

A Perpetual Itch

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In the good old summertime...

Recipe for Summer

SOME RETIREES dread the onset of summer as much as they welcome the end of winter—there's no pleasing these folks when it comes to a change in the weather! So most of us in early stages of "senior citizenry" are struggling to find some way to enjoy life from one season to another in spite of the discomfort visited upon us by arthritis, allergies, and excess weight. For me, the solution has been my grandchildren and the friends who share much of the long summer days with them.

I recall fondly when my own children were in their grade school years and how much fun it was to go picnicking at the beaches and parks on weekends and holidays. Now, however, the drive to and from such places, plus the crowding and a decline in courtesy where people gather in large groups has squelched my enthusiasm for that sort of entertainment.

What to do then, after signing on to take care of my seven year old granddaughter during her long hot summer break? I began assessing all the options available and soon found that there were multiple activities available within the neighborhood. One of the handiest was the sidewalks. My doctor had urged me to walk for exercise and my granddaughter loved going for walks—bingo! As there is usually a friend nearby, it soon became a

common sight to see grandpa and two or three youngsters strolling around the neighborhood. We are also blessed to have an excellent hiking/biking trail within a block—another great opportunity for exercise with an added bonus just a short mile down the trail; a well-equipped playground with all needed facilities. Grandpa and the kids can be seen on the trail and in the playground several times every week.

OK, but what else is there to do? After all, you can't be walking all day long, can you? No, there is another wonderful option: swimming! Several families in the area have their own swimming pools, my granddaughter included. What better then than to take a mile walk to the playground, spend half an hour on the swings, slides, and other playground gear, then walk a mile back and go for a swim? The kids love it, and what's even more fun, they all love for grandparents to get in the pool with them.

I have found that kids' games which I played in the old swimming hole of my youth, have changed. Now it's something called "Shark" or "Marco Polo" as well as underwater gymnastics and ballet. Kids delight in teaching oldsters how to play these games, and to have us act as judges when they perform—just like in the Olympics!

Today's kids have a multitude of electronic gadgets, TV and TV games, plus bicycles, trampolines, swimming pools, backyard swings and slides, etc., yet they seem prone to boredom much moreso than I did at their age—and my big entertainment was fishing, climbing trees, and reading or listening to the radio. With so much to do, how could kids possibly be bored today? It is my suspicion that every generation has asked the same question.

There are many opportunities for grandparents to add quality to a child's summer activities. For instance, it isn't difficult to engage children in a game of "spelling", "history", or "arithmetic" at times when the weather is inclement—or just as a change of pace. Children love challenges, and a simple reward is often just the prize needed to get a spirited contest going among playmates. My own technique in these educational efforts is to get right in the middle of whatever is going on and be one of the players—with amazing results in creating unsuspected mental exercises that kids love. I wonder if my own grandpa.... #