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Generation Comparisons

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Family plays a tremendous part in everyday society. The problem now is society is steering away from the traditional nuclear family and turning into single family homes. According to Dr. Montell, "the more important the concept of family is to a culture, the more folklore the families in the culture will have surrounding them". Families play various functions in our society. It allows us to know our past generations and it creates unity within the family structure. The family also gives each member their own personal identity and freedom to choose. Families are the base this country was built on. I was blessed to have parents that believed in the idea of family. Even though my parents are divorced, they still taught me the values of family and how important it is to have family. Because of the changes in family life and society, my dad and I experienced different and challenging childhoods.

Instead of playing in his neighborhood and going to malls, Dad grew-up as a Navy brat and moved from base to base throughout his childhood. Dad's favorite game to play was kick the can. This was one of the few games Dad was able to play because he lived on a naval base. Dad was also known as the "Turtle King" because he caught the most turtles on the base. Most of the places he stayed were located next to the beach, so each boy would compete to catch the most turtles and whoever caught the most turtles, won. Thus crowned the "Turtle King". Next, they would number the turtles and race them at the military club and the adults would place bet on the turtles. Dad said sometimes he would even find turtles with numbers on them from the previous year.

Because the Navy base had so many kids, there had to be other things for the kids to do to stay occupied. On Easter, they had Easter egg hunts and received a visit from the Easter Bunny. There were also pic-nics and beach parties for Fourth of July. Everyone would enjoy volleyball, throwing frisbees, and

roasting marshmallows. A Cub Scout chapter was created on every base and Dad was chosen as the honor scout for the entire base. Being a Cub Scout was what Dad enjoyed the most. He went to Camp Freedom, for international scouts, for two weeks on a train with about 50 other boys. The camp stopped at different locations on its journey across Europe. This was a big deal because there were no parents allowed and it was his first time away from home.

Dad was stationed in Naples, Italy, but there were many other places he traveled with his family. During the summers, they would go on 30 day tours across Europe. He went to Casablanca, Morocco and to Barcelona, Spain. In 1958, they sailed up the Adriatic Coast of Italy and stopped at the various ports along the way. During this tour, they traveled through Austria, Germany, France, and Switzerland. He went to the World's Fair in Brussels, Belgium. The Hague in Holland caught his interest the most. The Hague is a miniature city which has moving cars and trains, boats that float up imaginary rivers, and every type of building one could imagine. Again, the city was a complete miniature replica of other cities throughout Europe. Each member of the League of Nations donated certain parts to this little city. The final cruise took him through Tripoli, Libia; Istanbul, Turkey; and Athens, Greece.

Dad said there were several things he enjoyed most about traveling around the world. He liked St. Peter's Cathedral where he was blessed by the Pope. He saw the castles in Germany and one was a replica for the castle at Disney World. There were times when Dad would be allowed to sail on aircraft carriers and he would watch the planes take-off as practice for war. Dad saw the active volcano which destroyed the ancient city of Pompey. Finally, Dad enjoyed seeing the Acropolis in Athens, Greece which is the scene for many mythological legends. He toured various museums throughout Europe and he visited many of the World War I and II battle fields.

Dad was able to experience a world that many people only dream of. He by no means had a normal childhood or at least what most people would consider to be normal. He did receive a wonderful education and experienced things he could not have learned in school. Even though Dad's childhood did lack normality, he still played baseball, softball, and tennis when the opportunity arose. According to Dad, there was nothing he would have changed about his childhood adventures.

I, on the otherhand, did have a normal childhood or at least what I considered to be normal. I grew-up in Hillwood Estates here in Bowling Green. Our house was located on a wooded lot with a fresh water creek across the street. Unlike my Dad, I was able to climb trees, ride my skateboard, and play with the local kids. We played a variety of games. Our favorite game was hide and go seek, if we had enough people. I also enjoyed playing dodgeball, four square, and kick the can. If you are not familiar with four square, then I will explain the game. You draw one 5x5 (feet) square on the street, then make a cross in the square to create four squares. Using a basketball and at least two people, you bounce the ball into each other's square. The object is to hit that person's square without them returning the ball. We even played games that are still recurrent today. Freeze Tag was popular along with Mother May I. We also enjoyed Simon Says, Red Light/Green Light, and Cowboys and Indians.

Once I started junior high, I did not have the luxury of traveling across Europe like my Dad did. My friends and I usually went to the mall or roller skating for fun. Of course at the roller rink, we took part in couples skates, speed skate racing, and doing the hokey pokey. The big thing to do at the mall was to hang out in the arcade. This was where the boys usually went. Sometimes we would go shopping or just sit at the tables and talk about boys. When it was someone's birthday, the girls in that click would go to a slumber party at that person's house. The parents would usually take us to get pizza and then we would go back to

their house. Once it was dark, we would play truth or dare and tell ghost stories until someone would get scared. If we felt really crazy, then we would put some girl's underwear in the freezer and see how long it would take for them to figure it out where their underwear was. There was one time we put a girl's underwear in the meat freezer and it was at least three months later before she found it.

Needless to say, she was not very happy with us when she found out. It seems that everyone had a teen idol while growing up. I would rush inside from playing to watch Donny and Marie on Sunday nights. This was my favorite show of all times and I even had every album they ever produced.

Once I made it to high school, going to parties was the in thing to do. It seemed that there was always an excuse to have a party, no matter what the occasion was. Someone would throw a party just because it was a nice day out. At the parties, we played truth or dare, spin the bottle, or seven minutes in heaven. The parties usually consisted of 50 to 100 people and there was always a fight. Another school in that district would hear about the party and come over to cause trouble. Of course someone was always drunk and someone always ended up getting hurt. The police would come and break up the party. To keep the party from being busted, we would sometimes have a bonfire out in the country, so the noise would not disturb anyone. If we did not go to parties, there were always football games to attend along with other school related events. I was fortunate to be involved in many school activities. I was President of Student Council and a cheerleader. These two events kept me busy and added to my social life. I was also able to go to several summer camps for cheerleading and student government.

I am sure everyone has different experiences in their childhoods that they remember and enjoyed the most. Mine were the times outdoors, scuffing my knees and getting my hands dirty, in other words, just being a kid. My Dad had

experiences that so few people will ever have from collecting turtles to traveling through Europe. These were experiences he has never regretted having and he enjoyed them to their fullest potential. Even though my childhood was different from his, we were able to grow up with a family that truly loved and cared for us. But the nice thing is, all these different experiences made us the people we are today.