

RANDOM REFLECTIONS: Glorious Beach Days!

By Kathryn Wishlow

Remember when we were young, and the weather affected the family's plans to have a day at the beach? It was usually a last minute decision, since Mom or Dad just looked out of the window at the sky, and announced, "Okay, let's go to the beach today!" Mom headed to the kitchen to make sandwiches and cut up raw vegetables. We children raced to our rooms to put on our bathing suits under our clothes, and grab our favourite towels. Dad went downstairs to get the cooler, flutter boards, pails and shovels, binoculars, a blanket, and folding lawn chairs.

Oh, the excitement! We were on our very best behaviour as mom made sure we were slathered in sunblock, and had our hats on. That race towards the chilly waters of Georgian Bay, and rigorously splashing the last one still standing, was epic. Our parents carefully waded in, cringing as that cold hit vulnerable parts. We played hard before lunch, knowing we would have to wait over an hour after eating before we could go back in again.

When you were dried off, and the shivering and teeth chattering stopped, the picnic food was devoured. We were so hungry. Fresh air and physical activity always enhanced your appetite. After lunch, we would spend that waiting hour either building

sandcastles or exploring the shoreline. I am sure we bugged our parents every ten or fifteen minutes to see if it was time to go back in the water. Once more lotion was applied, we went back to play in the bay until our fingers wrinkled, and Mom called us to come out.

The ride home was quiet. Often we kids would fall asleep. It was kind of sad helping Dad carry things back down into storage. Wet towels and sandy bathing suits were piled in the laundry. You never knew when the next "perfect day to go to the beach" would happen again.

This week I was invited to a new friend's place on Papineau Lake. I was told the beach area was shallow, sandy bottomed, and that the water was warm. I was really excited! I pestered another friend to come too, and she helped me pack two lawn chairs and beverages. It was only about a half hour north of Bancroft, but I had never been there before.

The beachfront at her cottage was perfect. We perched the lawn chairs close to the water, and for a moment, I was transported back in time. The lake was calm, with a slight, warm, onshore breeze. There were no bugs! It was quiet. The occasional dragonfly zoomed past us. A family of seven ducks paddled past, turned around and actually came up on the grass around me to

snack on bugs. I did not move.

I felt my eyes glisten with tears of joy when a loon paddled past with five tiny ones behind her. The moment she felt threatened, she gave a low pitched grunt, and the young all skittered at full speed towards her and hopped on her back. They were less than fifteen feet away from me. As I looked up at the sky, a bald-headed eagle was circling. That must have been what the loon saw, because when it flew off, she made a different sound, and all the little fluff balls jumped off her back, and scattered to play and chase bugs. Next time I will bring binoculars!

Even though my friends played in the warm, shallow water with floatation devices for hours, I was content to just sit and watch. I listened to their laughter, and the boats in the distance. I got lost in the reflections on the gently rippling water. The peace and beauty of a "perfect day at the beach" is not only invigorating to the soul in these difficult times, but very necessary.

(Kathryn Wishlow belongs to White Pine Writers Inc. Follow them on FaceBook or www.w.whitepinewriters.ca)