

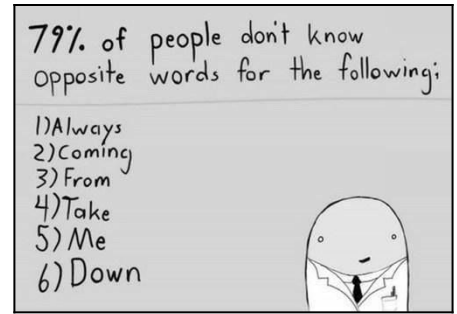
Who Remembers...Hot Wheels and Skate Plus?

Here is another installment in our *Who Remembers?* series. You can browse previous articles by using the search bar on the right or by clicking **here**. These articles are strolls down memory lane. In some cases the buildings, but new businesses have replaced them. In other instances, the buildings or even the properties have been razed. Instead of a building, it may be a TV show, personality, or commercial that no one longer exists. Either way, it can't stop us from taking the Memory Lane stroll!

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!

I grew up in the 1970s and 1980s – eras where the nation made some pretty monumental leaps in terms of social change. The 1980s, in particular, were characterized by an almost naive level of fun. Life was good for America in the late 1970s through the 1980s. It permeated fashion, hairstyles, the film industry, and especially our leisure activities.

One of the common activities that scream this era is roller skating. Just say those two words to someone and watch the gears start to turn and memories start to fly. Most often this will elicit some smiling or smirking. We begin to remember the brightly colored, vividly patterned clothing we wore, the hairspray saturated hairstyles we had, and the common slang we utilized, e.g. rad, bitchin', totally tubular, etc.



Sorry, couldn't resist.

By the time we go through this, think of a few iconic movies like "Fast Times at Ridgemont High," "The Breakfast Club," or "Ghostbusters" we may suddenly realize some time has passed and we forgot the person who mentioned it was there! This is the power of this special time. I'd imagine it's like this for any era, but since this was my era I'm certainly biased.

There are simply too many things to reminisce about in the 1980s, so the best way to wax nostalgic is to narrow the focus – in this case, the roller rink. Here is where many teenagers first experienced unsupervised leisure time. It was our first foray into going outside the home for a few hours without our parents or a guardian. Of course, that also meant our first dance or kiss.

If you weren't meeting your girlfriend or boyfriend it didn't matter. There were lots of cute girls and boys to choose from. It was a place to hang out and let loose – just be a kid or teen without being told "Don't do that. Clean your room. Quiet down." The 80s roller rink (and the mall) was a bridge from childhood to teenager. It was a medium where we could practice being a young adult.

Just as important we could wear anything without being judged – fashion and hairstyle were considered self-expression and encouraged by peers. Who here had a favorite pair of leg warmers, parachute pants, or some puffy shoulder pads? How about a selection of Miami Vice or Member's Only dinner jackets? Girls could use yellow or blue mascara and no one

would bat an eye. Got a new pair of jeans? Rip some holes in it and roll up the leg bottoms a bit. Big hair, round brushes for those bangs, and a scrunchie would round things out. How about a denim jacket with your favorite metal band patch taking up the back? Converse or Vans?

Two of the area's favorite spots for the roller rink vibe were New Bedford's "Hot Wheels" and Fairhaven's "Skate Plus." I spent virtually every weekend at these two spots from the age of 13-15. We would walk around these places with these various fashion statements and hairstyles and dropping as much slang as possible while "checking out the chicks." These hairstyles and clothing are now called "costumes" at Halloween stores. In between chat we would play some stand-up arcade games, grab some pizza, a hot dog or hamburger and have at it again.



I don't recall skates like this, but "loud" would be a good way to describe 80s fashion. (farm5)

Guess what? Sometimes we'd even skate! Skating backward was a great way to show your "manliness" and surely will attract the chicks, right? Simon Says, limbo and couples skate would inevitably happen, but the "rad" and cool people wouldn't skate to that. 1980s was about making statements – you'd be outed as a dweeb or Neo-maxi-zoom-dweebie if you did that. You'd make a statement by donning the skates when your band or song came on. It let everyone know who you were and your musical taste was a good way to let everyone know.

No night would be complete if you didn't dedicate a song to someone special – or even better hand off a "mix tape." Popular songs were Maneater (Hall & Oates), "You can dance if you want to." (Men Without Hats), "Whip It!" (Devo), or I Love Rock 'N Roll (Joan Jett). Of course, if I was choosing the music it would be Megadeth, Slayer, Testament or Overkill, but that wasn't happening at the skating rink.

The beauty of this era was the communication medium: face to face discussion. There was no such thing as being ignored because someone was doing a status update. There was no vying for the attention of your peers – you always had it.

The time spent in these two skate rinks were some of my fondest in life. The 80s especially were an innocent era in American history. We didn't have (or didn't notice) daily terrorism, beheadings, planes flying into buildings, social crusading, or smartphone distractions. Heroin was relegated to the fringes and "hard drugs" for us was smoking marijuana. It was a special time plain and simple.