

Rainy Days

I woke up this morning to the sound of heavy rain. As I poured my first cup of coffee and sat down at my computer, I could hear the wind playfully teasing my wind chimes out on the porch. I love that sound. I marveled at the comfortable feeling rain always brings, so contrary to the bleak and dreary mood usually associated with waking up to a rainy day.

Now, hours later, the peaceful feeling is still with me, and I think it's because, today, it allowed me to remember ... when I was a child and it rained, there were always a million things to do.

There were six children growing up in my house -- my cousin, Bill, who was like a brother, lived with us and he and I were the oldest. Like with most large families, there was never a dull moment, and I can't say that we were ever bored. All of us had creative imaginations and we were forever pretending.

In the summer, after our chores were done, the days were pretty much ours to do what we wanted, if we didn't have early swimming lessons. If we did, then as soon as we got home, we could be found outside playing games, riding bikes, roller skating, or maybe up in the old apple tree reading or building Swiss Family Robinson's tree house from scrap wood we found out in the woodshed.

Today's rain made me think of another rainy day a long time ago. It all began with a thunder storm -- we always loved thunder storms. At the first rumble of thunder, we usually headed to our big front porch to watch Mother Nature work her magic.

When the storm wound down to a steady rain, someone -- I don't remember who, now -- came up with the idea to go to the basement and build a fort. All for one, and one for all, our heads filled with wonderful plans, we raided the linen closet. Arms loaded up with blankets and sheets, we headed down the basement stairs.

We weaved heavy twine and rope back and forth, from one wall to the one across, and then draped our sheets and blankets over the lines -- each of us had our own living quarters that way. Then we borrowed the vacuum cleaner hose to use as a telephone, which was always hysterical, because it left a perfect black circle of

dirt around our mouths. Every time we looked at each other, we laughed until our sides ached.

We had such a great time that day, all of us together and just being kids -- of course, like with most creative projects, most of the fun was in the actual creation, which took us almost the whole day -- clean-up was always something we avoided, until mom got after us with threats of no TV till it was all cleaned up.

Those are the days I remember most -- the sweet childish days that were as long as twenty days are now. Maybe that's why I'm still not ready to grow up ...