

Remember nostalgic

when...waxing



Ah...the days when you were a kid and the world was less complex.

We are going to take a diversion from our usual *Who Remembers?* article. You can browse those previous articles by using the search bar on the right or by clicking **here**. This time around we are going to approach our strolls down memory lane in a slightly different fashion. We're going to reminisce about how times have changed in general.

As always we would rather this be a discussion. No one knows this area better than those who grew up here! Please, leave constructive criticism, feedback, and corrections. We'd love to hear your anecdotes. Please share!

Yeah, yeah...we've all heard the proverbial classic "When I was your age, I walked 5 miles to school...in the snow!" You could

easily finish that sentence with dozens of other options. There are a myriad of ways to describe how the times have changed.



It wouldn't have been uncommon for me to hop on my bike in the morning, travel miles and not return until nightfall without touching "base" once.

As is characteristic of New England, we may often finish that sentence with some griping or complaining, but that's no fun. We want to have a little fun – maybe chuckle a bit, bring a smile to the face or get that brain working and recalling the "olden days." It will certainly generate discussion in the home or the next time you are hanging out with friends in your age group.

Many of these changes happened so subtly that they were barely noticed, others were brought about immediately. Of course, this article could reach back to the 1940s or 1950s or even the 1960s, but not only would the article be incredibly lengthy, but I wouldn't be speaking from experience, having been born in 1970.

But don't let that stop those of you whom are older from sharing the things that you recall!

Roaming About

When I was a kid...I would wake up around 10:00am on a Saturday

or Sunday morning, pour myself a bowl of cereal and watch Creature Double Feature and Kung-Fu theater. When those were over, I would bolt out of the house for the rest of the day – sans cell phone checks. When I lived next to Kinyon Campbell School, I'd often wander all over different parts of the neighborhood and I might return for dinner or I might not. When it got dark it just meant I had an hour or so before I'd have to get home or be in trouble.

Did this mean there were less predators back then to worry about? Or does it mean we've become a more fearful generation?

Communication and Media

Today communication is instant – cell phones and laptops mean we are always accessible. However, there was a time when cell phones didn't exist – the horror! The humanity!

Car broke down? Well, I guess we'll have to walk to a pay phone. Pay phone? What the heck is that?! This is another one that my 13 year old daughter thought I was making up. For the price of ten cents (at least for some time) you could make a one-two minute phone call. Either keep pumping those dimes in or of course, you could "call collect."



*Call the operator
and tell her you
want to make a
collect call!*

Speaking of phones, it was quite the “to-do” when push buttons replaced rotary-dials. State-of-the-Art! Then the cordless phone came about and that meant no more spiral cords to twirl or get tangled. Then came the beeper or pager with all it’s special codes to send messages. Man, if you had one of those you were the “man” or “woman.”

The 8-track tape was phasing out as I was growing up. Technology was so advanced that we had the cassette tape and it was replacing the 8-track. Then the cassette recorder came out and we could make mixed tapes. I often wonder why cassette tape manufacturers never tried to make a few extra bucks by making a special tool to spool the tape back in whenever it got all tangled up in the cassette player? Maybe because the pencil was too perfect?

While on the topic of music, remember when the “M” in MTV stood for “music” and all day and night that’s all you got?

Then there was the VHS tape and there were entire stores where you could rent them for a small fee for a night. But please ‘Be kind, rewind.” or you’ll pay a fee.

Finally, when the Al Gore let us have the internet in our homes we became really excited. We simply unplugged the phone from the outlet and plugged in the computer. Man, I hope no one tries call while my dial-up modem is making all that pinging, buzzing, and noise. Little did the Yellow Pages know that their days of popularity were numbered and its usage would dwindle immensely.

Running Errands

Who doesn’t remember being asked by mom to run to the store to pick something up?! We KNEW what that meant: spending the leftover change on penny candy – when penny candy actually cost a penny. You could stuff one of those brown paper bags with the 50 cents worth of change. Who cared about the inevitable belly ache? Bob and Eileen’s was my favorite spot.



"Sure mom, I'll go to the corner store a block away and grab some milk. Should only take 2 minutes..."

I would make these store runs from as early as a time as I could remember. I would say since I was 5-6 years of age. Alone, crossing streets, and of course, with many pit stops. If the store was a block or two away, it wouldn't be uncommon to take 30-40 minutes to get there and back. While an ear beating wasn't uncommon for taking the scenic route to grab a gallon of milk, calling the police because the 5 minute walk took longer than usual was unheard of.

Often these trips to store would be to pick up a pack of cigarettes – yes, even at 6 years of age. Speaking of cigarettes, everyone smoked, everywhere – including inside restaurants. Imagine that!

No Safety Packaging

My daughter thinks I'm pulling her leg when I tell her, there was a time when there was no sealed cellophane, plastic peel-offs, or other safety packaging. Today it seems common sense, but there was a time when you could simply open up a jar or bottle and take a few pieces of candy or aspirin or whatever, out. While there were child-resistant caps for some medicines, nothing was sealed.

Remember that you could go 'Trick or Treating' and it wouldn't be uncommon to come across baked brownies, cupcakes, or other homemade goodies? The Chicago Tylenol murders in 1982 took the

lives of five people, including a 12 year old child and precipitated massive changes in how consumer products, pharmaceuticals, and food would be packaged.



Remember when “rolling” the window up meant using your whole arm and not a finger? (mikanet.com)

Automobiles

“Roll up the window” is a term that is still used today, in spite of the fact that nowadays, no one rolls anything up: you hold your finger on a button. But, there was a time when you used a crank to actually roll the window up or down.

We had the Pinto, El Camino, the Gremlin and the Yugo. I hope they make a come back. When it snowed, my friends and I would keep a watchful eye out for Z28s or other cars that had fin on the back trunk. That meant you could run out, grab a fin and ski down the road with the car pulling you along. “Oh the humanity!” again.

We had no GPS, no spinner rims, no \$10,000 sound system in the trunk, no keypad entry, no memorials pasted on back windows, the Jeep Cherokee was the biggest thing on the road that could be considered an SUV, and wood paneling was as flashy as it got.

School System

Where to begin with this one? There was a time when you could bring anything you wanted for school lunch. Sometimes you had

a better lunch than others, sometimes they had a better lunch. Clothes? Same thing. Whether you got an “A” for a grade or an “F,” you earned it and with it would come a sense of pride or shame, accolades or snickers, respectively. You played Dodgeball, you Square-danced *cringe* and sometimes you were one of the last to be picked for a team. That’s just the way things were. No one who didn’t have cookies packed with lunch turned out to become a serial killer. If you got hit by the dodgeball or picked last on a team, it didn’t traumatize you for life. Someone had better shoes? Oh well. You didn’t grow up and hate the world for it.

These days we eliminate sports that could give someone a boo-boo. No one picks teams so as to eliminate someone being picked last. We give out “NS” for “Not Satisfactory” instead of a big, fat “F” and make everyone follow the “Kommon Kore” from Kiev, Russia. We don’t allow people to bring in a brand name snack and everyone has to share the same, really awful lunch.



*You can be picked last
for a team sport and
still develop self-
confidence and esteem.*

All of these things happened to me: I got “F”s for grades, my family was very poor for years and my clothes came from the Salvation Army or charity organization, most of the time someone had a way better lunch than I did, I’ve been picked last for baseball and been pinged on the head by a dodgeball too many times to recall. I’m a productive, tax paying

citizen. It didn't harm me one bit. What's all the hoopla about?

Anyhow, I recall the popped collars, jam-packed with scribble and art brown paper bag book covers, the bolted to the table pencil sharpener, girl's bangs created with a round brush, parachute pants, Miami Vice style dinner jackets with shoulder pads, leg warmers, Jordache jeans, fingerless gloves, and terms like "rad," "gnarly," "take a chill pill, "barf me out," "totally," and "grody." I use these now on my 13 year old daughter to show her how hip I am. Did I say "To show her how hip I am."? I meant, to say "To torture her in front of her friends."

What do you remember from growing up? Is there something that has completely disappeared? Whether a fashion, saying, or notion? Please share and wax nostalgic with the rest of us!
