

Summer Vacation

By Mike Harris

I never had a summer vacation until I retired at age sixty-two.

During my early years when I lived with my parents on a farm, summer was a busy time. When school was out my father assigned certain work each day. Please do not get the idea that I was in any way abused. The assignment usually, if I applied myself, never took more than half a day. The rest of the day I was my own to spend in dreaming, fishing, or swimming in the creak that was a part of the farm. "Son, would you hoe six rows of corn to-day?" "Sure," was always my answer, knowing that dad would look at what I had done and would compliment me that evening at the dinner table if the chore was properly done. Sometime he would say, "Come with me to-day," and those times were precious, because he would talk about the land and its inhabitants, and while I helped, he was teaching. It was never boring, it was always fun, and points were made with illustrated stories. Even when we left the farm and lived in the city, he contrived, when school was out, to have something for us to do. "Idle hands become the devils work shop," was a usual comment in our home.

Since I retired at sixty-two some thirty-three years ago, my wife and I have had many "summer vacations." Our two children left the nest and we were free to do as we pleased, only constrained by our financial circumstances. We did a lot of traveling with trailers; over time we owned three different trailers, the last one a thirty-two foot "Holiday". Most summers were spent in Colorado, winters in Florida, spring and fall in Pennsylvania. These were glorious years with trips to the West Coast, to Alaska, cruises, and a whole year camping in Europe. We were really enjoying our golden years. When my wife's health started to fail it all came to an end. Not much fun all alone; my partner had some three and half years of a hard time. The nursing home took one quarter of a million dollars. When the state took over, they left me with the house and ten thousand dollars.

Eighty-eight and start all over. No brag, my daughter was a big help, my son settled here in Denver also very supportive, had his family. I tried not to become a burden. I have managed my finances with care and moderate success, no debts and independent. Like most near the end I submitted to the entreaties of family. After much self-search and lots of conversation, I came to Denver, and Windsor Gardens. Nothing is free, one must pay for everything, not necessarily in money. It has been a real adjustment, but I have always been able to adapt to my circumstances and am trying to make this also a happy part of my retirement and the memories of twenty-six Summer Vacations are sustaining.