Almost

By Bobbye Maggard

If you grew up in the thirties, forties and fifties in a place that was almost big enough to be called a city and almost small enough to be called a town, perhaps you can identify with the following.

Maybe it was a place where almost everyone knew almost everybody or knew someone who did.

Almost every home had a dad and a mom, and almost every mom was a “stay-at-home” one. Almost every dad was the bread winner.

Almost every girl had a first and a middle name and almost every boy did, as well. Almost every child was called by his or her double name almost every time he or she did something wrong. Almost every mom was free to reprimand almost any child who misbehaved, then call the child’s mother to report the misdeed.

Almost every boy was a Boy Scout and almost every girl was a Girl Scout. Almost every young boy wanted to grow up to be like Jack Armstrong or Flash Gordon. Almost every little girl wanted to be a Shirley Temple look-alike and be as talented as she was. Almost every child was taught the fundamentals of competition. Almost all of them heard, “It’s not whether you won or lost, but how you played the game” and almost none of them actually believed that.

Almost every family had a dog, cat, fish or bird, and almost all cats and dogs were free to roam off-leash. Almost every mom insisted that her child take care of the pet, but ended up taking care of it herself.

Almost every child had house/yard chores to do and almost every one got a weekly allowance. Almost every small child believed in Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny, and was disappointed to find out that none of them really existed.

Almost every child looked forward to going “Trick or Treating” on Hallowe’en. Almost all children learned to walk on stilts, jump rope, play hop-scotch, rock school, Mother, May I ?, red rover, sugarloaf town, jacks, territory, hide and seek, and slip down slides, ride on merry-go-rounds, sway on swings and hang from monkey bars. Almost all of them rolled down hills on skates with skate keys hanging around their necks on string. Almost all children enjoyed sliding down
snowy hills on sleds or toboggans pulled by the family car. Almost all of them got broken bones from engaging in the above-mentioned activities.

Almost everyone enjoyed picnics during the summer in the city park. Almost everyone who spent their childhood there has wonderful memories of swimming in creeks, rivers or lakes, and almost everyone knew that “skinny-dipping” was a cardinal offense, but did it, anyway.

Almost every kitchen had an ice box before refrigerators came on the scene and ice was delivered from trucks. Almost all children ran behind the trucks to gather ice chips. Almost everyone called a refrigerator a Frigidaire, that brand being the most popular one. Almost all milk was delivered by a milkman. Almost all bakers and butchers gave samples of their products.

In that place that was almost big enough to be called a city and almost small enough to be called a town, neighbor borrowed from and loaned to neighbor. Almost every parent taught their children to practice good manners and to trust police officers. Almost all parents sat on their porches chatting with neighbors in the evening, while their children chased lightening bugs or played tag in their yards until they were called to come home.

Before telephone dialing systems were installed, almost everyone heard a familiar voice say “Number, please”, and almost every household used a party-line.

Almost all children attended public schools, except for those who went to Parochial schools. Almost everyone graduated from those schools, although a few of them almost didn’t. Almost everyone knew that skipping school meant after-school detention and worse than that at home, but did it, anyway.

Almost everyone listened almost every Sunday evening to Jack Benny on their radio. Almost all radios were floor models that had curved tops and on/off/volume knobs. Almost everyone heard on Sunday, December 7, 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt announce that the Japanese Imperial Navy had bombed Pearl Harbor, and almost no one knew where Pearl Harbor was.

Suddenly, everyone in town became patriotic and American flags began to hang in windows, yards and from rooftops. America was at war! For the next few
years, *almost* everything was in short supply because *almost* everything was used by the military. *Almost* every song and movie carried a war time theme.

On *almost* every downtown corner there was a house of worship. *Almost* everyone attended their house of worship *almost* every time the doors opened.

*Almost* every teen knew of a place where they could socialize and dance to jukebox music, and *almost* all of them could *almost* remember all of the words to *almost* every song they danced to.

*Almost* everyone was contented with their life, and *almost* all who had to move away from there fondly remembers *almost* everything from that *almost* perfect time in that *almost* perfect place.