

From This Corner

Summer: and the Living Was Easy

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It is early in the morning down here on "the Corner" and it is one of those days that remind me of summer past. There is a cool breeze coming in the window. You can sense though that it is going to warm up rapidly. There was a time when a day like this would roll out before me without plan. School had concluded and the summer in all its glory was before me. It has been a long time since and summer days without agenda have been replaced with planning calendars with goals and tasks prioritized as to their importance. Usually there are enough of these to create a kind of agenda anxiety.

In those long one days there was the luxury of not having a clue as to the time. There was morning, afternoon, and evening only marked by our mother calling us home for the appropriate meal. It was that way for all the neighborhood kids. This was the day before organized summer sports and working moms.

Frequently the day would entail a few errands like riding my bike up to the post office or the corner store to get some grocery item for mom. Then it would be off to some adventure with my brother. Many times it would be a ten minute trek down the railroad tracks to Johnson's Creek to fish for blue gill, bass, bullhead, and an occasional pickerel. The only thing that could frustrate that would be that the hobos off the local freight train would be camped at the old fishing hole. We were not allowed to fraternize with them, and fishing would have to be postponed for another day.

If all else failed we would ask for an orange Popsicle, sit on the steps of the front porch, and slowly savor it making it last as long as possible. There was a real art in this that maximized the pleasure. It is hard to describe the entertainment this could provide, especially as it began to melt faster than we could lick. The sweet orange nectar would run down our arms and drop off the elbow onto the sidewalk. Soon the ants were sharing in the summer delight. Another few minutes could be spent watching them.

Yes, we had it perfected. Those were quintessential summer days. The conclusion would be a neighborhood ritual I have not experienced since. After supper it seemed as though everybody in my then small world would gather on their porches up and down Garland Street. Conversation would fill the evening.

Today there is talk of the urgency of finding some time off. Imagine that. The fact that it is urgent is a sad and telling fact. Even worse perhaps is the fact that most children in much of our country will never know the kind of summers we once experienced. Maybe that is why so many people have so little joy in their lives. They have no memories of a lazy, hazy summer.

The Psalmist once wrote: "It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter" (74:17.) I think God made the seasons for them to be opportunities for change. Might it be for the better if summer were not so much the same as the rest of the year? Of course, we adults will have to work, but why not go for some holy abandonment of our incessant agendas. An orange Popsicle will do, or an evening at the old fishing hole. And for the moment the living will be easy.