

My Huckleberry Friend Sasee Magazine, January 2012

By Sue Mayfield-Geiger



How many childhood acquaintances can say they've been friends for 62 years? In today's world of technology and transitions, it may be that memories of childhood will be quite different for present generations. With texting, email, Twitter, Facebook and Skype, friendship is just a click away.

Yet there was a time when friendship blossomed between two five-year-old girls who first met over a backyard fence thick with honeysuckle. They started first grade together and graduated high school together as well. The girls played hopscotch

for countless hours on their adjoining sidewalks; roller skated from sunup to sundown, picked blackberries along the railroad track, and scattered chocolate chip cookie dough in every crevice of their mothers' kitchens when learning to bake.

Mud pies and make believe, picture shows, paper dolls, board games and wading in the ditch after a good rain were simple pleasures. Summer days were spent squirting each other with a water hose, but the best pastime of all occurred when a Sears and Roebuck truck came down their street with a refrigerator delivery for a neighbor. Every kid on the block watched in anticipation as the cardboard box it came in was hauled out to the curb for the garbage truck. The girls were swift, grabbed it quickly and transformed it into the whim of the moment. It became a castle where they reigned in all their glory with servants bringing them tea and cake. It was a Lincoln Continental or their own private yacht. It was a schoolhouse where they were the teachers and gave homework only to prissy girls and mean boys. It was a theater where they were movie stars and won numerous Academy Awards. It was their very own future home where they cooked for husbands and raised babies. It was where they shared their biggest dreams and treasured secrets.

After months of wear and tear, it would eventually find its way to the trash heap. But soon, someone on the street would buy a washer and dryer, and they would be the lucky recipients of two giant cardboard boxes! The girls cut out pictures of movie stars from movie magazines and plastered them on their walls. They wrote letters to James Dean, Natalie Wood, Tab Hunter, and other popular icons of the day. And guess what? The stars wrote back, sending glossy, autographed headshots of themselves. The girls dreamed of having them over for tea many a day in their pretend sanctuary.

They rode the bus together for 12 years and raced home as fast as they could while in junior high school to watch "American Bandstand" where they were captivated by dancing teen couples Justine and Bob, Arlene and Kenny, and Bunny and Eddie. They saw Ricky Nelson, Ray Charles, and Elvis in person, screaming their lungs out at each concert.

The girls grew hoarse from yelling at hundreds of football games. They fretted over what to wear to school dances, and more importantly, about who would ask them to dance. They could do the bop and slow danced the night away with dreamy partners and some not-so-dreamy.

They took driver's ed together and drove their parents' cars, thinking they were hot stuff. They picked up girlfriends and paraded around town, circling pre-Sonic drive-ins looking for just the right spot. Carhops in shiny gold uniforms took their order and brought out heaps of fried onion rings and cherry Cokes. They were living large!

They double dated, went steady, survived break-ups, had spats of their own, cried a million tears and laughed a million laughs. After high school graduation, their lives took different forks in the road.

One friend went off to college in another city and the other took a job as a secretary. Soon they married and were in each other's weddings. They had children and grandchildren. They sometimes lived hundreds of miles apart but always kept in touch.

They supported each other through their parents' deaths and other tragedies that came their way. They celebrated birthdays, anniversaries, and other milestones. They attended high school reunions and are about to celebrate their 50th next year.

They feel fortunate to have traveled this road together – two gal pals who grew up in the best of times when "Facebook" meant pasting school photos of your best friends in a scrapbook, when talking on the phone for hours was a lot more engaging than texting, and when meeting for the first time with real human contact was the everyday norm. Like 62 years ago, when the friendship of youth blossomed as sweet and natural as the honeysuckle blooms that covered a backyard fence when life was young.