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# The 'Glorious 4th of July'

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JULY 03RD 2011 BY UNKNOWN

## The 'Glorious 4th of July'

***By Annabeth Miller***

Family legend has it that the young lad had saved all his hard-earned summer money -- probably earned while sweating through some lawn-mowing jobs and working in a hot pressroom. Proud as a peacock, he went to the fireworks stand, and purchased the biggest pack of firecrackers to be had -- Black Cat. This was the early 1960s, and pack of Black Cat was a big thing then. It was the Cadillac of firecrackers.

On the morning of Independence Day the flag was placed outside the home, and mom was in the kitchen fixing a blackberry cobbler. But my knotheaded brothers were out on the front steps, anxiously awaiting the moment when they could let those Black Cats go. A punk (not a teenager with an attitude, but a lighting device!) was in hand. But wait! Maybe it wasn't burning. So proud John laid down the "bad" punk and ran back into the house to light a second punk at the kitchen range.

While he was standing there, backup punk in hand, his pack of Black Cats was on the front step. He suddenly blanched and was the shade of a boll of cotton when there was an explosion of sound coming from the front yard. It sounded like Sherman and all his Army was thundering through the neighborhood. But it wasn't Sherman. the neighbors, or even the *precious* little sister.

No indeed, it was the pack of highly-treasured Black Cat firecrackers, lit by the punk that "wasn't burning."

The entire Independence Day Celebration went up in less than a minute in a decibel-breaking racket and a puff of smoke. John didn't even have time to hustle from the kitchen to the front porch to see the puff of smoke.

The 4th of July was always big stuff around our house. Not only did we attempt to celebrate our nation's birthday in style, it was also the oldest knothheaded brother's birthday. He never has quite figured out that the fireworks are not in his honor.

But the 4th would be a day of shooting a few firecrackers, lighting a few other whirligigs, and waiting anxiously for the evening. Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Dick (Trotter) would come over, a freezer of ice cream would be ready, and mom would carry out the best-tasting blackberry cobbler this side of the Ozark hills. Finally, when the sun would set quietly in the west, the fireworks would come out. Little sis didn't get to do too many -- maybe the waterfall off the clothesline, a pretty fountain cone, and, of course, sparklers. There had to be sparklers.

All of these sorts of celebrations are appropriate for our nation's birthday. History tells us that John Adams -- one of the men who brought this nation into existence -- actually wanted Americans to celebrate Independence Day in a grand manner.

In a letter to wife Abigail, Adams wrote that the day should be a "great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore."

In a strange quirk of history, Adams and colleague Thomas Jefferson were to think of one another 50 years after the fateful signing of that Declaration of Independence. Both on their deathbeds, thoughts turned to the other and to the nation they helped establish. At Monticello, Jefferson stirred, and asked if it was the Fourth. Hearing a yes, historians say he lay quietly back down. Occasionally, his hand could be seen moving, as if he were writing, this mimicking the motions of penning that important document.

North in Massachusetts, John Adams' awoke in the morning and said "It is the glorious 4th of July. God bless it, and God bless you all." Sometime in the afternoon, he roused again, and said his final words: "Thomas Jefferson survives."

Two men, close friends and so important in the birth of our freedoms, died on the same day -- 50 years to the day after they signed the Declaration of Independence.

America will have celebrations this weekend from Alaska to Missouri to New Hampshire. Politicians will pontificate and attempt to lift up the heritage left to us by such men as Adams and Jefferson.

But to me, the 4th of July is in the backyard celebrations. It's in the light on a kid's face as they twirl around with a sparkler in the early evening. It's the voices of youngsters standing on the Dexter post office steps reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, it's the fireworks overhead, and sharing the oo's and ah's with friends. It's in blackberry cobbler and homemade ice cream and reading the Declaration of Independence just one more time.

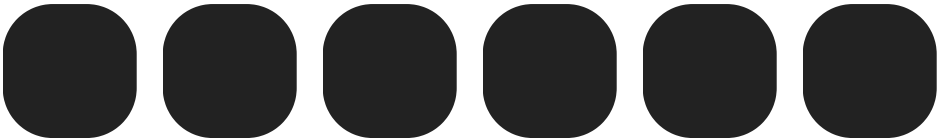
Happy Independence Day! Celebrate America!

*Annabeth Miller is the editor of the ShowMe Times and a lifelong resident of Dexter.*

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