

Time to relive the favorites of summer

July 5, 2015

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When we were kids, summertime meant: "Go outside and play."

Hopping on our three-speed Schwinn bikes gave us freedom. There was no need for helmets, no stranger danger. We could ride to the drugstore and get a milk shake at the soda fountain. We could pedal to the playground, where we would find a friend, swing on the swings, and hang out till dark.

When we heard the jingle of the Jack & Jill ice cream truck, we'd grab a few coins from our allowance and run outside to be first in line. Then there was the decision to be made between the chocolate éclair and the Firecracker pop.

Our cousins lived nearby. Together we'd listen to the latest 45s, read Mad magazine, and play Monopoly and gin rummy while the aunts and uncles sat around the dining-room table and talked. As the sun went down and the kids started to whine - "Are we ever going to have dinner?" - Uncle Sid would lumber outside, drag the grill to the patio, douse the coals with lighter fluid, and pull out a package of Hebrew National hot dogs.

On family trips to the Shore, we would race to the sand while the adults unpacked the car. No sunscreen, no hats, no shoes. We'd sunburn and peel, sunburn and peel, throughout the summer. We couldn't wait to jump into the ocean, no matter what the temperature.

Then we got married and had children. Our kids gave us a reason to do our favorite things all over again.



We joined the community pool because we wanted to sit on the edge of the pool and chat with the other moms from the neighborhood while our kids splashed around. We wouldn't take the plunge until they begged us to put our heads under water so we could see them do a handstand.

If the ice cream truck arrived right before dinnertime, we didn't deny our kids, because we wanted ice cream, too. We'd stand in line with them, helping them choose, and then we'd ask them for a bite.

We brought our bikes out of the garage, filled the tires with air, and bought a baby seat for the back. This time around, we all wore helmets. When the kids graduated to two-wheelers, we taught them to stop at the stop signs and watch out for cars. We'd bike along the West River Drive or ride with them to the variety store to get a fresh bottle of bubbles or a new balsa wood glider.

When our children were young, we loved going to places like Sesame Place and Hershey Park. With a brave face, we'd climb the stairs of the tall water slide to show the kids it wasn't scary. We enjoyed the Muppet musical stage show as much as they did. Closer to home, we'd watch them wheel a mini shopping cart through the Please Touch supermarket, purchasing play food and empty boxes. At the Franklin Institute, we would lead the way down tight, dimly lit passageways through the chambers of the heart. We always enthusiastically boarded the huge indoor locomotive for the 10-foot ride.

We wanted our kids to spend time with their cousins, but now it involved coordinating calendars around summer camp schedules and family vacations. It required advance planning: We'd drive miles to each other's houses for a barbecue or plan field trips to a Phillies game, an amusement park, or the beach so we could all be together.

Now our children are grown. We don't yet have grandchildren. We have no excuse for childlike behavior, and we miss it.

When we hear the ice cream truck's song, we still get excited, but we don't run outside. Instead, we open the freezer and pull out a Haagen-Dazs Dixie cup with a little plastic spoon tucked into the lid. Sitting at the kitchen table eating it brings back fond memories.

Now we have bicycles with comfy seats and 18 gears and we love them, but by the time we load them into the car and get the water bottles, suntan lotion, and bike helmets, we're exhausted. It doesn't help that when we're riding, our husbands constantly warn us, "Car! Car!" They aren't quite as bad as those "professional cyclists" in head-to-toe Spandex who zoom past and shout, "On your left!"

At the beach, we wait until the ocean temperature is nice and warm before we wade in. We look out for jellyfish, stay where the lifeguard can see us, and reapply SPF 100-plus when we get out of the water.

We wanted to check out the new Please Touch Museum, but we couldn't find a kid to rent. We didn't get into the building until recently when we attended a fund-raiser there. We saw the carousel, but we couldn't ride it.

When Frozen came out, we didn't want to go alone to the movie theater to see it. We felt out of the loop with all the Olaf lunch boxes and Princess Elsa pajamas. Who is Elsa and why is she so cold? The next time our kids came home, we forced them to sit on the sofa and watch it with us on Netflix so we could see what all the fuss was about.

When a business trip took us to Orlando, we couldn't resist going to Universal Studios. It wasn't embarrassing to wait in line for the Harry Potter and Spider-Man rides without children in tow, but when we climbed aboard the flying couch for the Cat in the Hat Ride - "2 adults, please" - we felt like showing photos of our kids to prove we weren't stalkers.

It's not that we're not having fun anymore; it's just grown-up fun. Perusing the list of specialty summer cocktails and ordering the lemonade vodka freeze is pretty darn fun. So is going to the movies any night of the week without having to hire a baby-sitter. So, hey, ice cream man, please wait. There's a middle-aged lady chasing your truck down the street.