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Then and Now

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Sexual revolution, Viet Nam, school consolidation, Go-Go Boots, and fish-net hose were the surroundings of growing up a teenager in the 60's.

Being the middle of six daughters, and being raised very strict Baptist, we were not allowed the freedom that a lot of my friends experienced during that period. The big social activity during high school years was attending ball games at home and away. For away games, a bus was taken to the out of town games, called the Pep Bus. I always wanted to be a part of the group that attended all of the games, but our parents did not allow us to participate. I also greatly desired to sport a pair of white Go-Go Boots, of course the Baptist restrictions did not allow such.

Money was very tight for our large rural family, thus we grew the majority of our food. My mother also made all of our clothes that we wore. When I was a Freshman in High School, I enrolled in a Home Economics Class. During the summer, we had a home project that required the instructor to visit our home to review. I chose sewing as my project, creating new dresses to wear to school the next year.

Back then, we also had to purchase all of our text books. I owned a cow that calved rather timely to sell before school started, thus allowing cash to buy books and supplies for school. Mini

skirts were all the rage in the 60's. You guessed it - Baptists were required to look different with longer skirts. Desiring to be a normal teenager, I simply rolled my skirts at the waistband, thus creating a much shorter version of the regulated Baptist length. I also wore fish net hose that made me feel wonderful. I don't know why the Baptist approved, actually I believe it had more to do with an economic effect. Fish net hose with a cotton texture lasted much longer than nylons.

During the school year 1959 - 1960, my family moved from Barren County (Hiseville area) to Warren County (Smiths Grove area). I was in the first grade, my sister Wanda, was in the sixth grade. Wanda experienced peer pressure when she observed that all of the Warren County students were wearing penny loafer shoes. The style in Barren County was black and white oxford shoes. Wanda informed her classmates that the shoes she wore were "special" shoes, that she had polio when she was much younger. We teased her in later years about her polio shoes, but she didn't think it was funny at the time to have to make up such a tragic story.

We also chuckle at photos in our high school yearbook with our hair styled in the famous "Mary Tyler Moore Flip" (curled up on the ends). I worked very hard to achieve that look by sleeping on huge brush rollers nightly.

Our long summers consisted of writing letters to our closest friends. It would be three long months before we would see each

other again. We helped in the garden from planting to preserving the food. By the time the last potato was stored for the winter, we looked forward to the first day of school.

Playtime activities in our household of six girls included playing house. My sisters and I would dress our baby dolls and visit each others houses (rooms). We had make-believe husbands that were always away at work. Our imaginations created the finest of homes, complete with laundry chutes, and maid service. We even played church, where we lined up chairs out on the lawn under a shade tree to form the pews. We then packed our babies and diaper bags (an old purse) into church. Cuddling our babies, we sang from "The Heavenly Highway Hymns" as our beautiful squeaky voices sang "Amazing Grace." We only had singing services unless a male cousin was present, then we made him the preacher.

On Sunday afternoons, we would take the horses and ponies for a jaunt around the farm. My favorite was the fastest horse that really made me feel free with my hair flying in the wind.

We also played softball out in the pasture field. Dodging the meadow muffins (cow manure) added to the excitement of getting on base.

The only deck of cards in our house were homemade from cracker boxes. We diligently cut precise brown squares, then numbered each card. We then played Authors - now called Go Fish.

We also spent hours cutting up old catalogues and magazines for

paper dolls. We gave our models numerous outfits and families. We even cut out a car, truck, house and barn for our paper families.

A typical day began at 5 a.m. to milk the cows by hand, feed the pigs and chickens before catching the school bus at 7:30 a.m. We arrived home from school at 3:30 p.m. I quickly changed into old clothes to carry in the firewood, gather the eggs, do the evening milking, eat supper and do homework. We did not have a television until 1968 when I was fifteen. My favorite T.V. shows were; I Love Lucy, The Beverly Hillbillies, and Bewitched.

Most of my elementary school years, I took a sack lunch that consisted of a tuna fish sandwich and a moon pie. I bought a carton of milk at school for five cents. Tuna fish and a moon pie everyday, five days a week for years is the reason I gag at the thought of a moon pie to this very day.

I was a sophomore in High School when our hometown school, North Warren was consolidated with Richardsville and Bristow. I remember one of our neighbors started a petition against the consolidation. His comment was, "You take the High School away from Smiths Grove, and the town will be dead as Rocky Hill" (a nearby town that had a railroad crossing and a general store). All opposition to consolidation was not successful, so I started my Junior Year of High School in a brand new school (Warren East High). I felt really strange not knowing everyone, and learning new schedules to classes. I rarely saw my old friends of ten years

until we were on the bus to and from the new school, as we prepared for our different careers. My old friends were interested in Nursing, VoTech, or College Prep, while I pursued an interest in business subjects to prepare for the secretarial field.

There was much whispered conversations about who "did it." The girls with a bad reputation (trashy girls) did it. The cheerleaders "did it." Obviously, one of the Seniors "did it" as we noticed during P.E. class that she was getting very chubby. She delivered her baby during Christmas break. She did not return until our graduation in May.

I started dating at fifteen with a young man that I met at church. For almost a year, my parents allowed him to visit me on Saturday nights. We watched T.V. in the family room with my little sisters present. Finally, at age sixteen, we were allowed to go out on real dates, but my curfew was set at 9:30 p.m. All the complaining in the world could not convince my strict parents that we never got to see an entire movie. The movie ended at 9:30 or 10:00 p.m. We always missed the ending unless we saw a Sunday matinee. At the ripe age of sixteen I received a sweetheart ring and an engagement ring the same year. I was a Senior in High School when I got married on December 27, 1970. Although we dated for two years, I reminded my fiance on a regular basis that Christians wait until marriage to "do it." I had enough credits to graduate at mid-term, so I continued to go to school for two weeks into January,

then settled down to married life.

The summer that I graduated from High School, May 1971, I also attended the funeral for a young man, only a few years older than myself, that had graduated from my old High School. He married his high school sweetheart, and they had a son. He was killed in the Viet Nam War. There was a line of people outside the Funeral Home. The entire town turned out to pay their respects to a young man that gave his life for his country.

I am glad that my children's teenage years were more positive and active than my own. I was determined to give all three a normal childhood and teenage years. We encouraged them to participate in sports, school clubs, have sleep-overs and enjoy their growing up years. The variety of activities that they participated in included: Little League Softball, Basketball, Girl Scouts, Cheerleading, FHA, FFA, Pep Club, Kids Team, Yearbook Staff, Welding Team, Foreign Language Club, Band, Beta Club, and Proms.

My son had sleep-overs that turned into a camp-out by the pond to frog gig and fish all night by a campfire. The girls had slumber parties, watching videos, playing games and giggling until the wee hours of the morning. They attended Conservation Camp and Girl Scout Camps. I not only chauffeured Mom's Taxi, I co-sponsored many activities and supervised field trips. They enjoyed swimming parties, skating parties, or a summer beach party with friends.

Competition was fierce as they competed in many activities in

large high schools. Although they were allowed more freedom than I experienced, rules were set and met.

A strong work ethic was also instilled. The two oldest children held after school jobs while in high school, yet maintained good grades and participated in various activities.

Teens in the 90's are confused with so much being offered. Problems of teen drinking, drugs, violence, and sexual activities abound that did not exist in the 70's.

It makes me want to take a step back in time. Let's lower the hemline to traditional Baptist lengths and set stiffer curfews. Our high-tech society has achieved a high level of stressed, latch-key children, with so many opportunities and little supervision. Sadly, the majority of the teens are not surrounded by the love of traditional family values that we took for granted. That is why I feel the need to be reminded of where we came from, to set traditions to be passed on for generations to come, to increase the value of life.