

Goodbye Grade 7

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The last few days of school in 1963 were made memorable by an atmosphere of high anticipation, paralyzing fear, and the overall buzz of excitement that accompanied the breathless, shimmering heat.

Our classroom was a sauna. Our hair was damp, our arms stuck to the paper and there was a permanent lineup at the water fountain. The normally good-natured teachers became irritated at the slightest provocation.

Our geography class was studying Switzerland and one day our teacher brought in slices of Swiss cheese and pieces of chocolate for us to try. By the time the plate reached the last kid, the now limp cheese had little oily drops on top and the rich delicious chocolate pieces were almost a puddle.

Games in the schoolyard continued as usual. We divided up into teams for baseball which was my favourite sport. To my delight, my team included a Grade Eight teacher, an athletic nun who was a wicked batter and sprinted around the bases with her black veil flying behind her.

During the last week, school buses picked us up and took us to Hogs Back Park for our school picnic where we ran three-legged races, played tug-of-war, dodgeball and generally wore ourselves out in the heat.

Then, on the last day of school came the moment we had been dreading - report cards were handed out. The results were either "pass" or "fail". My friends and I huddled in a group, waiting anxiously for our names to be called. "I think I'm going to be sick. I know I flunked," moaned Judy. "If you flunked, I did for sure." I told her. "Your marks were higher than mine. Now I feel sick too". Finally, with a huge collective sigh of relief, we realized that we had all passed. Next fall we would be kingpins of the school. We would be in Grade Eight.

Now we were free. We looked forward to swimming at Plant Bath, and Westboro Beach. There would be trips to Lac Philippe with a bunch of cousins. We would be packed into two cars passing each other occasionally, yelling, waving out the windows and singing "Wolverton Mountain" at the top of our lungs.

Sometimes carnivals would set up in one of the local parks, bringing a few rides, games of chance and cotton candy booths. One year there was a peanut parade, starring the dapper, and very famous, Mr Peanut. He wore a black top hat and monocle and threw out little packages of peanuts to the

onlookers. That would never happen in the 21st century – the risk of an attempted murder charge would be too great.

Judy's parents were both at work, so her house was a natural girls' gathering place. We could make popcorn, listen to Connie Francis records and watch “The Secret Storm”, “The Edge of Night” or other edgy afternoon serials. Of course, the boys we liked were an endless topic of conversation.

On quieter days, we could always bike to the Rosemount library and spend the afternoon curled up with a good book. It was a treat to sleep in late, waking up to the sound of a push lawnmower and the barking of a neighbour's terrier. These were the trademarks of summer in the 60s.

In only eight weeks, all this fun would come to an end when school loomed on the horizon, but for the moment, summer vacation seemed to stretch endlessly into the future and we could wait for the fresh, overall buzz of excitement that would mark the beginning of a new school year.