

RANDOM REFLECTIONS: Love long weekends!

By Kathryn Wishlow

I was trying to figure out at approximately what age, long weekends became significant to me. It might be different for every person, but I believe that I really had little understanding or concept of time until I was in about grade two. Likely attending school makes all of us more aware of calendars, holidays, weekends, and long weekends.

I was raised in the small town of Orillia in the 1960's, and there were less long weekends then compared to now. It seemed to take forever after the Christmas vacation, which included New Years, for the next break to arrive. Of course it was Easter, and that could be in either March or April. This was followed by the Victoria Day weekend celebration of the Queen's birthday, approximately the 24th of May.

It was always a childhood favourite! Why? Because it was one of two designated firecracker days, and regular bedtimes were waived. When I was in the earlier grades, my mother made snacks, gathered blankets for the kids, and lawn chairs for the adults. We would all pile into car, reeking of mosquito spray, and head for the highest point in the area to observe the fireworks display over Lake Couchiching. It was twice as spectacular seeing them reflected on the surface of the lake.

I suspect it was easier on my parents, too. No going early to fight for a parking spot, and no time wasted entertaining us rambunctious children. We had to wear our pyjamas under our coats, and would not need to leave the house until dusk. Later, the excitement rose as the slight delay after each "kaboom" left you wondering what was coming next. "Ooooo's and ah's" were followed by squeals of delight when falling sparkles exploded again and again.

Although it was disappointing when it was over, there was still the July 1st, Canada's birthday celebration to look forward to after school ended. Those fireworks were always the best! That signalled the real beginning of "summer holidays" and every school child's spirits were high. The end of summer was marked by the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto, and was followed by the "Labour Day" or September three day weekend, which meant back to school with a new classroom and teacher.

After selling our farm in Alliston, I have fond memories of moving to Bancroft, and taking the family to the fireworks here. My parents joined us, and we were all impressed by how good they were for such a small town. One year we watched them being lit in the park

from up on Eagle's Nest, just hoping to catch a breeze that would help lessen the black flies. Most of us understand the negative impact on wildlife and nesting birds that fireworks have. I know they are an expensive luxury for a small town, and the money could be used more beneficially if spent elsewhere. Firecrackers can be dangerous even when closely supervised. But, I am sure glad I got to watch as many displays as I did.

The Thanksgiving long weekend in October was the last three day break for a student to look forward to before having to write exams. That made November seem very long since the next time home from school would be the two week Christmas vacation. That left over two months with no long weekend. These days, there is nearly one three day weekend every month, compared to only five when I was young. Silly me! I still get excited at the mention of a long weekend coming soon ... ☹️

(Kathryn Wishlow belongs to White Pine Writers Inc., a local group of like-minded authors who encourage and support all facets of writing, editing and publishing literary efforts. She contributed to the book "The Art of... RePurposing Yourself!" Follow on FaceBook or www.whitepinewriters.ca) ☹️