

Big Times on Little Tybee

Written by:
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How to Pack a Trunk

Please forgive me if I elaborate on the following, but “The Olds” deserves honorable mention. It was considered a part of our family for many years, hence a major part of this story.

If you are old enough to remember the 1953 Oldsmobile Delta 88, then you know how spacious her interior was. Actually, one could easily compare it to that of a hotel suite in Tokyo, Japan. Today’s minivans and SUV’s roominess could hardly compete with that of The Olds. Oh—and that mammoth trunk! You could have rented a lot at your local campground and camped out for months in sheer luxury! I’m talking home theater, sectional sofa, hot tub, an RV portable shower—well, you get the point.

It was Daddy's car and I believe he loved it as much as he loved us. He would continually clean the car and it remained immaculate inside and out. The Olds was tan and bronze: on the front grill was a silver globe of the world with a ring around it. Daddy kept The Olds until 1984, the year he passed away. It still had its original Rocket 88 V-8, 303 cubic inch (5.0L) engine with 165 hp and 275 lb-ft of torque that was mated to a Hydra-Matic ® four-speed transmission. When it was sold in 1984, it had a little over four hundred thousand miles on it.

For many years, The Olds transported us from Atlanta to Tybee Island in Savannah, Georgia where we would go each year on our summer vacation. My parents started going to Tybee in 1948, the year my oldest brother, Jimmy, was born. My earliest recollection of vacations began with The Olds in the late fifties. Daddy would load innumerable suitcases into that bottomless pit of a trunk. My three brothers and I helped speed the process along by depositing overnight bags, beach towels, fishing poles, tackle boxes, old tire inner tubes that we used for floats, and yes, even a yellow and white beach umbrella.

The Departure

Mama made sure we had all gone to the bathroom before settling into the car. “C’mon! Let’s go,” we would anxiously say, while we waited for Daddy to securely batten down the house for the week. We sat in the massive back seat, craning our necks toward the windshield. We knew it was finally time to go when Daddy emerged from the house with three things: a flashlight, a thermos full of hot coffee, and a whiskbroom tucked under his arm. Let’s roll!

Behind schedule as usual, we were on our way—well ... almost. We had another stop to make across town to pick up Daddy's sister, her two children, and Daddy's

mother. It wouldn't be a family vacation without more family, would it? "We just want to go to the beach!" we would say. Mama told us to try to go to sleep.

We didn't want to sleep, because we were hungry from all the packing. We knew Mama always packed tons of food. Those days, convenience stores and fast food restaurants weren't on every other street corner like they are today. As a rule, we were not allowed to eat in the car, but once a year we got to use our "super-duper secret weapon" against Daddy's rule. Our secret weapon was something Daddy feared, and we knew it, and it went by the name of "Bigmama."

Bigmama was Daddy's mother. A small, petite woman of German- Irish descent, she possessed a very large, aggressive personality. It is fair to say that she was a tad eccentric. As if accentuating her bold nature, she applied a monthly henna rinse to her naturally brown hair, which rendered it a bright, carrot-orange color. She had deemed herself "Bigmama," because vanity would not permit her to be called *Grandmother*. My Aunt liked to be called "Mimi," not pronounced as Mi-Mi, but as "Mimmie." Why, I don't know, but if it's of any consequence to you, their real names were honest to goodness, Thelma and Louise.

When we finally reached Bigmama's house, Mimi was not, nor would she ever be, ready to go. This always irritated Daddy to no end. She had to finish packing or had to throw that last bobby pin into her hair. Mimi was a very gentle, attractive woman, with raven hair and deep brown eyes. She remained a widow after she lost her husband, Uncle Raymond, during World War II at the battle of Normandy. We never got to know him.

Mama told us we should go and help with the luggage. She also reminded us that it might be a good idea to use the bathroom—again. My brothers and I jumped out of the car and ran up the flights of steps, which led us across the porch, into the house, where we joined our two cousins, Sonia and Steve. They were a few years older than we were and were as beautiful as Mimi, their mother; Sonia always reminded me so much of Snow White. Now everyone was accounted for, which meant there were six of us running around the house.

Of course, Bigmama had to make sure we had something to eat and drink in the process of all those hysterics! This made Daddy even more anxious. He would yell at Mama, "Margaret, see if you can get them back together and into the car," he would say. "We have to go and we're behind schedule. Tell Bigmama to stop giving them so much to drink! We'll be stopping every 50 miles down the road!"

Time to load the abyss with more suitcases, more makeup bags, more food! Not to mention the things we had piled into the car itself. Magazines, crayons, coloring books, newspapers, snacks, another whiskbroom (an inherent trait no doubt) a portable potty, and who could ever forget the famous mayonnaise jar containing a washcloth in soapy water that Bigmama always carried around with her.

The Second Departure

It was five in the morning and the tight schedule had been shot. Nevertheless, we were on our way. Daddy, Mama, Billy and I in the front seat: Bigmama, Mimi, Steve, Sonia, Jimmy, Pat, the potty and the mayonnaise jar containing a washcloth in soapy water, in the back seat. We were off to Savannah, right in the middle of summer with no air-conditioning. Somebody open the windows, please!

We finally settled down and were lulled to sleep by the rocking motion of the car. Mama, Bigmama and Mimi, with their "Lana Turner" scarves tied around their heads, hair twisted full of bobby pins, slept sitting upright. They never laid their heads back on the seat. How they managed that, I'll never understand. We would just lie all over each other and wake up hot, sweaty, and sticky.

It was fun falling asleep in one place and waking in another, as if magically transported through time. I remembered looking out the windows of the car, thinking we might have driven to another country. The trees looked different, bigger, older. There was this wispy, gray whiskery-looking stuff hanging from the limbs of the massive live oaks. It conjured up images in my mind of old decrepit pirates running through the grass and getting their beards caught and tangled in the branches, snatching them off their faces to hang there throughout the ages.

It was Spanish moss, of course, and I never tire of seeing it hanging from the branches of the trees. I always looked forward to riding down Victory Drive, seeing the live oaks, dripping with Spanish moss. The smell of sulfur permeated the air, and it was pungent, stinky, and wonderful.

The last long stretch of highway 80 was lined with palm trees as far as the eye could see, and it was then that we knew we were getting very close. On either side of the stretch were low-lying marshy areas, which served as a haven for all sorts of God's wonderful living creatures. Off to the left we could see Fort Pulaski. At that point, the Lana Turner scarves came off and bobby pins went flying through the air as the women started fixing their hair. We knew it wouldn't be long!

We were approaching my favorite part of Tybee Island. It was the sharp curve in the road, where the *old* DeSoto Hotel on Butler Avenue used to be. My heart would race as I looked out over the horizon. Time seemed to stand still for a moment, and I couldn't hear all the commotion going on around me.

There before me, lay the long awaited first glimpse of the vast blue ocean with its cresting waves breaking into white foam. My stomach turned over inside, and I wanted to run to greet the water. The deep azure sky was filled with dozens of snow-white seagulls gliding high into the air, hitchhiking on a jet stream. I could almost feel the motion of flying with them, being lifted up and slowly gliding back down to the soft, sandy beach. The briny smell of the surf filled my lungs and I felt the blistering hot sun upon my face. Mesmerized, I was being summoned back to earth by my brothers and cousins. We were

raring to go as we pulled into the sandy parking lot behind the old Wilson Hotel. Above the excited squeals, I could hear the ocean waves as they crashed against the sand. We were there! Yes, we were there.

The Arrival

We excitedly threw open the car doors and the air felt like a wall of steam, thick enough to cut with a knife. As we rushed out of the car, we stepped directly onto cocklebur patches. We hardly ever wore shoes in the summer. It was like walking through a minefield trying to avoid those things. The sand was hot, and it burned the bottoms of our feet.

The air was filled with the smells and sounds from the boardwalk that used to line the beachfront at that time. Sweet smells of candied apples, cotton candy, and caramel corn filled our nostrils and made us smack our lips in anticipation. We heard laughter and sounds of pinball machines from the arcade that resonated with organ music that played at the roller skating rink in the middle of the large, wooden pier.

The old Wilson Hotel was located on 16th Street and was about a block away from the beach. It was a two-story, dark red brick building, with a large, breezy veranda. There were only a handful of private bathrooms on each floor. Other than that, you would have to use the common area ones. Air conditioning? Fuggeddaboutit! The only television in the hotel was located in the lobby, along with a sofa, a few chairs and an old, wooden telephone booth.

We each grabbed a bag or two and rushed into the hotel. Rowena Wilson, the owner, and Maggie, the caretaker, always came out to greet us. I think Maggie got the biggest kick of all from our visits. After a day of fishing, Jimmy and Steve would bring a stringer of fish back for Maggie. She was so gracious about receiving the haul, that it became a contest over the years to see how many fish they could catch to impress her.

Up the stairs we went with all our luggage and scrambled into the rooms to unpack our swimsuits! The rooms were stifling hot and we opened the windows. The ocean breeze helped to cool them, but only a little. Heavy, black wrought iron headboards and footboards supported the beds in which we slept. The sheets were so stiff you could stand them up in the corner and they were murder on sunburned skin.

Bigmama and Mimi always took the room at the front corner of the hotel. One of the doors opened onto the large, breezy veranda that was full of rattan furniture with big fluffy floral print cushions. We spent many nights sitting there trying to stay cool. We also spent a lot of time on the veranda eating tuna fish sandwiches, Vienna sausages and pork and beans right out of the can. Why is it you could eat pork and beans out of the can on vacation, but not at home? Oh, and Kippers—how Daddy loved his Kippers and Sardines! Yuk! Then we would wash it all down with freshly squeezed lemonade.

Directly across the street from the hotel was a two-story department store owned

by Mr. T.S. Chu. Mr. Chu was a living legend around Tybee, deservedly so. He had the most intriguing department store we had ever been in. "If it's something you use, you'll find it at Chu's." How many times did I see that slogan on his storefront over the years, and it was true, too. Mr. Chu always remembered us and was so happy to see us each year when we visited. I will always remember what a nice gentle man he was. Mr. Chu was an immigrant from China, and eventually settled in the Tybee Island area due to an act of selflessness on his part. As a result, he was given a small souvenir stand teetering on bankruptcy, and the rest, is history. As he prospered, he shared his wealth with people less fortunate, but asked to remain anonymous in his benevolence.

Mr. Chu's store had so many culturally diverse items to enjoy. We had never *seen* such a store back home in Atlanta. In the back remote corner of the store, there stood an old fortune-telling machine. In it, was a life sized, mechanical gypsy-looking woman with a red bandana on her head, and large gold-hoop earrings hanging from her earlobes. It was dark and scary there in that corner. My youngest brother, Billy, and I decided to put a penny into the machine to receive a forecast from the Fortune Teller. The booth lit up and eerie music started playing. The gypsy woman moved her hands over the crystal ball. She had big gold rings on each finger and long fingernails, painted bright red. She started to speak, and her eyes rolled back and forth in her head. Startled, we took a step back, but our curiosity held us spellbound. A small piece of paper with our fortune spat out of the slot on front of the machine. We grabbed it and quickly ran to the front of the store where we shook glass snowball globes with pink flamingos and Santa Clauses in them. Life was good.

Kamikaze Summer

Mama always bought my swimsuits for me except for this one, particular summer around '66, '67, when I stood my ground. I mean, I was almost a teenager. She had tried her best to tell me the swimsuit was not appropriate for someone "my size." O.k., I'll admit it: I was a bit on the chubby side, but I just *had* to have that swimsuit! It was a darling red and white two-piece, and I just knew I would look so good in it. It reminded me of the one I saw Emma Peel wearing in an episode of *The Avengers*. I imagined I would look just like her, minus the white knee-high patent leather boots, long dark hair, and sleek figure, of course.

I put that two-piece on and felt so grown up and sophisticated. Filled with confidence, I walked out to the hallway and joined everyone. My brothers and cousins started laughing. I just tried to ignore them as I pulled on my white rubber swim cap over an abundance of fuzzy blonde curls, and snapped it closed under my chin. I think it was at that point my brother, Pat, blurted out, "Hey! Y'all look at Betsy! She looks just like a Kamikaze Pilot!"

They were laughing so hard. Mama sent me downstairs with a pitcher to get some ice for the lemonade. As I descended the stairs, Mama started laughing too, but at the same time, she scolded everyone by saying, "You should all be ashamed of yourselves! I tried to talk her out of that swimsuit." My aunt Mimi tried to make me feel better by

saying, "The swim suit looks just adorable on you! You know, for someone your size, at least you're pretty solid all over. You're not jiggly at all!" Sigh ...

As usual, we took tons of pictures while on vacation. After we had gotten home and had the film developed, we all sat around and reminisced about the fun we had at Tybee. Billy looked at one of the pictures and asked me why I was still wearing my float on the beach. I took a long hard look at the photo and realized that I wasn't wearing any float. Besides, the only floats we had were old tire inner tubes. I never wore the swimsuit again, but I still have that picture. Funny!

Anyway ... back to getting the pitcher of ice. Mrs. Wilson did not allow just anyone to use her private kitchen area, but to her, we were family. I felt so special as I opened the door to her icebox we were so privy to and retrieved the ice pick. Chiseling away at the enormous block of ice sitting where the freezer was supposed to be, was one way of venting my anger. I thought that icebox deal was a great thing and wished we could have one back home. When I asked Mama about it, she said our modern one, the kind you still had to defrost in those days, was much better.

Upon returning to our room, I passed Jimmy and Steve on their way out to go fishing. They whistled at me and said I looked like a movie star. I've never forgotten that and have always loved them for saying it. They were going fishing over at the pier. As teenagers, they most likely didn't want to hang out with us kids. Besides, they had the contest going on: "Fishing for Maggie."

All you Need is Lettuce

Daddy was standing outside the room with the beach umbrella and a homemade suntan lotion someone at work had told him about. They said that he was guaranteed to tan—not burn—with this formula. It was basically a drop of Iodine, a small amount of baby oil, a little vegetable oil, and apple cider vinegar.

Mama had the towels, Coppertone, and Noxzema. She knew! Billy, Sonia, and I had our inner tubes on and were ready to go! We were missing Mimi and Pat. We ran up and down the halls of the hotel with our flip-flops flapping and our inner tubes bouncing. We finally found Pat in Bigmama's room.

"What are you doing?" we asked. He was standing at the sink, brushing his teeth with *CREST* toothpaste, and rinsing his mouth with a glass full of lemonade.

"Why are you doing that?" I asked.

"Because the water tastes like rotten eggs and it stinks!" he said. Naturally, we all wanted to do this too, so we ran back out into the hall and asked Mama for some lemonade, so we could brush our teeth.

"What in the world are you talking about?" Mama asked.

We all piled down the stairs of the hotel. Daddy, with his broad shoulders, dark wavy hair, and sparkling blue eyes, looked like my favorite Tarzan of all time, Johnny Weissmuller. He could do a pretty good imitation of the Tarzan yell, too. Mama, with her naturally blond hair, hazel eyes, and little button nose, looked like Lana Turner in a sleek black Catalina swimsuit, minus the headscarf, this time.

It was early afternoon now, and the sun was high overhead. As we approached the boardwalk, we could hear Dean Martin's latest hit single *Everybody Loves Somebody, Sometime*, being broadcast over loud speakers up and down the beach. We were to hear this song over and over throughout the coming week. To our right, stood the old city pier and we saw Jimmy and Steve, amid all the other tourists, fishing away. We started walking across the hot, golden colored sand, and quickly learned that feet, flip-flops, and deep, hot sand, do not a match make.

Mama and Daddy scouted for the perfect spot to pitch the bright yellow and white umbrella on the crowded beach. Mama said, "Don't wander off too far from this spot!" We headed straight for the water, stopping dead in our tracks, mouths dropping wide open, as we looked at the six-foot waves crashing in. We turned and looked at each other, eyes wide with excitement, and ran back to the umbrella site! We dropped our inner tubes and rushed back to the water! We were going body surfing, the heck with inner tubes!

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Bigmama walking across the sand. Now this was a sight to behold. Her bright orange hair encompassed by a black hair net, stuck out like a sore thumb in the strong midafternoon sun. She had on a pair of pink plastic horn-rimmed sunglasses, a white sleeveless cotton blouse, black pedal pushers, and black, wedge-heeled sandals. In one hand, she held a beach towel, in the other, the mayonnaise jar with the soapy water and washcloth in it. She wore the same clothes to the beach, almost like a uniform, every year. Mama told me when Bigmama got home from vacation, she washed her "beach clothes," put them in a plastic bag, and saved them for the following year, sunglasses, shoes, and all.

Once, a somewhat inebriated man simply could not contain himself. He saw Bigmama sitting under the pier, her beach towel spread out in the shade in all her glory, and he was just overcome. He shouted out at the top of his lungs, "Hey Red! You shine through and through with that red hair of yours!" We thought that was kind of funny, but Daddy didn't think so.

Daddy had his beach towel spread out in the sun, and he opened the "suntan lotion." He slathered it on and was overcome by the aroma. Mama moved away from him. Not only was he a greasy mess, but he smelled so bad that every fly within a twenty-mile radius homed in on him. Other people on the beach were grateful, as no fly would land on them *this* day. All he needed was a head of lettuce, a tomato, and some onions, and we could have had a salad— well, sort of.

Meanwhile, we were out in the ocean, being pounded by the enormous waves crashing down on us. What a feeling it was to be caught up in the break and turned upside down in the water, pushed to the ocean floor, and stuck there, churning like you're inside a washing machine. I gave out of breath several times under water. A wave turned me upside down at one point, crashing me into the ocean floor so hard that the plastic hair band I was wearing left teeth marks in my scalp, but I emerged, ready for the next one. I loved standing in knee-deep water waiting for a wave to reach the breaking point, diving magically through the middle of it, coming out on the other side miraculously unscathed. In rough waters, this was tricky though, because you could wind up getting blasted by the next wave.

We had gotten tired of body surfing and donned our inner tubes while battling our way through the waves out past the pier. We saw Jimmy and Steve fishing. Billy yelled out to them, "Look at me! Watch this!" A big wave would come and lift him high into the air and he would paddle with his hands as fast as he could, barely making it over the top before the wave broke.

As we floated around in deeper waters, schools of mullet and shiners would be flipping in and out of the water. We weren't really afraid of sharks. Thankfully, this was many years before the movie "Jaws." Daddy, a Navy veteran, told us he had seen a lot of shark-battering dolphins in the water that day, so we felt safe. He always said the dolphins were our protectors from sharks.

Mama never ventured out past ankle deep water. A jellyfish attached itself around her ankle once, and it was so painful that she has never been in the ocean since. I know she believes that jellyfish is still out there somewhere, gunnin' for her.

Sailing the ocean blue famished us, so we made it back to shore. Why did swimming always make you so hungry?

Pat looked at Daddy and said "Pew! You smell awful."

Seeing my daddy glistening in the sunlight I said, "Daddy! You're as red as a lobster!" Anyway, what I could see of him through the pack of flies swarming around him.

Mama said it was time to go and round everyone up. Sonia ran and got Bigmama, and it was a good thing, too, because high tide was approaching her shady place under the pier. The rest of us ran with rubbery feeling legs onto the pier, hearing Dean Martin singing that song again. At the end of the pier stood Jimmy and Steve. They looked like James Dean and Elvis standing there, hair windblown, and faces bronzed by the sun.

Maggie would have a good dinner tonight, they said while holding up the stringer full of fish. The highlight of the day had been a three-foot hammerhead.

Steve said, "Hey Betsy! We caught this shark right where y'all were floating in

your inner tubes! We're going to try to catch his mama tomorrow! Jimmy said he saw her out there in that area." Steve. He was quite the kidder, he was. So much for the shark-battering dolphins.

Two's Company; Eight's a Crowd

Bigmama was in her room making tuna sandwiches and more lemonade for us when we finished showering. Daddy wanted to take his shower right away to wash off his "salad dressing." Mrs. Wilson threatened to hose him down before he came into her hotel, but he was so sunburned, she felt sorry for him. We had taken the available shower stalls, so he had to wait. Mama made him stand out on the veranda. "And don't sit on anything, either," she added.

I stood in the shower with fresh bar of Ivory soap, as needle-sharp water sprayed over me. For the first time in my life, my midriff had been sunburned. I couldn't move, and my entire body had started to stiffen. The hotel towels felt like sandpaper against my freshly sunburned skin.

By now, it was dark out over the ocean. Someone mentioned it would be nice to go for a walk on the beach, but we were too tired to move. It was nice just sitting on the veranda with the cool ocean breeze moving over our Noxzema-covered bodies. The smell of eucalyptus from the Noxzema made my eyes sting and water a bit, and I was so sleepy. It was time to turn in for the evening as we climbed into our beds between those stiff, white sheets. Exhausted, thankfully the sleep came quickly.

Good Moanin'! Upon waking, anything that could possibly hurt on your body, hurt. Daddy's ankles and feet were so red and swollen, he could barely walk. We used to tease him about how skinny his legs were, and he looked so funny with those bird legs attached to the swollen "boats" beneath them.

Pat got the worst of it. He had red hair and was the fairest between us. His nose looked like an overcooked hot dog, all plumped and swollen up. His lips were swollen twice their size, and his eyes were all puffy. We took him to the first aid station located near the beach. The medic said he had sun poisoning. We went to Mr. Chu's and got him a straw hat to wear for protection. Sun block did not exist in those days.

After a hardy breakfast, and against Daddy's wishes, we went back to the beach. It was only our second day there! Dean Martin was still singing *Everybody Loves Somebody, Sometime*, and we knew all the words by now. Daddy pitched the umbrella close to the pier, so he could keep a closer watch on Bigmama. Jimmy and Steve were off fishing again, but before they left, they reminded us about the hammerhead's mama, and how they were going to catch her that day.

So, it's no surprise that I decided to stick close to Mama and Daddy that day. I found a place under the umbrella and got situated with my coloring book and crayons. Pat

had to stay under the umbrella due to the sun poisoning, as he read the latest *Hardy Boys* mystery. Billy and Sonia decided they wanted to stay with us, too, and then, Mimi scooted in.

Daddy and Mama wondered what was going on, but they crowded in under the umbrella as well. What was this? Bigmama had given up her place under the pier and joined us. What a great feeling of security that was. When you're young, you don't realize how very special times like those are. If I could have been given just a fraction of foresight, I would have savored *even more*, every second of our times together.

Later that evening on the veranda, Jimmy and Steve told us how they had seen the big shark and watched as two dolphins as they battered the shark to death. I don't know if that was true or not, but if it was, then Daddy was right. We *were* safe.

Calling Ralph

I experienced my first long distance "romance" at the age of 14 on Tybee Island. His name was Ralph and his mother owned a small restaurant where we would go for burgers and fries. He worked behind the counter, and he was the first boy I ever held hands with. I don't remember whose palms were sweatier. Ralph was an enterprising young man. There was a jukebox in the restaurant, and I played *Mony, Mony*, by Tommy James and the Shondells every time I went in. "I wish I had a nickel for every time somebody plays that song," he'd say each time.

There was a black out on the island the night Ralph would come to call. He had foreseen this, given how overcrowded the island was due to tourist, knowing this would inevitably spark a power surge, creating the black out. He had extra burgers on standby. Ralph told me that he and his mother realized a hefty profit while they continued to operate via candlelight. Meanwhile, the other businesses suffered a loss due to their lack of foresight. I think Ralph was all of sixteen at the time?

He was a member of the ROTC, and Steve, an adult now, married to Brenda, teased me relentlessly about Ralph. While I patiently waited for Ralph, he'd say, "Hey Betsy! Do you really think he's coming? Do you know what ROTC stands for?"

Anxious to know, I asked, "What?"

"Rotten Old Tomato Can," he would laugh. Steve. Always the kidder, he was. I would get so upset, because he was making fun of my "boyfriend!"

As a typical, impatient fourteen-year-old girl, embarking upon her first "date," I would go to the veranda, stand at the edge, and yell "Ralph." He was terribly late, and I didn't think anyone was paying attention.

Ralph finally showed up, and we walked the beach, trailed by my entire family, of course! He talked about all the money the business took in and when we got back to the hotel, he took my hand in his for a brief moment. It was sweet. Over the years, I have named two different dogs Ralph, in his honor.

To this day, whenever I see her, Brenda loves to remind me of the time, "Betsy stood over the edge of the Wilson Hotel veranda, calling Ralph."

In Closing

In 2002, my husband and I went down to Tybee for a short vacation. The Wilson Hotel had a new owner, and its appearance had changed. A new pier had been erected, which replaced the old one that burned down many years ago. There was no boardwalk, Dean Martin, or Oldsmobile Delta 88. Bigmama, Steve, Jimmy, Mimi and Daddy, are gone.

Mr. Chu is gone, too, but his original store remains an icon on the island, and it even has sun block all the way up to SPF-50. I was really surprised, however, to see he has convenience stores everywhere! He has come a long way from shoelaces.

The humidity and heat were the same. My husband, Steven, said Tybee Island was the hottest place he had ever been, but it was still a relaxing trip. We did a lot of sightseeing along the Savannah River and over on Wilmington Island.

We sat on the bank of the Savannah River and watched great ships going out to sea and we visited the statue of Savannah's Waving Girl. Legend has it that she was the Lighthouse Keepers daughter who fell in love with a sailor. She would stand at the bank of the Savannah River every day, awaiting his return. He never returned, but she welcomed countless ships over the years. She stands to this day, a beacon of hope, waving her handkerchief, and welcoming others safely home.

We went back to the beach to watch the sunset. Steven and I basked in the glow of the warm afternoon sun. I closed my eyes and my mind was flooded with memories. In the distance, I could hear Dean Martin singing. The smell of cotton candy, caramel corn and candied apples filled the air. I heard the organ music coming from the skating rink and could picture Jimmy and Steve on the pier, catching fish for Maggie. Bigmama was sitting under the pier in her favorite shady spot, and in the breeze, there was the faint scent of vinegar and oil.

End

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