



SOUND MEMORY

by Dara Fromm Bunjon

The sound I hear at this moment is my heartbeat. A sound I could hear in any city at any time, but today it has to do with tension from work. It is moments like this I like to think back to the sounds of joy and laughter that permeated my childhood. Now these were squeals of excitement and glee in my neighborhood. I know it could be anywhere USA but it was Baltimore and it was on the street, in and out of alleys and our backyards.

Oh how we would entertain each other with games of make believe like castles and I was always the princess who was to be saved by the prince or I would be the damsel in distress laying across the railroad tracks waiting for Dudley Do-right. Hide and seek, dodge ball and the ever-popular rope across the street. Ahhh, you don't know that one? You gather a handful of mischievous children on one side of the street behind each other in a line and duplicate with more ruffians on the opposite side of the same street. Visually, picture a tug of war as the moon starts to rise and dusk fades to darkness. The only thing missing is the rope. The on-coming drivers see the children tugging and thinks there is a rope and screeches his brakes to avoid hitting the non-existing rope. At which time we all disperse, laughing, in whatever path seems the fastest getaway from the irate driver.

These were the days when being on the streets and in the alleys weren't much of a concern for parents. Though I did get punished for walking over the railroad bridge to my cousin's house near Carlin's swimming pool. I was a stupid kid and didn't understand that danger might lurk just ahead.

A sound known to all the children was the bell tingling on the Good Humor truck. Not only did this Pavlovian trained motley crew of children run to the gleaming white truck with colored pictures of chilled concoctions so did my dog, Taffy. My mixed breed canine with her cocker spaniel ears would wait patiently for her turn and her treat. Our driver knew exactly what Taffy wanted, the vanilla Dixie cup. Her tongue would lick

away, that cup would go up and down, scraping the cement pavement as she tried to get every last bit

Not so much the sounds, but the moisture of a historic water battle with the boys against the girls (although there were a lot of screams). It was like a scene from Laurel and Hardy. I would be over at Shirley Horowitz's house where there were tall hedges between her home and an apartment building. A bucket of water would hit us from over the hedges. I must admit, I started the whole water battle.

This is when "Real Lemons" first came out in the little plastic squeeze lemons. I filled my mother's empty bottle with water and squirted Dennis Weiner and, from that time forth, for 30 days and 30 nights, the battle continued escalating and culminating in a hose in the front door mail slot of one of the houses. Good old clean American fun until the hose - the parents put a kibosh to this epic water battle.

My world expanded when I got my two-wheel bike. We would ring our bells and put baseball cards in the spokes to make a rat tat tat sound. I remember going all the way to Liberty Heights on the bike. Eventually, the cool bikes had transistor radios, which would be virtually silent compared to the blasting cars of today. Before my bike, the world revolved around a 4-block area with kids galore. It was the baby boom and one didn't travel far for playmates.

The summer of the hula-hoop had us little girls twisting and gyrating on the front lawns. I can still hear the swoosh of the ball bearings traveling the circle inside those plastic hoops picking up volume with the momentum.

These are all sensory memories rekindled with a bell tingling, rat-tat-tat or a swooshing noise. My heart beat has slowed and tension alleviated as I remember the rapid heart beats of my youth running up and down the alleys playing tag or hide and seek or the infamous water battle of 1958.

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