

## Fireworks

Have you ever been thinking about a seemingly ordinary subject and suddenly find yourself overcome by emotion? At first you might not even know why. Then you press play on the memory card that is your brain and it all comes into focus. The subject of fireworks does this to me. That was a recent surprise I received while trying to write about the subject for my new Writer's Group. Let me take you on a journey through my memory bank and show you why.

See, there was a period of time where life was as close to perfect as it could ever be for me. It was a small window of time from 1983 to 1988 when I was 6 to 11 years old. Mom, Dad, and I lived in a big house with a park literally attached to the back yard. We had a swimming pool and a finished basement with a pool table, pinball machine, and an old school jukebox. My father was making a lot of money. I was an only child, so he was my best friend and honestly, I was spoiled.

Everything changed over the next two years. The economy crumbled and my father's business went with it. Other problems began to rear their ugly head. Eventually, it led to bankruptcy. We lost the house. Forced to move. Then my mother got pregnant. As much as I thank God for my sister, it probably wasn't the best time for a new baby financially. Then again, I'm convinced that the excitement of a new baby on the way is the only thing that kept my father connected to us most of that last year. SO I thank my sister for that.

Shortly after my sister's birth and my 13th birthday, my father couldn't hack it anymore. He committed suicide. My mother has struggled to control her drinking ever since. My sister grew up without a father. And I won't even begin to get into all my issues that I can trace to that day because this typewriter only has so much ink. I will put it like this: to say that life has been tougher ever since might qualify as the understatement of the century.

However, when I think of fireworks, I'm brought back to those 5 wonderful years in that big blue house in Warwick, Rhode Island. It was a nice suburban neighborhood with lots of kids my age. Our house was right on the turn of a circular road that hardly ever got any traffic. Each of the three houses on the turn had boys about the same age and as a result, we formed our own little community of families

that did all sorts of things together. The highlight of every year for our community was without a doubt, the 4th of July.

Each year, the father of all three houses would use whatever means were available to them to amass a ridiculous amount of fireworks. Come dusk on the 4th, the fun began. One of the fathers was a sergeant in the Warwick Police Department with a lot of time in. As a result, we had carte blanche to do as we wanted. Brilliant colors lit up the sky. Loud explosions popped eardrums. Every hand held a sparkler and every telephone pole had several spinning stars nailed to it. Roman candles, bottle rockets, and firecrackers kept the kids busy and entertained in between the fathers lighting off the "big stuff." There were bonfires in the middle of the street and everybody stayed full off my mother's southern fried chicken. Outside of a burnt finger or two and the occasional dud, there wasn't a bad memory to be had.

Those were genuinely good times. Life is so full of ups and downs on a daily basis that sometimes we forget to stop and take a look back. I had forgotten how much I enjoyed those 4th of July's. To be honest, I often struggle to remember any of the good times that have to do with my father. When your best friend and the man who raised you decides to abandon you by his own choice over money problems, it can be tough to get past. Thankfully, I found my faith a few years ago and that has made it a lot easier for me to accept the bad...and to see the good...that life has to offer.

I am going to make a real effort to try to enjoy the 4th of July more from this point forward. It's strange, but sometimes just sitting and thinking about the most ordinary of subjects can really light the fireworks in your heart.

Until next time...