

FAVORITE HOBBIES

by Mike Harris

In thinking when my lifetime hobbies started I have to go way, way back to when I was eight years old. To an event which took place that affected me then and even now. My father saw me reading a "Tom Swift" paper back novel. He asked to see it. What happened started me reading good literature. He introduced me to Jules Verne, James Fennimore Cooper, "The Jungle Book", Shakespeare, and others of their stature, this while we still lived on the farm.

Two years later when we relocated to the city and I discovered the neighborhood libraries which were free, I really became hooked. I became a Reader, and here I have to add I also became a Traveler.

New York City transportation was just a nickel to a destination and another nickel to return. This gave me access to many museums and free concerts and a multiplicity of cultures. The kids I met in school usually would talk about upcoming events that they would be excited about that were free, and with two nickels for transportation I put their world at my doorstep. New York City was a cornucopia of exciting events well within the reach of a boy who made himself available to run errands that would net him the equivalent of at least two nickels every week. I will never forget The New York Museum of Natural History, The Bronx Zoo, The Museum of Art, the free concerts in Central Park, all available for two nickels for transportation.

I guess I should also mention here that age ten I was tall, skinny and given to liking my own company. I also basked in the approval of my father and mother when I described to them where I had been and what I had seen or done.

Being a reader I took to reading almost indiscriminately. Adventure, where I visited in their books far off places, biographies of famous people, historic, political, scientific, etc. History, especially Jewish History, Biblical tales. In the libraries I would read about new inventions and improvements on everyday machines in magazines. All this for just my time or two nickels for transportation. Yes, maybe I did not know much about sports, but I knew Jack Dempsey was the heavy weight champion world class fighter, I was well aware that the Yankees and Dodgers were baseball teams.

I really found out that I was a well-rounded teenager at thirteen or fourteen years of age, all my education had not come just from public school. My father was always ready to listen when I asked questions and always gave answers with story illustrations that gave relevance to the here and now, anchoring his explanation to everyday living. He also taught awareness of danger in everyday living. Because he taught both my brother and me how to recognize dangerous situations, both my brother and I became survivors. We both almost always recognized unusual conditions and learned to cope. He taught "Street Smarts" and city survival skills.

So the hobbies of reading and travel formed in large part our retirement. I was very

fortunate in my choice of a marriage partner, all helped by my two hobbies.