

**OLD TIMERS SHOULD ASSURE KIDS THAT THESE ARE GOOD
OLD DAYS
01/09/01**

I became acutely aware of the vast void that exists between my childhood experiences and my grandchildren's while watching a history quiz on television recently.

A famous singer of yesteryear was being featured and although she will forever be indelibly imprinted in my memory, there is every likelihood my grandchildren my never hear of her.

She is the late Kate Smith, a well-known personality of the 30s, 40s and 50s. She was celebrated for her renditions of "God Bless America" and her theme song, "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain."

With a home near Lake Placid, her presence and prominence was of significant interest to Adirondack residents. Of more personal interest to me, as well, was the fact that C.J. Strife, legendary timber contractor of local repute, negotiated with and harvested timber on her estate.

Much of the above will be known by the readers of this column. I have learned over time it is the people close to my generation who show the most interest in my musings. I originally began it so my grandchildren might ultimately know who their grandfather was. I have not been surprised to learn that at least one who is old enough to learn from it makes a point of not reading it. I also know she will when she is much older and she will be glad I wrote it.

We currently have two more younger grandchildren living with us and I have been made more aware of the vast gulf that exists in our childhood experiences.

The entertainment possibilities offered to them today stand in stark contrast to those available to me in the 30s and 40s. Even the activities available to both our generations have been much enhanced over time.

We never enjoyed the warmth and comfort of the clothing available to kids today. We well may have spent much more time outdoors than they do, but we sometimes suffered for it. How many youngsters today have ever had chilblains or even heard the word?

We stayed outside until the last dog was hung because of the limited pursuits

indoors to occupy our time. Today the reverse is true with videos, television and electronic games bidding against outdoor activities for children's free time. They save today's parents many of the problems and frustrations my poor mother endured.

Reflecting on same today, I realize I may have been directly responsible for her pronouncement that, "I raised my children, you raise yours." It is one more subtle way I may have paid for my misdeeds. It also may explain why I am much more receptive to volunteering to baby-sit our grandchildren than Grandma is.

I had two younger brothers and I remember our early years seemed to consist of three stages. The first was that nearly all of our time was spent in outdoor activities regardless of weather conditions.

The second and most memorable was the advent of the radio. With it our time became somewhat divided between it and the outdoors.

I vividly recall the day we received our first radio. It was a Philco table model that sat on a shelf in our living room. When my own children complained about "nothing to do," I relished telling them about how it came about.

The day before the Philco was delivered, my uncle built the shelf where it was to repose. That evening we children all sat enraptured by the thought that by the same time tomorrow we would be sitting and listening to Skippy or the Shadow as we gazed upon the shelf.

The third and final stage for me was when the entertainment furnished by radio was supplemented by the wonder of books. I fortified and expanded my interest and knowledge of the outdoors in the best possible way at the time.

I sometimes like to think I grew up in the good old days, but when I truly look at the options available to today's children, I have to admit these are the good days. It's up to us old timers to make sure the children know it and take advantage of it.