

Ah. Summer vacation.

Staying up late. Sleeping in. Hangin' out with friends. Just doin' nothin'.

No textbooks, no homework and no tests.

Sounds like a little slice of heaven covered in whipped cream to me.

As a kid, who didn't dream about summer vacation?

The last days of school were excruciating. They seemed to drag on for an eternity. It was warm and we all wanted to be outside, not cooped up in a classroom being tested on how much we had paid attention during the school year.

I remember gazing out the classroom window and imagining the fun I was going to have. I lived in a neighborhood packed with kids. The possibilities were endless. The canal was always a place to spend time fishing and catching turtles and crawdads. The park was just a hop, skip and a jump across the canal and always filled with friends and activity.

Let's not forget the pool. How we patiently waited for opening day. We'd fly up to the gates on our bicycles, trying to be the first in line. Endless days were filled with water tag and braving the high dive. I still enjoy a Charleston Chew now and then; one of my favorites at the pool.

After a quick trip home for supper, it was back to the pool for the last few hours of freedom.

And then there was the cottage. The first was at Flat Rock near Oakwood. Just a small cottage

built on the banks of the river. It was two rooms with more beds than anything else. My cousin Brad and I would take the John boat out on the river and row and row. We knew the twists and turns and channels like the back of our hands.

The second cottage was an A-frame on Bass Lake in Hillsdale, Mich. Shared with the Best family, countless memories were made. The structure was built by the hands of the two family patriarchs. The early memories are some of the best. Weekends were spent getting as much done as possible before the end of that first summer.

Following summers were spent enjoying the spoils of their hard work.

Life in general was a lot simpler then. We didn't spend a lot of time indoors and if you wanted to talk to a friend, you got on your bicycle and rode to their house and did it in person.

Watching television was a treat as mom was always shooin me outside. "It's a nice day. Go out and play."

We didn't have video games, iPads, DVDs or even CDs. If you listened to music it was on the radio or American Bandstand on Saturday morning.

I don't get a summer vacation anymore. The price you pay being an adult. Why did I ever want to grow up so fast?