

The Summer Solstice

Summer arrived at 1:04 Eastern Daylight Time this morning. Scientifically speaking, it is the first of two solstices that occur each year.

A solstice happens when the tilt of the Earth's axis is oriented directly toward or directly away from the sun, causing the sun to appear to reach its northernmost and southernmost extremes. The name is derived from the Latin *sol* (sun) and *sistere* (to stand still) because, at the solstices, the sun stands still in declination; that is, its apparent movement from north or south comes to a standstill.

So much for the technical stuff. Here's what the coming of summer has meant to me:

- Spending hours in the blackberry patches. Since July the Fourth is a holiday and the time that blackberries are ripening, my family generally designated the morning of Independence Day for picking the delicious fruit. While we had to endure a hot sun, the invasion of chiggers, scratches from briars, and the ever-present possibility of encountering a snake, my mother's blackberry cobbler was always a cherished reward.
- Plunging into the cool waters of the old swimming hole. My brothers, some good friends and I had to walk about three miles into the countryside near Cookeville, Tenn., to a clear, gurgling stream cascading through a meadow, and it was a place where we frolicked for hours. Somehow, diving into the waters of a municipal or hotel pool has never been the same.
- Relaxing in a swing on the front porch, and hearing news of the day or stories from the past with neighbors.
- Gazing at a full moon casting its beams through an open window of our farmhouse, and wondering about the heavens through which it sailed.
- Playing tag amidst the long, strong arms of a tall beech tree, impervious to the danger of a fall onto the exposed roots and rocks below.
- Fishing with my father, and listening to him explain the principles of how to catch the big one, and, more importantly, of life itself – the challenges, the requirements, the value of relationships and the results that can be obtained by hard work.
- Pulling red-ripe tomatoes from the vine in the garden, and making a delicious sandwich with leftover breakfast biscuits.
- Helping my mother on the back porch, chopping cabbage as she made sauerkraut, and scooping up handfuls of the salty-but-tasty product.



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- Lying on my back on a grassy bank in the front yard and studying the clouds as they drifted into formations, creating fanciful images for the mind.
- Learning about God in Vacation Bible School, and getting along with other boys and girls as we worked together on projects; and, of course, enjoying the ever-present Kool-Aid and cookies.
- Listening to the distinctive call of a whippoorwill deep in the woodlands, accompanied by a chorus of frogs from the nearby lake.



Yes, summer is a season offering special memories. Its debut this year, 2013, means it is a time to create some new ones.

For you and for me.

– Beecher Hunter