

Katydids and Blackberries

Summer 2012 makes her debut today. The season slips in officially at 7:09 p.m. EDT. That may or may not be good news for you, depending on where you live and as you contemplate the three H's – heat, haze and humidity – in the wake of one of the warmest and driest springs on record.

I heard a fellow here in Tennessee recently say it had been so hot and dry that his uncle went out to the pond to fish, and caught a catfish with a tick on its back. He also related that it was so dry that Baptists were sponging people down for baptisms, and the Methodists were running around town issuing rain checks.

Whatever the climatic conditions where you live, however, summer provides some wonderful memories from years gone by, and the opportunity to make some special ones this year. For example ...

- It's about time for the song of the katydid to peal across the South, and I look forward to hearing that melodious concert in the trees any evening now. Legend says that from the date the first one is heard, count off 90 days and expect the first frost. I've been serenaded to sleep many evenings by the comforting sound coming through an open bedroom window.
- The Fourth of July is just around the corner. In addition to that being the time for celebrating our nation's independence, it also signaled the occasion for our family to be in the briar patch picking blackberries. The delicious fruit is generally ripe by then, and my father had a holiday from work. All the family pitched in, and by noontime, we had buckets of blackberries, and lots of chiggers, too. It was all worth it when my mother put piping hot blackberry cobbler on the table. Now that I am married, the Fourth of July has another very special meaning: It is my wife's birthday!
- A swimming hole or two generally comes to mind when summer is mentioned. The two shall always be linked in my thoughts. Somehow, the professionally designed swimming pools just cannot compare to the delight of walking two or three miles with boyhood pals, along a dusty road, usually barefoot, to a bend in a stream where the water was deep and wide. The gurgling tune of cool, clear water cascading over rocks to feed our fresh-water playground provided the ultimate background music.
- The unique and unmistakable aroma of honeysuckle vines clinging to roadside fences has returned. The sweetly-scented, bell-shaped flowers festooned moonlit pathways between church and home following evening worship services, while gospel songs and Spirit-filled sermons resonated in the mind.

Stretching before us are adventures to claim – and to share with family and friends. Let's get started, on this first day of Summer 2012.

– Beecher Hunter