



## LOWCOUNTRY MUSINGS

June 2018

### A JOURNAL THROUGH TIME

By Florence Bothwell Cosby

June



**I MISS THE DAYS  
WHEN YOU COULD JUST  
PUSH SOMEONE IN THE POOL  
AND NOT WORRY ABOUT THEIR CELLPHONE.**

~Anonymous~



June always reminds me of my mother's roses. My mother was an amazing gardener. She really had the gift of a green thumb. Our yard flourished with a vast variety of blooms, from early spring until the first frost of winter—annual plants, perennials, shrubs, trees, and of course her roses.

Our house on Robinson Avenue where I grew up was smothered in rose bushes of every color and variety. I did not know then, and still do not know now, the names of the blooms, but I did recognize that they were not all alike in petal pattern, color, and manner of growing. My mother cultivated her rose bushes with care and encouragement, providing them with water, proper soil, food, and nutrients. As well, she dead-headed the spent blossoms, shaped and secured the branches as needed, and pruned them back at the end of the growing season. My mother began planting her rose bushes the first spring

we lived in the house, in 1947, a few at a time over the years, until there were roses seemingly everywhere.



We had a white picket fence that enclosed our property which my mother embellished with dozens of low-growing rose bushes that grew full and close to the ground. She would clip these to just above the top of the fence, so they looked neat and orderly, like a rosy hedge that edged the front lawn. They were a deep, velvety red in dramatic contrast to their dark green foliage.

In the backyard along the side of the garage, my mother planted three climbing rose bushes, each affixed to a narrow trellis of its own and spaced next to the two windows in the wall of the garage—one each of yellow, rosy red, and pale pink, with medium green leaves the color of the grass. They grew to great heights, almost wild in their profusion, often reaching above the roof line of the garage.

From the garage to the back edge of the house, my father and my uncle constructed a long trellis with an archway over the sidewalk to the driveway. Here my mother planted a row of six or eight white climbing rose bushes, to create a natural privacy wall to enclose our back yard. As the branches grew, she would weave them in and out of the lattice frame, so that their fullness would increase the seclusion of the floral barrier.

These many rose bushes provided an abundance of blossoms from late spring and throughout the summer. My mother arranged them in vases for inside our house and in bouquets wrapped in wax paper for parceling out to family, friends, and neighbors. What I remember most about my mother's roses is their enormous size, their vivid color, and their heady, intoxicating fragrance. To me they were the essence of June.



How can I possibly pass up writing about National Doughnut Day! I have read that the day was created by the Salvation Army in 1938 to honor the women who had served doughnuts to soldiers—the Doughboys—on the front lines in Europe during World War I. The celebration of the day began as a fund-raiser for Chicago's Salvation Army to help the needy during the Great Depression. Food historians believe that the donut originally came to this country with Dutch immigrants in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



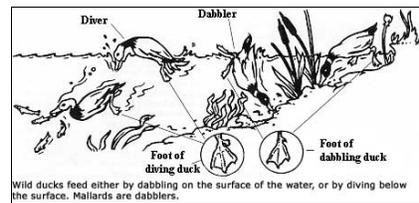
I love donuts, although I cannot remember when I had my first one. They were not a regular grocery item in my house when I was a kid, and I don't recall any designated donut shop in or around where I grew up. There was, however, an ice cream shop in Bolton Landing which was an annual stop during our summer vacations at Lake George. One of the specials was called the Sombrero and featured a plain donut topped with a scoop of ice cream, fudge sauce, and a sprinkling of peanuts—resembling the hat for which it was named. To me it was delicious—the combination of cakey donut and ice cream sundae.

My favorite donuts are from Dunkin' Donuts, mainly because I prefer the variety of choices they offer. When I was working at various schools here in the Lowcountry, I treated myself to a weekly stop at DDs on the way home on Friday afternoons. I would order an iced decaf coffee, very light, and two donuts to enjoy on the remainder of my commute home. I always chose one of the frosted donuts with sprinkles on top, plus one other which varied from week to week.

My other favorite donuts are made by Entenmann's and are widely available in grocery stores. We usually get the variety package, although everyone in our household likes the ones with the glazed crumbs on top best. They were a welcomed treat for Cameron when he was growing up, and when he comes to visit us these days, his eyes still slide first to where the donuts are stored in the corner of the kitchen counter. So, I think it would be safe to say that Donut Day can be pretty much any day of the year in our house.



When we opened the blinds early this morning, we were greeted by this pair of mallards snuggled into the backyard feeding area. There is pond water about half a mile away in three different directions, but they apparently chose our yard to spend the night. They did not stay beyond the morning before moving on to join their flock, as mallards prefer a social group. There is a yard around the bend from us where about a dozen ducks regularly, almost exclusively, congregate, perhaps because that yard has grass shoots that are tastier than the rest of the neighborhood. As well, they can be seen casually waddling around our rural sub-division—walking, not flying, as if they have not yet figured out the purpose of their wings.



Wild mallards feed by dabbling on the surface of the water, preferring water that is less than 16 inches deep, so they can duck their head down and reach plants at the bottom. Their feet are conformed to accommodate this behavior. They are omnivorous, eating the seeds of grasses and sedges and the leaves, stems, and seeds of aquatic plants, as well as occasionally eating insects, crustaceans, and mollusks, especially when young. They also like cracked corn and grains, so perhaps they found a few of these tasty items scattered on the ground from our backyard feeders.



The flock thickens... The next morning—we had *three* ducks strolling through the front yard, then heading around to the back yard for breakfast. They hung out for a while, pecking and nibbling at the seed debris on the ground before moving on, once again to meet up with their family group. Even though here for only a short while, having the ducks stop by was a happy visit for us.



My daughter Cati's apartment overlooks the Broad River in Columbia. It is not a vast river, but it does flow around bends and over rocks to make it an active destination for river-craft outings. Cati and her neighbor friend Teri planned a day of adventure along the segment of the river that borders their apartment complex.



Cati had ordered the river tubes for them online from Wal-Mart, then picked them up at the local store. They are made of light-weight vinyl, with a mess seat, handles, a back rest, and even a cup holder—all the comforts for an outdoor life of leisure. The store associate had thoughtfully inflated the floats for them, without realizing that they would surely not fit in Cati's Kia SOUL. But they did manage to squeeze them in, with the driver's seat pushed forward and her leaning over the steering wheel, much to the glee of those who passed her along the road. But it was a short drive home, then on to the river.

They parked one car at the end site down river, then drove the other car back up to the put-in area where a commercial tour of river tubers and kayakers had gathered. The tour guide kindly invited Cati and Teri to join his safety lecture, then provided a few tips for them to enjoy their independent excursion down the river. She later sent us videos taken between her feet and down the river that preceded her, and judging from her squeals of delight, the day was an enormously enjoyable success.



When we were kids growing up in Great Kills, the ultimate goal of every kid on our block was to secure an inner tube for summers at Crescent Beach. Back then, tires were made with an inner tube inside the

treaded part of the tire, and if a blow-out occurred, then the inner tube often required a patch to repair it, as well as reinflation. Best case scenario was when the tire was totaled and one of our parents had to replace it. Worn-out tubes then became the prized water toys of our youth—even though they were made of thick, heavy black rubber and were hot and sticky in the sun and awkward to carry. We used them to float, not on a river as Cati does, but bobbing around the ocean at our local beaches. But if you were not one of the lucky kids, not to worry, as we were happy to share the spoils of our parents' tires with the rest of our neighborhood crowd.



Father's Day is set aside to honor the role that fathers play in the structure of family and society. For decades, it was more of a national custom than a national holiday, until then-President Nixon signed into law a permanent national holiday for the third Sunday in June, more than 50 years after the first regional celebrations. It is not as commercially promoted as Mother's Day, which is why it was kept on a less formal status, to avoid that commercialism.



David was one of the first modern fathers who stayed at home with our daughter from birth to about four-years-old. He shouldered all the major responsibilities of child-rearing while I worked full-time. We chose this arrangement for practical reasons—my position in education offered me more comprehensive health-care benefits, as well as all major holidays and summers off. That plus David really wanted to be the stay-at-home parent. The bond that was established between father and daughter has followed them into the present, as they have remained close to each other now, more than 40 years later. From the hush of the labor room, to the clamor of the ER, David has always been there to guide and support her through life. Wherever that road has taken her—struggling through the lows and celebrating the highs—her Papa has provided a strength of family that can never be broken.

*Happy Father's Day to David  
and to all our TMS classmate dads.*



When I was a kid growing up on Staten Island, the school year ended the last week in June. That was when summer officially began for us. The first order of business was to buy our summer shoes, which for girls were Keds sneakers—one of the definitive signs of summer.



There were no where near as many choices for footwear as there are today—it was either blue Keds or white ones. The Keds’ magazine print ad set the spirit of the season with their canvas Champion Oxfords: “Summertime U.S.A begins with Keds.” I always chose the navy blue, as that color went well with my limited summer wardrobe of a couple of pairs of shorts and tops to mix and match. I was also allowed to choose a pair of summer sandals to wear for dressier occasions. Again, there were limited options, so I would select the colorful strappy ones, because, well, they were colorful, and I did like the inclusion of my favorite Crayola crayon colors—red, green, yellow, blue.

When I was a bit older, I was given the opportunity of choosing from a new selection of Keds called Kedettes. These were espadrilles, a 1950s line of fashionable casuals. The long laces provided endless amusement in devising new ways to tie them--wrapping them around the ankle, criss-crossing them over the instep, or tying a bow at the back of the ankle. Well, endless amusement if you are 12-years-old with the long, leisurely days of summer ahead to devote to this task.



National Chocolate Pudding Day is another great day in the month of June. Yup, I love chocolate pudding—I wouldn’t even mention it if I didn’t. David fixes the Jell-O product that comes in a box and all you add is milk. Well, that plus the whipped cream garnish and a maraschino cherry. We have made chocolate pudding from scratch a few times over the years, but the box product is so delicious and easy to prepare, why make a simple dessert complicated.



When I was a kid, my mother concocted homemade pops for us to enjoy in the summertime. She had a set of aluminum pop molds with wooden sticks inserted into them, very much like store-bought Popsicles. But these were even better tasting, because my mother made them from various products and flavors—Kool-Aid, Jell-O gelatin, lemonade, and of course, chocolate pudding. She would make the pops the night before, then allow them to harden in the freezer overnight. In the morning, she would unmold each pop, wrap it in wax paper, then store them back in the freezer until later in the day.

We had a rectangular kiddy-size wading pool with a dark brown canvas bowl that hung from a standing metal frame and with Masonite seats across each corner. My mother would fill the pool with water from the hose for us to splash around in on a hot summer’s day. We were often joined by our friends in the neighborhood, squishing in as many of us who could fit at one time. The best part was when we had finished with our pool playing and she would treat us all to one of her special pops. The chocolate pudding ones were by far everyone’s favorite. The outside would begin to melt and form a gooey outer layer that was a delight to lick off, working our way to the frozen inner part. If the temperature wasn’t too hot, we could make that treat last for ages, with the added bonus of licking the remaining chocolate pudding off our fingers. Now that’s a summer memory to last forever.



A couple of days ago was National VCR Day. At first, I skipped over this celebration since VCRs are a thing of the past in the swift-moving evolution of technology. We got our first VCR (video cassette recorder) when we lived in New Jersey. It was an amazing piece of video equipment and opened up a whole new manner of enjoying movies, which is our favorite genre of TV viewing. My most vivid recollection of using the VCR capabilities was for a family holiday gathering at our house, perhaps Thanksgiving as there was a lot of cooking going on. In order to entertain my mother, young Cati, and other guests in the living room while David and I were busy in the kitchen, we rented a movie from the then-new concept of taped movies rented from an easily accessible store. The movie was “Moonstruck,” which later won or was nominated for six Academy Awards (1988). My mother, who rejected all manner of technology, was fascinated by the opportunity to watch a major film in the comfort of an easy chair at our house.



From that point forward, the quality and ease of recording and playing movies skyrocketed, as did the commercial enterprises such as Blockbuster that offered the films for rental. When we lived on James Island 20 years ago, I bought two new VCRs—one for us and one for Cati—to replace that original model that had just plain wore out. We collected a quantity of our own video tapes, as well as taping programs from the TV to play at other, more convenient, times and to add to our personal movie library. It was a brilliant technological concept, that has since been replaced by even more sophisticated technology, so that several years ago we finally disposed of our VCR and all the video tapes. Most young people, such as our grandson Cameron, do not even recall what a VCR player and a VCR tape are.

One of the conundrums of VCR usage was the concept of how it worked. How could you tape one program while watching another? How could you tape a program if you didn't even have the TV on? And how did you get that damn clock from blinking endlessly on 12:00? At some point, most folks just gave up trying to understand and accepted it for what it did, not how it did it, much like listening to the radio without wanting to know how the songs get there. The funniest enactment of this gnawing confusion is a scene from the movie “City Slickers” where the character Mitch is trying to explain to the character Phil how the VCR works. To this day we continue to laugh at that scene, even though we watch the movie, not on a tape in the VCR, but on a Blue-ray Disc on our DVD player—advanced technology, at least for now.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQGgal-Bcl4>

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**🔗 Please check back next month for the *July* entry to this *Journal through Time*.**