

Looking Back
by Lillian Klein

One day my young nephew asked me what my favorite fast food was when I was growing up. I replied that we did not have fast food. Mother cooked every day and we ate at home. When father came home from work we all sat down together at the table. If I didn't like what was put on my plate, I had to sit there until I got to like it or wait until everyone finished eating. Here are some other things that I could have told him about my childhood.

My parents never wore Levi's, set foot in a golf course, flew on a plane or had a credit card. Father had a slogan, "No cash, don't buy" or put it in layaway until it was paid. Children did a lot of walking. My parents seldom drove me anywhere within two or three miles and never to school even if it was raining or snow on the ground. There were no computers or hand held calculators or cell phones. We were required to memorize the time's tables at school and perform with nothing but pencil and paper. There was no such thing as a "social promotion". If you flunked a class you repeated that grade the following term.

We didn't have television until I was about twelve. It was, of course, black and white but you could buy a piece of colored plastic to cover the screen. The top was blue like the sky and the bottom third was green like grass and the middle was red. It was perfect that had scenes of fire trucks riding over the lawn on a sunny day.

A milkman delivered milk to our house door. In the winter the cream in the milk would freeze and push the cap off. The first one of the kids who woke up early would eat some of the cream before Mother caught us.

We had one telephone in our hallway and it was a party line. Before you could make a call you had to listen in to make sure that no one else was already on the line. If the line was open the operator would come on and ask, "number please" and she would connect you with the correct number. They were always polite.

I loved to go to the movies. They usually had a double feature plus a serial, a comedy, a newsreel and coming attractions. The cost was ten cents and we each got a penny for candy. Movie stars kissed with their mouths shut. Touching someone else's tongue with yours was called French kissing and they just didn't do that in movies back then.

You never saw the Lone Ranger; Roy Rogers or anyone else actually killed someone. The hero would just shoot the gun out of the bad guy's hand. There was no blood or violence. Parents were expected to discipline their children and respect grownups. If we didn't offer our chair to an adult or say please or thank you, we got a dirty look and knew what that meant. I learned something called "this hurts me more than it hurts you. After being threatened I can't remember ever being spanked. When you were sick a doctor actually came to your home. Mother would put out her fine linen towels for the doctor to use. If you grew up in that generation you may want to share some of these memories with your children or grandchildren. Don't blame me if they look incredulous. Growing up today sure isn't what it used to be in my day!