

Summer Games in the Sixties

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During the summer holidays back in the sixties, no one suffered from a lack of fresh air. My mom was home during the day and was delighted to have us out of her hair. Sometimes, particularly on a rainy day, we could be found lying around reading a library book or squabbling over Monopoly or Clue, but otherwise we couldn't get out the door fast enough.

We loved skipping with a single rope or double-Dutch to a myriad of cryptic chants and songs passed down from the older kids. Sometimes there were enough of us to create a lineup and if only two of us were playing, we tied one end of the rope to the telephone pole. When we got tired of skipping, we climbed a few steps up the pole. One curious variation was called "yogi" where a long piece of elastic was stretched between two kids who held it at ground, ankle, knee and increasingly higher levels while the others had to jump over, all the while chanting our version of a Japanese rhyme.

Lots of other games kept us busy and some worked out better than others. Hopscotch could be drawn on someone's laneway and markers ranged from pebbles to fancy tokens. Playing school usually ended in bitter arguments due to the overly strict teachers. "What Time is it Mister Wolf?" was all fun and games until one of the boys wore a Halloween wolf mask when it was his turn and sent a little kid screaming home. Neighbours' yards were common property. We thought nothing of going to a nearby laneway and throwing an India rubber ball up against the brick wall at the side of their house. No one ever came out and yelled at us.

Injuries were common. Gymnastics on someone's lawn was popular and resulted in the odd sprain. Those who were learning to ride a two-wheeler usually sported some degree of road rash and now and then someone would fall out of a tree.

We rounded up as many parents as possible to be spectators at our backyard plays, circuses and concerts. They sat with forced grins and cheered with wild applause when the show was over. We really thought the applause was because they appreciated our talent.

Hide and Seek in the dark, our favourite game, was played in late summer when darkness came early. We crept through backyards, behind garages, in doghouses (with the dog) and through bushes trying to stifle our giggles. Our

fun ended with our parents calling us in. Some whistled, some yelled and others sent the older siblings out to find us.

When we were bored we could knock on someone's door and ask if we could walk their dog. They always said yes. Then there was the corner store which was good for some red wax lips, Bazooka gum or maybe a Sweet Marie bar if we had ten cents. Or we could always run through the sprinkler.

Then, before we knew it, the goldenrod would appear in the vacant lots and fields. We all knew that meant that the new school year was closing in on us. We were sad only until the first day of school, when we could see all our friends once again, and begin a whole new season.