soda fountain, flavored with syrups: mint, cherry, sometimes, even, chocolate.
Once in a great while, as a special treat, a Chocolate Eclair from Le Cave's Bakery. Ohhhhhh.

Sack lunches which provided one last BANG!, when the sacks were blown up and exploded.

And the games we played:

Mother, May I? Simon Says... Take three giant steps...

Red Light. Green Light. Red Rover...Come over...

(Sometimes 'around the corner' seemed very far away.)

Tag! You're IT!

Jaw breakers; all-day suckers. (Don't run with that in your mouth!)

Doublemint. Spearmint. Beemans. Black Jack. Denteen.

Running through the sprinkler ...

The smell of the sun and baby oil and chlorine...all to get that perfect tan.

Hour after hour spent on towels on the cement (or the grass) around Himmel or Wetmore Pools.

Cooling off in the water; then home, late, burned red-black, and soooo tired.

Once, watching Johnny Weissmuller swim the length of Himmel Pool in NOTHING FLAT!

Hiding from mosquitoes under a sheet when you slept outdoors,
In the early days whole families slept outside, frontyard or back, it didn't matter... just wherever there was room for a cot, or a swing, or anything to sleep on ...No A-C, then...

Remember the sharp, won-derful smell of the desert after the rains ... when the creosote (greasewood) bushes were everywhere in every vacant lot. Did anything ever smell that CLEAN, again?

Milk came to the door and sometimes, when it was freezing cold, the cream was pushed 'way up high with the cap sitting at a crazy angle... didn't it come in a Shamrock Dairy truck?

During the Big War (WWII, of course):

We collected tires and paper and metal... we rolled up the tinfoil (from sticks of gum and our parents' cigarette packages -- we had to soak off the paper backing from the foil, first)... into balls for the War Effort -- some of us constructed foil balls T-H-A-T BIG!

Trying to knit socks and scarves, and helping tend Victory Gardens...

Counting red cardboard 'points' for buying beef and pork... no points needed for rabbit or horse meat...yes, 'they' said that somebody in the neighborhood ate that! (Brrrrr.)

Turning in coffee cans full of fat to the butcher.

Buying Savings Stamps for a quarter a piece, and sticking them into books to be turned into Savings Bonds. Bonds cost \$18.75, and in ten years they would be worth (wow!) \$25!

The deafening sound of WWII bombers, from Davis-Monthan, flying overhead on their way to save the world for us. It was so hard to hear on the telephone when they thundered overhead in what seemed like their ga-zillions. Of course, we hadn't invented the word 'ga-zillions,' yet!

AND...

When going downtown seemed like going somewhere....

Our folks had only one car, usually, so we could walk downtown, or take the "Number 3 - 6th Street" bus. It went right by THS.

Going to a downtown movie: The Rialto, The State, The Lyric, The Fox, The Plaza.

Practising 'hanger-clicking' in the shops, or pressing our noses up against the display windows at Levys, Jacomes, Steinfelds, Lerner's, T. Ed Litt, Walgreens, Woolworths, Kress, Porter's Western Wear, Patania's, Howard and Stofft, The White House, Penny's, Sears, Monkey Wards.

Putting our feet into the X-ray machines in the shoe stores and watching our bones move in a green field when we wriggled our toes, in store, after store, after store...

SPRING:

And off came the leather shoes. Blissfull bare feet happy and free in the Bermuda grass.

Easter eggs hidden under saguaros in the desert; sometimes solid with beautiful green grass and flowers. Our desert wildflower show; especially won-derful because it was so rare.

SUMMER:

early rising to do chores, black umbrellas open to keep the sun off (colorful ones didn't seem to be available, or used.) Houses kept dark, swamp coolers on...we all padded around inside barefoot, Moms and Pops, too. Thunderheads over the Catalinas, and rain coming down as though Someone had turned on a faucet. We didn't know to call the Summer rains 'Monsoons', then. Fried eggs on the sidewalk at the corner of Congress and Stone... could we beat Phoenix and Yuma in getting ours cooked first? Fourth of July fireworks in the BIG stadium at UA.

FALL:

school starts (right after Labor Day,) and it is still VERY hot; but, there is something in the wind that says COOL is on the way: New clothes, new shoes, new Indian Head tablets with sharp, new yellow pencils. New beginnings. Knot-hole gang football tickets for THS and UA games.

WINTER:

ahhh, here come the Snow Birds; Halloween; Thanksgiving; Christmas; New Year's; La Fiesta de los Vaqueros (girls could wear pants at school!)... remember the grandest 'NON-mechanised Rodeo Parade in the WORLD?' Parades, in those days, went right down town along Stone and Congress and drew huge crowds. (We even marched from THS to the center of town and had a rally or two there, ourselves...the cheerleaders and the Pom-pom girls led us while we cheered!) Valentine's Day; Washington and Lincoln's birthdays...no such thing as Presidents' Day;

Remember:

Climbing trees. Picnicking and swimming in Sabino Canyon. Following the Mt Lemmon highway regularly to see how far the CCC 'boys' had gotten, by now...and, later on, the federal prisoners who glared at us as we drove by, (while we stared back at them) Eventually, we could go all the way to Summerhaven when the AZ Highway Dept finished the job. AND, there was SNOW there in the Winter, and always pine-scented breezes the rest of the year. Glorious cool up in the mountains..

Skate keys? Essential tools of childhood: hanging around our necks on leather thongs, or on old shoe-strings. Skating on sidewalks, eternal scabs on knees from encounters with gravel roads. Much smoother surfaces on the wooden floor at the Skating Rink on Sixth St, just down the street from Mansfeld Jr. High School, where we had to rent skates so we wouldn't hurt the floor with our street skates. Remember the big mirrored ball going 'round and round while they turned off all the other lights, so the mirrored lights flashed around the room...and, the organ music? Over and over again, they played: THE SKATER'S WALTZ, THE BEAUTIFUL BLUE DANUBE, THE MERRY WIDOW WALTZ, while we stumbled, and twirled, and laughed..

Remember when there were just two types of sneakers for girls and boys (Keds, and PF Flyers) and the only time you wore them at school was for gym? (Whew....Those stinky sox in our lockers!)

And don't forget:

When it was considered a great privilege to be taken out to dinner at a 'real' restaurant with your parents...El Charro could feed a family on so little money, and they used to present Almondado dessert, no charge, to the birthday person. (*The last time I was at El Charro, for dinner on my birthday, I told my 'waitperson' that it was my birthday, and he wished me Many Happy Returns, period....this, in the '90's. Sigh.*) Caruso's for Italian food, where we learned about Lazagna. Had pizza been invented, yet? Not in Tucson, probably. Drive-ins for Cokes and hamburgers ... Homemade food: Pot roast. Onion sandwiches on white buttered bread. Avocados with salt, pepper and a little lemon juice. Chicken pie. Tamale pie. Fruit pies made from scratch, their crusts started as Lard! Canned fruit for dessert. Jell-O puddings and molded salads. Beefsteak tomatoes. Pinto bean soup first, then it became frijoles. Adults meeting annually to have tamale-making parties... 'Greencorns,' especially. Yumm.

We shared our treasure:

(Remember Arizona's 'FIVE C's?' Cattle. Citrus. Climate. Copper. Cotton.) Christmas boxes of delicious citrus fruit from Desert Treasures and Reid's Ranch out along Oracle, hand-selected by our folks so that only the best was sent to Aunts and Uncles in the East and Middle-west.

We had the best, we were Absolutely Sure of it!.

Those were our Golden times...

Take the time. Remember when, and smile.

Then let's see if this might be another Golden weekend to add to our collection..

---Inspired by nostalgia and several anonymous e-mails. mcb.