

A Midsummer Night Dream

Summer is a time for fun and reflection with your family and your friends. Every summer I'm filled with memories from past get-togethers with those I haven't seen for a long time. Summertime makes me think back to when I was a kid, and had two months off from all my childhood responsibilities. One of my best summers ever was when I was six years old. My memories of that summer are significant in that it was the first time I met my grandfather, and the first time I'd ever planted something in the ground that meant something to me.

I had found some gnarly looking brown things in a pile next to a house that we lived at in the Oakland hills. The house we were renting at the time had a large orchard and a lot of open space. The house was located just south of Joaquin Miller Park. A few years later, the Oakland Mormon Temple was built two blocks above where we lived. It was common for us to sit on the front porch of our house on Lincoln Avenue and look out to the southwest. You could see for miles across the Bay to the peninsula and beyond – Alameda, San Mateo and even Redwood City.

One day I found these odd looking bulbs and took them to my mom to ask her what they were. She said to take them outside and plant them next to the house. I planted them in the ground – it was the first time I had ever planted anything. I was rather proud, and was anxious to see what they were going to be. I watered them every day. As the summer went along, they started to sprout these long green stalks.

While I was watering one day, this 1950's Ford Woody station wagon pulled into our driveway. Out stepped an older couple. My mom came running out of the house and gave both of them a hug. She called me over, and introduced me to her parents - my grandmother and grandfather whom I'd never met. My grandmother bent down, grabbed me and gave me a hug. My mom said she needed to show my grandmother something inside, so they both proceeded to go inside. My grandfather looked down at me and was beaming at the fact that he had never met me. He picked me up and proceeded to not let me go. He carried me over to the steps in the front of the house and started to ask me lots of questions. I couldn't wait to answer his questions. Even then I could tell that he was just a nice man who was genuinely interested in everything, especially his grandson with all the attention he was giving me. I will never forget that moment – it's such a great memory.

After a while through the questions he was asking me he discovered I had planted something by the house. He was very excited and was anxious to see what it was that I had planted in the ground. He had a big smile on his face. "Wow," he exclaimed. "You've planted gladiolas, Bobby!"

He was enthralled with the fact that I had planted something into the earth and I could feel his genuine enjoyment at seeing my enthusiasm. He said he couldn't wait to come back another time to see them in bloom, as we joyfully walked into the house.

It was a special day to meet him, and I look back now with the realization that our encounter is what set me on the track of ornamental horticulture and sparked my interest in parks. It wasn't until many years later that I realized who my grandfather was, and all the things he had accomplished. My grandfather was Harry Lee Blaisdell. He was the superintendent of the Central Coast Division of the State Parks, and the first "warden" of Mount Diablo State Park in the 1920s. The Blaisdell Trail at Mount Diablo State Park is named in his honor.

Summers are fun – they are supposed to be fun. It's when you enjoy those treasured times and remember them forever. Enjoy your summer. Oh, by the way, my gladiolas bloomed that summer, in an incredible array of colors.

FRRPD Master Plan Public Workshops

Are you interested in the future of recreation? FRRPD is in the initial phase of its Recreation Master Plan Update and we want to hear from you! Please join us for the workshop in your area:

Mon., July 7 – Southside Community Center, 6:30 p.m.

Wed., July 9 – Forbestown Recreation Center (Charles Lynnds Hall), 6:00 p.m.

Tues., July 15 – Palermo Grange Hall, 6:30 p.m.

Quote

Summer afternoon - summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language. ~Henry James

4th of July Fun Facts

Independence Day commemorates the formal adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. However, it was not declared a legal holiday until 1941.

There are 30 places in America with "Liberty" in its name. Iowa, with four, has more than any other state: Libertyville, New Liberty, North Liberty, and West Liberty.

Bald eagles have few natural enemies & live only in North America.

The number of 4th of July Cookouts is estimated to be huge with approximately 150 million hot dogs to be consumed. That's one hot dog for every two people in the United States.

Upcoming Events

For more information about any of the following events, call FRRPD at 533-2011.

July 3 – Thursday Concert in the Park. Kick off your 4th of July weekend with a bang with **8-Track Jam Attack** at Riverbend Park from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

July 4 – Independence Day at the Beach. Come down to Riverbend Park to set off your fireworks!

July 5 – BBQ at Nelson Pool. Come celebrate the 4th of July weekend at Nelson Pool from 12-4 p.m. FREE admission, \$5 BBQ meal.

July 7 – Junior Giants begins.

July 10 – Thursday Concert in the Park. The **Musical Brewing Co.** brings its funky California rock to Riverbend Park from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

See you in the parks!