

Stuff from childhood I can't get out of my head

By Gail Grenier Sweet © 2006

- Sitting on Pop's shoulders while he biked to the fishing pond in Taunton, MA (about 1952).
- Sitting on the porch swing on the big porch of the house on Bay Street in Taunton, MA (about 1953).
- Swinging on the flat board swing hanging from scratchy ropes at the bottom of the stairway to the basement in Grandma Hoerig's duplex in Wauwatosa, WI (about 1954).
- Feeling jealous of the girl down the block because she had *crutches* (about 1954).
- Scooting along the floor on my butt, like the girl down the block, who had polio (about 1954).
- Looking out the window and watching a neighbor lady yell and scream in the middle of 68th Street in Wauwatosa, right in front of Grandma's duplex (about 1954).
- Playing puppets early Saturday mornings with my friend Kathy Yeko, she from her bedroom window and I from the kitchen window of our upper flat in Grandma Hoerig's duplex (about 1954).
- Watching Mum play Jacks *really fast* on the seat of the sandbox in Kathy Yeko's back yard (1954).
- Grandma Hoerig rubbing my face off with a wet washcloth (about 1954).
- Crinoline slips scratching my face off (all through grade school, mostly on Sundays).
- Pretending I was a galloping horse (all through grade school, and occasionally beyond).
- Waking up in the dark to go fishing with Pop (all through early childhood and grade school).
- Pushing Peggy Potter into a puddle of mud because I was jealous of her new blue coat (about 1956).
- Holding Mum's hand and both of us skipping from the car to the theatre to see "Bambi" (about 1957).
- Feeling my first heterosexual yearnings from TV images, first for Fess Parker in "Davy Crockett," then for Clint Eastwood as Rowdy Yates in "Rawhide," and ultimately and most powerfully for Edd "Kookie" Byrnes in "77 Sunset Strip" (almost, but never quite eclipsed by my strange and powerful love for the rather paternal David Janssen as "The Fugitive").

- Sitting in a scratchy black rocking chair, singing “Oh la bebe” and squeezing my baby sister Sally so tight I was afraid I might hurt her (1957).
- Riding my green balloon-tire 20” bike really fast down the alley, over smooth dirt bumps and valleys (about 1958).
- Flying kites with my dad and once making a homemade kite with him with newspaper, balsa wood, and glue made of flour and water. I loved the tug of the wind on my kites (my whole childhood).
- The feeling of pride after selling 78 boxes of Girl Scout cookies all by myself (about 1959).
- The urge to kill, fighting my brother Danny bloody murder (all through childhood until I got breasts).
- Playing “Mrs. Reppandik” (a kidnapper game) with Carol LaVesser on her swing set (about 1959).
- Digging out dandelions with a screwdriver, along with Carol, for her parents, for five cents a bushel (about 1959).
- Holding Pepere’s hand while we “walked the town” in Madison, WI (about 1959).
- Putting my little brother David into my bike basket and giving him rides as I pedaled , only taking spills with him twice (about 1961).
- Taking bike spills and having scabs or open sores with pus on my knees lasting the whole summer (most of my childhood).
- Trimming grass along the sidewalk with a hand shears (about 1960).
- Pushing a *gas* lawn mower for the first time! (not sure of year)
- Seeing a blood on the road where an old man died on Appleton Avenue about a block from our house (not sure of year). He was walking across the street at night and a car hit him.
- Seeing blood and glass on the pavement, and a wrecked car on Beckett Street after a crash.
- Watching cars drive below me while I sat on the ledge of the billboard above the vacant lot on Glendale Street and Appleton Avenue in Milwaukee, WI (about 1960).
- Feeling like my bike and I were one (about 1961).
- Leaning forward against the back of a couch with Kathy Yeko, looking out her picture window and watching rain lash against the street pavement outside her new house on

Potomac Avenue in Milwaukee. The rain hit the pavement so hard that it flew up a couple of feet, creating a big white area with double rain (not sure of year).

- Playing flashlight tag and “Red light, green light, hope to see a ghost tonight” with my cousins, hiding and chasing around parked cars in the street and trash bins in the alley at night (much of childhood).
- Walking along a wintery street, listening to “Telstar” by the Ventures play on my new-for-Christmas transistor radio cupped to my ear (about 1962).
- Playing “Pipeline” by the Chantays, on the piano... over and over and over and over and over.... (about 1963).
- Reading all the Nancy Drew and Dana Sisters and Cherry Ames books, and lots more, and hearing my mother say, “Get your nose out of that book,” especially on car trips (all during childhood).
- Walking to the pharmacy at Time Square with Carol for orange phosphates (we called them orange *fos-fays*) (about 1963).
- Walking my dog Corky *repeatedly* past the home of Hansi “Johnny” Strublik, while singing “Johnny Angel,” Beckett Street, Milwaukee (1963).
- Wearing my first pair of high heels, tripping and grabbing air, but not quite falling down the three steps at the altar of Our Lady of Sorrows after receiving my eighth grade diploma (1964).

To be continued....