

My Life, Season 1

Memories of Growing Up

Games We Played at Grade School: This sub section is important because it graphically points out how far we have allowed our personal freedoms to be eroded. Wake up people!

Mumbley Peg: (Plain Geometry and targeting Practice) This game was played with our pocket knives. There were pocket knives and there were Barlow pocket knives. If you had a Barlow, you just had to win. I saw one or two, but they cost more than a dollar.

To play the game, a small wooden peg was driven into the ground until the peg top and ground were even. A circle about 2' in diameter was then drawn around the peg. We would take turns throwing our knives at the peg. The result was usually a miss and the knife stuck into the ground. From where the knife stuck into the ground, a straight line parallel to the blade was drawn across the circle. The part of the circle, not containing the peg, was eliminated from play. This would continue until a player stuck his knife into the peg, automatic winner, or the next player missed the ever decreasing space. The loser had to use his teeth and pull the peg from the ground.

By the time I was back in school in Hot Springs, knives were no longer allowed. Fear of hurting someone? No! Too many students were using them to carve their initials in desk tops.

Cowboys and Indians: This was a common recess game. Obviously it involved a lot of running and make belief shooting. A student or two might actually have a cap pistol (actually a revolver replica, but to us kids, everything was a pistol), otherwise sticks, fingers or cutout wood pistols were used.

War Games: We had a group of Americans and another of bad guys. The good guys simply tried to ambush the other guys – In this case the Japs or Krauts. The standard ambush site was around some corner of the school building or in a ditch. One guy would be behind a corner and when the “enemy” came into view, you would point your finger, stick, or wooden gun and call out, “bang, bang, you’re dead. This game was OK until the response back became, “clank, clank, I’m a tank”. Stalemate!

Dodge Ball: Everyone used to know how to play dodge ball. Now prohibited. Someone might get hit with the ball. I thought that was the idea. Dodge ball was mostly played as an organized play or PE event. Usually, during recess, everyone would be doing their own thing and you couldn’t get enough guys and girls together to play.

Jump Rope: At school, this was usually a girl’s game. Sissies you know. We boys would play jump rope at home. It will work your legs more than a little bit.

Marbles: (More Geometry) Boys only. Girls simply wouldn’t get down in the dirt at school. The king of the circle would be any boy that had one of those most prized aggies (marble ground out of agate rock). When I was in the first few grades WW II was in progress and glass was expensive. Some marbles were made of fired glazed clay. Log rollers (Large $\frac{3}{4}$ ” marbles) were never allowed to be used as the Taw. Taw – the marble used to shoot at marbles in the ring.

Marbles are now a no-no. CPSC – you might swallow one or get it caught in your wind pipe. Do people still play Chinese checkers? I haven’t seen that marble game in a very long time.

Jacks: (Eye Hand Coordination) unless you were at home and out of view of prying eyes, this was a girl's only game. At home, I could beat the girls. I could make it from onesies to tenses and not miss a beat. Jacks may be another of those swallowing hazard prohibited games.

My First Bicycle: This was more than just a bicycle, it was my bicycle. To acquire this beauty took some ingenuity and smart trading. I started out with a ball of kite string. I traded that for a raggedy old baseball. The baseball went to acquire a bat that had hit as many rocks as balls. Next in line was a catcher's mitt from the 1920's. No I don't really know the date, but the leather was as dry as a mummy and had cracks and tears.

The greatest trade was getting the bicycle for the catchers' mitt. Boy was she a beauty. It only had one flat tire. During the war, tubes were not to be had, but you could buy Camel rubber patches. The patch box lid even had a rasp surface to buff the tube. I think it had one fender and the New Departure rear end brake spring was broken. One pedal tread was missing and it just had the post remaining. The only way to stop was to jump off or drag your feet.

Dad had tube patch for the car, so I was able to get a patch. I and my friend a couple of houses away got the rear wheel off and figured how to get the coaster rear end apart. I managed to come up with a few pennies to buy a new spring. My friend and I finally figured out how to get all of those rear end parts back in the right order and behold, I had wheels of my own. Note: The brakes were multiple disk like modern airplane brakes.

I had ridden Pauls' bike, but by myself, I could not get on and go on a full sized boy bike. As a matter of fact, that is the only sized bike I had ever seen. I could start on a slope, but I had to stick my right leg under the boy bar and ride sideways.

Eventually, I learned how to put the pedal in the right place and step up and over while cranking the bike forward. Then all my too short legs had to do was to catch and push the next pedal to reach the top of its arc and my foot. Fortunately the bad pedal was on the left. I mounted from the right.

German POW Camp: There was a German POW camp right outside Murfreesboro. I learned years later the Geneva Convention requires POW's to be held in an area similar in topography to where they were captured.

I had seen the camp a lot of times. It was next to the road that went to a good fishing place up river. Frankly it only had a barbed wire fence. I now suspect the POW's were happy to be there and not on the German front lines.

I'm sure there were more things they had to do other than the one I know, but during peach season, they were used to pick peaches at the huge Highland peach orchard. If one tried to escape, he had a rope loop put around his neck and the rope was tied to the truck. He had to jog behind the truck, all of the way back to the POW camp. Falling was not an option. Yes, all of these roads were also gravel.

I understand, after the war, a lot of the POW's applied for and were able to stay in the US. I do not have any details on that and I'm not researching anything but my stuff.

Epilog: There was also a US Citizen Japanese internment camp in AR. After I retired from the USAF, I learned of it. One day, during my traveling job, I saw a sign identifying the rural spot in south AR. I went buy for a look see, but then, it was just open land. It has since become dedicated space.