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Screaming for Ice Cream  
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To borrow from T.S.Eliot, I might say that I have measured my life with ice cream spoons. When I was young and clueless, I was satisfied with a small paper cup of vanilla ice cream, served with a wooden spoon. As you might expect, that period of small expectations didn't last long.

My father was a pharmacist, called a druggist in those days, in a drugstore that still contained a soda fountain. My mother and I were sad that he had to work on Saturdays when other men on the block were home, but as a consolation prize we could look forward to the pint of coffee ice cream he brought home each week. Our small refrigerator had an ice compartment, but no freezer, so ice cream wouldn't keep. My mother and I had no recourse but to finish the pint, already soft from the ride home in the car. Was that the beginning of the association of ice cream with family and love?

If I had a favorite song, it might have been the jingle from the Good Humor truck. On hot summer nights, a couple of friends and I sat on the stoop, often tired from catching lightning bugs, waiting for that almost celestial ring. We had serious discussions--what to choose, a toasted almond bar or an ice cream sandwich? Then indescribable disappointment on occasions when we had heard the music but were horrified to see the truck drive by on Jamaica Avenue without turning into our street.

My parents tried to educate me, taking me to museums and various historic spots, but for me the highlight of those trips was each stop at Howard Johnson's with its 28 flavors. Oh, the agony and the ecstasy. Usually peppermint stick won out, but at the time each meal seemed to require a life-altering decision.

Carol lived across the street and often asked her parents to include me in their family visits so that she would have someone to play with while her parents talked with the adults. I greatly preferred her loud, singing, beer-drinking, German relatives to my own and was especially happy when we visited the ones who lived far enough away that a stop was necessary on the way home. With luck we would find a frozen custard stand open, and I still remember the miraculous discovery one time that the machines could squirt out not only vanilla and chocolate but also black raspberry.

Summers, when we were eleven or twelve, we road our bikes several miles through Queens to the nearest Carvel. As I look back, it seems crazy that we were allowed to do this, but those were different times, and except for once passing a flasher in Cunningham Park, our rides were uneventful. Of course we never told our mothers about the flasher and continued the rides, trying to discover the pattern according to which our favorite third flavor would be available.

Eventually childhood passed, followed by somewhat more conscientious decisions related to diet or health. Now, in my old age, I can splurge a little. If, at Costco, after struggling to haul a huge bag of broccoli out of a carton on a too high shelf and promising to eat it, is it so wrong to buy a Very Berry Sundae on the way out?

I have heard that the ancient Greeks mixed snow with honey and fruit to create early ice cream. For this I applaud them. Last winter a recipe on Pinterest inspired Tina, my

daughter-in-law, to make snow ice cream. She was kind enough to give me a sample, which wasn't bad, but not exactly up there with Ben & Jerry's. There's a lesson here: as much as the world seems to be falling apart, there are always advances for which to be grateful.

Now I see the wonder of ice cream in my grandchildren. Last year Patrick, the oldest, was a freshman at Mason. Every few weeks Tina took four-year-old Liam to campus to have lunch with his brother. Whatever else they had to eat no one mentioned, but Liam decided that instead of bothering with kindergarten, he would rather go directly to Mason, and specifically to its all-you-can-eat ice cream bar.

So, clearly, while there may be some concerns about sugar, fat, cholesterol, and calories, ice cream adds joy to life and encourages education.