

**A LINCOLN LIFE**  
**by**  
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*Enjoy the little things in life because one day you will look back  
and realize they were the BIG things. — Kurt Vonnegut*

**Summer Sundays:** In the 1950's we had many family traditions as well as chores and duties. For example, my brother and I were expected to make our beds each morning and do our homework by ourselves each evening before bed. And we didn't have calculators to help with our math homework. We also didn't have a dishwasher, so we had to take turns clearing the table after dinner and drying the dishes with our mom or dad (they also took turns).

After dinner and after our homework was done, we looked forward to at least one hour of family television time. We didn't get our first black-and-white TV set with a round picture until I was in junior high school, and it was housed in a big blond cabinet — with no remote control either. Some of my favorite shows were: Gunsmoke, I Love Lucy, Father Knows Best, The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet, and especially on Sunday nights — The Ed Sullivan show.

Another reason that I loved Sunday as a kid was my favorite family summer tradition. We didn't go on many family vacations in the summer; instead our summer Sundays were spent taking a mini-vacation right here in town almost every week. That family tradition was one of the little BIG things I remember fondly from my childhood.

We went to church and Sunday school in the morning. But immediately after church, we'd race home, shed our Sunday best clothes and slip into our swimsuits. Mom would prepare a picnic lunch to take with us, and my dad, mom, brother Tom and I would head to Capitol Beach amusement park and swimming pool which was located a few miles west of town, a location that is now covered by Capitol Beach Lake.

Capitol Beach was in operation from 1917 to 1961. By the time we enjoyed the swimming pool in the 1950's, the huge Jack Rabbit roller coaster was no longer in service. However, according to historian Jim McKee, at least in the early part of the decade, many other features were still up and running, including the Ferris wheel, merry-go-round, dodge'em cars and kid's boat ride. But our family summer Sundays were spent in the large salt water swimming pool; it felt just like what I expected the ocean to smell, taste and feel like. A sand beach even surrounded the cement pool that made it feel more like a sea shore environment. Hmmm, maybe that's when I first developed my affinity for the beach and the sea?

We had a great time swimming and playing for hours (if my brother and I didn't try to drown each other, that is). Dad would carry us around on his shoulders and then dunk us in the water. Dad also loved to show off by doing a fancy dive off the highest diving board, and continue to swim under water all the way to the other side of the pool.

At the end of the afternoon, before exhaustion took over, the family would head home for a quick dinner. I really can't ever remember the whole family eating at a restaurant before my teen years. There were no McDonald's in Lincoln in the 1950's.

The first McDonald's opened at 5305 "O" Street around 1960. Those of my generation probably remember King's Drive-In (especially the cheese Frenchee). The first King's was opened by Larry Price in Bethany in 1955, but that was way across town from our home. We probably didn't even know about King's at all until I was in high school, and the King's at 40th & South Street became a regular hang out.

We always ended our idyllic family summer Sunday outings at the Starview Outdoor Theater near 48th and Vine Street. The first drive-in theater in Lincoln, the Starview opened in May 1948 and remained open for almost 40 years. When it first opened, the cost for adults was \$.60 and kids under 12 were free. Before the show, Tom and I would go down to the playground in front of the giant screen and swing, play on the slides and generally run around with other kids.

When the sun began to set we would race back to the car for some homemade snacks including cookies and popcorn. Dad would pick up the huge speaker from its stand next to the driver's window and place it on the open window. The sound reverberated with feedback from the same speaker on every other car's open window throughout the drive-in. Sometimes we would sit on the back fender of the car and watch the moon and the stars come out. Once it got dark and the film began, Tom and I usually fell asleep in the back seat; we always came prepared for this eventuality with blankets and pillows.

These predictable family Sunday outings are very special memories for me today. I can still picture them in my mind's eye, and the memories grow more vivid as time advances, even as many other parts of my past continue to fade away into the mist.

*Children will not remember you for the material things you provided, but for the feeling that you cherished them.* — Richard L. Evans

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