

A Typical Summer Day

Sisters, Roxane, Rhonda, and Rochelle lived across the street. Rhonda and I were closest in age and Roxanne a year older. Though Rochelle was several years younger, we included her in our activities and mischief. Seemingly endless days of summer were never dull, matched by the collective amount of creativity among us. We were eight or nine years old when we decided to become movie stars...

The Conner house had a covered concrete front porch with flowerbeds lining the front walkway; a shady, cool, place to play. Acquiring some beautiful dress-up clothes, former prom dresses of my older sisters and the Conner's young, beautiful mother, completed our wardrobe. Half the fun was determining who would wear what dress and who was going to be which movie star.

After getting dressed-up, we would climb into their Volkswagen Beetle parked in the garage, and our imaginations would take us wherever we wanted to go. Upon arrival, we traipsed to the front porch for a stunning show. With the assistance of the Conner's record player each star would perform by lip-synching our favorites, "To Know Him is to Love Him" and "Johnny Angel." We felt so grown up and beautiful.

Tiring of the life of a movie star and the rising heat, we would go inside for an afternoon of imaginary play with Barbie and Ken. Lacking doll furniture, we fashioned our own from crystal candy dishes and decorative ashtrays. A shoebox covered with a handkerchief made a beautiful bed and a curved candy dish made a fancy recliner for Barbie. Each of us could have our own dollhouse underneath a coffee table and end tables. It wasn't long before we moved on to something else.

It was time to dress up again and go shopping. Becky and Kay lived on the corner and had a manufactured cardboard play store. It was really neat with a checkout counter and register. The miniature boxes of cereal and food looked just like the real thing. We could spend hours under their carport setting up the grocery store and deciding who would be the grocer and who would be the shoppers. Then switching roles so that everyone could be the one to run the register.

As the sun began to set and the heat with it, we might head to the street to pop asphalt bubbles with our toes. During the day, the asphalt got so hot it boiled leaving tiny tar bubbles along the edge of the street. They actually made popping sounds as we squashed them with our toes. The gummy asphalt remained on our feet for days unless our Mother's insisted we scrub it off.

Some evenings we could hear the "mosquito" trucks on their way to our street. This meant they were spraying the city and we would have the momentary excitement of a fog of pesticide in our own front yard. As the truck made it's way down our street, we would run out into the grass toward the fog. Just as it came our way we would plummet to the ground into a huddled ball allowing the cloud of fog to slowly envelop us. To our disappointment the operator would tilt the unit upward, which was much like a theatre spotlight, to avoid our getting a direct hit of insecticide. I'm grateful for that today!

Many evenings Kay would bring her foam pillow and spend the night at my house. Two of us could easily fit in one bathtub (those were the days!) We discovered that we could create our own version of a "Tilt a Whirl" carnival ride in the bathtub. First, we'd take a bath. Then we let out the water and lathered down the damp sides and bottom of the tub with a bar of soap. When the tub was nice and slippery we sat back-to-

back, one having her feet at the front of the tub and one having her feet to the back of the tub. Counting as we alternated who would bend her knees allowed us to slide up and down the bathtub, and on the count of three slide past each other trading places and rotating to the opposite end of the tub, and start the process all over again. We were careful not to bump into the waterspout. One could say that when we came out of the bathroom we were literally “squeaky-clean.”

On those rare occasions when Mr. & Mrs. Conner hired a sitter for the evening we looked forward to Mrs. Moon coming and always asked her to make popcorn. At my house our popcorn was just a bag of kernels. Mrs. Conner bought the kind that came in a disposable foil skillet filled with kernels and it had a pleated foil cover that would expand and rise as the popcorn popped. Mrs. Moon invariably thought we were giggling with excitement over the popcorn. We were giggling because as she shook the foil skillet from side to side for the corn to pop evenly, the upper part of her arm moved one direction and the skin that hung loosely underneath swung the other direction. It didn't take much for us to find entertainment on a typical summer day.