

School's Out!

By Marilyn Reeves

Remember those sweet halcyon days of our youth, when Summer Vacation started the day after Memorial Day and lasted till the day after Labor Day? Somewhere along the line, somebody decided to change all the calendars, so that nowadays kids don't have that same certain three months of freedom as we did back then.

Remember that last day of school at the end of May, when you sat at your desk watching the hands of the clock slowly – oh, so slowly – work their way around to 4:00? Then the bell would ring that one last time, and a cheer would go up and all the kids would rush to be first out the door! We couldn't wait to step out of that classroom and into the warm, welcoming arms of June.

There would be swimming and hiking and bicycle rides, and lazing under the shade of a tree. While the boys were playing softball down at the park, we girls would play out in the backyard making hollyhock dolls, turning cartwheels, and wriggling our toes in the soft green grass. We'd clamp our roller skates onto our Buster Browns, and tighten them up with a key. Then, careful of the cracks in the sidewalk, we'd ride down the hill till we got to the bottom, where we'd grab hold of the trunk of a tree in order to stop ourselves from rolling on into the street.

At least once a week, we'd stuff our gear into our baskets and ride our bikes out to the Salida Hot Springs Swimming Pool. We'd swim and dive and splash around until our skin began to prune. Then we'd dry off and put our clothes back on, letting our hair dry in the warm breeze during the ride back home.

When we were in Junior High a group of us kids would sometimes hike around the backside of Tenderfoot Mountain – the one with the big, white S on the front – all the way up the gully to where a small waterfall came cascading down. And then, hot and tired, we'd work our way back down again. After a long day of hiking, it was time to head for home.

On Sundays my family would pile into the back of Dad's jeep and he'd take us somewhere up in the high mountains where we gals would roam around, hunting for wild strawberries and tiny white violets while he would fish in the stream. Once he'd caught his limit, we'd build a campfire and have a picnic, competing with the ants and the blue jays and chipmunks for our food.

As the remainder of summer vacation wore on, my friends and I continued to play, but it no longer held quite the same luster and sense of excitement as it did during that first month of June. And by the time August rolled around, we began longing for the sound of the bell, as our thoughts turned once again toward school.