



# and that's... **The Gospel Truth!!** with Pat Corn

*a brief message of encouragement to make your day just a little bit brighter*

By the time you read this, you have probably enjoyed a celebration of Independence Day. July 4<sup>th</sup> is always one of my favorite holidays. Back in my home town in Henedersonville, NC there was always a lot going on to celebrate this special day. It generally started with the Kiddie Parade down Main Street at 9am. Kids would make their own "floats" from their own imaginations, of which seemed to always be pulled by their favorite old dog hooked to their Red Flyer wagon. Often the cargo would be a baby sister or a cat dressed like a baby sister, in red-white-and blue of course. Now sometimes the wagon would be pulled by a Schwinn bike complete with red-white-and blue handlebar grip streamers, new reflectors, and a fresh playing card clattering along on the spokes of the wheels attached with brand new clothes pins. The rules of the Kiddie Parade said that the "float" had to be created by the kid displaying it. What I don't understand was how did some of those kids know how to build little flatbed trailers and wire them up with tail lights and horns? Those girls were sure smart in those days.

The teenagers would always have a Soc-Hop at the Teenage Canteen spinning their music favorites by the original stars of rock 'n roll. Without a doubt, some of them would have driven down below the South Carolina line to buy fireworks, since they were illegal in North Carolina. And someone would have brought back a case of Pabst Blue Ribbon beer to share among probably twenty "wild" teenagers. After all, PBR was patriotic in those red-white-and blue cans, right? Those guys were the "trashy" boys that did that. They drove the '53 Chevys and old pickup trucks, not the '56's and '57's. There were rowdy but not cool. They would drag Brock's and the Tic-Toc hootin' and hollerin' and acting like they were hot stuff. What I always noticed was that they never had any girls with them. I wonder why? That's how I knew they weren't cool. No girls....You can't be cool and not draw girls!! Nonetheless, these guys really added to the audible portion of the July 4<sup>th</sup> atmosphere.

All day long there were picnics galore, either family or church related, and one giant one at Camp Strauss in Brevard. It was sponsored by the Olin Matheson/Ecusta plant that employed half of that county and ours too. My Dad worked there. Only employees, and their guests, were allowed to use the facility. Those picnics were really fun because they had a lake for swimming, a real baseball field, a basketball "gym", an archery range, and lots of woods to ramble in. Parents could just let the kids "run" without any concern at all.

My favorite part was on the backside of the lake. It was the old WWII olive green cannon that worked with all the wheels and cranks that moved the barrel up and down and side to side. We would crawl all over that thing playing our own "war games" defending America from the German's and Japs. My cousin Greg had to always be the leader. He was a year older than me and that always made the difference in leadership. I'd always get greasy from the old gun and it was worth it. I'll bet I "killed" at least a battalion of those enemies of America....in my mind. I took my first steps at Camp Strauss years before and became a true patriot at six years of age. Today Camp Strauss is a high-dollar housing development. Sometimes progress stinks when it steals our memories.

The covered picnic tables were reserved, and had electric lights and plugs for coffee pots and radios. As long as there was celery sticks with pimento cheese in them, I was a happy soldier. Hot dogs and watermelon made it all worth while, and cranking the homemade peach ice cream was fun, not work.

We always had to leave by 5:00 to make the eighteen mile ride back to Hendersonville, so that we wouldn't miss the talent show and fireworks at the high school's football field. The Rotary Club sponsored the event each year and had professionals come in to set up the fireworks. They had talent shows in each of the schools all year long and those winners came to compete for the grand prize on July 4<sup>th</sup>. A local DJ would always be the emcee, and there were lots of singers, dancers, piano players, and cloggers. And

there was always that “sissy boy” who played piano and sang show tunes, and the girl who sang sand “They Call The Wind Mariah”. The coolest part was when the local rock ‘n roll band would play while the judges made their decision. “The Waymates” were the coolest. Matching red blazers, black pants, and saddle oxfords. They had real professional twangin’ Gibson and Fender guitars and Ludwig silver sparkle drums just like The Ventures. “One day....”, I thought. “I’ll do that one day”.

All of a sudden.....BOOM!....and the whole stadium went dark!! The judge’s decision to award first prize to the “sissy boy” was obliterated with one launch of a huge aerial cannon that filled the night sky with incredible booming sound and sparkling light! Here we go! The fireworks!!! One launch after another kept our necks craned upward as we watched a display of light and sound that could only compare to the earth’s creation!!

The finale` was a sight to behold. Even the comical chasers that went back and forth between two telephone poles, and the “waterfall” beside them, couldn’t compare to the launches in rapid succession that condensed the time and space of that moment in a kid’s eyes and ears....WOW!

Piling into the car to head home at the conclusion, I would last only a few minutes before falling asleep in the back seat. Every sense that God had given had been stretched to the limit on those July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations.....the sound of the music, the sight of the fireworks, the smell of the hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill, and the taste of home-made peach ice cream. God was good! And He still is!!!

“God bless America...Land that I love...Stand beside Her and guide Her...Through the night with the light from above....”

And that’s....The Gospel Truth!!

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