

Summer Voices

I wonder what sort of people will walk the boardwalk this year? Will they be regular summer folk wanting to repeat the amusements from years past? Or will they be coming to our little beach town for the first time?

I think back on all of my summers gone by—full of visitors that arrived at our beaches—about their brightly colored towels covering the sand—their umbrellas shading their folding chairs and coolers. I contemplate sending out warnings to the sand crabs to bury themselves, to the clams to dig deeper, and to the sea urchins and starfish to move farther out to sea.

Will the pitching of pennies, the rolling of skeet balls, the driving of bumper cars, and the rides on the Ferris wheel occupy the youngsters’ thoughts? Will others hunt for popcorn, cotton candy, hot dogs, lemonade, and soda pop? What post cards and flavors of salt water taffy will be mailed back to friends and family left at home.

The summer breezes will once again welcome the grandparents who will open their homes to family and relatives. The rows of small rental cottages will overflow with young parents and their children. And there will be those who choose to hold up inside high-rise condominiums, who do not like to cook, and do not want to carry chairs to the beach. They will enjoy their summer from balconies that overlook the ocean—and will watch for schools of porpoises and pelicans diving for a quick meal.

The smell of salt air will surround fisherman as they cast their lines from land and boats offshore—their hopes high for a good haul. Others will ready their large pots for the crabs that their children will catch with nothing more than strings attached to sticks.

The cloudless days will bring out sun worshippers to bronze the bodies. Helmeted bikers will pass by joggers running the favorite routes. Those not so inclined to heavy exercise will walk along the boardwalk. Pick-up volleyball games will break out on the beach. Kids, their buckets and shovels in hand, will build sand castles surrounded by protective moats.

In the distance, screams of laughter and joy will be heard as waves are jumped and surfers on bogie boards ride into the shore. Young teens will dance to the music from boom boxes. Sounds of horns and heated tempers will be heard while people vie for choice parking places.

Five-and-dime stores will bustle with business—selling swim suits, shorts, and tee-shirts. At the supermarkets, women will push shopping carts laden with food for the weeks’ barbeques—hoping to get groceries home before the Popsicles and butter melt. There will be potatoes to boil for salad, fruit baskets to fill, and snacks to prepare.

Bills for sporting equipment will run high with snorkels, face masks, and bogie boards. Merchants will delight with the sound of cash registers as tourists of all ages snatch up souvenirs. Movie theatres will fill up on rainy days with folks catching up on the summer’s latest blockbusters.

The marina will be packed with charter boats, their captains waiting to be hired by anglers wanting to try their hand at deep sea fishing. Sunfishes and sailfishes with brightly-colored sails will head out in search of fair winds on the inland bay.

And at the end of each day, the sunset will send out fiery rays of light across the sky. Sunburned people will head for the showers and wash off the lotion and sand from their bodies. Easy dinners, served on paper plates will be savored. Youngsters, their stories read, will be bedded while parents enjoy board games and concerts by the sea. Lovers—hand-in-hand—will stroll the moonlit beach, dodging the waves, and leaving their trails of intermingled footprints in the sand. Small groups will circle around flickering bonfires that dot the shoreline.

Workers will prepare floats for the Fourth of July parade. Crowds will set up their beach chairs to view the evening’s fireworks—greeting each explosion with a chorus of “ohs” and “ahs.”

July and August will flow by quickly—with rental units being replenished with each new week, the sand on the beach being rearranged with each new batch of vacationers—with new license plates from near and far—all in search of new friendships and new adventures.

The end of August will bring the final group of visitors, all hoping to catch that last bit of summer, an opportunity to get a suntan, and one more chance to build magnificent structures out of sand. Seagulls will survey the beach for forgotten morsels. Umbrellas will close down for the season. The tide will carry away footprints and hermit crabs will once again scurry back into their holes.

Sale signs will begin to appear in store windows—owners wanting to clear their shelves of summer fashions. Bargain hunters will wait to scoop up the best buys of the season.

Ah, sweet summer will be over—and it will leave our vacation town with only the occasional sounds from the year-round residences. Some that stay behind will hibernate—some will await a repeat performance of months just past.

And what about me? I have been daydreaming. I am remembering times past—all of the yesterdays—they are always with me—they will always be engraved in my memory. I must rely on these visions because my eyes are clouded over, blinded by a battlefield encounter—distant and long ago.

Yes—I am sightless. And so I savor the summer voices and remember all of the wonderful sights of summers gone.



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