

# Deja Views

**Our readers remember the Fabulous '50s.**

## **Exploring NYC on Skates**

I LOOK LIKE I'm saying, "I've got skates. You can't catch me!" in this photo (left) from 1954.

Who doesn't remember their first pair of roller skates? I got mine that year. They were heavy with metal tongues that fit over my shoes and leather straps that went around my ankles. I wore my skate key on a string around my neck.

Roller skates were a ticket to freedom in New York City. With a step, step, glide, I was speeding down a sidewalk, stepping up high over the curb and watching out for traffic.

A city bus would be close behind me, breathing down my neck, before I'd reach the park just in the nick of time! Here I could explore pathways and playgrounds to my heart's content.

—Debby Farrow, East Haddam, Connecticut

## **Howdy, Neighbor**

I REMEMBER the flashy new Pontiac (above) used by my mom, Betty Smith Davis, for the local Hi-Neighbor program in 1953. Dock Coffey Pontiac and other Amarillo, Texas merchants launched the innovative service to welcome new people to our city.

For a few hours a day, Mom and her friend Faye Hill encouraged other businesses to initiate sponsorships with gifts such as discount coupons. Mom remembers that they had to fill the Pontiac's tank with gas, but the use of the car was invaluable. Dad traveled, leaving Mom without transportation.

Mom says she cherishes the confidence she developed through an

opportunity few women were afforded in the '50s.

—Carolyn Davis Barker, Canyon, Texas

### **“Movie Night Out”**

IN BURBANK, California, in the 1950s, my father was a hardworking contractor, so come Saturday afternoon, he was ready to relax. While Dad got cleaned up, Mother would put me in my pajamas and slippers.

All of us, including our dog “Fella,” would pile into the car and head for the Pickwick Drive-In. We’d get there while it was still light outside so I could play with the other kids in the playground—yes, in our pajamas!

After Mother watched me play on the swings and slides and merry-go-round, Dad would retrieve us for a trip to the snack bar. We’d order pizza or hot dogs, along with popcorn and soda.

With blankets and pillows, Fella and I would settle down in the backseat just before the cartoons started.

—Darletta McCartney Horn, Lakewood, Colorado

### **TV Theater Proprietor**

IN THE LATE 1940s, my father brought home a tabletop TV, the first television in our neighborhood, and it created a lot of excitement on our block.

The reception was “snowy,” and we could get just one TV station, from Des Moines, in our small Iowa town. Dad discovered that putting colored transparent paper over the TV screen helped tone down the snowy background. He changed the color each week.

Dad invited the neighbors over for TV on Saturday and Sunday nights, charging 5¢ per person—it was cheaper than 10¢ at the local movies. He was always trying to earn a few cents to buy detective magazines.

My 85-year-old grandmother lived with us, and the only show she liked was Arthur Godfrey's. She figured if she could see him, then he could see her, so she got all dressed up especially for him. We never could convince her otherwise.

—Nancy Rinehimer, Queen Creek, Arizona

### **A New Kind of Earphone**

IN 1959, our Zenith portable television was acting up.

My dad could usually fix it, but this time, he claimed the set wouldn't work with the metal cover in place (top and sides), so he took it off. Mom just threw a towel over it, as she didn't hold with naked TVs!

That same year, I discovered Shock Theatre out of WBKB in Chicago. The host, Mad Marvin, ran those wonderful old Universal Pictures monster movies.

But I was faced with a dilemma. Our unfinished house had no wall between my parents' bedroom and our tiny living room, and Dad said he couldn't sleep with the TV on. After a lengthy negotiation—begging, really—he agreed to let me see my show with the volume off.

Desperation being the mother of invention, I stole my mom's vacuum-cleaner hose and wired one end to the now-exposed speaker bracket. The other end just reached the couch.

By lying down, I could put my ear against the rubber end of the hose, and voila! I could hear the audio with the volume knob turned low.

—Steve Henderson, South Haven, Michigan

### **“Wunnerful, Wunnerful”**

ON MAY 2, 1951, I was drifting off to sleep when I heard Mom shout to a lady visitor, “Oh, it's Barney! I'll get the kids.” We were ushered in front of our Motorola, and Mom said, “Look, Daddy's on the TV!”

Earlier that night, technicians from KTLA in Los Angeles set up a portable camera for an experimental broadcast from the Aragon Ballroom in nearby Venice.

Viewers later asked to see more of that new Welk band with the bubbly music, and thus, The Lawrence Welk Show was born.

Several years earlier, Mr. Welk had asked my father, Barney Liddell, to be lead trombonist in his small dance band. Dad thought the music was too commercial, even corny, but was tired of one-nighters with other bands and accepted the offer.

Weekly, hour-long broadcasts to a local audience began on KTLA, and in July 1955, the program went national. Dad, a sensitive man who had hesitated to join the band, eventually became one of its most beloved members. He remained with the orchestra for 34 years, longer than any of the other “boys in the band.”

—Terrence Liddell, Atascadero, California