

Area Bloggers

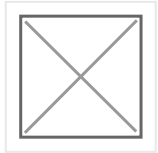


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July 4: Celebrate America!

JULY 04TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

July 4: Celebrate America!



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. 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 1960s, and pack of Black Cat was a big thing then.

On the morning of Independence Day the flag was duly placed outside the home, and mom was in the kitchen preparing a holiday meal. But the older boys were out on the front steps, anxiously waiting 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 brother #2 laid down the punk and ran back into the house to light a second punk at the kitchen range.

While he was standing there in the kitchen, 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 all of a sudden it sounded like the 7th Army was coming through the house chasing Crazy House. But it wasn't the Army, the neighbors, or even that pesky little sister.

It was the pack of precious Black Cats, lit by the punk that wasn't burning.

The entire Independence Day Celebration went up in a decibel-breaking racket and a puff of smoke. And poor John wasn't even in the yard to witness it.

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 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: "I am apt to believe that this day will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the 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 friend Thomas Jefferson were to think of one another 50 years after the fateful signing of that Declaration of Independence. Both on their deathbeds, their thoughts turned to the other.

At Montecello, 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. Some of us gathered for the 20th annual July 4th Kiddie Parade at Jason and Kristi Banken's. The Independence Day holiday is summed up for me when those kids take to the Post Office steps, and in their innocent voices, say the Pledge of Allegiance. All decked out in red, white, and blue (and Caroline's boa and Emma's neat eagle shirt that she made) it's a perfect expression of all that the holiday is about.

John Adams was right. The 4th of July is a glorious day. It's about kiddie parades and backyard celebrations. It's the fireworks overhead, and sharing the oo's and ah's with friends. It's about remembering the people throughout history that have sacrificed to make our nation "the grandest on earth." It's in blackberry cobbler and homemade ice cream, flying the flag and reading the Declaration of Independence just one more time.

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