

of Today's Fast Pace

How Do You Go Back To The Good Old Days?

This is a wonderful world in which to live. It is crammed with wonders—a new one hits the front page nearly every day.

But it is a fast world—so fast that our grandchildren will have seen the whole world, by the time they are graduated from high school.

If by then no one has found a safe way to get to the moon, or Venus or Saturn—or if we discover that there is no civilization on these other planets—it's going to be a life of sheer boredom for those adults who are around in the year 2000.



I KNOW IT is nonsense to wish for the old days. No one particularly wants to return to when the ice man delivered 25 pounds to your house every other day; or when you had to clean out the stable every morning.

Or when you had to walk a couple hundred feet through snow to reach the outhouse. Or when you heated the house with coal and had the unhappy job of not only taking out the ashes but finding a place to hide them.

Yet, when I think back of my boyhood in Indiana, out in the farm country (I studied agriculture, and had every intention once to be either a streetcar motorman, a grocer, or a farmer) it is with a feeling of such nostalgic pleasure that I wish someone would really invent a time capsule.

I'd like to turn back the clock every so often and rest awhile from the dizzy speed of present-day life.



WITH ADVANCING age there is a parallel feeling—that of envy of the youngster. Where I used to run, I now walk. Where I used to play tennis all day, now I prefer to watch. Where I played at baseball, or football or basketball (I was a pedestrian sort of athlete in all branches) I now watch.

The kids have taken over, and I'm lost, and so I wish I could set back the clock and go back to the Hoosier town in which I was reared. I say to my friends that given a chance to retire, I'd go back to Marion, Ind., and sit on the front porch and rock.

I say this knowing it is all a lot of poppycock.



OUR FAMILY has lived out in Marion for some 60 years. My dad, an immigrant, got there (he once told me) by sheer accident.

He had a relative in Piqua, O., and was put aboard a Pennsy train for Marion, O., but somehow he couldn't tell the difference between Ohio and Indiana, and the conductor overlooked him, and so he got off at Marion, Ind., and having no cash on hand, just decided to stay there.

When I lived there, Marion was a sleepy town, surrounded by rich farm country. The town had a population of a few thousand, and it was built around the typical "public square" in the center of which was an ancient courthouse.

Around the courthouse were chains to which you hitched the horses. And at strategic spots there were watering troughs for the horses.

We had streetcars in town, but actually if you wanted to get anywhere a 15-minute walk would make it.



THERE WAS a big park to the north of town, given to the city by a family named Matter. Every Sunday we hitched up the horse and drove out there in a fancy buggy with a real fringe hanging from the top.

My dad peddled yard goods and such to farmers around the area, and so our

horse didn't care a bit for this Sunday outing. He preferred to remain in the stable and rest, or else get out into the big pasture behind our house.



MY FATHER would get up early each weekday morning, load up the wagon and set forth. Sometimes he came home rather unhappy—business was bad. Sometimes he came home in a better frame of mind. Sometimes he came home with little money, but with butter, eggs and other

produce the farmers traded for a few yards of muslin or percale.

Once he delighted the four kids by presenting us with a mongrel dog, half bulldog, one quarter fox terrier and one quarter something else. He'd gotten the puppy for a yard or two of gingham.

The dog—Tony we called him—lived with us for some 15 years, and we still recall him with a fondness that is overwhelming. Many was the night my mother would walk into the bedroom and demand

that whoever had Tony in bed with him, get him out right away.



THE SUNDAYS at Matter Park were elegant. Mom would cook up enough to feed not only the six Maidenburgs but a dozen others as well. It was considered quite unfashionable to not be able to invite neighbors and friends over for a "snack"—the snack being big enough to put three or four pounds on even one with an hyper-active thyroid.

We'd get out there in the morning, eat and drink soda

pop all day long, play in the Mississinewa river, and get home late in the evening.



ON SPECIAL DAYS, such as Memorial Day or the Fourth of July, we'd go out to the Old Soldiers' Home. That was a place south of town where Civil War veterans lived.

That was really a Big Deal.

There'd be a big band concert, and the band would play the Star Spangled Banner 40 or 50 times, interspersed with all sorts of marching music of the War of the Rebellion.

The grounds of the Old Soldiers' Home were covered with Civil War cannon, pyramids of cannon balls, and other such stuff, and we had a heck of a time looking down the gun barrels and lifting the cannon balls.

The best though was when we could corner some garrulous Civil War veteran who'd regale us with stories of Gettysburg and Chancellorsville and Bull Run.

All the old-timers I ever listened to had never forgiven the South for the Civil War (these oldsters at Marion, Ind., were all Union veterans). But grudge or no grudge, these old-timers, like any other soldier, exuded a delight in having taken part in the struggle, and in the hero-worship to which they were subjected.

It was a sad, sad day for all of us when the Civil War vets started dying out, and the place was changed into a haven for World War I veterans.



MANY THINGS have changed in Marion. The population is up to around 50,000. The town is full of industry. The golf course is now a bunch of fancy homes. The old "lover's lane" leading out to Matter Park also is a housing development. The dirt and gravel streets are paved.

A kid seen barefoot would be picked up or reported to the police. No one goes to Matter Park anymore, and I haven't seen a horse in Marion for ages.

The streetcars are gone; Tony the dog has left us. The houses in which we lived have become filling stations, and the conversation no longer is just chat—now my friends have become hypochondriacs on the subjects of foreign affairs, the floods in China, the Russian problem and high taxes.

There's about as much chance for having a restful, conversational evening as there is for Marion, Ind., to suddenly be turned back to the year 1920.



YOU MAY WONDER how I got into the newspaper business, having mentioned earlier that I had a desire to be a farmer, or motorman or grocer.

It was one of those things. Believe it or not, I played with a baseball team in Marion that was made up of eight Negroes with myself as first baseman. We used to play every Sunday before crowds of several hundred. (The baseball field is now a shopping center, by the way.)

One day the sports editor of the Marion, Ind., Chronicle who had the unhappy job of covering these games came to me, said he had a date and would I write-up the game for him and get the box score if he'd pay me \$1.



THE RESULT satisfied the sports editor, and the money was so huge to me that thereafter I was not only the first baseman (batting average .251; fielding average .531) but also the Sunday baseball correspondent for The Chronicle.

From there I drifted into the newspaper business. That was some 35 years ago.

—BEN MAIDENBURG