

Looking back we enjoyed the best decades ever

by Mark Pavilons

Growing up today is much different than a generation ago.

We not only survived our childhoods, fraught with danger and stupidity but thrived.

For me, a late Boomer, there are fewer days ahead than behind. Instead of regrets of what may be and a somewhat curtailed life, there's been a lot of what was back in the day.

And boy were those days fun!

We've complicated life to an unbelievable degree, where schedules, timetables, Zoom calls and pay days are all encompassing. Grocery shopping, car insurance premiums and tariffs consume us today.

It wasn't always this way, not by a long shot.

I was dragged into existence kicking and screaming back in 1963 ?? great year for the Corvette, but not so great for JFK.

Experiencing the late 60s, along with the 70s and 80s, was a journey of discovery, fun, tailgates, drive-ins, Nerf football, and good, old-fashioned buffoonery.

As a pre-teen, the bike gang would gather on the street and head off, exploring, racing, living dangerously. Our bikes had banana seats and if we were lucky, one hand brake on long, curved handle bars. We never told our parents where we were going and had no idea when we'd return. Our stomachs and the occasion booming mom voice announcing dinner was our recall.

In Caledon, we rode without helmets down gravel roads. I remember plucking out stones embedded in my knees on several occasions. It was par for the course.

We'd return a little dirty and scuffed up sometimes, never really discussing our war wounds.

Kool-Aid was the drink of the day and our moms made gallons of the stuff.

We made balsa wood gliders that nose-dived to destruction soon after you spent your last dime. Youngsters all talked about sea monkeys, but few had the money to order them from the back of a comic book.

Hitting a tennis ball against the back of the house wall was the go-to boredom breaker.

We all tried to build a go-kart and often gathered all sorts of wood scraps, tree branches, bike wheels and the like. They never worked and looked like a mess, but we didn't care.

In high school, we evolved bell bottoms, jean jackets and running shoes were our official uniforms. For those males brave enough to stake their territories, shirts undone and rolled up sleeves were the norm.

The wealthy among us owned things like a Walkman that magically played the hits of the day on things known as cassettes. You could easily spot these people because the unit was proudly worn on the hip.

Others would entertain the crowd on boom boxes of various sizes, also churning out the top 40 for all to hear. We'd have to take

turns totting these things around due to their weight.

I wore aviator glasses ? much too large for my face, but boy were they cool. Long hair was the norm, and if it covered one's eyes, all the better.

We passed notes in class. I?had a habit of writing limericks and handing them to friends to break the monotony. And yes, I got caught a few times.

I loved pinball and was quite proficient at the first video games like Space Invaders and Missile Strike. I?recall the emergence of Atari and Commodore, and games like Pong and Pac Man.

We decorated our lockers inside and out.

Who went to the theatre on Tuesdays in 1985 to see Back to the Future, The Goonies, St. Elmo's Fire and Cocoon?

And music ? I firmly believe we Boomers witnessed the height of legendary rock bands.I recall vividly when songs like You Better, You Bet (The Who), Hold On Loosely (.38 Special), Tom Sawyer (Rush), Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap (AC/DC), Jessie's Girl (Rick Springfield) and Take it on the Run (REO?Speedwagon) hit the charts. All of these were in 1981 alone! Year after year, bands were making history and we bought records, tons of them.

The record shop was a social hub where you could spend entire afternoons flipping through albums.

We looked up to our peers who smoked cigarettes ? there was nothing cooler than having a small deck tucked into your t-shirt sleeve.

If the rotary phone or doorbell rang at home, we answered it.

Sure, a lot of those things were generational fads or transitions, but it was still neat being part of it all. And we saw it all ? learning the metric system, using calculators, using the first fax machines and flip-phones and the arrival of the Internet and that annoying dial-up squeal.

We peeled the labels off of stubby beer bottles.

Those are things all who follow today will never know. Simple pleasures all.

They described more than a generation or lifestyle ? they summed up a feeling and carefree way of life. They epitomized youth, friendship and fun.

I?wish someone could put together a collage of all those things in a cohesive online video. I'd watch it over and over again.

Now that I've surpassed 60, my thoughts are a bit scrambled. I?don't really have any long-term goals or bucket list adventures in the works. Cancer has put all that in limbo.

But I?do have the memories that marked a generation, something only a few remaining souls remember.

I am, like my fellow Boomers, the embodiment of a lost era, a historic period in our growth.

We may never be able to ?put another dime in the jukebox, baby,? like Joan Jett advised. But we can still love rock and roll.

We should be thankful we got to live through one of the best times in recent history. That's something we will take to our graves.